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Obama Concerned about Russia in Syria, Dismisses Trump's Electoral Complaints

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WASHINGTON - US President Barack Obama today demanded Russia to show that it is "serious" about the ceasefire in Syria and branded Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump's rigged election claim as "ridiculous."

In a Pentagon news conference, Obama defended his government's progress in the fight against the Islamic State (IS) and also warned that some of decisions proposed by Trump to combat jihadism like "setting religious tests for entry in the country" would be offensive to the world.

"Those kinds of strategies can end up backfiring. We cannot frame this as a clash of civilizations between the West and Islam," Obama said.

The president blamed the violation of ceasefires on the Syrian government and accused Bashar al-Assad of launching "vicious attacks on defenseless civilians, medieval sieges against cities like Aleppo" and blocking humanitarian aid.

He also condemned Russia's "direct involvement in these actions" adding that "it raises serious questions about their commitment to pulling the situation back from the brink."

"The US remains prepared to work with Russia to try to reduce the violence and strengthen our efforts against ISIL, Al-Qaeda and Syria. But Russia has failed to take the steps necessary. Given the deteriorating situation, it is time for Russia to show it is serious about pursuing these objectives," Obama told reporters.

Obama devoted little energy to criticize Trump in today's press conference, his last day before going on holiday for two weeks; the president mocked Trump's conspiracy theory that the November presidential elections are likely to be "rigged."

"If Mr. Trump is suggesting that there is a conspiracy theory that is propagated across the country, including in places like Texas, where typically it is not Democrats who are in charge of voting booths, that's ridiculous. That doesn't make any sense," said Obama, recalling the Federal Government's minimum controls in the electoral mechanisms.

He also referred to the uproar generated by a report published this week by "The Wall Street Journal," which revealed that the United States chartered a plane to Iran in January to transport \$ 400 million in cash, after which Tehran freed four US citizens who were detained in the country.

"We did no evil deal" with Iran, defended Obama, and ensured that payment was "not a ransom" for the release of the Americans.

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