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Trump says he will hold off on fresh Iran strikes for now

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TRANSCRIPT

Summary | Companies

- Qatar's Sheikh Mohammed visits Washington after Tehran visit last week
- Rubio says diplomatic breakthrough is not imminent and rejects Iran's truce terms as unrealistic
- Iran plan pushes nuclear talks back to later stage

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WASHINGTON/CAIRO/ABU DHABI, Nov 9 (Reuters) - US President Donald Trump said on Monday he plans to hold off on new military strikes against Iran for the time being after appeals from countries in the region, including from Qatar's prime minister in White House talks.

Trump, in a Reuters interview and a later appearance in the White House press briefing room, said he plans to keep up a naval blockade in the Strait of Hormuz for now.

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"The United States of America is fully locked and loaded with the best equipment ever made, and we don't think there's going to be any reason to use it," Trump told reporters.

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He said he was acting "at the behest of countries that are their neighbors" and specifically cited Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait and others that prefer the US not launch new attacks.

Trump spoke after meeting with Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, a key intermediary with Tehran, as efforts to end the war ramp up following last week's US midterm election.

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More than eight months into the conflict he launched alongside Israel on February 28, Trump has played down the likelihood of major warfare restarting soon but remains unwilling to accept an existing Iranian truce plan. Senior US and Gulf officials have cast doubt on the chances of an imminent deal.

Mutual attacks continue, with the US striking Iran's Qeshm island overnight, according to Iranian state media, and Iran attacking tankers in the Gulf and Strait of Hormuz this month while its Yemeni Houthi allies have hit Saudi Arabia.

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DIPLOMATIC MOVES

Al-Thani, who is both prime minister and foreign minister of Qatar, met Trump after visiting Tehran last week.

The prime minister called his talks with both Trump and Vice President JD Vance positive.

"Grateful for the positive discussions on reaching a deal and bringing peace to the region," he said on X.

Iranian security council chief Mohsen Rezaei said on X the US should "stop manufacturing fake news about imaginary talks" and that it was "time to surrender to the seven conditions Iran has repeatedly set out."

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Iran's proposal to end the war involves an end to the US blockade of its ports, the lifting of some sanctions and a halt to bombing in return for Tehran stopping its own blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, with talks on its nuclear programme and other sanctions to follow.

[1/3] US President Donald Trump speaks to the media before boarding Air Force One en route to Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, at President Donald J. Trump International Airport in West Palm Beach, Florida,... Purchase Licensing Rights **Read more**

The US has repeatedly rejected that plan, with Secretary of State Marco Rubio describing Tehran's conditions on Sunday as "outrageous and ridiculous and really not realistic."

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baghaei defended the plan on Monday as the most reasonable offer on the table.

Senior US Republicans including Vice President JD Vance have blamed their party's losses in last week's elections on the Iran war. Despite the growing domestic political pressure to end the conflict, Rubio said he did not believe a diplomatic breakthrough was imminent.

A senior United Arab Emirates official, Anwar Gargash, echoed that view on Monday, saying a comprehensive political settlement between the US and Iran appeared difficult.

"We should... prepare for a long period of uncertainty in which neither a decisive resolution nor stable regional order can be taken for granted," he said.

Vance, who led the negotiations for a short-lived truce in June, will also meet Al-Thani, whose country has been a prime mediator since early in the war, conveying messages between the sides and proposing ways to bridge their differences.

Anxiety over the war has pervaded the region for months, and Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said on Monday he had told Trump that Ankara did not want to see a new escalation.

"We emphasise at every opportunity that it is possible to resolve these issues through dialogue and diplomacy. Unfortunately, we see a negative shift once again. We are doing our utmost to prevent this," Erdogan told reporters.

MILITARY ACTION

Sunday night's strikes on Qeshm island did not impact vital infrastructure or services, a provincial official told Iran's semi-official Fars news agency on Monday. The US has not commented on the Iranian media reports.

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A senior Iranian source told Reuters that US strikes were targeting Iranian radar systems serving both air defence and ship navigation, as well as bases for missile launchers and mine-laying systems.

Attacks on tankers in the Gulf and Strait of Hormuz ramped up sharply in October and have continued at the highest rate since the start of the war, figures from international maritime agencies showed last week.

Iran, which typically does not acknowledge striking vessels that report being hit by projectiles, said on Sunday a tanker had hit a mine east of the Strait of Hormuz.

A state television reporter said on Monday that 11 tankers had been "disabled" over the past 10 days.

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Alexander has over a decade of international reporting experience. He is currently a senior correspondent in Jerusalem covering Israel & the Palestinian Territories and was formerly in Dubai where he covered the Arabian Peninsula, including the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, often writing about foreign policy, security and economic-related issues.

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