

Study: Attack on Iran Would be the “Start of the Long War”: “An Attack could Send Oil Prices through the Roof”

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Global Research, July 15, 2010
[Raw Story](#) 15 July 2010

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Iran’s response to an attack could send oil prices through the roof, think tank argues

An Israeli attack on Iran would fail to stop Tehran’s alleged nuclear weapons program and would lead to a “long war” that would be marked by economic instability and mass civilian casualties, says a study from British think tank.

In a [report](#) (PDF) released Wednesday, the Oxford Research Group stated that, while the likelihood of a US attack on Iran’s nuclear program has been lessened by the Obama administration’s policies, advances in Israeli military technology have increased the potential for an Israeli attack.

The study, entitled “Military Action Against Iran: Impact and Effects,” also argues that an attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities would galvanize the Iranian public behind the leadership of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and give the regime in Tehran more support and rationale for developing nuclear capabilities.

“An Iranian administration under attack would experience considerable national unity and would work rapidly to redevelop its weapons programs, withdrawing from the NPT and prioritizing nuclear weapons,” the report states.

As a result of that, the study concluded, Israel would be forced into repeatedly attacking Iranian facilities, “resulting in prolonged conflict — the start of a long war with potential regional and global consequences.”

Furthermore, the report — written by Paul Rogers, a professor of peace studies at Bradford University — suggested that any Israeli strike on Iran would cause a large number of civilian casualties because the Israeli strike would likely not be limited to the nuclear facilities themselves.

Israel “would hit factories and research centers, and even university laboratories, in order to do as much damage as possible to the Iranian expertise that underpins the program,” Rogers said in a [press release](#). Any Israeli military attempt to neutralize Iran’s nuclear facilities “would probably include attempts to kill those technocrats who manage Iran’s nuclear and missile programs.”

“There would be many civilian casualties, both directly among people working on Iran’s nuclear and missile programs, but also their families as their living quarters were hit, and secretaries, cleaners, laborers and other staff in factories, research stations and university departments,” Rogers said.

The ORG argues in its report that Iran would have many options in retaliating for an attack on its nuclear facilities. Chief among them would be Iran’s ability to block the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow body of water separating the Indian Ocean from the Persian Gulf, through which oil tankers from the Middle East have to travel. If Iran were to block the Strait, oil prices would jump dramatically throughout the world.

Iran could also launch “paramilitary and/or missile attacks” on Western oil processing facilities in the Middle East, and could begin supporting groups fighting the US presence in neighboring Afghanistan and Iraq.

Earlier this month, President Barack Obama [signed into law](#) another round of US sanctions against Iran, following on the heels of a fourth round of sanctions placed on the country by the UN.

Whether or not Iran is planning to build nuclear weapons has been an issue of controversy for years. While Iran says its nuclear program is purely for peaceful purposes, Israeli lawmakers have described it as an “existential threat” to the small Jewish state.

The ORG report says that Iran is “slowly developing the technologies and personnel to enable it to handle a range of nuclear-related systems.” If the country were to decide to use those capabilities to make weapons, it would take three to seven years for it to produce six usable weapons.

“There is no firm evidence that such a decision has been taken, but the nature of recent construction projects, especially those underground, suggests that the leadership at least wants the option of a capability, even if it is held in reserve rather than implemented,” the report states.

The Oxford Research Group [describes itself](#) as “an independent non-governmental organisation and registered charity, which works together with others to promote a more sustainable approach to security for the UK and the world.” It is not affiliated with Oxford University.

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