

# Did Iran Just Test a Nuclear Weapon?

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*On October 5, local sources [reported that a 4.6-magnitude earthquake hit an area in the Kavir desert](#), 44 km southwest of Semnan, a city in northern Iran. However, following the reports, some sources pointed out that this was an “unclear seismic event” not entirely consistent with patterns commonly seen in naturally occurring earthquakes.*

In addition, the very location of the event raises further doubts. This is particularly apparent in the case of the Kavir desert, [with earthquakes being a rather rare occurrence in the area](#) (the last one was in 2010). Interestingly, [on the same day, Iran issued a NOTAM](#) (Notice to Airmen, essentially a warning to all aircraft in a given area) for airspace over western Iran “every day from 17:00 UTC to 01:30 UTC until the 9th of October, for military operations”. Although the affected area is relatively far from where the alleged earthquake hit, the timing is certainly peculiar.

It could also be argued that the NOTAM is connected to the possibility of Israeli strikes after Iran fired at least 180 missiles at Israel on October 1. Tel Aviv’s actions in the Middle East, including direct attacks on Iranian assets in the region, have prompted Tehran to respond directly. Thus, it can be expected that these back-and-forth attacks will continue, making it perfectly reasonable that Iran would expect strikes from Israel. Obviously, any Israeli attack would be expected to affect western parts of Iran, explaining the NOTAM over the area. However, what makes this rather strange is that [Tehran denied any NOTAMs were issued](#). Namely, **Javad Salehi**, the General Director of Communications and International Affairs of Imam Khomeini International Airport, claims no NOTAMs were issued for western Iran, although local sources insist that the warning was indeed sent out.

And yet, even if we ignore the NOTAM issue, the “mysterious seismic activity” that was reported on October 5 still leaves many questions unanswered. Other countries have also noted that the supposed earthquake was “strange”. [Reportedly, an Armenian station picked it up and established that](#) “it lacks a seismic compressional wave, making the event more consistent with an explosion than an earthquake”.

Further evidence suggests that it happened in the vicinity of Aradan, a small town in the Semnan Province, the birthplace of former Iranian president **Mahmoud Ahmadinejad**. Images reportedly released by the Armenian station suggest that the “mysterious seismic event” in Iran looks more like an “underground nuclear test than an earthquake”, with one tell-tale sign being that “there was not a single aftershock”. If these reports are indeed true, these are certainly groundbreaking developments.

According to local sources, some prominent Iranian politicians said Tehran “needs to establish a new grade of deterrence” only a day before the alleged earthquake. If the event

was indeed an underground nuclear test, such statements could refer to nuclear weapons. [The Cradle reports](#) that this could be an attempt by Iran to deter Israel from attacking its nuclear facilities. Quoting its Iranian sources, the outlet reports that “the possibility that a nuclear test was indeed conducted is being discussed at high levels in Iran”.

Last month, The Cradle’s Syrian sources reportedly predicted that “Iran would seek to develop breakout nuclear weapons capability in response to Israel’s assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran”. Numerous Israeli [decapitation strikes in recent weeks and months](#) would certainly prompt Iran to acquire such a strategic deterrence capability.

And while a response to Haniyeh’s assassination was already expected, Tel Aviv’s strike that killed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps) **General Abbas Nilforushan** on September 27 was what definitely triggered Tehran’s direct response. However, this is certainly not enough, as Israel obviously has the means to [conduct decapitation strikes against its opponents in the region](#) (particularly through Mossad).

Iran most likely believes only an arsenal of weapons of mass destruction would suffice as a credible means of deterrence. The same logic is present in Tel Aviv, which possesses a small nuclear arsenal of at least 90 warheads ([with some sources claiming it could field upwards of 400](#), although this number remains unconfirmed). The possibility that both countries now have weapons of mass destruction is certainly an uneasy prospect.

For years, the mainstream propaganda machine has been reporting that [Iran is a “week, month or year away from acquiring nuclear weapons”](#). Back in July, US **Secretary of State Antony Blinken stated that** “instead of being at least a year away from having the breakout capacity of producing fissile material for a nuclear weapon, [Tehran] is now probably one or two weeks away”. Such speculation is so common that most people simply don’t pay attention to it. This is why the Heritage Foundation’s claim that “Iran can produce nuclear weapons far more rapidly than expected” went largely unnoticed. Published on the same day Iran launched its latest retaliatory strikes on Israel, [the report noted that](#) “in late April 2024, a senior Iranian lawmaker stated that there is only a ‘one-week gap from the issuance of the order to the first test’ [of a nuclear bomb]”. Once again, such claims were all too common for years.

However, while Tehran previously denied it even has a nuclear weapons program and insisted on using such technologies for peaceful purposes only, it seems this rhetoric is slowly being abandoned. Namely, back in May, Kamal Kharrazi, a senior adviser to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, [warned that “Iran may be forced to change its nuclear doctrine”](#). Although he said that there’s “no decision to build a nuclear bomb”, Kharrazi also pointed out that “should Iran’s existence be threatened, there will be no choice but to change our military doctrine”.

[According to a report by the International Atomic Energy Agency \(IAEA\)](#), these statements were then followed by a “significant increase in Iran’s stockpile of uranium enriched to the 60% level between May and August”. The report further pointed out that uranium enriched up to 60% purity is “just a short, [technical step](#) away from the 90% required for nuclear weapons”.

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