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US Worries About Impending Preemptive Israeli Strike on Iran

By [John Glaser](#)

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U.S. defense leaders are increasingly concerned that Israel will take military action against Iran despite U.S. objections and are beefing up U.S. facilities in the region in case of a regional conflict, [according to the Wall Street Journal](#).

President Barack Obama, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and other top officials have privately sought assurances from Israeli leaders in recent weeks that they will not unilaterally attack Iran, but the Israeli response has so far been evasive, U.S. officials said.

The U.S. believes its military bases and personnel in neighboring Iraq, for example, would be vulnerable if war did break out and so is keeping its Embassy in Baghdad on alert. The U.S. has also sent a second aircraft carrier strike group to accompany its 15,000 troops based in Kuwait. Arms transfers to key allies in the Gulf, including the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, et al., have been sped up in recent months as a further deterrent to Iran.

The renewed concern of an aggressive Israeli strike comes after an Iranian nuclear scientist who supervised a department at the Natanz uranium enrichment facility was [killed by a bomb placed on his car by two assailants](#) in northern Tehran. The act, which has a series of similar precedents, is [widely believed](#) to be the work of U.S. or Israeli intelligence agencies, or both.

There is no evidence of an Iranian nuclear weapons program, and the [opinion of the U.S. intelligence community](#), the [Obama administration](#), and the [latest IAEA report](#) is that Iran's enrichment is so far civilian in nature. Additionally, Iran has agreed to host a delegation of

United Nations nuclear inspectors this month, following up on [continuous inspections in recent years](#).

Still, the U.S. posture has remained aggressive, even if the leadership is hesitant to start another war. Harsh U.S.-led economic sanctions that have been placed on Iran in addition to [a covert war](#) consisting of cyber-attacks, commercial sabotage, and support for rebel groups inside Iran aimed at undermining the regime.

Writing in the *Los Angeles Times*, Micah Zenko, a fellow in the Center for Preventive Action at the Council on Foreign Relations, [maintains](#) that “if Israel attempts such a high-risk and destabilizing strike against Iran, President Obama will probably learn of the operation from CNN rather than the CIA. History shows that although Washington seeks influence over Israel’s military operations, Israel would rather explain later than ask for approval in advance of launching preventive or preemptive attacks.”