

## BREAKING: Real Danger of US Military Strike on Iran and Syria: Russian Security Council

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MOSCOW: Russian Security Council secretary Nikolai Patrushev warned that military escalation is likely in Iran, with "real danger" of a US strike, in an interview published Thursday.

He added that Syria, which has refused to break its ties with Tehran, could also be a target for Western intervention.

"There is a likelihood of military escalation of the conflict, and Israel is pushing the Americans towards it," Patrushev said in an interview published on the website of the daily Kommersant.

"There is a real danger of a US military strike on Iran," the senior Russian security official said.

"At present, the US sees Iran as its main problem. They are trying to turn Tehran from an enemy into a supportive partner, and to achieve this, to change the current regime by whatever means," he added.

"They use both economic embargo and massive help to the opposition forces."

Patrushev said that "for years we have been hearing practically next week that the Iranians are going to create an atomic bomb, (but) still nobody has proved the existence of a military component of Iran's nuclear programme."

Iran said Wednesday it had firm evidence that "foreign quarters" were behind the killings of Iranian nuclear experts and demanded UN Security Council condemnation of the deaths.

Patrushev said the current tension over Syria was linked to the Iran issue.

"They want to punish Damascus not so much for the repression of the opposition, but rather for its refusal to break off relations with Tehran," he insisted. "There is information that NATO members and some Arab states of the Persian Gulf, acting in line with the scenario seen in Libya, intend to turn the current interference with Syrian affairs into a direct military intervention."

In this instance, the Russian official said, "the main strike forces will be supplied not by France, Britain and Italy, but possibly by neighbouring Turkey."

Washington and Ankara may already be working on plans for a no-fly zone to enable armed Syrian rebel units to build up, he said.

The United States said Wednesday it would reduce the number of staff at its embassy in Damascus...

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