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Current Events: IRAN

“What You Need to Know about the Iran Deal”

*By Erin Kelly and Paul Singer, USA Today
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Senate Democrats on Thursday blocked a resolution to reject the Iran nuclear agreement. But what does that actually mean for U.S. foreign policy and what happens next? USA TODAY's Erin Kelly and Paul Singer have the lowdown.

So what is the Iran deal?

The deal is an agreement between Iran, the United States, Germany, Great Britain, China, Russia and France that reduces international economic sanctions against Iran in exchange for that nation ending its pursuit of nuclear weapons. Iran is required over the next 10-15 years to reduce its stockpile of enriched uranium and the number of centrifuges it has to produce the uranium – a key component of a nuclear weapon.

What's taking so long?

The agreement has been in the works for years. Earlier this year, as final negotiations were ongoing, Congress passed a law requiring President Obama to submit any final agreement for congressional review. The State Department submitted the deal to Congress in July, starting the 60-day clock for Congress to take action. If Congress does not reject the deal by Sept. 17, the president can move forward.

Why doesn't the U.S. get along with Iran?

The history of conflict with Iran goes back more than 60 years, when the CIA helped overthrow a democratically elected government in 1953 and backed the shah of Iran, a monarch whose rule was marked by torture of opponents and the amassing of great wealth. The unpopular shah was overthrown in a 1979 revolution by an Islamic movement. Fifty-two Americans were taken hostage by Iranian students supporting the revolution, and held for 444 days. Since 1984, Iran has been one of a handful of nations listed by the State Department as a “state sponsor of terrorism,” funding militant groups around the world that have targeted the U.S. and its allies, including Palestinian terror groups.

What are all these side deals we keep hearing about?

The critical "side deals" are two documents agreed to by Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency. One of the documents details what questions Iran will have to answer about its past work on weapons' development. The other document details the access that the agency's inspectors will have to Iran's Parchin military site, where Iranian officials are suspected of having tested detonators for nuclear weapons. The Obama administration argues that these documents do not fall under the law requiring congressional review. Republicans say they do.

If the deal goes through, does it mean there will be peace in the Middle East?

The goal of the agreement is not peace in the Middle East – it is delaying for at least a decade Iran’s pursuit of a nuclear weapon. Opponents of the deal have argued that by lifting economic sanctions on Iran, it will give the nation more money to fund terrorism around the world, making peace in the Middle East less likely. The Obama administration has argued that the deal was necessary because it was the only way – short of war – to head off Iran’s pursuit of nuclear weapons.

If it doesn’t go through, does the U.S. go to war with Iran?

There is no direct link between this agreement and any decision to go to war. For that matter, passage of the agreement does not guarantee that the U.S. will not go to war with Iran.

Does the Senate’s Thursday vote mean the deal can go forward?

Probably. Republicans tried to bring up a resolution to scuttle the Iran deal, but Democrats blocked it. Republican leaders vowed to try again next week, but there is no reason to believe they will have more success. House Republicans are going to pass alternate resolutions to lay the groundwork for a legal challenge to implementation of the agreement, but that’s a longshot. Republicans also point out that a future Republican president could undo the agreement.

Source: (<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2015/09/10/what-you-need-know-iran-deal/72036704/>)