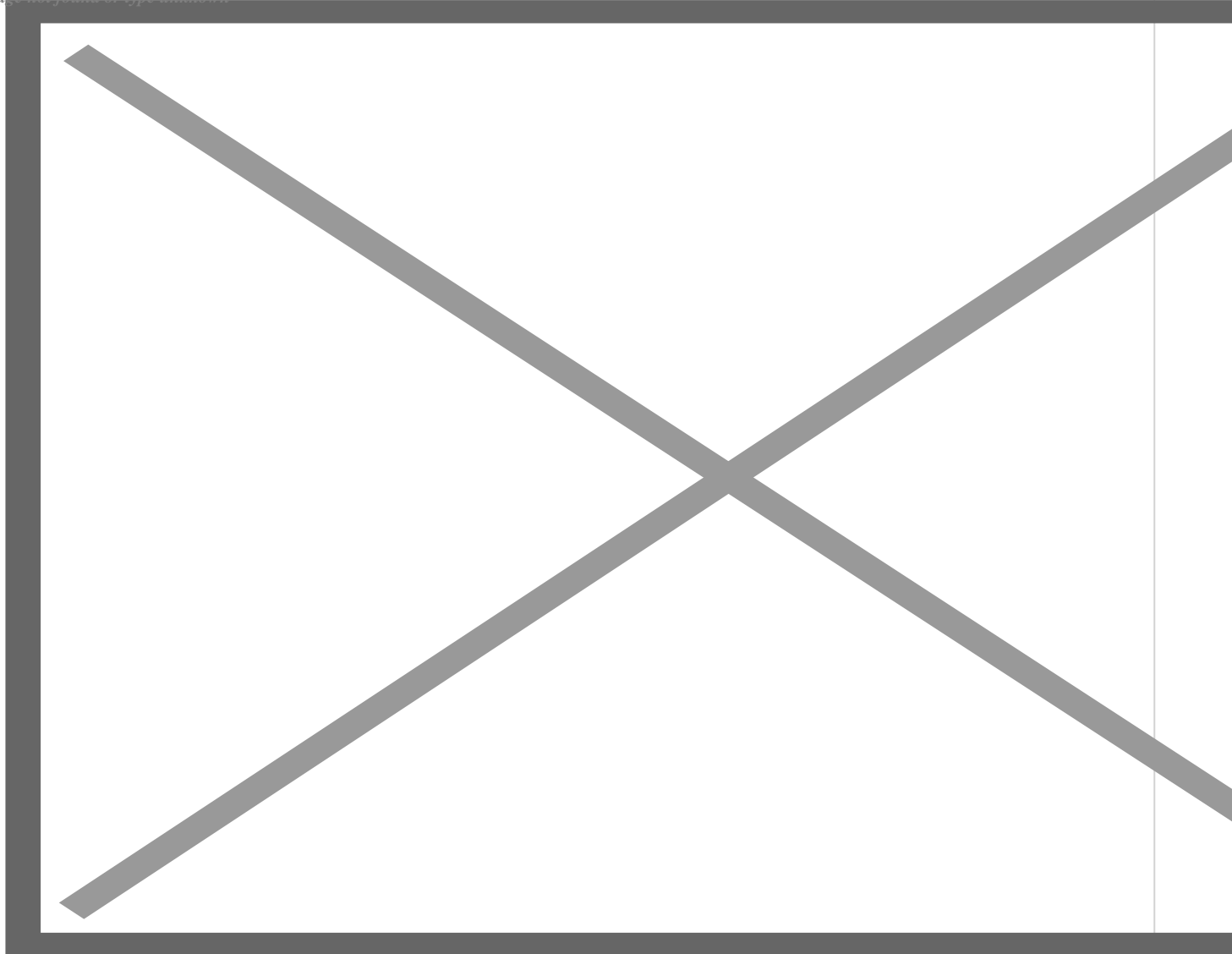


Iran dismisses Israel military action threat as 'psychological war'

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**Iranian President Hassan Rouhani chairs a meeting next to his chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi.
(Photo: Iranian Presidency handout via AFP)**

Tehran, January 28 (RHC)-- Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's chief of staff said the Biden administration is independent and will not follow all Israeli commands like the previous U.S. government, after Israel announced it is revising attack plans against Iran.

Israel's military is preparing "a number of operational plans, in addition to those already in place" in reaction to Iran boosting its nuclear programme in recent months, top general Aviv Kochavi said on Tuesday.

His comments were seen as a threat to new United States President Joe Biden, who has signalled he wants to re-enter the historic nuclear accord signed between Iran and world powers in 2015. Iran's presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi dismissed Kochavi's remarks as "psychological war" and said Israel "in action, they neither have a plan nor the ability to carry it out."

"Some officials in the Zionist regime think Washington would accept whatever they say," he told reporters on Wednesday after a cabinet meeting. "But I believe the new US administration has its own independence – just like other countries have their own independence." The official added Israel and others in the region such as Saudi Arabia are now lobbying against Iran in Washington, but "we mustn't take such things seriously."

Vaezi pointed out that Iran held several military drills using missiles, submarines and drones in January, something he referred to "as a sign that we do not want war, but are serious in defending the country."

Asked by reporters about the Israeli military chief's remarks, First Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri said: "Israel is not at a level to threaten Iran."

Biden has promised to revitalise Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers his predecessor unilaterally withdrew from in 2018, imposing harsh economic sanctions on Iran. But U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has suggested the process will be slow and the U.S. will expect Iran to act first. Iran, meanwhile, has said it will recommit to all its nuclear promises if the United States first removes sanctions.

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Rouhani noted on Wednesday it was the US that withdrew from the deal in 2018, not Iran. "The [U.S.] owes us, not the other way around," he said. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who had a key role in devising a hawkish Iran policy under Trump, opposes a return to the nuclear deal or any kind of agreement with Iran.

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