

Amber Alert! Get ready for war

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In spite of reassurances from the Washington [talking](#) heads and policy [wonks](#) that the U.S. is not about to launch an attack on Iran, or countenance an Israeli strike, the *Sunday Times* has [the real scoop](#):

“President George W. Bush has told the Israeli government that he may be prepared to approve a future military strike on Iranian nuclear facilities if negotiations with Tehran break down, according to a senior Pentagon official.

“Despite the opposition of his own generals and widespread skepticism that America is ready to risk the military, political, and economic consequences of an airborne strike on Iran, the president has given an ‘amber light’ to an Israeli plan to attack Iran’s main nuclear sites with long-range bombing sorties, the official told *The Sunday Times*.

“‘Amber means get on with your preparations, stand by for immediate attack, and tell us when you’re ready,’ the official said. But the Israelis have also been told that they can expect no help from American forces and will not be able to use U.S. military bases in Iraq for logistical support.”

It seems, however, that the Israelis have [already](#) been using U.S. bases in Iraq to train for the coming attack. There have been [denials](#) all around – from the Iraqis, the Americans, and the Israelis – but both the Iraqi media and the Israeli media have reported, as the *New York Post* [put it](#), that “Israeli warplanes have been flying over Iraq and landing at U.S. bases there in preparation for an attack on Iran.” The Iraqi Web site [Nahrainet](#) reported Israeli fighter jets have been in rehearsals, so to speak, for their much-anticipated strike at Iran, flying at night over Jordanian airspace and arriving at U.S. air bases in Nasiriyah in southern Iraq and near Haditha in western Anbar province.

The Israelis, in concert with their [amen corner](#) in the U.S., have been engaged in a [propaganda blitz](#) targeting Iran’s [alleged](#) nuclear weapons program, the whole point of which is not to pressure the Iranians into backing down, but to force the U.S. to take action in lieu of the Israelis going it alone. Why fight if your big brother is willing to wage the battle? To that end, the Israelis are taking aim at Washington, rather than Tehran, in a full-scale political assault that shows every sign of succeeding where it counts – in the Oval Office. The *Times* cites a top Pentagon official:

“It’s really all down to the Israelis. This administration will not attack Iran. This has already been decided. But the president is really preoccupied with the nuclear threat against Israel and I know he doesn’t believe that anything but force will deter Iran.”

Translation: The U.S. will not be the first to attack Iran, but it may well join in once the Israelis get things started. Laura Rozen, [writing](#) in *Mother Jones*, reports that a parade of Israeli officials – including Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak and IDF Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi – is due in Washington over the next two weeks to impress upon the Americans the urgent necessity of taking military action. Rozen spoke to neocon superhawk [David Wurmser](#), former [adviser](#) to Vice President Dick Cheney on Middle Eastern affairs, who said:

“Ultimately, my gut tells me that most of the administration on most levels would push back very hard,’ on Israeli pressure on Washington to authorize it to strike Iran, Wurmser added. ‘What those in the administration who don’t want Israel to act probably won’t want is for it to be taken to the highest level. They would always be afraid that [the president] might not be so tough on the Israelis. If the Israeli [government] really intends to do something, they would go to the highest level without a lot of people knowing.’”

They may have gotten to the president already, as Rozen reports:

“A former Pentagon intelligence official who spoke with Mother Jones also alleges that Meir Dagan, the chief of the Israeli intelligence service, the Mossad, held secret meetings with officials in the White House on Wednesday. Neither the Israeli embassy nor National Security Council would comment on whether Dagan had been at the White House.”

This is really the crux of the matter: [George W. Bush](#). Reckless, more [radical](#) than most of his advisers, and now dangerously [fixated](#) on his “legacy,” he is more determined than ever to leave his lasting mark on the Middle East and the world – and, given that the Constitution has been [abandoned](#), and a [single man](#) can take us to war [without](#) the consent of Congress or the people, an apocalyptic departure from office seems more likely than not.

As in the [run-up](#) to the Iraq war, the prelude to this far greater conflict is marked by attempts to circumvent what one Bush official disdainfully referred to as “[the reality-based community](#)” and “[stove-pipe](#)” the Israelis’ analysis of Iran intelligence into the White House. Our own [National Intelligence Estimate](#), compiled by the CIA and a raft of other intelligence-gathering outfits, says that the Iranians abandoned their nuclear weapons program years ago and they [aren’t anywhere near](#) weaponization of their [nascent nuclear capabilities](#) at the present time. The Israelis beg to differ, and they are stating their case to Bush in person – whispering in a presidential ear that has been unusually receptive to them in the past.

Wurmser gives the odds of the Israelis attacking Iran before Bush leaves office as “slightly, slightly above 50-50.” If that happens, then it is only a matter of time – a very short time – before the U.S. is involved in a large-scale conflict with Iran that will send oil prices skyrocketing [past \\$300](#) per barrel and bring the world economy to a screeching halt. Not only that, but war with Tehran will upend the American political [landscape](#) and give John McCain more than a fighting chance to beat frontrunner Barack Obama.

In this context, the Israeli pressure for military action can be seen as a direct attempt to influence an American election that, so far, is not going to their liking. Obama has openly [stated](#) that he favors negotiating with the Iranians, which is what the Israelis fear most. How better to eliminate this possibility than by tying Obama’s hands the moment he gets into office? With the U.S. already engaged in hostilities with Iran, negotiations will be off the

table - and the Israelis will be off the hook.

The *Telegraph* reports that Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert recently told one of his closest friends that "in three months' time it will be a different Middle East." Yes, and also, perhaps, a very different America...

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