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# Bush: Talk of Iran attack 'wild speculation'

## Reports suggest U.S. contemplating nuclear strike against Tehran

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President Bush says Monday that his administration is trying to resolve Iran's nuclear issue through diplomacy.

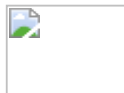
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**WASHINGTON (CNN) -- President Bush on Monday dismissed as "wild speculation" reports that his administration has considered nuclear strikes against sites in Iran to prevent the nation from building nuclear weapons.**

Bush addressed the issue during comments at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies in Washington.

He emphasized that his administration is trying to resolve concerns over Iran through diplomacy. ([Watch Iran's tough targets --1:34](#))

"The doctrine of prevention is to work together to prevent the Iranians from having a nuclear weapon," the president said.

"... We hear in Washington, you know, 'prevention means force.' It doesn't mean force necessarily. In this case, it means diplomacy.

"And by the way, I read the articles in the newspapers this weekend. It was just wild speculation, by the way. What you're reading is wild speculation. Which is, kind of a -- you know, happens quite frequently here in the nation's capital."

Earlier Monday, White House spokesman Scott McClellan used the same term as president to describe a New Yorker magazine article that said the White House has considered striking underground nuclear sites in Iran.

However, McClellan said the Pentagon is conducting "normal military contingency planning" to deal with the nation that Bush famously called part of an "Axis of Evil" in his 2002 State of the Union. Iraq under Saddam Hussein and North Korea were included in that trio.

In the April 17 issue of The New Yorker, investigative journalist Seymour Hersh said the Bush administration is stepping up covert activities in Iran and planning for a possible air attack while publicly advocating diplomacy.

"The fear is that the White House -- there [are] some people in the White House who aren't really, no matter what happens diplomatically -- they don't believe Iran's going to give up its ambitions," Hersh told CNN's Wolf Blitzer on Sunday. ([Hersh: U.S. mulls nuclear option for Iran](#))

"There's been a lot of planning going on. It's more than planning, it's operational planning. It's beyond contingency planning," Hersh said.

Hersh reported that regular military forces already have infiltrated Iran.

Also on Sunday, The Washington Post reported that the administration "is studying options for military strikes against Iran as part of a broader strategy of coercive diplomacy."

The paper said no attack appears likely in the short term and many specialists inside and outside the U.S. government have doubts about whether such a move would work. "U.S. officials continue to pursue the diplomatic course but privately seem increasingly skeptical that it will succeed," the report said.

McClellan called Hersh's article "hyped-up reporting based on anonymous" former officials outside the White House who are not familiar with the administration's thinking on Iran.

When pressed on whether the Bush administration has left nuclear strikes on the table as an option, McClellan declined to confirm or deny the essence of the New Yorker report.

"Those who are seeking to draw broad conclusions based on normal military contingency planning are misinformed or not knowledgeable about the administration's thinking," McClellan said.

Tehran denies any effort to build nuclear weapons and says it has the right to a nuclear energy program.

*CNN's Ed Henry contributed to this report.*

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