IRAN WAR

Trump says he's not thinking about Americans' finances 'even a little bit' in Iran talks

Trump said the "only thing" that matters is Iran "can't have a nuclear weapon."

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By Allan Smith

President Donald Trump told reporters on Tuesday that he is not weighing the economic burden of the Iran war on everyday Americans when negotiating a deal with the country's leadership.

Speaking on the White House South Lawn before departing for a diplomatic trip to China, Trump was asked to what extent "Americans' financial situations" were motivating him to make a deal with Iran.

"Not even a little bit," Trump replied. "The only thing that matters when I'm talking about Iran – they can't have a nuclear weapon. I don't think about Americans' financial situation. I don't think about anybody. I think about one thing – we cannot let Iran have a nuclear weapon. That's all."

A reporter followed up on whether he really wasn't thinking about the economic impact of the war.

"The most important thing by far – including whether our stock market, which, by the way, is at an all-time high – but including whether our stock market goes up or down a little bit, the most important thing by far is Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon," he said, adding, "Every American understands."

Since the U.S. and Israel launched joint strikes on Iran in late February, Iran has blocked access to the Strait of Hormuz, a waterway through which about 20% of the world's oil supply typically transits every day.

As a result, gas prices in the U.S. have spiked. The national average price of regular unleaded gas stood at $4.50 per gallon on Tuesday, while diesel fuel was $5.64 per gallon, according to a AAA tracker.

Rising fuel costs have rippled across the U.S. economy, with April inflation surging to 3.8%, its highest level in nearly three years, according to data released Tuesday by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Increased energy costs, the agency said, are "accounting for over forty percent of the monthly all items increase."

Democrats quickly jumped on Trump's remarks. Leah Leszczynski, spokesperson for the Democratic Party in Michigan, a battleground state, said that while Americans were struggling to pay for necessities, Trump "is saying the quiet part out loud – and it's equivalent to 'let them eat cake.'"

Job growth did outpace expectations last month, according to the agency's April jobs report released last week, while U.S. stock indexes have hit record highs during the war.

But Americans overwhelmingly have expressed discontent with the economy under Trump. A CNN/SSRS survey conducted between April 30 and May 4 found that 70% of Americans disapproved of Trump's handling of the economy. That's the highest number the pollster has

recorded throughout Trump's two terms in office. During his first term, that number never broke 50%.

Additionally, an NBC News Decision Desk Poll released last month found that two-thirds of respondents disapproved of Trump's handling of inflation, as well as his handling of the Iran conflict.

Trump on Sunday rejected Iran's latest offer to end the conflict, calling it "unacceptable." He added on Monday that an ongoing ceasefire was "on life support."



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Tara Prindiville and Henry J. Gomez contributed.