

# U.S. UPDATES MILITARY PLANS AGAINST IRAN

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At a meeting of President Donald Trump's top national security aides last Thursday, acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan presented an updated military plan that envisions sending as many as 1,20,000 troops to West Asia should Iran attack U.S. forces or accelerate work on nuclear weapons, administration officials said.

The revisions were ordered by hard-liners led by John R. Bolton, Mr. Trump's National Security Adviser. It does not call for a land invasion of Iran, which would require vastly more troops, officials said. The development reflects the influence of Mr. Bolton, one of the administration's most virulent Iran hawks, whose push for confrontation with Tehran was ignored more than a decade ago by President George W. Bush.

It is highly uncertain whether Mr. Trump, who has sought to disentangle the U.S. from Afghanistan and Syria, ultimately would send so many U.S. forces back to West Asia. It is also unclear whether the President has been briefed on the number of troops or other details in the plans.

However, according to an AFP report, President Trump on Monday rejected that he was considering sending 1,20,000 troops to counter Iran, but didn't rule out deploying "a hell of a lot more" soldiers in the future.

There are sharp divisions in the administration over how to respond to Iran at a time when tensions are rising about Iran's nuclear policy and its intentions in the region. Some senior officials said the plans, even at a very preliminary stage, show how dangerous the threat from Iran has become. Others, who are urging a diplomatic resolution to the current tensions, said it amounts to a scare tactic to warn Iran against new aggressions.

European allies who met with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Monday said they worry that tensions between Washington and Tehran could boil over, possibly inadvertently.

More than a half-dozen U.S. national security officials who have been briefed on details of the updated plans agreed to discuss them with *The New York Times* on the condition of anonymity.

The size of the force involved has shocked some who have been briefed on them. It would approach the size of the U.S. force that invaded Iraq in 2003.

## More targets to strike

Deploying such a robust air, land and naval force would give Tehran more targets to strike, and potentially more reason to do so, risking entangling the U.S. in a drawn out conflict. It also would reverse years of retrenching by the U.S. military in West Asia that began with President Barack Obama's withdrawal of troops from Iraq in 2011.

But two of the U.S. national security officials said Mr. Trump's announced drawdown in December of American forces in Syria, and the diminished naval presence in the region, appear to have emboldened some leaders in Tehran and convinced the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps that the U.S. has no appetite for a fight with Iran.

Several oil tankers were attacked or sabotaged off the coast of the UAE over the weekend, raising fears that shipping lanes in the Gulf could become flashpoints. Emirati officials are investigating the apparent sabotage, and U.S. officials suspect that Iran was involved.

An Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman called it a “regretful incident,” according to a state news agency. [Nytimes](#)

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