

# Obama urges opponents not to 'screw up' Iran deal

In jab at Republican Congress members, president says partisanship over framework agreement 'crossed all boundaries'

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**P**ANAMA CITY, Panama — President Barack Obama pressed opponents Saturday of a deal on Iran's contested nuclear program to be patient and not "screw up" the potential for a historic agreement.

In addition to staunch Republican opposition in the United States to an accord with the Islamic Republic, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned on Thursday that there were no guarantees of an agreement.

The president said he isn't surprised that some Iranian leaders are criticizing certain provisions of the deal. But he said he is dismayed that some Republican members of Congress are giving more credence to the Iranian leader's interpretation of the deal than they are to US Secretary of State John Kerry's explanations.

Obama said that partisan wrangling over the emerging nuclear agreement with Iran and on other foreign policy matters has gone beyond the pale, singling out two senior Republican senators for particularly harsh criticism. "It needs to stop," he declared.

Obama complained that Sen. John McCain of Arizona had suggested that Kerry's explanations of the framework agreement with Iran were "somehow less trustworthy" than those of Iran's supreme leader.

"That's an indication of the degree to which partisanship has crossed all boundaries," an exercised Obama said in a news conference at the end of the two-day Summit of the Americas. "And we're seeing this again and again."

Obama said it was understandable that people would be suspicious of Iran, even that they would oppose the nuclear deal.

"But when you start getting to the point where you are actively communicating that the United States government and our secretary of state is somehow spinning presentations in a negotiation with a foreign power, particularly one you say is your enemy, that's a problem," he said.

Clearly irked by aggressive pushback from the strengthened Republican majority in Congress, Obama also singled out Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell for criticism, saying the Kentucky Republican had been “telling the world” not to have confidence that the US can meet its own climate change goals.

McConnell has been urging US states not to comply with Obama’s power plant rules, and arguing that the US could never meet Obama’s target even if those rules do survive.

Obama also renewed his complaints about the 47 Republican senators who sent a letter to Iran’s leaders saying that any deal the Iranians made with the US wouldn’t necessarily hold up after Obama leaves office.

Of all of it, Obama said: “That’s not how we’re supposed to run foreign policy regardless of who’s president or secretary of state.”

Obama said he’s still “absolutely positive” that the framework agreement is the best way to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. And he added that if the final negotiations don’t produce a tough enough agreement, the US can back away from it.

The president added that instead of working to make the nuclear deal better, GOP critics seemed out to sink it.

“I don’t understand why it is that everybody’s working so hard to anticipate failure,” Obama told reporters in Panama City on the sidelines of the Summit of the Americas.

“My simple point is: let’s wait and see what the deal is... And if, in fact, we’re not satisfied that it cuts off the pathways for Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon, then we won’t sign it.”

On April 2, after months of grueling negotiations, Tehran and six world powers agreed on the broad outline of a deal to impose tighter controls on Iran’s nuclear program in exchange for lifting economic sanctions.

“What I’m concerned about is making sure we don’t prejudge it or those who are opposed to any deal whatsoever try to use a procedural argument essentially to screw up the possibility of a deal,” Obama said.

The P5+1 powers and Tehran have given themselves until June to finalize a detailed accord, but Washington has released fact sheets outlining steps it says Tehran has already agreed to take.