

Kremlin Blasts Bolton: Moscow warns US politician on the issue of Israeli aerial strikes against Iran

By [Global Research](#)

Global Research, August 18, 2010

Voice of Russia 18 August 2010

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Israel has 'eight days' to launch a military strike against Iran's Bushehr nuclear facility and stop Tehran from acquiring a functioning atomic plant, a former US Assistant Secretary of State has said. In an interview with Fox News on Tuesday, John Bolton explained that Iran is to bring online its first nuclear power reactor, built with Russia's help, on August 21, when a shipment of nuclear fuel will be loaded into the plant's core.

When asked whether he expected Israel to actually launch strikes against Iran within the next eight days, Bolton was skeptical. The controversial former envoy to the United Nations criticized Russia's role in the development of the plant, saying that 'the Russians are, as they often do, playing both sides against the middle.'

After August 21, it will be too late for Israel to launch a military strike against the facility because any attack would spread radiation, Bolton said in what analysts said is little more than a stern warning for Tel Aviv not to drag its feet over the matter. Significantly, State Department spokesman Mark Toner declined to comment on Bolton's statement on Wednesday.

Briefing reporters in Washington earlier in the day, Toner rejected allegations that Russia's efforts to build the Bushehr nuclear power plant (NPP) will add substantially to Iran's nuclear-enrichment program. Moscow has repeatedly pointed to a peaceful nature of the Bushehr project, which is being implemented under the aegis of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

For his part, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that the Bushehr NPP would contribute considerably to Tehran complying with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. One can only hope that US hardliners, not least John Bolton, will refrain from making the Cold War-style statements in the future, all the more so that such saber-rattling may well fuel fresh tensions in the Middle East and beyond.

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