

## The Noose is Tightened Around Iran

"Israel could strike Iran this spring", US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta stated in an interview

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However, these statements are at odds with the growing US and NATO presence in the Persian Gulf. Their troops and military hardware have already been moved to bases in Oman, Kuwait, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and the island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

The campaign could also affect innocent bystanders like China, which is the biggest consumer of Iranian oil. Thus, Beijing is actively calling for a resumption of a dialogue on Iran's nuclear program. Russia also strongly opposes violence.

Israel could strike Iran this spring, US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta stated in an interview with The Washington Post. According to the official, the Israeli government seems to have already made a decision on this.

Panetta believes that Israel can strike Iran after the latter crosses into the so-called "zone of immunity" and starts building a nuclear bomb.

Earlier, Israel's Defense Minister Ehud Barak stated that his country would consider launching a military operation if the sanctions fail to stop Iran from pursuing its nuclear program.

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Recently, a senior US official stated that Washington and Tel Aviv shared the same stance on the Iranian threat. The US could justify its potential campaign against Iran by claiming that Tehran's nuclear capacity is obviously on the increase.

In this case, the US and Israel would be the only ones to assess Iran's nuclear potential while at the same time preparing their troops for a special operation.

The notorious IAEA report has shown that the US and Israel don't need to show any proof of the existence of nuclear weapons in Iran. Mere suspicions would be enough to claim that

Iran poses a danger for the whole world.

An Israeli strike on Iran would do more harm than good, believes political analyst Georgy Mirsky:

“This is unlikely to happen this year. Israel realizes that its strike wouldn’t guarantee a destruction of Iran’s nuclear facilities. Even if it strikes Iran on its own, the Islamic world will be certain that the US was behind it. This will drastically change the situation in Afghanistan and shatter Obama’s plans to improve ties with the Muslim world.”

Such statements are aimed at undermining Tehran’s regime, believes expert in Oriental studies Sergey Demidenko:

“This is a long-term strategy. Neither the US nor Israel is placing stakes on a military scenario. Israel is incapable of even halting the Iranian nuclear program as one needs vast military and financial resources to do this. Iran in its turn is so far incapable of producing nuclear weapons or even nuclear fuel.”

However, Tehran perceives this threat as a real one. Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has warned the West against attacking the country and stated that Iran “would harm America ten times more than Iran.” He also pledged to support Israel’s foes, thus this campaign could hit Israel and spread tension to the entire region.

The campaign could also affect innocent bystanders like China, which is the biggest consumer of Iranian oil. Thus, Beijing is actively calling for a resumption of a dialogue on Iran’s nuclear program. Russia also strongly opposes violence. Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is planning to discuss the issue with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at the 48th Munich Security Conference scheduled for February 4.

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