

Moredechai Vanunu and Israel's Plans to Wage Nuclear War on Iran: History of Israel's Nuclear Arsenal

Hundreds of nuclear warheads under the control of Israel's defense establishment

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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

*This incisive article by **Michael Carmichael** first published on January 15, 2007 provides a historical focus on Israel's nuclear weapons program.*

*In 1986, an Israeli civil servant who worked in the state-owned nuclear industry flew to London where he was invited to meet with reporters working for *The Sunday Times*.*

*In these press briefings, **Mordechai Vanunu revealed Israel's top secret - the Israelis had gained control of a growing stockpile of nuclear warheads.***



*In the weeks immediately following these explosive revelations, Mr Vanunu visited Rome where Israeli espionage agents abducted him and forced his return to Israel. Back in Tel Aviv, **Mr Vanunu** was placed on trial for treason. Tried before a secret tribunal, Mr. Vanunu's conviction was a foregone conclusion, and he served an eighteen-year prison sentence with eleven of those years in solitary confinement.*

Released in 2004, Mr Vanunu was placed under orders prohibiting him from travel to other nations where he has been offered academic posts.

Mr Vanunu is now living in the sanctuary of a Christian Church in Israel, but this refuge has not stopped his political persecution by the government of Israel. Since his release, Mr Vanunu has been arrested four times, and he is now facing 21 charges of contravening a

lawful direction, a charge that carries a penalty of two years in prison for each count (ie. 42 years).

The European Parliament condemned the state of Israel's persecution of Mr. Vanunu. Amnesty International published a report charging that Israel's treatment of Mr. Vanunu was, "cruel, inhuman and degrading . . . such as is prohibited by international law."

Since his exposé of Israel's nuclear arsenal, Mr. Vanunu has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize a total of seventeen times.

Even though Joseph Rotblat placed Mr. Vanunu's name in nomination, Vanunu's Nobel nominations have always faced systematic opposition organized by friends and supporters of the state of Israel who wield immense influence in the Nobel deliberations.

In 1987, **Mr. Vanunu received the alternative Nobel Peace Prize (ie. the Right Livelihood Award)**. In 2005, he was awarded the Peace Prize of the Norwegian people and an honorary doctorate from the prestigious University of Tromso.

The state of Israel has consistently blocked Mr. Vanunu's taking up his academic post as a Lecturer in history at the University of Glasgow. The Israeli government prohibits Mr. Vanunu from traveling beyond their borders apparently for fear that he will hold press briefings about their now well-known arsenal of nuclear weapons.

Expert opinions vary but some now rank Israel third or fourth behind only the USA, Russia and possibly France in holding the largest stockpile of nuclear weapons.

In addition to the nuclear devices themselves, Israel has a formidable arsenal of delivery systems. Israel's Shavit rocket has been used to launch satellites into orbit, and the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* reported that the Shavit could be converted to an ICBM with a range of 7,000 miles allowing an Israeli nuclear strike anywhere in the Middle East as well as eastern and western Europe and Central Asia. Additionally, Israel now has a fleet of Dolphin class submarines armed with cruise missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads. **The *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* reported that Israel may have developed nuclear artillery shells as well as nuclear land-mines that could be deployed in the Golan Heights** to discourage Syrian designs on the region.

Video on Israel's Nuclear Weapons Facility

English subtitles

Even though the existence of Israel's nuclear arsenal is now a well-established fact, the state of Israel has consistently refused to confirm its nuclear status. Furthermore, Israel refuses to become a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Israel's adamant nuclear insularity and denials have created tensions - not only in the Middle East - but globally.

America's acquiescence to the Israeli nuclear arsenal may have encouraged India, Pakistan,

North Korea, Iran, Saudi Arabia and other states now known to be capable of developing nuclear capabilities. For instance, in 2003, leading members of the government of Saudi Arabia announced that due to worsening relations with the United States they were considering the development of nuclear weapons. The worsening relations between Saudi Arabia and the United States are predicated upon the policies of Israel: its rogue nuclear arsenal and its harsh treatment of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. Some reports indicate that India has secretly provided Saudi Arabia with nuclear weapons.

In the early 1990s, one of America's premiere journalists, **Seymour Hersh**, published a best-selling book, ***The Samson Option***, detailing Mr Vanunu's testimony. Hersh's book contained a great deal of new information about Israel's vaunted nuclear defense capability.

Since 1986, the overwhelming majority of the global population has known about Israel's nuclear arsenal, but many Americans remain completely unaware of the existence of hundreds of nuclear warheads under the direct control of the Israeli defense establishment. In the mid-1990s, Michael Moore – a person who is not known for his conservatism nor for his reflexive support for the policies of the state of Israel – made disparaging remarks during an interview that touched on the existence of the Israeli nuclear arsenal. Moore made this gaffe because – even though he is usually well-informed – it was obvious that he was oblivious to either Mordechai Vanunu's testimony or Mr Hersh's bestselling book.

In the reports linked below, *The Sunday Times* have now revealed new evidence that **Israel is currently [early 2007] planning to launch a nuclear attack against Iran.**

Aimed at destroying the embryonic Iranian nuclear industry, **the Israeli missiles armed with nuclear warheads will be delivered via conventional jet fighters.** *The Sunday Times* reported that Israeli jet pilots are already undergoing advanced training to fire the nuclear warheads at targets in Iran – in a tactical replay of their attack that destroyed Saddam Hussein's nuclear reactor at Osirak in 1982.



In *The Sunday Times* coverage, no reference was made to the possibility of a nuclear strike from Israeli submarines that have been equipped with cruise missiles that could be armed with nuclear warheads. Military experts have been reporting the presence of Israel's Dolphin class submarines in the Persian Gulf for the past two years ostensibly to support US naval operations in case Iran attempts to close the Straits of Hormuz.

Two years ago, Seymour Hersh began publishing a series of papers in *The New Yorker* detailing a vast planning project in Donald Rumsfeld's Pentagon to attack and wage war on Iran. In the interim, many other authors have now reported details of the highly publicized policy of the Bush-Cheney White House to use military force to compel Iran to abandon any ambitions she might have to develop nuclear weapons. These American military options involve the use of nuclear weapons sometimes called bunker busters that are designed for

striking deeply embedded underground locations such as Iran's nuclear laboratories.

It is worthy of note that Elizabeth Cheney, the eldest daughter of Vice President Richard Cheney, is the US government official at the State Department responsible for a budget of circa \$100 million per year to encourage "democracy" inside Iran - ie. covert operations designed to construct a fifth column inside Iranian society that is hostile to the existing government.

From a lengthening series of reports, it is now clear that the Bush-Cheney administration has been severely weakened by the recent midterm elections, and they apparently no longer feel capable of launching a direct nuclear strike against Iran using American forces, American weapons and America's formidable nuclear arsenal. In negotiations that took place in Washington between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and President George Bush - as well as in the highly publicized negotiations between Vice President Dick Cheney and King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia - it would now appear that the joint planning to strike Iran has altered only slightly from the grandiose schemes originally designed by Donald Rumsfeld prior to his abrupt retirement on the day after the midterm elections last year.

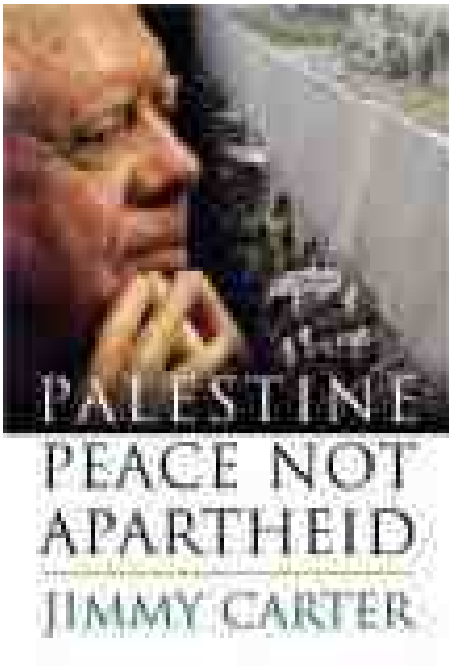
According to *The Sunday Times*, there has been a slight re-calibration of the plans for the war against Iran. Rather than a direct American nuclear strike against Iran's hard targets, Israel has been given the assignment of launching a coordinated cluster of nuclear strikes aimed at targets that are the nuclear installations in the Iranian cities: Natanz, Isfahan and Arak.

What remains to be seen is whether the American media - now ranked 53rd on the International Press Freedom Index - will cover the story, and whether the American people will be informed of the intimate collaboration between the Bush-Cheney White House, the Olmert government in Israel and other governments now known to be involved in the military planning to contain Iran's still nascent nuclear development.

Following *The Sunday Times'* detailed coverage of Israeli's plans to launch a nuclear strike against Iran, the government of Israel issued an unconvincing denial. One Israeli official made an ambiguous statement when he said that the story could have been leaked intentionally in order to prevent the nation of Israel from doing something, "crazy." When Israeli government officials offer praise - even in this odd manner - it is time to take note that a political realignment may be taking place in Tel Aviv.

In America, there is no doubt whatsoever that a major political realignment has already taken place. The American Israel Political Action Committee (AIPAC) and its cheerleaders are concerned that the trend to criticize Israel is now intensifying both on the left and in the center of the political spectrum in the US. The government of Israel's support for the disasters brought about by the neoconservative ideology has triggered an American political backlash in the wake of years of disappointment over the war in Iraq - a war that was to have been the crowning achievement of the Bush-Cheney administration.

Former President Jimmy Carter's book, *Palestine: Peace not Apartheid* is now standing high on the bestseller lists even though he has faced a firestorm of protest from the Israel-Firsters led by Abraham Foxman, the formidable propagandist of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL).



Against this rapidly shifting backdrop, American politicians of both parties – and from all parts of the political spectrum: left, right and center – are now openly expressing their opposition to the war in Iraq. That said, relatively few members of Congress have taken any position on the Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld plans for war with Iran.

Last week, the new Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Joseph Biden (D-Delaware) challenged Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, about her inflammatory remarks threatening a military intervention to confront what she termed Iran’s “aggression.” In striking terms, Senator Biden warned Secretary Rice that Congress would not tolerate any US military attack across the Iraq-Iran border. Senator Biden arrested Secretary Rice with his promise of a “constitutional confrontation” between Congress and the White House if President Bush orders US forces to cross the border. Currently the most outspoken opponent of America’s plans to wage war on Iran in the US Congress, Senator Biden is an unannounced candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2008.

In a parallel development, top-ranking staff at the White House ordered Tony Snow to issue a weak statement designed to allay rising public concerns about expanding the unpopular war into Iran. Snow attempted to pour scorn on what he deemed to be an “urban legend” – that the Bush White House has made plans for war with Iran.

Coming as they did in the aftermath of Condoleezza Rice’s provocative remarks about Iranian “aggression” and the highly publicized seizure of five Iranian officials by US forces in Iraq, Mr. Snow’s attempt to quell the concerns of Americans was underwhelming, unconvincing and little more than a transparent attempt to disinform the public. The appointment of Mr. Snow, a former personality from Fox News, was, perhaps, one of the worst of many questionable decisions made by a White House besieged on so many fronts.

During his confirmation hearings last month, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates responded to a question about potential US military intervention against Iran. Mr. Gates stated that such an attack could have, “devastating consequences,” for America and her friends in the region.

Mr. Gates was right. The reality is stark. If Israel attacks Iran, she will be playing Russian

roulette on a grand scale. The retaliation from a broad spectrum of nations and multinational militias in the Middle East could bring about a concerted series of devastating hard power attacks against both Israeli and American forces arrayed in a dense cluster from Iraq to Kuwait, Qatar and the Persian Gulf.

During his recent appearance at the Oxford Union, Avi Shlaim, one of the premiere historians of Israel, said,

“There was never any special relationship between America and Britain. Whenever Bush was confronted with the choice of pleasing Blair or Sharon, he always sided with Sharon. The real special relationship is between America and Israel.”

There is an old adage in politics: It’s never your enemies who get you into trouble: it’s your friends.

(Mordechai Vanunu in Israel)

Michael Carmichael is Chairman & Chief Executive Officer, The Planetary Movement, Oxford, UK and a frequent contributor to Global Research

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