

Bush's "Nuclear Option"

By [Evan Augustine Peterson III](#)

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Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [IRAN: THE NEXT WAR?,
Nuclear War](#)

Just in case you've gotten the impression that the Bush administration isn't seriously considering a military strike against Iran using both conventional and nuclear weapons, see the American Progress Action Fund's 4-10-06 Progress Report, "The Nuclear Option." You can read it below or at: <http://www.americanprogressaction.org/site/apps/nl/newsletter2.asp?c=kILWJcP7H&b=917053>

On the brighter side, there are limits to the U.S. military's loyalty to Mr. Bush, and high-ranking American military officers have stated that they are adamantly opposed to the use of bunker-buster tactical nuclear weapons (i.e., so-called "mini-nukes"). Moreover, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw has publicly stated that the idea of a nuclear strike against Iran is "completely nuts."

Additionally, the Bush administration has only presented alarmist rhetoric, whereas they haven't presented any credible evidence. Hence, American politicians and journalists should be openly questioning the reliability of the intelligence behind the Bushites' allegations that: (1) a "nuclear crisis" exists vis-à-vis Iran; (b) Tehran is actively seeking a "nuclear weapons program"; and (c) Iran is somehow capable of "posing an imminent threat" to the USA and the UK with its non-existent phantom nukes.

Finally, we should be deeply skeptical about the legitimacy of the Bush administration's casus belli, because: (a) we know that the war-profiteering neocons prefer their illegal "Bush Doctrine of Preemptive War" to the civilized pursuit of diplomatic and juridical solutions; (b) we have every reason to believe that a conventional aerial strike against Iran would quickly escalate into a regional war with global terrorist blowback; and (c) their plan for a nuclear strike against Iran is "completely nuts," insofar as it would be both a monstrous war crime and a humanitarian disaster of the first magnitude.

Evan Augustine Peterson III, J.D. is Executive Director American Center for International Law ("ACIL")

IRAN

The Nuclear Option

American Progress Action Fund

Senior Bush administration officials are considering plans for a massive bombing campaign

in Iran to prevent the country from developing nuclear weapons, according to several [recent accounts](#), including two this weekend by the [Washington Post](#) and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist [Seymour Hersh](#).

Current U.S. plans also call for the use of nuclear weapons to destroy suspected underground weapons facilities, which would mark the first use of such weapons in 61 years. Former intelligence officials quoted by Hersh describe the planning as “enormous,” “hectic” and “operational,” though U.S. officials sought yesterday to play down the activities as “[normal defense and intelligence planning](#).” The truth is, [there is no good military solution](#) to the Iranian nuclear impasse. And while there are military options, each carries with it grave risks that threaten to undermine U.S. national security interests at home and abroad while actually speeding up Iran’s development of nuclear weapons.

HIGH-RANKING MILITARY OFFICIALS THREATENING TO RESIGN OVER NUKE PLANS: “There are very strong sentiments within the military against brandishing nuclear weapons against other countries,” says one former Pentagon adviser. Indeed, Hersh writes, the matter “may soon reach a decisive point,” because the Joint Chiefs of Staff — a panel of the highest-ranking military officials from each major branch of the U.S. armed services — “had agreed to give President Bush a formal recommendation stating that they are [strongly opposed to considering the nuclear option for Iran](#).” Hersh reiterated this point yesterday: “One thing about our military, they’re very loyal to the president, [but they’re getting to the edge](#). They’re getting to the edge with not only Rumsfeld, but with Cheney and the President.” ([Watch video of Hersh.](#)) British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw also warned this weekend against a nuclear strike, calling the idea “[completely nuts](#).” “The reason why we’re opposed to military action is because it’s an infinitely worse option and there’s no justification for it,” he said.

COSTS OF WAR: IRAN TERROR FORCE ‘MAKES AL QAEDA LOOK LIKE KINDERGARTEN’: A recent Washington Post report noted “a growing consensus that Iran’s agents would [target civilians in the United States, Europe and elsewhere](#)” if attacked; planning for such a response “is consuming a lot of time” throughout the U.S. intelligence apparatus, one senior official said. “It’s a huge issue,” another said. Former U.S. counterterrorism chief Richard Clarke stated recently that Iran would be likely to respond to an attack with a three-pronged terrorist assault: “terrorism by Hezbollah, which they own and operate as a subsidiary; terrorism in Iraq, where they have tens of thousands of militia under their control; and terrorism by their special forces call the Kudz Force, that in the past blew up the American Air Force base at Khobar. All three of these organizations make al Qaeda look like a kindergarten.” Clarke concluded, “We’ve thought about military options against Iran off and on for the last 20 years and [they’re just not good because you don’t know what the end game is](#).”

COSTS OF WAR: AIR STRIKE WOULD ‘ALMOST CERTAINLY SPEED UP’ IRANIAN NUKE PROGRAM: A military strike on Iran’s nuclear facilities would not likely delay the program, but “[almost certainly speed it up](#),” as occurred after the 1981 Israeli preemptive strike on Iraq’s nuclear facilities. After the Israeli strike, with its nuclear ambitions fully exposed, Iraq stepped up its weapons development dramatically, according to Iraqi defector Khadir Hamza. “At the beginning we had approximately 500 people working, which increased to 7,000 working after the Israeli bombing,” he said. According to Carnegie Endowment nonproliferation expert Joseph Cirincione, “[the bombing set back Israel more than Iraq](#)” by further harming its international reputation while “making Iraq appear a victim of Israeli

aggression.” Similar dynamics are at play in the current impasse with Iran.

COSTS OF WAR: ‘WHAT WILL 1.2 BILLION MUSLIMS THINK THE DAY WE BOMB IRAN?’: A report published in February by the Oxford Research Group determined “that attacks on Iranian facilities, most of which are in densely populated areas, would be surprise ones, [allowing no time for such evacuations or other precautions](#),” and thus leading to hundreds or thousands of civilian casualties. Moreover, planners also currently [debating launching attacks from Iraq or using Iraqi airspace](#), which could “exacerbate the political cost in the Muslim world.” Analysts fear a military strike would “[rally the Iranian public around an otherwise unpopular regime](#), inflame anti-American anger around the Muslim world, and jeopardize the already fragile U.S. position in Iraq.” As one former Pentagon advisor asked Seymour Hersh, “[What will 1.2 billion Muslims think the day we attack Iran?](#)”

A NUCLEAR REGIME CRISIS, NOT A NUCLEAR WEAPONS CRISIS: The “[consensus among U.S. intelligence agencies](#)” is that Iran is “about a decade away” from acquiring a nuclear weapon, meaning that the situation today is “not a nuclear bomb crisis, [it is a nuclear regime crisis](#).” The Bush administration’s Iran strategy should reflect this reality. The first priority of U.S. officials should be to form a strong global front to demand that Iran curb its nuclear ambitions or risk further international isolation. Iran’s latest actions — demanding that the U.N. Security Council [stop investigating its nuclear program](#) and announcing it will [not abide by the Security Council’s directive](#) that it cease uranium enrichment — have [helped unite the international community](#); new reports of the Bush administration’s aggressive war planning will likely reverse that tide. Also, the United States should come to the table and engage Iran directly in bilateral talks over its nuclear program, an option it has [consistently rejected despite numerous opportunities](#). As Council on Foreign Relations expert Ray Takeyh notes, current U.S. policy “of relentlessly threatening Iran with economic coercion and even military reprisals only empowers reactionaries and validates their pro-nuclear argument.” A “more adroit American diplomacy could still dissuade Tehran from crossing the nuclear threshold” by persuading Iranian pragmatists of the [many benefits of abandoning their nuclear ambitions](#).

SHOW US THE INTEL: “Fortunately, we know more about Iran’s nuclear program now than we ever knew about Iraq’s,” Cirincione writes. But we don’t know nearly enough. Following a briefing last week on Iran intelligence, Rep. Jane Harman (D-CA), ranking minority member of the House Intelligence Committee, said, “[I remain skeptical — lots of unanswered questions](#).” As we learned the hard way in Iraq, intelligence about Iran’s nuclear development is key to determining the appropriate policy — and facts are already being manipulated. At a recent meeting of the International Atomic Energy Association, for example, “US officials called several journalists to tell them that in the briefing IAEA officials [were ‘shocked,’ ‘astonished,’ ‘blown-away’](#) by Iran’s progress on gas centrifuges.” In fact, nuclear experts reported that “IAEA officials have said they were [not surprised by Iran’s actions](#),” prompting one IAEA official to say the U.S. statements came “[from people who are seeking a crisis, not a solution](#).” As Cirincione advises, “The key now is to get all this information on the table for an open debate. ... An accurate and fully understood assessment of the status and potential of Iran’s nuclear program [is the essential basis for any policy](#).”

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