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Potential Iran deal puts Trump in a bind



People walk past an anti-U.S. and anti-Israel mural depicting missiles hitting an aircraft carrier on May 26 in Tehran, Iran. ATTA KENARE/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Hawks resist concessions on Tehran nuke program

Matt Spetalnick
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump finds himself in a bind as he seeks to end the war against Iran: He is under pressure to reopen the Strait of Hormuz and get U.S. gasoline prices down but at the same time faces a potential backlash from Iran hawks in his own party over any concessions to Tehran.

Trump's dilemma became clear during a week of hectic diplomacy marked by word of an emerging framework deal that, according to sources familiar with the matter, would extend a current ceasefire and release Iran's stranglehold on the vital oil-shipping route while defer-



Trump

ring discussions of its nuclear program.

Such an interim agreement, if approved by Trump and Iran's rulers, would amount to the most significant step toward peace since he joined with Israel in attacking the Islamic republic on Feb. 28, and could ease the soaring energy prices the conflict has triggered.

But it could also draw the disapproval of a key segment of Trump's base – influential Republicans clamoring for him to “finish the job” by resuming strikes to close Tehran's path to a nuclear weapon, his main stated reason for going to war.

Earlier this week, some of Trump's hard-line anti-Iran allies responded to reports of a possible deal with criticism, even arguing that he might gain little beyond the 2015 Iran nuclear deal negotiated by former President Barack Obama and scrapped by Trump during his first term.

Senior Republicans rarely at odds with Trump, including U.S. Sens. Lindsey Graham, Roger Wicker and Ted Cruz, urged the president not to compromise.

Trump pushed back, insisting he was in “no rush” and would only accept a “great” agreement.

See **IRAN**, Page 2A

Judge blocks Trump's \$1.8B 'slush fund' as case is litigated

Bart Jansen
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – A federal judge has temporarily blocked President Donald Trump from setting up a \$1.8 billion fund to compensate people the Justice Department deems were investigated improperly.

U.S. District Judge Leonie Brinkema in Virginia ordered the Trump administration on May 29 not to take further action creating or operating “the Anti-Weaponization Fund, which includes the transferring of money to the Fund,” the consideration of any claims or the disbursing of funds while the case is litigated.

She set a hearing for June 12. The White House referred questions about the order to the Justice Department, which didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Justice Department announced May 18 it was offering \$1.776 billion to “victims of lawfare and weaponization” as part of a settlement of a \$10 billion lawsuit filed by Trump and his family against the IRS after their tax returns were leaked.

But Democrats and some public interest groups have blasted the proposed program as a “slush fund” to reward the president's supporters.

Part of the criticism is that the money could benefit people who were convicted of or charged with attacking the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, and who were later pardoned by Trump.

Trump has said a five-person committee overseen by Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche will determine how to distribute the money.

Congressional Democrats argue the fund is unconstitutional because lawmakers traditionally determine how to spend federal funds.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-New York, called the fund “one of the most depraved” of Trump's “corrupt schemes,” and said Democrats would fight it in courts and in Congress.

See **SLUSH FUND**, Page 2A

Poison singer latest to exit Freedom 250 shows

Edward Segarra and Taijuan Moorman
USA TODAY

President Donald Trump's patriotic concert continues to unravel after more acts have dropped out.

Several artists slated to perform at the Great American State Fair, a 16-day event organized by the president's nonprofit Freedom 250, have reportedly pulled out of the event, according to statements released on social media since May 27.

The fair, which is expected to run June 25 through July 10, will transform the National Mall in Washington into “the biggest, boldest state fair in the country” in honor of the United States' 250th anniversary, according to the official Freedom 250 website.

A lineup of music superstars rounded up to perform has shrunk significantly

over the course of a few days, with Vanilla Ice and Flo Rida among the remaining acts.

Many of the fair's announced performers have walked back their involvement with the event.

Bret Michaels became the latest musician to announce his departure, attributing his exit to the event becoming “divisive” as well as threats to his loved ones.

“Unfortunately, what was presented to us as a celebration of our country has evolved into something much more divisive than what I agreed to be a part of,” the Poison front man, originally set to perform July 3, wrote in a lengthy Instagram post.

Country star Martina McBride, set for

See **FREEDOM 250**, Page 2A



Poison's Bret Michaels became the latest musician to announce his departure from the Great American State Fair, attributing his exit to the event becoming “divisive” and saying his loved ones had received threats. EMILEE CHINN/GETTY IMAGES FILE

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