

## **Trump blames Obama for creating void in Middle East, calls Russia asset in fighting Islamic State**

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**New York:** President-elect Donald Trump today blamed outgoing President Barack Obama's policies for creating a void in the Middle East that gave room to terror group Islamic State to grow.

### **File pic - President-elect Donald Trump**

In his first news conference as President-elect on Wednesday, he said that Russia will be assets in fighting the Islamic State terror group, which he called the "number one" issue.

While trying to make Russia an ally in the war on terror, Trump also warned of a hardline if he had a falling out with President Vladimir Putin.

Promising to take a tough stand, he said, "If Putin likes Donald Trump, I consider that an asset, not a liability, because we have a horrible relationship with Russia. Russia can help us fight Islamic State, which, by the way, is, number one, tricky (issue)."

"This administration created ISIS by leaving (Iraq) at the wrong time. The void was created, IS was formed," he claimed.

As for future relations with Russia, Trump said, "I don't know that I'm gonna get along with Vladimir Putin. I hope I do. But there's a good chance I won't. And if I don't, do you honestly believe that Hillary would be tougher on Putin than me?"

Moving away from his earlier position of questioning Putin's involvement in the hacking scandal, Trump said, "He shouldn't be doing it. He won't be doing it."

Projecting his tough-guy image, Trump asserted, "Russia will have much greater respect for our country when I'm leading than when other people have led it."

He added, "Other countries, including China, which has taken total advantage of us economically, totally advantage of us in the South China Sea by building their massive fortress, total. Russia, China, Japan, Mexico, all countries will respect us far more, far more than they do under past administrations."

He poked fun of Clinton for having given Russian Foreign Minister a red button labeled "Reset" at the start of her tenure as Secretary of State in 2009 to signify an attempt at renewing frayed ties.

"I won't be giving a little reset button like Hillary, 'Here, press this piece of plastic', were relations with Putin to run into problems," he said, adding, "There's no reset button. We're either going to get along or we're not. I hope we get along, but if we don't, that's possible too."

- With IANS Inputs