

U.S. to Hold Off on Disbursing \$6 Billion in Iran Oil Revenue Unfrozen in Prisoner Deal

Decision with Qatar, which oversees the funds, comes amid concern for Tehran's support for Hamas

**By Ian Talley and Andrew Duehren
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The U.S. and Qatar have agreed to deny Iran access to [\\$6 billion in oil proceeds](#) that Washington had previously freed up as part of [a prisoner swap](#) reached last month, according to people familiar with the matter.

The decision with Qatar, whose government is overseeing Iran's access to the funds, comes amid concern for Tehran's long-running provision of money, arms and intelligence to the group responsible [for the terrorist attack on Israel](#) last weekend, Hamas.

According to a preliminary unclassified assessment by U.S. intelligence agencies, Tehran likely knew Hamas was planning operations against Israel but [didn't know the precise timing or scope](#) of the surprise attack.

The funds are sitting in a restricted bank account in Qatar, and the U.S. has struck an informal agreement with Qatar to hold off disbursing them to Iran, the people familiar with the matter said.

Deputy Treasury Secretary Wally Adeyemo described the arrangement in a meeting with senior House Democrats on Thursday.

Iran's mission to the United Nations said the administration was reacting to domestic "political jousting" and called reports the U.S. would hold on to the funds as "unreliable and distant from reality."

"The money rightfully belongs to the people of Iran, earmarked for the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to facilitate the acquisition of all essential and non-sanctioned requisites for the Iranians," the mission said in a statement.

Biden administration officials have repeatedly said the money was already tightly restricted, adding that Iranians haven't actually used any of it yet.

“Freezing the money is a good step,” said Rep. Brad Sherman, a California Democrat and senior member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, who was briefed on the matter after Adeyemo’s meeting.

The Qatari embassy in Washington didn’t respond to a request for comment.

The assets, the proceeds of oil sales to South Korea, were frozen as part of an economywide sanctions program the U.S. levied against Iran after the Trump administration withdrew the U.S. from an international deal limiting Iran’s nuclear program.

As part of the prisoner swap, the U.S. last month agreed to release \$6 billion in Iranian funds held in restricted accounts in South Korea to restricted accounts in Qatar, for humanitarian use only by Tehran.

“We have strict oversight of the funds, and we retain the right to freeze them,” Secretary of State Antony Blinken said amid meetings with Israeli officials in Tel Aviv.

Sherman, who has long advocated stronger sanctions against Iran, said he understood the agreement with the Qataris as a temporary arrangement, but said Iran’s support for Hamas should rule out giving it access in the future. “Sending it back to South Korean banks would be the final step,” he said.

Iran’s clerical regime has called for the destruction of Israel, and Tehran has financed and armed Hamas and other militant groups in the region.

Since the attacks, Republicans and some Democrats have [called for the \\$6 billion to be frozen](#) again.

“Iran has a long and storied track record of malign behavior and supporting terrorism worldwide, including Hamas and Hezbollah,” said Rep. Ruben Gallego (D., Ariz.). “Our ally Israel is at war, and while the conflict continues, we must stand united.”