

Contender for House Speaker Would Like to Put U.S. Troops in This Nation

Republican U.S. Representative Kevin McCarthy, the leading candidate to be the next House speaker, voiced sharp disagreement with President Barack Obama's foreign policy on Monday with calls for a tougher response to Islamic State and Russian aggression in Ukraine.

McCarthy was strongly critical of the Democratic president in a speech that could increase his appeal to hard-line conservatives who sought to oust the current speaker, John Boehner. Boehner abruptly announced his resignation on Friday.

"The absence of leadership over the past six years has had horrific consequences all across the globe, and it is getting worse day by day," McCarthy said in a speech to the John Hay Initiative, an organization of Republican foreign policy veterans.

McCarthy, 50, who as majority leader is the No. 2 House Republican, has emerged as the most likely candidate to be elected to succeed Boehner as speaker. The California congressman formally announced later on Monday that he had decided to run.

In his speech, McCarthy provided a list of foreign policy suggestions that largely conflicted with Obama administration policies.

There has been little common ground between congressional Republicans and Obama on foreign policy during Obama's time in office, and McCarthy's comments made clear that was unlikely to change if he were to become speaker.

He spoke on the same day that Obama gave a major foreign policy speech at the annual U.N. General Assembly.

McCarthy said the United States should provide lethal aid to Ukraine as it faces Russian aggression and target Russia's Gazprom energy company. He also spelled out strong opposition to the nuclear deal with Iran, calling for tougher sanctions.

McCarthy backed measures to deal with the crisis in Syria, including a no-fly zone in northern Syria and tougher measures against Islamic State militants. And he said the United States should consider putting U.S. Special Forces troops on the ground to help call in air strikes and provide more support for the Iraqi army and Kurds fighting the group, which has conquered wide swaths of territory in Syria and Iraq.

"We must wage this war against radical Islam as if our life depended on it, because it does," McCarthy said. {eo}

(Reporting by Patricia Zengerle; Editing by Bernard Orr and Jonathan Oatis)

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