

Obama orders Gates to update plan for Iran strike

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American defense secretary tells NBC television president has instructed him to refresh plans for military action against Tehran prepared during Bush era. 'Presidents always ask their military to have a range of contingency plans available to them,' he says



WASHINGTON – Technical or offensive move? US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said Friday that President Barack Obama had asked him to update the plans for the use of military force against Iran which were prepared during former President George W. Bush's term.

In an interview to NBC television's Today show, the American defense secretary explained that "presidents always ask their military to have a range of contingency plans available to them. And all I would say is that, as a result of our dialogue with the president, we have refreshed our plans and all options are on the table."

It should be noted that Gates himself has opposed a strike in Iran since his days in the Bush administration and continues to firmly object to military action against the Islamic republic under the Obama administration as well. Admiral Mike Mullen, the chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, also opposes such a move.

Mullen told the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Thursday that the consequences of Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon would be "calamitous" and major powers must act together to prevent it.

"It then, in my view, generates neighbors who feel exposed, deficient and then develop or buy the capability themselves," he said, suggesting Iran's acquisition of a nuclear weapon likely would trigger a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. "The downside, potentially, is absolutely disastrous."

But he did not suggest the United States should take military action to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. He echoed the Obama administration's policy that big powers should work together to persuade Iran not to pursue a nuclear bomb and halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons generally.

"Major leaders, internationally, have got to come together to arrest this growth or the long-term downside for the people in the world is really, really tragic and drastic," he said.

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