

# US and Israel in “lockstep” against Iran

Peter Symonds  
8 February 2012

The danger of a US/Israeli attack on Iran was made clear in comments by US President Barack Obama to NBC News on Sunday. Obama not only repeated the mantra that “all options are on the table,” but added that the US was working with Israel “in lockstep as we proceed to try to solve this, hopefully diplomatically.”

Publicly, the Obama administration insists that it is seeking a “diplomatic solution” by imposing crippling oil sanctions on Iran, designed to force it to the negotiating table on US terms. At the same time, however, the White House is coordinating closely with Israel as it prepares military strikes on Iran’s nuclear facilities.

The *Washington Post* reported last week that US Defence Secretary Leon Panetta believed there was a “strong likelihood” that Israel would strike Iran in April, May or June. While he did not confirm the statement, Panetta did not repudiate it.

Obama downplayed the likelihood of a pre-emptive Israeli attack on Iran, declaring: “I don’t think Israel has made a decision on what they need to do.” However, he also declared: “I’ve been very clear: we’re going to do everything we can to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.”

Asked if Israel would consult Washington, Obama provided no direct answer, but emphasised that the US and Israel “have closer military and intelligence consultation... than we’ve ever had.” Significantly, the US president did not oppose what would be an act of war by Israel. Nor did he suggest that the US would use its considerable influence over Israel to veto such action.

While tactical differences might exist over the timing

of an attack, Obama’s declaration that the US is “in lockstep” with Israel is a commitment to march together down the road to war against Iran.

There is open discussion in Israeli ruling circles about such a war. Behind the scenes, extensive military preparations have been made. At a policy conference in Israel last week, Vice Prime Minister Moshe Yaalon declared that Israel was confident that “any facility in Iran can be hit, and I speak from experience as the [former Israel Defence Forces] chief of staff.”

Washington dismisses suggestions of a US military build-up against Iran, but the Pentagon recently doubled the number of aircraft carrier battle groups near the Persian Gulf. The *Navy Times* last weekend reported that the aircraft carrier USS Enterprise and other warships drilled off Florida last month with a scenario obviously based around the vital Strait of Hormuz. The USS Enterprise is due to depart for the Persian Gulf.

US allies are likewise ratcheting up the tensions with Iran and backing Israel. In an interview published in the *Politique Internationale* on Sunday, French President Nicholas Sarkozy noted that “some in Israel are considering” military strikes on Iran. Justifying such an attack, he said: “If Iran continues its senseless race to get the bomb and continues to threaten its neighbours, we are facing the risk of a military intervention.”

In fact, the sole country in the Middle East that has nuclear weapons and a long record of aggression against its neighbours is Israel. Not only has Iran repeatedly denied any intention of building an atomic bomb, but Panetta, among others, has acknowledged that Iran has made no decision to do so. All Iran’s nuclear facilities, including its uranium enrichment

plants, are monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to ensure weapons-grade uranium is not produced.

The US announced on Monday that Obama had signed an executive order for new sanctions on Iran, including a freeze on all property owned in the US by the Iranian government, the Central Bank of Iran and Iranian financial institutions. A US Treasury Department statement declared that “Iran now faces an unprecedented level of pressure” and would “face ever-increasing economic and diplomatic pressure” until it addressed international concerns about its nuclear programs.

Obama signed measures into law on December 31 to penalise foreign corporations and banks doing business with the Central Bank of Iran. The aim of the legislation, which will become fully operational by mid-year, is to cut off Iran’s ability to export oil, on which its economy is heavily dependent. The US laws dovetail with a European Union embargo on oil imports from Iran that will come into force at the same time.

Already, economic sanctions have hit the Iranian economy hard. The market rate for the Iranian currency, the rial, has gone from about 12,500 to the US dollar in December to around 18,000—effectively a 44 percent devaluation. The collapse of the currency has contributed to high inflation and price rises for range of essential imported goods, including medicines.

While the US and its allies insist that Iran must satisfy “international concerns” about its nuclear programs, the demands for “clarification” are endless. IAEA inspectors visited Iran on January 29-31 and are due to return for further discussions later this month. No report has been released, but the US and international media nevertheless accused Tehran of “obfuscation” and “time wasting.”

The reality is that nothing short of complete capitulation to all Washington’s demands—not only on the nuclear issue, but its relations with the Syrian government and groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas, as well as its alleged “interference” in Iraq and Afghanistan—would end the US build-up to war. In

short, Washington is pressing for a regime in Tehran that bows to American economic and strategic interests in the Middle East and Central Asia on every significant issue.

For all the talk about “diplomacy” and “sanctions,” the US is recklessly setting course for a war with Iran that threatens to engulf the Middle East and spread internationally.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**