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## Obama to reassure Salman on Iran deal

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"US President Barack Obama might be able to assuage (Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques) King Salman's concern on the Iranian nuclear deal by pointing out the very clear military advantage that Saudi Arabia has over Iran, both in terms of total military capabilities and the Kingdom's allies," a senior US defense and foreign policy expert has said.

In an interview with Okaz/Saudi Gazette, Christopher Preble, vice president for defense and foreign policy studies at the Washington-based Cato Institute, said it was hard for a US president, so far removed from the chaos and violence in the region, to be able to appreciate the depths of Saudi anxiety.

On the significance of King Salman's visit and his meeting with President Obama in the light of severe multiple crises in the Arab region, Preble said: "I think the main value of this first meeting is for the two men to meet, and to try to understand how each side views the dramatic changes occurring throughout the region."

On the Iranian nuclear program and whether President Obama would be able to calm Saudi anxiety and allay suspicions about the agreement and its implications with regard to Iran's continuous threat to Gulf countries, Preble said President Obama might be able to convince King Salman that he takes his concerns seriously, and affirm that the United States has no intention of upsetting the regional balance of power.

"President Obama might be able to assuage King Salman's concerns by pointing out the very clear military advantage that Saudi Arabia has over Iran, both in terms of total military capabilities, and Saudi Arabia's allies. But I candidly doubt that this will do much good," he said.

There is a growing perception in the Mideast region that the Obama administration was not as serious in dealing with the Yemen crisis as he was in striking a deal on the Iranian nuclear program. Asked to explain this contradiction, Preble said he could understand the frustration from the perspective of some in the region. "But the simple fact is that Iran attracts much more attention in the United States than other countries. There is a long history between our two countries, going back to 1979 for most Americans, 1953 for many Iranians, and a long-standing sense of animosity. Trying to deal with this animosity, either by pressuring Iran militarily, or

seeking accommodation at times, has dominated the attention of US policymakers for decades," he said.

Yemen, by contrast, he said, has not been "a high priority item for the United States, and I think is unlikely to become one. The lingering public anger and frustration toward the Iraq and Afghan wars here in the United States makes most Americans extremely wary about become embroiled in another civil war."

In addition to his work at Cato, Preble teaches the US foreign policy elective at the University of California, Washington Center. Before joining Cato in February 2003, he taught history at St. Cloud State University and Temple University. Preble was a commissioned officer in the US Navy, and served aboard the USS Ticonderoga (CG-47) from 1990 to 1993.

Preble holds a PhD in history from Temple University.

Preble is the author of *The Power Problem: How American Military Dominance Makes Us Less Safe, Less Prosperous, and Less Free* (Cornell University Press, 2009); and *John F. Kennedy and the Missile Gap* (Northern Illinois University Press, 2004).

Preble has also published articles in major publications, including the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Financial Times*, *National Review*, *The National Interest*, and *Foreign Policy*, and is a frequent guest on television and radio.