

Donald Trump says he "hopes" U.S. does not go to war with Iran



Washington, May 17 (RHC)-- U.S. President Donald Trump has said he hopes the United States does not go to war with Iran, amid escalating tensions between Washington and Tehran over the Trump administration's hegemonic policy towards the Islamic Republic.

"I hope not," Trump said on Thursday at the White House when asked about the prospects of a military confrontation with Tehran before his meeting with Swiss President Ueli Maurer, whose country serves as the Protecting Power of the U.S. in Iran since May 21, 1980.

The president's terse response comes amid reports that he is angry at his National Security Advisor John Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and other hawks in his administration who are pushing the United States into a military confrontation with Iran.

Last week, Trump grew angry and about what he sees as warlike planning that is getting ahead of his own thinking, according to a senior administration official with knowledge of conversations Trump had regarding Bolton and Pompeo.

The New York Times reported on Monday that Acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan put forward a plan which he had updated on Bolton's orders. During a meeting of top national security officials, Shanahan envisioned deploying some 120,000 American troops to the Middle East region "should Iran attack American forces or accelerate work on nuclear weapons."

Donald Trump, when asked about the figure of U.S. troops said no, he would actually send more. He further rejected the New York Times report as fake news.

Lawmakers from both parties are growing more concerned about heightened tensions between Iran and the United States, urging Trump to keep them updated about his next step. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said she wanted the entire Congress to be briefed by next week about what the Trump administration calls military threats from Iran.

"We're hoping that for sure that before the break we will have a classified briefing on the Middle East, on Iran before the full House of Representatives," Pelosi said at a press conference on Capitol Hill on Thursday. "The responsibility in the Constitution is for Congress to declare war," she said. "So I hope that the president's advisers recognize that they have no authorization to go forward in any way."

Pompeo left the door slightly ajar for military action when about the issue after a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in the Black Sea resort of Sochi on Tuesday. "We fundamentally do not seek a war with Iran," he said. "We have also made clear to the Iranians that if American interests are attacked, we will most certainly respond in an appropriate fashion... We are looking for Iran to behave like a normal country."

The U.S. secretary of state has recently suggested that Trump had the power to wage war under the Authorization to Use Military Force legislation. Key lawmakers, both in the Democratic and Republican parties insist that the president does not have such powers, which must be authorized by the U.S. Congress.

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