

Haaretz screaming headline: Bibi Seeks Cabinet Approval for Iran Attack

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{Caption; photo is of the Hebrew edition} Haaretz front page headline: 'Netanyahu Seeks Cabinet Majority for Military Action Against Iranian Nuclear Plants' {end}

The main headline of today's Haaretz practically screams out (translation of Hebrew edition):

Netanyahu Seeks Cabinet Majority for Military Action Against Iran's Nuclear Plants

The article continues (from the English edition):

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak are trying to muster a majority in the cabinet in favor of military action against Iran, a senior Israeli official has said. According to the official, there is a "small advantage" in the cabinet for the opponents of such an attack.

Netanyahu and Barak recently persuaded Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, who previously objected to attacking Iran, to support such a move.

The article suggests that this month's IAEA report will be "decisive" in determining Israel's decision. Since Israeli media have already blared what the supposed substance of the report will be (i.e. that Iran is moving ever closer to processes necessary to create a nuclear weapon), this seems a dubious proposition. What this means is that Bibi wants to bomb Iran and if there is any material in the report that justifies his pre-ordained outcome, then he will seize upon it.

Much more decisive in the determination will be whether there is a cabinet majority, as the headline notes. Once Bibi has the votes it will hardly matter what the IAEA says.

The report says that Bibi and Barak currently have a "slight majority." Opposing are Yuval Steinitz, Dan Meridor, Bogie Yaalon (this is a shocker to me), Benny Begin and Eli Yishai. Maariv too has a screaming headline (Hebrew only):

Meridor: Iran Deliberations Graver than Anat Kamm Leaks

I take this to mean that the contents of the materials leaked by Anat Kamm, which revealed that IDF general had approved Palestinian assassinations in violation of Supreme Court

rulings, will pale in comparison to the damage that an Iran attack could do to the IDF and Israel.

This is the first Israeli media confirmation that not only have Bibi and Barak have determined to attack Iran, but that they have attempted to dragoon the cabinet into supporting it as well. This takes the plan one step closer to realization. As soon as there is a cabinet majority, the attack could happen at any moment. Don't be terribly surprised if you wake up one morning and find pictures of Israeli missiles falling on Iran on CNN and the front page of your local paper. It no longer seems much of a question of "if," but rather "when."

It's very important that bloggers, journalists and others prepare for such an eventuality. We should try to create open channels of communication among us and Israeli and Iranian bloggers who can tell us in real time what is happening, who's saying what, and where the bombs are falling. This will be a chilling, savage attack which I imagine will impact not just Iran, but Israel as well.

In this column, Haaretz columnist Reuven Pedatzur, a former IAF fighter pilot and one of Israel's premier military analysts, practically begs the current IAF commander to stand lay his body on the railroad tracks to halt the runaway train that is the project for an Iran attack:

If anyone can save Israel from catastrophe it is the Israel Air Force commander. All Maj. Gen. Ido Nechushtan has to do is whisper to the prime minister and defense minister that an Air Force attack on Iran cannot achieve its goals.

The force's airplanes can reach Iran and even drop bombs, he must tell them, but ultimately the operation will not destroy the Iranian nuclear program. At best it will be delay the program by a few months.

...Such an approach to the policy makers may be opposed to the "Air Force spirit," but Nechushtan must act with national responsibility. It would not be a display of defeatism, but rather one of supreme responsibility in an era when the decision-making process has gone dangerously haywire. Only he can stop the train speeding to a collision in Iran's skies.

...Never, it seems, has an IDF officer been in a position in which his professional recommendation could bring on Israel a disaster of such proportions. We may only hope Nechushtan will rise to the occasion.

Yet a third Haaretz article portrays (Hebrew) a Knesset speech by Ehud Barak in which he says regarding a possible Israeli strike against Iran:

Events of the past year in the Middle East lead to the conclusion that there may be situations in which Israel will have to defend its own interests or stand up for things which are vital to it by itself, without being able to depend on regional powers or expecting the help of others.

This was a clear reference to the fact that Israel, if it attacks Iran will not receive the backing of the U.S. (though whether it receives tacit backing is another question).

In related developments, Shelly Yachimovitz, the leader of the much depleted Labor Party, actually took a reasonable position warning Bibi and Barak against a "reckless, megalomaniacal Iranian adventure." Of course, the moment the F-16s take off, Labor will

dutifully fall in line and we won't hear another peep out of them until at least a hundred Israelis are dead. Then we'll begin to see some finger-pointing and even a charge that Bibi didn't let the IDF hit hard enough. So goes Israeli politics.

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