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Obama: 'Absolutely' no green light for Israel to attack Iran

By JPOST.COM STAFF

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US President Barack Obama on Tuesday strongly denied that the United States had given Israel an approval to strike Iran's nuclear facilities.

Asked by CNN whether Washington had given Israel a green light for such an attack, Obama answered: "Absolutely not."

In the interview, which was broadcast from Russia, where Obama is on an official visit, he added: "We can't dictate to other countries what their security interests are."

"What is also true is, it is the policy of the United States to try to resolve the issue of Iran's nuclear capabilities," Obama said.

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This would be achieved "through diplomatic channels," he added.

On Sunday, US Vice President Joe Biden was asked on ABC's This Week whether the US would stand in the way militarily if the Israelis decided they needed to take out Iran's nuclear program.

The US "cannot dictate to another sovereign nation what they can and cannot do," he said.

"Israel can determine for itself - it's a sovereign nation - what's in their interest and what they decide to do relative to Iran and anyone else," he said.



US President Barack Obama gestures during his speech at the New Economic School in Moscow, Tuesday.
Photo: AP

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State Department spokesman Ian Kelly, however, denied that the vice president was giving Israel American approval for an attack on Iran.

"I certainly would not want to give a green light to any kind of military action," Kelly said, while at the same time reiterating Israel's right to determine its security needs as a sovereign state.

"We're not going to dictate its actions," Kelly added. "We're also committed to Israel's security. And we share Israel's deep concerns about Iran's nuclear program."

Earlier Tuesday, *The Washington Times* reported that Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and his top deputies had not formally asked for US aid or permission for a possible military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities, since they feared the White House would not approve.

The report quotes two unnamed Israeli officials.

An anonymous senior Israeli official was cited by the *Times* as saying that Netanyahu was determined that "it made no sense" to press the matter after the negative response former US president George Bush gave the Israeli prime minister's predecessor, Ehud Olmert, when he asked early last year for US assistance for possible military strikes on Iran.

"There was a decision not to press this because it was probably inadequate for the engagement policy and what we know about Obama's approach to Iran," he said.

Israel is unlikely to attack Iran without at least tacit US approval, in part because it would require cooperation from the United States. At the very least, Israel would most likely have to fly over Iraqi airspace, which is still effectively controlled by the US Air Force.

However, a *Sunday Times* report claimed that talks conducted by Mossad head Meir Dagan resulted in Saudi Arabia agreeing to let IAF jets fly over the kingdom during any future raid on Iran's nuclear facilities.

White House officials have declined to comment on the substance of discussions between US and Israeli officials on Iran.

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