

Pentagon Chief Says Iran Agreement Doesn't Prevent Military Option



Washington, July 20 (RHC)-- U.S. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter says the nuclear agreement between Iran and the P5+1 group of countries does not prevent Washington from using military force against Iran if it deems a military option necessary.

Carter made the remarks on Sunday on his way to Tel Aviv where he is scheduled to hold meetings with Israeli leaders on Monday and Tuesday, before leaving for Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

"One of the reasons why this deal is a good one is that it does nothing to prevent the military option," Carter told reporters on board his flight to Israel. He went on to say that the United States is "preserving and continually improving" such a military option should Iran violate the terms of the nuclear agreement.

After 18 days of intensive talks, Iran and the P5+1 group of countries - the US, Britain, France, Russia, China, and Germany – announced the conclusion of nuclear negotiations in the Austrian capital, Vienna, on July 14.

According to the text of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran will be recognized by the United Nations as a nuclear power and will continue its uranium enrichment program. But some restrictions will be placed on Iran's nuclear program in exchange for the removal of sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

On Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the nuclear agreement a resounding victory for Iran. The Islamic Republic "has just received the dream deal," Netanyahu told CBS News. "This deal paves Iran's path to a nuclear arsenal."

The United States, Israel, and some of their allies accuse Iran of pursuing military objectives in its nuclear energy program. Iran rejects the allegation, arguing that as a committed signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), it has the right to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

Carter made it clear that his visit is not to stop Tel Aviv's opposition to the nuclear agreement but rather aimed at deepening military ties between the United States and Israel. Washington and Tel Aviv have been discussing the renewal of a 10-year pact that grants Israel some \$3 billion annually in military aid from the US. The deal will expire in 2018.

The United States has reportedly increased its military aid package to Israel, which would include another squadron of F-35 fighter jets, in an attempt to comfort the regime in Tel Aviv over the historic conclusion of nuclear talks between Iran and the P5+1 countries.

The package increase would include extra funding for the development of missile defense system, as well as another squadron of America's fifth-generation aircraft, F-35 fighter jets, according to a report published by the Jerusalem Post on Thursday.

Under the current agreement between Israel and the US, which went into effect in 2009, Tel Aviv receives about \$3 billion a year, most of which is used to buy American military hardware, such as jets and components for missile defense.

Israel, however, requested between \$4.2 billion and \$4.5 billion a year for the next 10 years, the New York Times reported on Thursday. The new agreement would last for a decade after going into effect in 2018.

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