

Netanyahu's war ultimatum at the UN

By [Barry Grey](#)

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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's belligerent and provocative speech last Thursday before the United Nations General Assembly underscored that plans for an unprovoked military attack on Iran are far advanced.

Netanyahu set a deadline of four to nine months after the US elections in November for the launching of a war, ostensibly to destroy Iran's uranium enrichment facilities. Pointing to a crude drawing of a bomb with a lit fuse, he said, "By next spring, at most by next summer at current enrichment rates, they will have finished the medium enrichment and moved on to the final stage... The red line should be drawn right here, before Iran completes the second stage of nuclear enrichment necessary to make a bomb."

This was an ultimatum to Iran to abandon its nuclear enrichment program or face massive retaliation at the hands of Israel and the United States. Netanyahu, who has criticized the Obama administration for delaying military action against Iran, stressed in his UN speech the convergence between the US and Israel.

The goal of "stopping Iran's nuclear weapons program," he said, unites "Democrats and Republicans alike." He spoke two days after President Obama addressed the General Assembly and declared "a nuclear-armed Iran is not a challenge that can be contained... The United States will do what we must to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon."

Netanyahu sought to create the impression that he would be willing to forgo an Israeli attack on Iran prior to the US elections in exchange for a clear commitment from Washington to launch a war next year.

His speech exemplified the criminal character of the foreign policy of both Israel and the United States. He presented Israel—which maintains an illegal occupation of Palestine and has attacked all of the neighboring Arab states in the course of its relatively brief history—as the victim, and Iran—which has never attacked Israel—as the aggressor.

He demanded that Iran abandon a nuclear enrichment program that is entirely legal within the terms of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, while Israel has refused to sign the treaty and has illegally built an estimated 400 nuclear warheads. Neither Israel, nor the US, nor the International Atomic Energy Agency has presented any evidence to contradict Iran's claim to be developing nuclear power for peaceful civilian purposes. The US acknowledges that Iran possesses no nuclear weapons and has made no decision to build them.

The war being prepared jointly by the US and Israel is a war of aggression, a so-called "preventive war"—something openly adopted as policy in the 1930s and 1940s by the Nazi

Third Reich and condemned at the Nuremberg Tribunals as a war crime. It was outlawed in the founding documents of the UN itself.

Following Netanyahu's speech, both he and Obama declared their basic agreement on confronting Iran. Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney praised the address.

The Israeli prime minister told the Israeli press on Saturday that he had had "a pretty long talk" with Obama, followed by a "one-on-one meeting with [Secretary of State] Clinton." He added, "Our teams are meeting on the highest levels. I think Israel and the US can reach much more concrete understandings than what commentators may think."

These statements suggest that commitments have been made by the Obama administration, with the bipartisan support of the Republicans, that are being concealed from the American people. The entire election campaign is being carried out without any serious discussion of the likelihood of war against Iran and its implications for the US, Iran and the world.

There is a conspiracy of silence, maintained by both political parties and the media, in the face of broad popular opposition to another war in the Middle East, to drag the American people into precisely such a disaster.

Meanwhile, the US, Israel and allied countries are carrying out war exercises in the Persian Gulf in preparation for a military attack. Last Thursday, naval forces from 25 nations completed a 12-day mock battle in the largest-ever military drill in the Gulf. Included in the armada with the US were Britain, France, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and others.

This month, the US and Israel will hold war games involving simulated attacks against Iran and Syria. According to the Israeli newspaper *Maariv*, the exercise will be named "dress rehearsal."

According to various press reports, the US attack will be anything but narrowly focused and brief. Israeli newspapers in August reported that US National Security Adviser Thomas Donilon had briefed Israel on US plans that began with an initial launch of hundreds of cruise missiles to demolish "Iran's air defenses, intelligence bases and radar stations." This would be followed by a wave of B-52 bombers that would "drop bunker-buster bombs on all of Iran's nuclear facilities."

The influential Washington DC military and intelligence think tank Center for Strategic & International Studies last month published a lengthy analysis of the likely dimensions of a US attack on Iran. The report listed eight missile bases and twelve industrial and research facilities that would be bombed, in addition to Iran's five main nuclear sites.

There is the real danger that the US or Israel would resort to nuclear weapons. One newspaper report noted that Israel has enlarged its submarine force, which is reportedly equipped with nuclear weapons.

On Sunday, a number of signatories to a recent study of the implications of a US attack on Iran, put out by the Iran Project, published a column in the *Washington Post* calling for a public discussion in advance of any military action. The authors of the column included the former head of the US Central Command, Retired Adm. William Fallon, former Republican

Senator Chuck Hagel, former Democratic Congressman Lee Hamilton, and another former commander of the US Central Command, retired Marine Gen. Anthony Zinni.

The column warned that a US attack on Iran's nuclear facilities could quickly escalate into a massive deployment of US ground troops and spark a regional war "involving Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinians and other Arab states and terrorist groups."

Once again, after Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, the American people are being thrust into a criminal war on the basis of false pretexts and lies—this time against a country with many times the population of the previous war targets and under conditions of even more explosive tensions—social, national, religious, sectarian—throughout the Middle East and Central Asia.

As in the previous wars of the twenty-first century, the real war aims are being concealed. Iran is being targeted not because of its nuclear program, but because it has vast oil reserves and is deemed the biggest regional obstacle to US hegemony in the Middle East and Central Asia. The US is determined to monopolize control of the world's oil resources in order to counter its global economic decline and weaken the position of its main rivals, first and foremost China.

The American people have a right to know what plans for conquest and mass killing are being plotted behind their backs! They should demand an accounting from the government and both big business presidential candidates.

The only social force that can halt the warmongers and disarm them is the working class. The fight against war requires the building of a mass socialist and internationalist movement to put an end to the capitalist system that breeds war and repression.

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