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## Iran Vows to Halt U.S.-Backed Caucasus Corridor, Citing Security Threats

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On August 9, 2025, a senior advisor to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei declared that Iran will block a proposed U.S.-backed corridor in the South Caucasus, regardless of Russia's involvement, according to Tasnim News Agency. Ali Akbar Velayati, the advisor, warned that the corridor, intended to link Azerbaijan to its Nakhichevan exclave, threatens regional stability and could become a “graveyard for U.S. mercenaries,” signaling Iran's firm opposition to foreign influence near its borders.

The proposed corridor dubbed the “Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity,” is part of a peace deal signed on August 8, 2025, at the White House between Azerbaijan and Armenia, with U.S. President Donald Trump facilitating. The route, also known as the Zangezur Corridor, would pass near Iran’s border, raising concerns in Tehran about losing access to Armenia and the broader Caucasus region. Velayati, speaking to Tasnim News Agency, called the corridor an “impossible notion” that endangers South Caucasus security. “The Caucasus is not real estate for Trump to lease,” he stated, emphasizing Iran’s determination to protect its strategic interests.

Iran’s opposition stems from fears that the corridor, in which the United States would hold development rights, could isolate Iran geopolitically and economically by severing its overland route to Europe via Armenia. Velayati highlighted Iran’s past actions, noting that the Islamic Republic conducted military exercises in northwestern Iran to demonstrate its readiness to counter such plans. “We have the right to defend our interests in a completely powerful manner,” he said, underscoring Iran’s resolve to prevent foreign intervention in the region.

The peace deal, signed by Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev and Armenia’s Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, aims to resolve decades-long tensions over border disputes and ethnic enclaves, including the Karabakh region, which Azerbaijan recaptured in 2023. However, Iran’s Foreign Ministry, while welcoming the agreement’s text, expressed concern about foreign involvement near its borders, stating that such actions could “disrupt the security and lasting stability of the region.” Velayati echoed this sentiment, framing the corridor as a U.S. and Israeli scheme to undermine Iran’s national security and weaken its regional influence.

A White House official, speaking anonymously due to the sensitivity of the issue, described Armenia as a significant strategic partner for the U.S., suggesting that the deal disadvantages China, Russia, and Iran. Velayati, however, dismissed the corridor’s stated purpose of facilitating trade and energy transfers, arguing that it serves as a “political conspiracy” to allow the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to encroach on Iran’s northern borders. He cited joint Iran-Russia military exercises in the Caspian Sea as evidence of their shared opposition to external interference.

The controversy surrounding the Zangezur Corridor highlights the complex geopolitical dynamics in the South Caucasus, where historical rivalries and modern ambitions collide. Iran’s firm stance, backed by its military posturing and diplomatic rhetoric, signals potential

challenges for the U.S.-brokered peace deal. As tensions rise, the international community watches closely, aware that Iran's actions could shape the region's stability and the success of the newly signed agreement.