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JD Vance, Iran deal architect and scapegoat

di Jim Geraghty

If you're skeptical of the announced but as-of-this-writing unreleased grand deal between the United States and Iran, join the club.

We've heard this story before. By [one count](#), the president has suggested that peace was around the corner "at least 38 times" between Feb. 28 and June 9. This isn't merely the boy who cried "wolf." It's the boy who turned that cry into the repetitive, rhythmic hook of an electronic dance hit:

Wolf, wolf, wolf, wolf, wolf ...

The U.S. is in a bind, faced with tactical military victory amid a geopolitical strategic stalemate at best or defeat at worst. The Iranian military's conventional forces have apparently been hammered. But if the regime still has enough to fire off "[nearly 30 ballistic missiles](#)" at Israel, as it did earlier this month, its stockpiles must run deep.

Or perhaps they're not difficult to replenish. That's already true of attack drones. That technology is comparatively cheap and easy to make. One analysis argues the [conventional price tag](#) for manufacturing a Shahed-136, somewhere between \$20,000 and \$50,000, is wrong. The weapon might run the regime only \$7,000 a piece. If that's correct, you could get three Shaheds for the price of one Kia K4, one of the cheapest cars on the market.

President Donald Trump wrote: "Ships of the World, start your engines" and "let the oil flow!" But even a handful of shots at oil tankers, cargo ships and port facilities make captains and crews reluctant to sail from the Persian Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, the Republican from South Carolina, offered what read like a carefully calibrated response to the deal on Sunday night. "I am somewhat concerned that Iran's view of the agreement seems different than what the American negotiating

team is claiming,” he wrote online. “Under our law, any nuclear deal with Iran will be sent to Congress for review and a vote. I look forward to reviewing the final product and I believe it is imperative that the architect of the deal, Vice President Vance and his negotiating partners, be part of the process in presenting the final deal to Congress.”

Ah, so the vice president is the “architect of the deal”? Does anyone else sense that he’s being set up as a scapegoat for whatever bad consequences may come?

Vance was reportedly a skeptic of starting the war, and he sounded like a cheerleader for ending it on Sunday. “This region of the world has been a basket case for my entire life, and longer than that,” Vance said in an interview with Fox News. “What the president has really set us to do is to certainly eliminate the nuclear threat of Iran, that is done, but now possibly to build to a new era of Middle East prosperity and success, where it is not a region of the world where the United States has to worry about so much.”

For good measure, he added some circumspection: “I’m not going to say that everybody is going to sing ‘kumbaya’ tomorrow,” he conceded. “It’s going to take a little bit of time to learn the ways of peace, but I do think we took a major, major step.” At least the vice president hasn’t held up a signed treaty and proclaimed, “peace for our time.”

Note that the Iranian regime has a [long and sordid history](#) of breaking its promises and violating its treaty agreements. It is more than a little bizarre to see a U.S. president, and his No. 2, convinced that diplomacy can work with a regime whose inaugural act was to take American diplomats hostage. There’s a reason our negotiators aren’t meeting in Tehran.

Do the U.S. and Iran even have an agreement? Bloomberg reported that the Iranian government is circulating at least [three different versions](#) of the deal; one has the U.S. and regional partners providing \$300 billion for the country’s reconstruction. At one point Monday, in an interview with CBS News, Vance said that sum is something Iran “could have access to, funded by the Gulf Coast Coalition, so long as they honor their end of the obligation.” Later in the day, Trump wrote on Truth Social: “The story that

the U.S. is paying Iran 300 million [sic] Dollars is Fake News, put out by the Dumocrats!!!” Clear as mud.

The final copy, whenever it’s released, is probably going to stink. It fits a well-established pattern of an administration that habitually overpromises and underdelivers. A vice president who apparently never wanted to start the war now gets the job of selling the country on a deal with one of the world’s most untrustworthy and treacherous regimes, with ideological opponents like Graham ready to blame him when the deal goes sour.

You almost have to feel sorry for Vance. Almost.