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US preparing insurgents for an attack on Damascus

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The United States and some of its Arab allies are preparing insurgents fighting against the Syrian government for an attack from the direction of the Jordanian border, hoping the insurgents will be able to reach the Syrian capital, Damascus.

The Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported on Monday that the attack will originate in Jordan and the US, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan are planning the way it will be launched.

According to media reports, the US is constructing runways for military aircraft near the border between Jordan and Syria and has been arming the foreign-backed insurgents with heavy weaponry which Saudi Arabia has flown to bases in Jordan.

While no US troops will be involved in the fighting on the ground, the reports say, the US President is to somehow address Saudis' criticism of his administration after his offensive missile campaign against Syria failed last summer. Barack Obama is determined to do so before his planned trip to Saudi Arabia next month.

Obama pushed for military strikes against Syria last summer following reports of a chemical weapons attack that Washington blamed on the Syrian government. However, he put on hold his planned military strike against the Arab country after Russia helped broker a deal under which Damascus agreed to eliminate its chemical weapons arsenal.

Several reports over the past weeks have shown that the US is considering a wide range of military options against Syria.

Last week, the Wall Street Journal reported that Washington is now reconsidering "military, diplomatic and intelligence options" which were abandoned in favor of talks between representatives of the Syrian government and the foreign-backed opposition in Geneva.

Meanwhile, some congressional officials have said that even the idea of using CIA-run drones is gaining currency both within the White House and Congress.

The latest news about a Jordan-based attack into Syria comes less than two weeks after the US President, who had hosted King Abdullah II of Jordan at the Sunnylands retreat in Palm Springs, California, said on February 14 that he and his royal guest had decided they should take steps "to apply more pressure to" the Syrian government.