

## We can attack Iran, says US commander

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We can attack Iran, says US commander  
By Alex Spillius in Washington  
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America's top military officer said the country does have the resources to attack Iran, despite the strain of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Adm Michael Mullen, who took over as chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff three weeks ago, said diplomacy remained the priority in dealing with Iran's suspected plans to develop a nuclear weapon and its support for anti-US insurgents in Iraq.

But at a press conference he said: "there is more than enough reserve to respond (militarily) if that, in fact, is what the national leadership wanted to do".

Defence Secretary Robert Gates warned that Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons could set off an arms race in the Middle East. "The risk of an accident or a miscalculation or of those weapons or materials falling into the hands of terrorists seem to me to be substantially increased," he added.

The two leaders appeared together just days after George W Bush raised the spectre of "World War Three" if Iran went nuclear.

Adm Mullen did not elaborate on what size of assault would be feasible, but earlier reports have said the Pentagon had laid out contingency plans for a major aerial campaign against suspected nuclear targets in Iran.

Given that there are approximately 180,000 US troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, the deployment of a significant ground force is improbable.

Early this year the US navy moved a second aircraft carrier with battleships into the Gulf, its biggest build up of military power there since the months leading to the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, leading to speculation that it was prepared to launch air strikes at any time.

Adm Mullen also said the US military was working hard to stem the flow from Iran into Afghanistan of high-tech materials for roadside bombs. The military has said that parts from the armor-piercing bombs, which have killed hundreds of troops in Iraq, are now getting into Afghanistan.

Iran's foreign minister said yesterday that his country is ready to establish nuclear energy cooperation with other countries, based on the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is prepared to cooperate with other countries in the nuclear field with a peaceful purpose," said Manouchehr Mottaki during a visit to the western Afghan city of Herat for a conference.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/10/20/wiran120.xml>

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Mullen: U.S. can strike Iran  
October 19, 2007

By Bill Gertz - U.S. military forces are capable of conducting operations against Iran if called on to bomb nuclear facilities or other targets, the new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said yesterday.

"From a military standpoint, there is more than enough reserve to respond if that, in fact, is what the national leadership

wanted to do, and so I don't think we're too stretched in that regard," Adm. Michael Mullen told reporters when asked if current operations had worn out U.S. forces.

Adm. Mullen said he has been concerned over the past year and a half with Iranian leaders' statements of intentions, Tehran's support for bombers in Iraq and Iran's covert drive for nuclear weapons.

"All of which has potentially a very destabilizing impact on a part of the world, a region of the world which is struggling in many ways already," he said in his first press conference since becoming chairman Oct. 1. "So they're not being helpful."

Defense and military officials have been preparing U.S. forces within striking distance of Iran. The forces would be dominated by Navy and Air Force weapons and forces since Army and Marine Corps forces are focused on Iraq and Afghanistan.

There are two main targets of any Iranian military action, according to the officials. First, U.S. forces are set to attack Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps facilities because of the paramilitary's support and provision of armor-piercing roadside bombs.

A U.S. official said the location of a factory where Iranian bomb materials are being produced has been identified.

A second target would be Iranian nuclear facilities, which are in numerous underground facilities across the country.

Adm. Mullen said Iran's support for terrorism "adds up to a huge and growing concern about Iran and where it's headed."

"There is a significant amount of activity right now to try to influence them diplomatically," he said.

The use of military force would be an option "of the last resort," Adm. Mullen said.

Adm. Mullen said many are working to try and influence Iranian leaders to move in a more positive direction. "But the concern that I have is very, very real."

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, appearing with Adm. Mullen at the Pentagon, warned about the dangers a nuclear-armed Iran poses to the Middle East.

"If Iran acquires nuclear weapons, it seems very probable that there will be other states in the region that decide for their own protection they will have to obtain nuclear weapons as well," Mr. Gates said, likely triggering a "nuclear arms race in the Middle East."

Mr. Gates said as nuclear weapons materials and perhaps nuclear weapons become available in states that did not have them in the past "the risk of an accident or a miscalculation or of those weapons or materials falling into the hands of terrorists seem to me to be substantially increased."

Nuclear weapons escalation in the Middle East would increase the risk of "a major war" in the region, he said.

"This is not to mention the fact that you've got a leader in Iran who has already publicly said that Israel ought to be destroyed," Mr. Gates said. "So let's just say that the leadership in Iran doesn't give us confidence, even by their public statements, that they would handle this kind of a capability with any kind of responsibility. And then when you add to that the proliferation part of the equation, it seems to me it ends up being a far more dangerous world."

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Joint Chiefs Chairman: U.S. Can Strike Iran  
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The new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said that despite the commitment of U.S. forces elsewhere, the military is capable of conducting operations against Iran if called on to bomb nuclear facilities and other targets.

Adm. Michael Mullen told reporters at the Pentagon on Thursday: "From a military standpoint, there is more than enough reserve to respond if that, in fact, is what the national leadership wanted to do, and so I don't think we're too stretched in that regard."

Defense and military officials have been preparing American forces within striking distance of Iran, according to the Washington Times. Attacks on the Islamic Republic would be carried out largely by the Navy and Air Force.

Officials say one target of any U.S. military action would be Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps facilities because of their role in providing insurgents in Iraq with armor-piercing roadside bombs. One official said the factory where Iranian bomb materials are being produced has been located.

A second target would be Iran's nuclear facilities, which are chiefly underground and spread across the country.

Appearing with Mullen at the Pentagon, Defense Secretary Robert Gates warned that if Iran acquires nuclear weapons, it would probably spur other nations in the region to obtain those weapons themselves. That in turn would raise the risk of nuclear materials falling into the hands of terrorists.

But Adm. Mullen said the use of military force against Iran would be an option "of the last resort."

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