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Politics

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Russian general says U.S. continues preparations for military action against Iran

MOSCOW. April 8 (Interfax-AVN) - The release of the 15 British sailors and marines captured by Iran has robbed the U.S. of a pretext to attack Iran, but the U.S. has not given up plans to attack Iran militarily, said Col. Gen. Leonid Ivashov, president of the Academy for Geopolitical Problems, a Russian think tank.

"Preparations to strike Iran's strategic facilities continue. Three major groups of U.S. forces are still in the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf. Altogether, they have up to 450 cruise missiles on alert," the general told Interfax-AVN.

"Military operations against Tehran will begin with the launch of at least two unexpected strikes using Tomahawk cruise missiles and air power in order to disable Iran's air defense capabilities," he said.

"According to our data, up to 150 aircraft are to be involved in each strike on Iran. Land-based air defense systems will be disabled in the first place, then mobile short-range systems, which Tehran has (including some 30 new systems)," he said.

Primary targets will include command centers, air defense installations, the navy, airfields, ports and docking facilities, the general said.

"Nuclear facilities may be secondary targets. According to expert assessments, at least 20 such facilities need to be destroyed in order to stop Iran's nuclear program," Ivashov said.

Ivashov did not rule out that nuclear weapons may be used against Iran.

"Combat nuclear weapons may be used for bombing. This will result in radioactive contamination of the Iranian territory, which could possibly spread to neighboring countries," he said.

"If Iran strikes back at Israel with missiles, Tel-Aviv is likely to use nuclear weapons on Iran," Ivashov said, adding that such a "development of the situation would undermine stability not only in the Middle East, but also in the entire world." ar md

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