

# Obama's Secret Letter to Tehran: Is the War against Iran On Hold? "The Road to Tehran Goes through Damascus"

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*The New York Times* announced that the Obama Administration had sent an important letter to the leadership of Iran on January 12, 2012. [1]

On January 15, 2012, the spokesperson of the Iranian Foreign Ministry acknowledged that the letter had been delivered to Tehran by way of three diplomatic channels:

- (1) one copy of the letter was handed to the Iranian Ambassador to the United Nations, Mohammed Khazaee, by his U.S. counterpart, Susan Rice, in New York City;
- (2) a second copy of the letter was delivered in Tehran by the Swiss Ambassador to Iran, Livia Leu Agosti; and
- (3) a third copy went to Iran by way of Jalal Talabani of Iraq. [2]

In the letter, the White House spelled out the position of the United States, while Iranian officials said it was a sign of things as they really are: the U.S. cannot afford to wage a war against Iran.

Within the letter written by President Barak Hussein Obama was a U.S. request for the start of negotiations between Washington and Tehran to end Iranian-U.S. hostilities.

"In the letter, Obama announced readiness for negotiations and the resolution of mutual disagreements," Ali Motahari, an Iranian parliamentarian, told the *Mehr News Agency*. [3] According to another Iranian parliamentarian, this time the Deputy Chairperson of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, Hussein Ebrahimi (Ibrahimi), the letter went on to ask for Iranian-U.S. cooperation and negotiations based on the mutual interests of both Tehran and Washington. [4]

Obama's letter also tried to assure Tehran that the United States would not engage in any hostile action against Iran. [5] In fact, in the same timeframe, the Pentagon cancelled or delayed major joint drills with Israel. [6]

To the Iranians, however, the gestures are meaningless, because the Obama Administration's actions with Iran have always contradicted its words. Moreover, Iran believes that the U.S. has not attacked, because it knows that the costs of a war with an

opponent like Iran are too high and its consequences far too risky.

This, however, does not mean that an Iranian-U.S. showdown has been avoided or will not eventually happen. The currents can go either way, so to speak. Nor does this mean that the Obama Administration is not currently waging a war against the Iranians and their allies. In fact, Washington's bloc and Iran's bloc have been fighting a shadow war from the digital arena and television airwaves to the valleys of Afghanistan and the bustling streets of Beirut and Baghdad.

### The War Against Iran Started Years Ago

The war in Iran did not start in 2012 or even 2011. *Newsweek Magazine* even stated the following on a cover title in 2010: "Assassinations, cyberattacks, sabotage - has the war against Tehran already begun?" The actual war may have started in 2006.

Instead of attacking Iran directly, the U.S. has started a covert and proxy war. The covert dimensions of the war are being fought by intelligence assets, cyber attacks, computer viruses, secretive military units, spies, assassins, agent provocateurs, and saboteurs. The kidnapping and assassination of Iranian scientists and military commanders, which started several years ago is a part of this covert war. In this shadow war, Iranian diplomats in Iraq have been abducted and Iranians visiting Georgia, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey have been detained or kidnapped. Syrian officials, various Palestinian figures, and Hezbollah's Imad Fayez Mughniyeh have also all been assassinated in this shadow war.

The proxy wars started in 2006 when Israel attacked Lebanon with the intention of expanding the war against Syria. The road to Damascus goes through Beirut, while Damascus is on the way to Tehran. After their failure in 2006, realizing that Syria was the lynchpin of the Resistance Bloc, which Iran dominated, the U.S. and its allies spent the next five to six years trying to de-link Syria from Iran.

The U.S. is also fighting Iran and its allies on the diplomatic and economic fronts through the manipulation of international bodies and proxy states. In the 2011 to 2012 context, the crisis in Syria on a geo-political level is a front in the war against Iran. Even the Israeli-U.S. drill Austere Challenge 2012 and the U.S. deployment of troops were primarily aimed at Syria as a means of combating Iran.

### Syria in the Eye of the Storm

What Washington is doing is exerting psychological pressure on Iran as a means of distancing it from Syria, so that the United States and its cohorts can go for the kill. Up until the start of January 2012, the Israelis have continuously been preparing to launch an invasion of Syria in a rematch of 2006, while U.S. and E.U. officials have continuously tried negotiating with Damascus for a deal to de-link from Iran and the Resistance Bloc. The Syrians, however, have always refused.

*Foreign Policy* published an article in August 2011 stating what was on the Saudi King's mind about Syria in context of attacking Iran: "The King knows that other than the collapse of the Islamic Republic [of Iran] itself, nothing would weaken Iran more than losing Syria." [7] Whether the above statement genuinely came from Abdul Aziz Al-Saud or not, this strategic outlook is representative of the reasons for the targeting of Syria. Obama's own

security advisor has also said the same thing, just a few months after the piece by *Foreign Policy* was released, in November 2011. National Security Advisor Donilon gave a speech saying that the “end of the Assad regime would constitute Iran’s greatest setback in the region – a strategic blow that will further shift the balance of power in the region against Iran.” [8]

The Kremlin has also made statements that corroborate that Washington wants to de-link Syria from its Iranian ally. One of Russia’s highest security officials has announced that Syria is being punished, because of its strategic alliance with Iran. The Secretary of the National Security Council of the Russian Federation, Nikolai (Nikolay) Platonovich Patrushev, has publicly stated that Syria is the subject of Washington’s pressure due to geo-political interests tied to cutting Syria’s ties with Iran and not due to any humanitarian concerns. [9]

Iran has also given signals that should the Syrians be attacked, it will not hesitate to intervene militarily to come to Syria’s aid. Washington does not want this. The Pentagon would much rather swallow Syria first, before turning its full and undivided attention to Iran. The Pentagon’s objectives are to fight its targets piecemeal. Despite the U.S. military doctrine of fighting simultaneous wars in multiple theatres and all the Pentagon literature about it, the U.S. is not ready yet to wage a conventional regional war against both Iran and Syria or risk an expanded war with Iran’s Russian and Chinese allies yet. The march to war, however, is far from over. For now the U.S. government will have to continue the shadow war against Iran and intensify the media, diplomatic, and economic war.

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## NOTES

[1] Elisabeth Bumiller et al., “[US sends top Iran leader warning on Hormuz threat](#),” *The New York Times*, January 12, 2012.

[2] Mehr News Agency, “[Details of Obama’s letter to Iran released](#),” January 18, 2012.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] Yakkov Katz, “Israel, US cancel missile defense drill,” *Jerusalem Post*, January 15, 2012.

[7] John Hannah, “[Responding to Syria: The King’s statement, the President’s hesitation](#),” *Foreign Policy*, August 9, 2011.

[8] Natasha Mozgovaya, “Obama Aide: End of Assad regime will serve severe blow to Iran,” *Haaretz*, November 22, 2011.

[9] Ilya Arkhipov and Henry Meyer, “[Russia Says NATO, Persian Gulf Nations Plan to Seek No-Fly Zone for Syria](#),” *Bloomberg*, January 12, 2012.

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