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OUTLOOK: On Iran attack, Trump sidesteps Congress again

Plus: DOE looks to speed nuclear-reactor approval, White House releases new science directives, and European officials defer to Trump on Iran.



None

A B-2 bomber arrives at Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri on Sunday after returning from a massive strike on Iranian nuclear sites Saturday. (AP Photo/David Smith)

Cristina Maza, Casey Wooten, Amelia Monroe and Philip Athey

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President Trump's decision not to consult Congress before launching an attack on Iran Saturday was met with shrugs from most Republicans, with only a handful crying foul.

It's a familiar reaction on Capitol Hill in the early months of the second Trump administration. When the White House previously [bypassed](https://www.nationaljournal.com/s/728283/perpetual-emergency-declarations-allowing-white-house-side-step-congress/) congressional oversight authority on trade, immigration, and other issues, GOP leadership largely brushed off criticisms that they've ceded the Constitution's Article I powers.

Republican leaders on Monday showed little interest in constraining Trump's ability to use military force in the Middle East, saying that they didn't feel the need for White House to seek authorization from Capitol Hill.

"I don't think this is an appropriate time for a war-powers resolution, and I don't think it's necessary," House Speaker Mike Johnson told reporters Monday. "For 80 years, presidents of both parties have acted with the same commander-in-chief authority under Article II."

The Trump White House has sought time-tested, as well as more obscure, ways to get around Congress' ultra-narrow GOP majorities. Trump used powers granted in national emergencies to levy tariffs on a vast range of imports. He employed so-called "impoundment" to block already appropriated funding to federal agencies.

In 1973, Congress overrode a veto from Richard Nixon to pass the [War Powers Act](#)

(https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/R/PDF/R42699/R42699.15.pdf). It requires the president to notify Congress within 48 hours of a military action and mandates congressional approval within 60 days of deployment. Ahead of Saturday's attack, the Trump White House notified Republican leadership but kept Democrats in the dark.

After President Obama's Libya intervention, the Republican-led House passed a nonbinding resolution—introduced by then-Speaker John Boehner—calling on the administration to withdraw from the region. The resolution went nowhere in the Democratic-led Senate. Today, the roles have reversed. Most Republicans echoed Johnson's position on Monday, but not all.

Rep. Thomas Massie, whose votes against spending legislation have drawn the ire of his GOP colleagues, joined progressive Democratic Rep. Ro Khanna last week to introduce a war-powers [resolution](#)

(<https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-concurrent-resolution/38?s=1&r=1>), prohibiting the U.S. from attacking Iran without approval from Congress. Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine introduced a similar measure in the upper chamber.

Trump's decision has split MAGA-world itself, with one of Trump's closest allies speaking out against the attack.

“I didn't sleep better after neo-cons and warmongers talked this administration into entering a hot war that Israel started,” Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene [said](#)

(https://x.com/Bannons_WarRoom/status/1937173370757324972), on former Trump aide Steve Bannon's podcast.

Still, Greene told *Punchbowl News* Monday that she opposed Massie's resolution.

Congress may have a say in the matter whether GOP leaders want to pursue it or not. Massie and Democrats could force a vote on the resolution by making it privileged, which would start an 18-day countdown in which the chamber must vote on the bill.

Massie told reporters Monday that he had spoken with Speaker Johnson, telling him he wouldn't force a vote on his measure if a ceasefire between Israel and Iran announced by Trump earlier holds. Such resolutions this year have presented thorny problems for Republican leaders, who have worked to keep members from forcing divisive votes on issues like repealing Trump's tariffs.

When asked about the issue by House Rules Committee ranking member Jim McGovern during a Monday hearing, panel chairwoman Virginia Foxx said she didn't anticipate leadership moving to prevent a privileged vote on Massie's resolution.

Lawmakers are set for a bipartisan classified briefing on the attack from the White House Tuesday.

—[Casey Wooten](/search/?a=Casey%20Wooten) (/search/?a=Casey%20Wooten).



📷 FILE - The Unit 2 reactor at Indian Point Energy Center in Buchanan, N.Y., is seen on April 26, 2021, almost one year after it was shut down. (AP Photo/Seth Wenig, File) NONE

New DOE pilot program could give nuclear reactors a one-way, express ticket to commercial operation

The Energy Department announced [a pilot program](https://www.energy.gov/articles/energy-department-announces-new-pathway-test-advanced-reactors)

(<https://www.energy.gov/articles/energy-department-announces-new-pathway-test-advanced-reactors>) last week that would expedite advanced nuclear-reactor testing, giving companies a fast-track ticket to commercial operation.

The move follows a slew of Trump-led executive orders targeted at growing the country's nuclear capacity. [One of the orders](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/05/reforming-nuclear-reactor-)

(<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/05/reforming-nuclear-reactor->

[testing-at-the-department-of-energy/](#)), signed at the end of May, aimed to reform the nuclear-testing process, with goals of developing three self-sustaining reactors by a July 2026 deadline.

“For too long, the federal government has stymied the development and deployment of advanced civil nuclear reactors in the United States,” Energy Secretary Chris Wright said. “Thanks to President Trump’s leadership, we are expediting the development of next-generation nuclear technologies and giving American innovators a new path forward to advance their designs.”

Trump’s pilot program involves DOE, Pentagon, and private-sector projects focused on driving research and development of advanced nuclear projects, including microreactors.

The Idaho National Laboratory is at the center of these efforts, with the [Pentagon](https://www.energy.gov/ne/articles/department-defense-breaks-ground-project-pele-microreactor) (<https://www.energy.gov/ne/articles/department-defense-breaks-ground-project-pele-microreactor>), breaking ground on a transportable microreactor, and the [DOE](https://www.energy.gov/ne/articles/trump-administration-pushes-microreactor-test-beds-front-line) (<https://www.energy.gov/ne/articles/trump-administration-pushes-microreactor-test-beds-front-line>), streamlining the construction of microreactor test beds and listing the lab as a [potential site](https://www.energy.gov/ne/articles/us-department-energy-identifies-tentative-site-aalo-atomics-experimental-microreactor) (<https://www.energy.gov/ne/articles/us-department-energy-identifies-tentative-site-aalo-atomics-experimental-microreactor>), for the construction of a new experimental reactor facility.

[As of 2024](https://www.nei.org/resources/fact-sheets/u-s-nuclear-plants), (<https://www.nei.org/resources/fact-sheets/u-s-nuclear-plants>), the United States has 94 commercial nuclear reactors, generating over 18 percent of the country’s electricity.

The [majority of nuclear generating capacity](https://world-nuclear.org/information-library/country-profiles/countries-t-z/usa-nuclear-power#Summer) (<https://world-nuclear.org/information-library/country-profiles/countries-t-z/usa-nuclear-power#Summer>), comes from reactors built between 1967 and 1990. Few

reactors have come online since, largely due to public skepticism and policy changes that came as a result of the Three Mile Island accident in 1979—the nation’s only accident at a nuclear site.

Despite Trump’s “drill, baby, drill” agenda, his administration has made it clear that nuclear expansion is an essential piece of driving U.S. energy dominance.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission currently has total control over the reactor licensing process. The DOE emphasized that the pilot program will not judge the “commercial suitability” of reactors; rather it intends to foster research and development of new projects.

—[*Amelia Monroe*](#) (</search/?a=Amelia%20Monroe>).

White House science office releases memo on ‘gold standard’ research

The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy has [released directions](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/OSTP-Guidance-for-GSS-June-2025.pdf) (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/OSTP-Guidance-for-GSS-June-2025.pdf>) to federal agencies on how to bring forth an era of “gold standard” science in the U.S., which some worry is just code for backing science that fits with the Trump administration’s political goals.

The memo, written in response to a [May 23 executive order](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/05/restoring-gold-standard-science/) (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/05/restoring-gold-standard-science/>), lays out nine relatively non-controversial “tenets” that federal agencies must adhere to both when conducting internal scientific research and seemingly when issuing grants for external research.

The nine tenets include a requirement for reproducibility of all scientific research, transparency in research, ease of access, communication of any errors or uncertainty in research, and a requirement for “unbiased” peer review.

Federal agencies have 60 days to post online their plan for complying with the executive order, including the development of standardized metrics for evaluation of research and how they may use artificial intelligence to adhere to the requirements.

“Will this be used in good faith to evaluate research, or will it be used to find ways to undermine research that doesn't fit with the political or ideological aims?” asked Maryam Zaringhalam, the senior director of policy at the Center for Open Science.

Zaringhalam said that, with the exception of using AI, federal agencies engaged in science have generally always complied with at least the stated requirements in the memo released by OSTP Monday.

Far more worrisome to Zaringhalam is the earlier executive order, which—in addition to requiring OSTP to lay out the science policy—requires every agency to designate a political appointee to oversee the science work of the agency, issue any “corrections” they deem necessary, and potentially fire any employee who steps out of line.

“Peer review is the review of your peers, rather than a political official who is making decisions about what is good, robust science and what is not,” Zaringhalam said.

—[Philip Athey](#) ([/search/?a=Philip%20Athey](#)).

Europe avoids criticizing Trump after Iran strikes

BERLIN—European leaders, reliant on Washington for security and intelligence sharing, are avoiding criticism of President Trump's decision to strike Iranian nuclear facilities even as questions swirl around the legality of the move.

During a press conference on Monday, spokesmen for the German Chancellery and the German Foreign Ministry dodged questions about how Berlin would respond if the strikes violate international law, instead saying they believe Washington's justifications for carrying out the strikes.

“Well, I can, of course, take note of what the Americans have to say about this, and they are invoking collective self-defense, and I think that is what the American secretary of Defense said,” said Christian Wagner, a spokesman for the German Foreign Ministry. “At this point, I will not be able to classify this in terms of international law. I think it can be emphasized again that the international community has stated very clearly, not only in the last few weeks and months, but for years, that Iran is in breach of its obligations under international law with regards to its nuclear program.”

Spokesmen from the German government also said they were not concerned about the fact that Washington had not forewarned Berlin about the strikes, and that they received a call from Washington shortly after the strikes began. They also said they believed Iran was working toward developing a nuclear weapon.

European foreign ministers gathered in Brussels on Monday to discuss events in the Middle East steered clear of any criticism as well, instead calling on all sides to return to the negotiating table. Iranian officials have stated that they are willing to engage in talks

with Washington if Europe acts as a mediator, a similar approach to the one taken during the negotiation of the Obama-era nuclear deal in Vienna, Austria.

“Iran says it only wants to negotiate with Europe, and we see that as a good sign, but we do also say that's not sufficient. We want to see the United States being involved,” German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul told reporters ahead of the meeting.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen similarly argued that all sides must come to the negotiating table.

Ireland’s leadership, which frequently breaks from the rest of Europe when it comes to Middle East policy, criticized Trump’s decision to join the Israeli bombardment of Iran, calling the intervention “unhelpful.”

—[Cristina Maza](#) ([/search/?a=Cristina%20Maza](#)).