



By: TA | AP Brief

Iran to hold call with European nations over nuclear program



Just days away from a European deadline, Iran said Friday its foreign minister would hold a telephone conference call with his French, German and British counterparts to avoid the reimposition of United Nations sanctions over Tehran's nuclear **program**.

The call, planned for Friday by Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi according to Iran's state-run IRNA news agency, comes as the three parties to Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal threaten to reimpose those sanctions under a mechanism known as "snapback" in the accord. The European Union's chief diplomat will also join the call, IRNA said.

The Europeans' concern over the Iranian program, which had been enriching uranium to near weapons-grade levels **before** the 12-day Iran-Israel war in June saw its atomic sites bombed, has only grown since Tehran cut off all cooperation with the International Atomic Energy **Agency** in the conflict's wake.

That has left the international community further blinded to Iran's program — as well as the status of its stockpile of uranium enriched to 60% purity, a short, technical step to weapons-grade levels of 90%.

Iran has long insisted its program is peaceful, though it is the only non-nuclear-armed nation enriching uranium at that level. The U.S., the IAEA and others assess Iran had a nuclear weapons program up until 2003.

In a letter Aug. 8, the three European nations warned Iran it would proceed with "snapback" if Tehran didn't reach a "satisfactory solution" to the nuclear issues.

That deadline would be Aug. 31, in nine days, leaving little time for Iran to likely reach any agreement with the Europeans, who have grown increasingly skeptical of Iran over years of inconclusive **negotiations** over its nuclear program.

Restoring the IAEA's access

Restoring the IAEA's access is a key part of the

talks. Iran has blamed the war with Israel in part on the IAEA, the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog, without offering any evidence.

The IAEA issues quarterly reports on Iran's program and the 2015 deal gave it greater access to keep track of it.

Iran has also threatened its director-general, Rafael Mariano Grossi, with arrest if he comes to Iran, further complicating talks. Grossi is considering running to become the U.N.'s secretary-general, something Tehran has seized on as well in its criticisms of the Argentine diplomat.

The "snapback" power in the nuclear accord expires in October, also putting pressure on the Europeans to potentially use it as leverage with Iran before losing that ability.

Under "snapback," any party to the deal can find Iran in noncompliance, reimposing the sanctions.

After it expires, any sanctions effort could face a veto from U.N. Security Council members China and Russia, two nations that have provided some support to Iran in the past but stayed out of the June war.