

U.S. Rep. Gallagher: CIA Director to Gallagher, Russia using Iran Deal as leverage is a “Genuine Concern”

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In today's House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence full committee hearing on worldwide threats, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director William Burns told Rep. Gallagher that the U.S. should not minimize statements from Mikhail Ulyanov, the lead Russian negotiator for the Iran nuclear talks, claiming that Russia, Iran, and China swindled the U.S. in negotiations over a new Iran deal, and that there is "genuine concern" over how Russia will try to utilize leverage from the deal in the context of Ukraine.

Rep. Gallagher recently [expressed concerns](#) over Ulyanov's suggestion, and [warned of ways](#) Putin could use any new Iran deal as valuable leverage against the U.S.

Click [here](#) to watch the exchange, or read the transcript below:

Rep. Gallagher: Do you view Ulyanov bragging that he's swindled us in Vienna as just mere bluster? Or more to the point, Lavrov demanding that sanctions with respect to Ukraine shouldn't impede their ability to do business with Iran going forward, should we view that as bluster?

CIA Director Burns: No, I take that seriously. It's something we have to take seriously as well. I don't think we can just assume that that's bluster. So no, that's something we can't minimize.

Rep. Gallagher: Maybe to put it a little bit differently, have the negotiations with Iran over their nuclear program been affected by any other issues, such as the sudden need to backfill Russian oil supplies on the global market? Or the remarkable fact that one of our P5+1 partners has made the sudden decision to arm Ukraine? Have the negotiations been affected in any way by those developments?

CIA Director Burns: I'm not involved directly in the negotiations, Congressman, but I don't think they have. I think this has been done on the merits, about whether it makes sense from the point of US national interest to go back into the JCPOA, recognizing, as I said earlier, that we've got lots of other problems posed by this Iranian regime, quite apart from the nuclear issue, as well.

Rep. Gallagher: And given that you've been one of the leading sort of envoys for this administration, is the plan, if there is a deal in Vienna, to bring that plan to the UN Security Council for some sort of vote?

CIA Director Burns: I honestly don't know.

Rep. Gallagher: I think the concern, at least the concern I've heard from a lot of my constituents, is that the President has gone out and made an explicit promise — one that I agree with, by the way — to turn Vladimir Putin into an international pariah. But at the same time, we have the State Department, who's not represented here today, saying we're going to continue to cooperate with Russia on the P5+1 negotiations over Iran's nuclear program. Well, those two things don't necessarily add up. Now, I get diplomacy is complex. You've literally written the book on it. And you know, we have to manage multiple crises. But it seems obvious to me that the Russians are at least trying, in a public narrative, if nothing else, to connect the two issues, though you have just said that they remain unconnected.

CIA Director Burns: Now, what I said, Congressman, is from the point of view, as I understand it, of our approach to the negotiations, they're not connected. We're doing this on the merits with regard to the Iranian nuclear issue. How the Russians try to play that question of leverage that you mentioned is a genuine concern. We have to pay careful attention to that.