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Trump says he is highly unlikely to order Iran strikes if talks progress

By **Reuters**

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[1/2] Smoke rises from the stern of a St. Kitts-flagged cargo vessel following what US Central Command says was a strike on Saturday to disable the vessel, which was trying to break the US blockade of... Purchase Licensing Rights **Read more**

Summary Companies

CNN does not specify what question Trump's comments were responding to

Blasts linked to Iran's military activity, Tehran media say

US says it disabled ship seeking to break blockade of Iran

Iran says two ships hit mines in Hormuz and a third catches fire

WASHINGTON/CAIRO, Nov 8 (Reuters) - US President Donald Trump said on Sunday he was highly unlikely to order fresh attacks on Iran as long as talks to end the conflict progress, even as both countries reported that shipping had been hit in or near the Strait of Hormuz.

"It depends on whether or not they sign a very strong agreement," Trump told CNN in a phone interview. "The answer is, highly unlikely it's going to be necessary."

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CNN did not specify exactly what it had asked Trump, who also said that if strikes resume, the US has identified potential infrastructure targets, including 38 bridges "that we can knock down in literally one hour."

Later on Sunday afternoon, Trump posted on Truth Social that "Task Force Iron Gate is in full force and effect" on Iran. The campaign, first reported by Reuters on Saturday, will crack down on Tehran's movement of advanced weapons and other sanctioned material over its land borders and through the Caspian Sea.

Trump acknowledged after the last week's US midterm elections that the Iran war was a part of the reason for Republicans' defeat, while Vice President JD Vance, seen as a potential successor to Trump when his term ends in two years, went a step further, saying definitively in a social media post, "The reason we lost is the war."

Trump told reporters on Sunday that "a lot of people did not like Vance's comments on Iran."

Secretary of State Marco Rubio, widely considered another contender to succeed Trump, declined to comment on Sunday on a link between the war and the elections.

"All I can tell you is that the president of the United States identified a very real threat to this country that existed for a very long period of time, and he addressed it," Rubio told reporters.

Asked separately about diplomatic efforts to end the war, Rubio said he did not believe a breakthrough was imminent.

"The president would always prefer to solve this and every problem diplomatically. Sometimes that's not possible, unfortunately. But if there's a chance to do it. We'll explore it. Right now, it hasn't been very productive because the Iranian demands are simply not just unacceptable, but in some cases outrageous and ridiculous and really not realistic," Rubio said.

Trump had been hinting that he would renew major attacks on Iran once the elections were over, but there has been no sign of a large-scale US military operation. Iran has said it would respond by striking US and Israeli targets.

Iranian media suggested that explosions in southern Iran on Saturday were related to Iranian military activities rather than US strikes.

Iran's state television said officials had not confirmed any missile strikes on Iranian territory following blasts heard in several areas, including on Qeshm Island in the strait.

Both the US and Iran have continued strikes on vessels in the Strait of Hormuz, restricting exports of energy and other commodities vital to the world economy.

Iran's state television said the evening explosions might be related to Iranian military activity in the waterway, where Iran said two vessels had hit mines and a third had caught fire.

The US said its air force had disabled a vessel in the Gulf of Oman beyond the strait.

Tasnim news agency said two missiles had struck Qeshm Island, with no official information on possible damage. Neither Iran nor the US has commented on that report. Washington said on November 2 that it had struck the island in a limited defensive measure against Iranians using surface-to-air missiles against US assets.

COMMERCIAL VESSEL, OIL TANKERS HIT

Since the US and Israel began attacks on Iran in February, Tehran has sought the upper hand by hitting vessels in the Strait of Hormuz to block Gulf energy exports, while US forces began blockading movements to and from Iranian ports in April.

The US military said on Saturday evening that its air force had fired at the stern of a commercial vessel in the Gulf of Oman, disabling it as it tried to get through the blockade.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards Navy said two oil tankers had caught fire after hitting mines while attempting to pass through an "unauthorized route" in the Strait of Hormuz. A third tanker had also suffered an explosion and caught fire, the semi-official Fars news agency reported later.

Reuters was not able to confirm any of the reported strikes.

Monitors from the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations said a bulk carrier and military forces were involved in an incident in the Gulf of Oman, approximately 18 nautical miles east of the United Arab Emirates' city of Khor Fakkan, with damage unknown. It was unclear if it was related to the reported US attack.

A conflict between Iran-aligned Houthis in Yemen and Saudi Arabia has escalated this month, enlarging the wider Middle East war.

On Sunday, Saudi Arabia's energy ministry said an administrative building belonging to state oil company Saudi Aramco in Riyadh had been damaged by falling debris after an attempted attack, with no injuries or fatalities reported.

Qatar, which has been mediating in talks to try to end a conflict that has shaken the world economy, on Saturday denied reports that the US and Iran had failed to reach a deal.

The Qatari prime minister had affirmed that both sides were continuing to work toward an agreement, it said.

Iran has submitted a nuclear proposal to Washington through Qatar, a senior Iranian official told Reuters on Thursday, saying the US was reviewing it but discussions would depend on Washington first meeting Tehran's seven demands.

These include sanctions relief, access to frozen assets and war reparations, while Washington says nuclear issues must feature in initial talks.

Reporting by David Ljunggren, Daphne Psaledakis, Simon Lewis, Menna Alaa El-Din and Enas Alashray; Writing by Philippa Fletcher and Michelle Conlin; Editing by Andrew Cawthorne, Sergio Non, Bill Berkrot, Michelle Nichols and Edmund Klamann

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