

US to abandon Israel over Iran?

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As Israeli threats of war against Iran encounter stiff opposition in the US, the new administration mulls over imposing sanctions on Tel Aviv.

US President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton are mulling over a plan to impose sanctions against Israel if the right-wing government of Benjamin Netanyahu implements its long-sought policy of countering Iran's nuclear activities by taking military action against the country.

According to a report by RIA Novosti, the Obama White House is on a collision course with longstanding Israeli plans to launch a military strike on Iranian nuclear infrastructure.

Washington favors diplomatic measures — at least for as long as the Obama administration believes there is room for the pursuit of its plans to engage Iran “diplomatically” over its nuclear case.

President Obama has been making efforts to put his belief into practice that America should talk to its adversaries such as Iran, Syria, North Korea and Venezuela.

However, since hawkish Prime Minister Netanyahu took office Israel has been buzzing with rumors of a possible military strike on Iran's nuclear sites if the United States fails to achieve progress in talks with Iran.

Earlier on Wednesday Israel's Home Front Command announced plans to mobilize the Israeli army as well as the public to hold the largest military exercise in its history on June 2.

The head of Israel's Department for Population at the Home Front Command Colonel Hilik Sofer said by holding the weeklong military exercise Israel seeks to “transform the population from a passive to an active one... We want the citizens to understand that war can happen tomorrow morning.”

Earlier in March, hawkish Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu raised the alarm about a major military conflict in the upcoming months.

According to Debka, which is believed to be closely connected with the Israeli spy agency Mossad, “His main consideration is that Israel expects to be embroiled in a major military confrontation in the next few months with Iran, Hamas or Hezbollah — or all three at once.”

Netanyahu's explicit threats of war on Iran as part of his top priority policy of “stopping Iran's nuclear program and what he sees as its ambition to dominate the region” comes in a stark contrast with the approach of Israel's most powerful ally — the United States.

In an attempt to convince Israel about the new US policy vis-à-vis Iran, Secretary of State described the Bush administration's failed eight-year attempts for the total isolation of Iran as a failure earlier in the week.

"The Bush policy did not deter Iran one bit in its ambitions to acquire nuclear weapons and to support terror organizations like Hezbollah and Hamas," Clinton said.

The new US move to take a stand against Israeli war threats on Iran comes after US Vice President Joe Biden warned Israel against any such military action, saying the Netanyahu government would be "ill advised" to try to strike Iran's nuclear facilities. US Defense Secretary Robert Gates, for his part, warned that any Israeli attack on Iran would have dangerous consequences.

An attack on Iran would "cement their determination to have a nuclear program, and also build into the whole country an undying hatred of whoever hits them," Gates cautioned.

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