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ANALYSIS

Trump's Quick Fix Approach to Iran Nuclear Deal Creates Untenable Policy Dilemma

February 21, 2018 *The Hill*

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President Trump's latest quick-fix approach to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear program creates an untenable policy dilemma. Because the deal sacrificed significant U.S. leverage upfront, right now there is currently little Congress can accomplish singlehandedly in trying to strengthen it, and much the administration would place at risk in abruptly leaving it. To truly fix the JCPOA, the United States should stay in it for the time being, so Congress and the administration can focus on rebuilding pressure on Iran to negotiate a better agreement.

This is not to minimize the deal's severe shortcomings or suggest proposed changes by the president and Congress are misguided. On the contrary, stronger inspections, permanent limits on breakout time and prohibitions on ballistic missiles – as proposed by the Iran Freedom Policy and Sanctions Act introduced in the House – would do far more than the current arrangement to actually thwart a nuclear Iran.