

Obama Criticizes Clinton Over Iran Stance

US presidential hopeful Barack Obama likened Hillary Rodham Clinton to President George W. Bush for threatening to "totally obliterate" Iran if it attacks Israel as he tried to fend off her challenge ahead of two pivotal Democratic primaries.

Clinton, in turn, stood by both her comment on Iran as she gave chase in Indiana and North Carolina to the frontrunner for the nomination, AP reported.

The competitors squabbled over the issues--one foreign, one domestic--from a short distance, first during separate appearances on Sunday news shows and then as they courted voters for Tuesday's primaries.

"This is the final push," Clinton told a cheering crowd of volunteer canvassers in Fort Wayne, emboldened by her Pennsylvania victory two weeks ago as well as polls that show her in a close race in Indiana and narrowing Obama's lead in North Carolina.

A few hours later and a few miles (kilometers) away, Obama urged an audience of several thousand to vote for him. "I need help," he said.

The Illinois senator hopes that wins this week will stop the bleeding from a difficult campaign stretch. Maneuvering for advantage and trying to put the controversy over his former pastor behind him, Obama sought Sunday to portray Clinton as a political opportunist on both Iran and her gas-tax plan.

Earlier, on NBC's "Meet the Press," Obama seized on an answer Clinton gave recently when asked what she would do if Iran attacked Israel with nuclear weapons on her watch.

"I want the Iranians to know that if I'm the president, we will attack Iran," Clinton said April 22 in an interview with ABC. "In the next 10 years, during which they might foolishly consider launching an attack on Israel, we would be able to totally obliterate them."

Obama said, "It's not the language we need right now, and I think it's language reflective of George Bush" akin to "bluster and saber-rattling."

"Senator Clinton during the course of the campaign has said we shouldn't speculate about Iran, we've got to be cautious when we're running for president, she scolded me on a couple of occasions on this issue, yet a few days before an election, she's willing to use that language," Obama added.

Clinton, asked about Obama's criticism, didn't back away from her comment.

"Why would I have any regrets? I'm asked a question about what I would do if Iran attacked our ally...and, yes, we would have massive retaliation against Iran," Clinton said. "I don't think they will do that, but I sure want to make it abundantly clear to them that they would face a tremendous cost if they did such a thing."

No Briton In IRGC Custody

An Iranian official rejected a report that claimed five British hostages kidnapped in Iraq a year ago are being held by Iran's Islamic Revolution's Guards Corps forces.

Hamid Babaei, first secretary at the Iranian Embassy in London, in a note to the Sunday Times dismissed the report claiming the hostages were handed over to the IRGC as "unfounded," PressTV reported.

"Iran is not involved in sophisticated kidnappings, rendition flights or some other practices, unlike certain western countries," wrote the London-based Iranian envoy.

The Iranian official urged the western media to report on "the misery of the Iraqi people and the untenable situation of the foreign forces since the invasion".

Babaei said Tehran seeks to bring stability to the region, adding that "measures adopted by countries such as Britain in the war-torn country of Iraq has acted against the efforts of the Islamic Republic".

The five British citizens were abducted from the Iraqi Finance Ministry in Baghdad last May in an attempt to force the Americans to release Qais Al-Khazaali, an Iraqi militia leader.

No Stopping Uranium Enrichment



> Compiled by Davoud Baqeri

Iran said on Monday it would not change its nuclear course despite an updated incentive offer by world powers to persuade Tehran to suspend its uranium enrichment program.

Six world powers agreed at a meeting in London on Friday to offer a new package of incentives to encourage Iran to suspend uranium enrichment.

Iran, which insists its nuclear program is aimed at generating electricity, says enrichment is a national right that it will not give up.

"Those incentives that violate the Iranian nation's right in any form will not be reviewed by the Islamic Republic," Foreign Ministry Spokesman Mohammad Ali Hosseini told a news conference.

Hosseini also said Iran has not officially received any package, PressTV reported.

The five permanent members of the UN Security Council--the United States, France, Britain, China and Russia--and Germany, known as Group 5+1, offered a package to Iran in 2006 that demanded Iran halt enrichment. Tehran rejected it.

> Package

"With regard to the incentives package... we believe the path adopted in the past should not be continued. They should act based on realities and international regulations. Talks should be held based on respecting nations' rights," he said.

Russia, which sent an envoy to Iran last week for discussions that covered the nuclear row, said on Saturday uranium enrichment would have to be suspended during international talks aimed at resolving the dispute.

"In the past, we have expressed our view about the issue that some Russian officials talked about. There has been no change in our position," Hosseini said when asked

about the comments by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

The spokesman said Iran's proposed package included political, economic and security issues.

"The package is based on justice and focuses on issues in a way that will contribute to the improvement of international peace, security and stability. It also respects the rights of nations and national sovereignty of countries," he said.

Hosseini expressed Iran's readiness to hold talks on the package with different countries, which have an effective role in international equations.

> Support for Maliki

Hosseini also said that Iran supports the government of Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Al-Maliki in confronting armed groups.

He added that his country has always been in favor of peace and stability in Iraq, noting that illegal armed groups in Iraq should be confronted.

Following an Iraqi delegation's visit last week to Tehran and talks with Iranian officials on security situation in this occupied country, Hosseini played down the Iraqi delegation's visit and termed it as solely a bilateral effort aimed at settling ongoing differences and clashes in Iraq and in line with Tehran's policy to restore stability and security in its neighbor.

While blaming the presence of foreign troops as the main problem in Iraq, Hosseini said Iran will continue using all its capacity to help the Iraqi government and nation.

Hosseini accused the United States of "massacre" of the Iraqi people and said further talks with Washington about improving security in its neighbor would be meaningless now.

"Right now, what we observe in Iraq is a massacre of the Iraqi nation by the occupying forces," he said.

Distortion of Persian Gulf Condemned

A society of Greece-based Iranians has strongly condemned the distortion of the Persian Gulf's name by certain countries.

Releasing the statement, a copy of which was sent to IRNA, the society expressed its anger toward the recent move by some Arab states to forge a name for the Persian Gulf.

Based on international documents and registration with the United Nations, Persian Gulf is a name that cannot be changed in international records and maps, read the statement.

It added that Arab states, which tried to forge a name for the Persian Gulf, had not even existed under the Persian Empire.

The statement called on the international community to prevent the distortion of historical realities that are strongly supported and confirmed by international organizations such as the United Nations and historical documents.

Distortion of historical realities would damage international security, it argued.

Many Iranians living abroad protested against the illegal move through the Internet, sending protest letters to international bodies and holding several protest demonstrations in many countries.

In Iran, Iran's Majlis Speaker Gholamali Haddad Adel urged regional Arab states to avoid distorting history by trying to forge a name for the Persian Gulf.

On April 29, hundreds of Iranian university students held a peaceful protest rally in front of the United Arab Emirates' Embassy in Tehran, showing their anger at the recent move by several Arab states to distort the name of the Persian Gulf.

In the southern province of Hormuzgan which lies on the Persian Gulf coasts, many Iranian youths formed a human chain on the National Persian Gulf Day to demonstrate their support for the cultural and historical identity of the Iranian nation.

Several protest demonstrations were also held in other cities of Iran on April 30 against distortion of the Persian Gulf's name.

Persian Press Watch

Vigilance

JAAM-E JAM: When the United States fails to justify its misguided policies in the Middle East, American officials blame the Islamic Republic for the catastrophes of their own making in the troubled region. The western media also help publicize this rhetoric in their propaganda campaign. One of their strategies is to portray Iran as the root cause of all problems in Iraq. This suits Americans who need to create insecurity in Iraq so that they can justify their presence and continue their occupation. On the other hand, some military circles affiliated to the Zionist regime are beating the war drum against Iran. George Bush always says that the military option is on the table. Under the circumstances, the Iranian diplomatic apparatus should be vigilant and wise enough to foil the American conspiracies. The Iranian media are also expected to help the foreign policy apparatus in this regard.

Petrodollars

RESALAT: State Expediency Council has ratified the outlines of a law concerning oil and gas revenues. This ratification aims to change the attitude of the officialdom about spending petrodollars. However, experience of the past decade indicates that petrodollars will not remain in the Oil Stabilization Fund for future generations, as indiscriminate withdrawals continue to deplete the surplus foreign exchange saved in the fund. So it's better to reduce oil production and keep it under the ground. As a result of reducing oil production, oil prices will increase and Iran will have a bigger oil reserve for future generations. If not for anything else, national expedience requires officials to save oil and gas resources for future generations.

Resistance

HAMSHAHRI: Thanks to its noble people and religion, the Islamic Republic has increased its influence in regional and international arenas. This influence has guaranteed the country's security, which emboldens officials to insist on defending the rights of the nation vis-à-vis nuclear energy because it leads to national strength and prosperity. In the past three decades, Iran has gained the capability to confront western conspiracies and withstand sanctions by following the guidelines of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. Despite Iran's preparedness, the country's military force should continue to boost its defense capabilities. During the recent visit to Fars province, Ayatollah Khamenei challenged the bullying policies of the White House. The officials should follow the leader in reinforcing the nation on all fronts to be able to tackle all conspiracies and pressures.



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