

In this report Sam Gardiner examines one possible outcome of the Iran-West controversy. **If Israel were to decide that it had no choice but to strike Iranian nuclear facilities, what would be the consequences?** With some justification, Israel seems to be losing confidence in the commitment of the Obama Administration to protect its interests with respect to Iran, writes Gardiner. Israel is therefore seen to be pushed in a direction that could lead to an attack against Iran. The Israel Defence Forces are assessed to have the military capability to damage and to set back the Iranian nuclear program.

Immediately after an Israeli attack, the United States would likely begin significant defensive deployments to the region, according to Gardiner. Soon thereafter, the Administration in Washington is assumed to choose to finish the job, eliminating Iran's nuclear facilities. As the conflict moves forward, the United States would want to end it as quickly as possible. However, assessments of Iranian action along with a visible opposition inside Iran, would likely lead the Administration to expand the conflict, making regime elimination the new objective.

Gardiner concludes that Iran is the only country with the capacity to prevent the seemingly inevitable movement towards what would be a disaster for itself, for the region, for Europeans, and for the United States.

This is the second report on consequences of military actions against Iran published by the Asia Security Studies Programme at the Swedish Defence Research Agency. The first report, **Consequences of Military Actions Against Iran**, was published in 2008. Both reports are available for download at www.foi.se/asia.

ISBN: 978-91-7056-126-9

The Israeli Threat

An Analysis of the Consequences of an Israeli Strike on Iranian Nuclear Facilities

Sam Gardiner, Colonel, USAF (Retired)



FOI ARKIVEX.

SPECIAL REPORT
MARCH 2010

FOI-S--3387--SE

The Israeli Threat

An Analysis of the Consequences of an Israeli Strike on Iranian Nuclear Facilities

Sam Gardiner, Colonel, USAF (Retired)



SPECIAL REPORT
MARCH 2010

ISBN: 978-91-7056-126-9

FOREWORD

THE CONTROVERSY over Iran's nuclear programme is in its eighth year and no satisfactory resolution seems possible in the near future. Despite broad international critique Iran continues its nuclear quest. Stakes have constantly been raised as Iran persists in taking further uranium enrichment steps. Coupled with the accelerated ballistic missile programme and revelations of covert nuclear facilities observers cannot but conclude that Iran is marching towards a de facto nuclear weapons capability.

In its legitimate quest to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons capability, the West has used a mix of sanctions and diplomatic negotiations in efforts to dissuade Iran from continuing down the nuclear route. Western diplomacy has all but failed in these attempts. This failure hinges on a few key factors. Due to differing objectives and approaches the U.S. and Europe have had difficulties in closely coordinating their efforts. Lack of coherence and coordination has also been evident within Europe. In 2003, Europe as a whole seemed to be taking the role of mediator but by 2005 the EU had swung closer to the U.S. position. Some European countries were quick to take a tough stance. Others kept a cautious approach focusing on maintaining lucrative economic relations while not defying the U.S. too much. This has led to a collapse of European unity. What little trust and confidence there was between Iran and Europe has withered away, further undermining and limiting diplomatic progress.

FAILURE TO APPROACH Iran in a comprehensive way including on issues that are core Iranian concerns, is another likely reason for the lack of any solution. The U.S. and to a large extent Europe have thus far taken an uncompromising approach, conditioning most negotiations and suggested deals on the suspension of enrichment. A mix of real concerns and negotiation tactics have pushed the Iranian regime to frame the problem differently. The issue of primary importance for Iran remains the question of Gulf security and the regional strategic balance. Iran puts great importance on historic legacies, which drives it to seek its "normal" place as steward of Gulf security. At the same time the "encirclement" of Iran by adversaries constitutes a real and acute security risk. Thus the lack of a common framing of the problem has made a solution more difficult.

The key adversaries in this controversy, the U.S. and Iran, also lack the knowledge and tools to understand one another

well enough. Diplomatic and scholarly interaction has been very limited for more than 30 years. This makes miscalculations and misconceptions of the other party's behaviour and political signals a fact further limiting possible diplomatic solutions.

Western efforts have resulted in UN sanctions against Iran. Up until now these sanctions have had symbolic importance but done little to influence Iranian behaviour. Society at large has suffered but the Iranian regime has been able to stay its nuclear course.

THE LACK OF DIPLOMATIC progress has fuelled speculations on solutions other than diplomatic. One central tenant in the media has been that of military attacks against Iran. Such attacks present a possible alternative to diplomacy and evidence suggest that the U.S. and Israel may have made plans for such attacks. Speculations have been further fuelled by periodic leaks hinting at actual preparation for attacks. Such leaks have often been traced back to governments in Tel Aviv or Washington when they have wanted to send clear signals demonstrating the seriousness with which they see the issue.

This conundrum is the backdrop to Sam Gardiner's scenario describing a possible future following an Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear installations. Mr. Gardiner convincingly shows us how U.S. policy under the Obama administration has gone through a policy shift. Outside observers, and especially Israel, are likely to interpret this shift as a move towards accepting a nuclear Iran. Mr. Gardiner reminds us that in the past, Israel has not hesitated to take whatever measures it finds suitable to ensure its own security let alone survival. The report puts into perspective and encourages the reader to think through the obvious question whether Israel has the choice not to attack Iran should the situation carry on as it has. It also makes clear that consequences of such an attack would be widespread and serious but perhaps not devastating for Israel, making the plausible argument stronger.

Stockholm February 24, 2010

John Rydqvist

Programme Manager Asia Security Studies Programme
Swedish Defence Research Agency. www.foi.se/asia

CONTENTS

Executive Summary	7
<i>Setting the Stage – An Israeli Attack</i>	7
<i>U.S. Responses</i>	7
<i>The Implications for U.S. Policies and the Region</i>	8
Introduction	9
Background to the Strike	11
<i>Israel More and More on Its Own</i>	11
<i>Iran’s Focus on Israel</i>	14
<i>Israeli Grand Strategy</i>	15
Planning The Strike	16
<i>Getting the Israeli Strike Package to Iran</i>	16
<i>Targeting</i>	20
<i>The Trigger</i>	21
<i>Zanék: Go</i>	22
<i>Prior to and During the Attack</i>	23
Zanék – H+12: Twelve Hours After the Strike	24
<i>Immediate Global Reaction After the Strike</i>	24
<i>Israeli Actions</i>	25
<i>Inside Iran</i>	25
<i>The First Meeting of the U.S. National Security Team After the Strike</i>	26
<i>Damage Assessment</i>	27
<i>Beginning the Tough Decisions</i>	29
<i>The First Decisions</i>	31
<i>Deployment of Forces to the Region</i>	33
<i>Inside Iran</i>	34
Zanék – H+24: Twenty-Four Hours After the Strike	36
<i>Another Meeting of the U.S. National Security Team</i>	36
Zanék – D+14: Two Weeks After the Strike	39
<i>The U.S. National Security Team with New Issues</i>	39
Back to the Present	44
<i>Preventing an Israeli Strike</i>	44
Summary	46
References	50

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

IN MARCH 2008, the Swedish Defence Research Agency published a report, *Consequences of Military Actions Against Iran* (FOI-R-2511-SE), which examined the consequences if the United States were to decide to resort to the use of force against Iran. That report pointed to far-reaching consequences whether or not the strike itself was considered a success or failure.

This report is a companion piece. It addresses a question that seems to be emerging in light of the unsuccessful attempts by the new U.S. Administration to engage Iran on its nuclear program.

The core question in the report is:

If Israel were to decide that it had no choice but to strike Iranian nuclear facilities, what would be the consequences?

Setting the Stage – An Israeli Attack

WITH SOME JUSTIFICATION, Israel seems to be losing confidence in the commitment of the Obama Administration to protect its interests with respect to the Iranian nuclear program. Tel Aviv makes the assessment that:

The United States and the rest of the world are occupied with issues other than a nuclear Iran.

The Americans seem to be gradually moving to accepting the notion of containing a nuclear Iran rather than preventing one.

As described in the analysis, Israel has the military capability to damage and to set back the Iranian nuclear program, and Israel is being pushed in a direction that could lead to an attack.

U.S. Responses

IMMEDIATELY AFTER AN attack by Israel, and even with no Iranian response, the United States is likely to begin significant defensive deployments to the region.

Its attempts over a period of a year to negotiate with the Iranians make the Obama Administration more vulnerable to domestic pressures to be strong in its reaction to an Israeli strike.

At an early stage after an Israeli attack, the United States would be faced with deciding whether to passively await

casualties or to attack Iranian military capabilities on its own. The United States would probably decide to finish the job on Iranian nuclear facilities and destroy as much as possible of Iran's capability to project combat power.

HYPOTHESIS:

The President's Speech at the End of the Meeting with Key Cabinet Officers.

"I cannot wait for Iranians to kill American men and women in uniform and American civilians. I have a responsibility to protect our people. The Iranians have said they will attack us. I have a responsibility to stop the attacks before they can take place. Those in Iran who are seeking the blessings of freedom are crying out for us to do something.

"In addition, I cannot sit idly by and watch Iranians kill innocent Israel citizens."

The drain on U.S. resources would thrust Afghanistan on to the back burner.

As a conflict moved forward, the United States' decision makers would want to end it as quickly as possible, an objective not necessarily shared by the Iranians. That pressure, along with a visible opposition inside Iran, would likely lead to the decision to make regime elimination the objective.

The Implications for U.S. Policies and the Region

HAVING CONSIDERED the way in which events might unfold after an Israeli attack on Iranian nuclear facilities, there are some implications for United States policy.

Although there are some leverage points for the United States on Israel, they are limited to punishment, and do not include prevention.

Washington is likely to assess that the United States will be put at a disadvantage if it waits until after an Israeli strike to deploy air and naval forces into the region.

United States interests will be damaged less if it moves forward with a combined Israel-U.S. operation and if initial targeting by the forces of the two countries is on Iran's general military capabilities as well as the nuclear sites.

From this analysis, Iran is the only country with the capacity to prevent the seemingly inevitable movement towards what would be a disaster for itself, for the region, for Europeans, and for the United States.

INTRODUCTION

Israel is an independent state where taking steps vital to our security is concerned ... We informed the Americans as we did others, only after the completion of the actual operation.

*Israel Defense Minister Rabin
October 1, 1985¹*

THIS STATEMENT WAS made after an attack on headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organization in Tunis in 1985. This strike is part of a pattern. When Israel identifies a national security threat, it will strike, and will strike at great distances.

The problem for Israel is not just the developing nuclear capabilities of Iran. Israel also has problems with the United States. During the Bush Administration, Israel could count on the U.S. taking a hard line with Iran. The Israeli leadership cannot be so certain with the Obama Administration. President Obama is not the friend of Israel that President Bush was. The Obama Administration openly and harshly criticizes Israel for expanding settlements in the Gilo neighborhood of Jerusalem. The U.S. President wants to negotiate with Iran. He reaches out to the Iranians. The U.S. does not seem to be in a hurry to stop Iran enriching uranium. The U.S. President says to the world that we need to give the Iranians space to make their decisions.

What has evolved since the Obama Administration took office is ironic. The argument has acquired a new dimension. According to the *New York Times*, before the U.S. President visited Beijing, officials visited China with a message. These officials carried the argument we have heard – that Israel sees Iran as an existential threat – but they took it to a new level. They told the Chinese that when Israel sees an existential threat, it takes matters into its own hands. Israel could attack Iran, and everyone knows what the consequence of that would be. Because of what Israel could do, these officials told the Chinese, China should support the United States to put pressure on Iran. In other words, Israel is the serious threat to Iran.²

An Israeli press source reported that President Obama passed a similar message to Chinese President Hu during his visit to China in November 2009. He is reported to have warned that the United States would not be able to keep Israel from attacking Iranian nuclear facilities for much longer.³

1. "92. Press Conference Following Israel Air Force Attack on PLO base in Tunis, 1 October 1985", Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, URL:<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1984-1988/92%20Press%20Conference%20Following%20Israel%20Air%20Force%20Att>

2. John Pomfret and Joby Warrick, "China's Backing on Iran Followed Dire Predictions", Washington Post, November 26, (2009).

3. Barak Ravid and Matasha Mozgovaya, "Obama Told China: I Can't Stop Israel Strike on Iran", Haaretz.com, December 17, (2009).

A difficult policy dilemma emerges for the United States and Europeans. Israel does not turn over its security to others. What if Israel were to decide it had to deal with the Iranian nuclear program by itself? What if, as it has threatened, Israel launched an attack on Iranian nuclear facilities? How would the United States and the West react to an Israeli attack? If we have a sense of how it would turn out, what kind of policy do we need now? Can a unilateral Israeli attack be prevented?

This paper is an examination of these policy questions. It is an analytical paper focusing on the details of probable future events. Those probable futures are formulated from the way in which Israel has dealt in the past with similar threats to its security and from the author's own work with decision simulations on Iran issues in the United States and Europe.⁴

Details of what the future might look like are important for policy makers. These details give substance to vague predictions. The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohamed ElBaradei, has said that an Israeli attack on Iran would "turn the Middle East into a ball of fire."⁵ He may have had some notion of what that means, but it is hard to believe that many who argue for the hard line against Iran do. Policy tends to be made from the present into the future. Let's do sanctions and see how Iran reacts. If they don't stop enriching, we'll decide what to do then.

One attempt to understand possible futures was made in December 2009 when Harvard's Kennedy School of Government hosted a diplomatic simulation focused on the dynamics of the Iran issues. Players took the roles of the U.S. President and the Israeli Prime Minister as well as other power centers involved in the back and forth we are likely to see in 2010. As one summary of the game put it, "Iran will be closer to having the bomb, and America will fail to obtain tough U.N. sanctions; diplomatic relations with Russia, China, and Europe will be strained; and Israel will be threatening unilateral military action."⁶

This paper picks up towards the end of the prognosis where the Harvard simulation left off. It will address the conditions that are likely to push Israel to decide that it has to take action on its own. Potential triggers for a strike will be explored. The paper will then examine the aftermath, the situation that is likely to confront U.S. decision makers in the first twelve hours, then the likely situation twenty-four hours after a strike, and finally, the situation after two weeks.

4. I have used hypothesized dialogue in parts of the paper. Obviously, this is not a conventional approach to strategy or policy analysis. In most cases when I use that technique, I am repeating what I have heard many times in decision simulations of the issues or I am basing it on previous Israeli operations. I footnote the source.

5. "ElBaradei Warns Against Any Israeli Attack on Iran", News.az, November 6, (2009).

6. David Ignatius, "Who Loses the Iran Game", Washington Post, December 6, (2009).

BACKGROUND TO THE STRIKE

Israel More and More on Its Own

ACCORDING TO *Der Spiegel*, the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv recently ran a decision simulation. It unfolded in the way Prime Minister Netanyahu may have expected. Iran continued to stall and reject compromises on its nuclear program. Heavy sanctions followed. Iran did not change. Israel was left with the attack option and no other.⁷

Inside Israel there is a current that is forcing the gap between Washington and Jerusalem. The Obama Administration's pressure on Israel to freeze settlements in the West Bank is being resisted inside Netanyahu's own Likud party. The Prime Minister is caught between a crisis with Washington and a crisis with the settlers.

Meanwhile, Iran continues to move forward with enrichment. The Obama Administration argues that Tehran needs space to accept offers. Israel's security continues to seem to take second place to Washington's interests in the Middle East.

At the same time the United States seems to be moving toward containment. There is more and more talk in the United States about how to deter Iran if it had nuclear weapons. John Bolton, the former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., reflected the concern in Israel when he said, referring to the Obama Administration:

*They're saying all of the right things, but there is a school of thought among many that an Iran with nuclear weapons can be contained and deterred. They, of course, prefer that Iran doesn't go nuclear, but they don't see that as a dramatically negative outcome. They're going through the motions. Deep in their hearts, a nuclear Iran is not ideal, but not extremely negative.*⁸

In discussing a nuclear-armed Iran at a conference, retired General John Abizaid, the former head of U.S. Central Command, has said, "The historical evidence would suggest that Iran is not a suicide state." He went on, "So, it is my military belief that Iran can be deterred."

In the recent Harvard simulation, the tension between the U.S. and Israel and the dynamics pushing the United States in the direction of containment was in evidence. As one of the players was quoted as saying, "The U.S. is moving away from preventing an nuclear Iran to containing a nuclear Iran – with

7. Dieter Bednarz, Erich Follah and Christoph Schult, "Israel's Patience with Tehran Wearing Thin", *Der Spiegel*, December 2, (2009).

8. "Bolton on Iran's Latest Provocation", *National Review Online*, December 2, (2009).

deterrence based upon the Cold War experience.”⁹ Containment is not a policy option from the Israeli perspective. The more it becomes a serious policy option for the United States, the more Israel will be pushed to take matters into its own hands.¹⁰

The Israeli press reported more detail than the U.S. press on what was supposed to be the secret Harvard decision simulation. Dore Gold, the former Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations, played Netanyahu. Interestingly the report was somewhat of a summary of what the Israelis already believe. According to Haaretz:

*The game made it clear: Iran will not stop on its path to producing nuclear weapons. The United States will not embark on a military action and will find it difficult to enlist support at the United Nations for imposing more severe sanctions, while relations between Israel and the United States will deteriorate.*¹¹

Groups in the United States supporting the Israeli position on Iran have attempted to raise the level of concern about the threat among the American public. One of these groups is “United Against a Nuclear Iran”. Its Advisory Board is a long list of individuals who are found on the Israeli side of issues, including the former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Jim Woolsey. One of the videos this group is distributing is called “Shame.” Its essence is the message that President Obama should be shamed by unclenching his fist and wanting to negotiate with the Iranian regime.¹²

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the most important group in the United States that supports Israel, has adopted Iran-as-a-threat as one of its main strategic communications themes. The group calls itself “America’s Pro-Israel Lobby.” During their annual meeting in Washington in 2009 members made an effort to see every member of the Congress for a discussion of the Iran threat. Frequent memos to the U.S. press contain a consistent theme:

- Iran has not stopped enrichment.
- Iran has enough enriched uranium for two bombs.
- Iran has secret enrichment facilities.
- Iran continues to advance its missile technology.¹³

The dilemma for Israel is that the focus of the leadership in the United States has been on other issues. Washington is focused on health care. Washington is focused on Afghanistan. Washington is focused on unemployment. Washington

9. Ignatius, op. cit..

10. According to a press item, a decision simulation was conducted at Harvard University on December 5, 2009. As described to this reporter, in the simulation the United States failed to keep Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and then moved to preventing the use of nuclear weapons. Not surprisingly, this became a source of tension between the United States and Israel in the hypothetical world. See “Harvard Simulation: U.S. Will Fail to Stop Iran Nucs”, IsraelNN.com, December 6, (2009).

11. Yossi Melman, “Experts Say Iran Has Clear Path to Nuclear Weapons”, Haaretz.com, December 10, (2009).

12. Unitedagainstinucleariran.com

13. These points are from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee Memo, “Continuing Iranian Defiance Demands Crippling Sanctions”, December 7, (2009).

is other-focused. The U.S. President, Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense talk very little publicly about the issues of Iran. By the measure of coverage, it is also clear that the world press have not embraced Iran as a threat.¹⁴

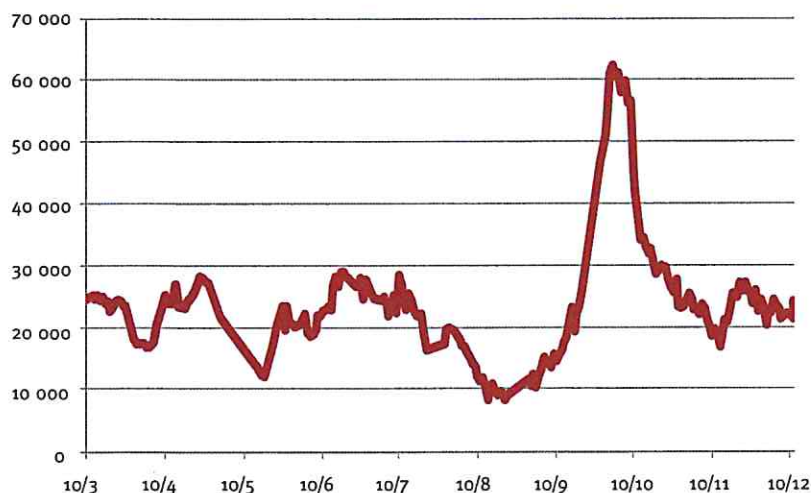


Figure 1. Number of English-Language Articles on “Iran Nuclear” in 2009¹⁵

“Sarah Palin” and “Tiger Woods” when measured by the number of articles produced by a Google news search are more important than the Iranian nuclear program.¹⁶ Israel has reason to be concerned about the commitment of the Americans.

The Europeans are just as other-focused as the Americans. The problem of Iran is far down the list of pressing topics. Climate change is more important. The United States is pressing NATO countries on Afghanistan. In the U.K. there is the general election and the finger pointing over the invasion of Iraq. There are the economic problems of Ireland, Greece and Spain. France is engaged in self-examination of its national identity. The theme of Israel’s message has been that Iran is a problem for the world. Israel has reason to be concerned that the message is not reaching the Europeans with sufficient force.

In an interview with *Der Spiegel* in mid-November 2009, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that the U.S. had no intention of taking the military option off the table.¹⁷ For Israel, the recent U.S. decision to deploy over 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan is a real demonstration of U.S. strategic priorities.

One of the concerns people have is that Israel might do it without being asked ... given the fact that Iran has a stated policy that

14. Using one day of press coverage as an example, on December 8, 2009 doing a Google comparison, 22,000 articles covered “Iran nuclear”; 83,000 on “unemployment”; 80,000 on the “deficit”; 152,000 on “Afghanistan”; and 165,000 on “health care”.

15. The data for this graph come from a daily, early-morning (between 05:00 and 08:00) Google search for news articles that contain the terms “Iran” and “nuclear.”

16. More was written about Sarah Palin than about Iran’s nuclear program from November 22 to December 2, 2009 during the early part of her book-selling bus tour.

17. “Our Goal is to Defeat Al-Qaida and Its Extremist Allies”, *Spiegel Online*, November 15, (2009).

their objective is the destruction of Israel, the Israelis might well decide to act first, and let the rest of the world worry about cleaning up the diplomatic mess afterwards.

*Vice-President Richard Cheney
MSNBC Interview, January 2005*

The isolation of Israel can also be found in other issues not directly related to Iran. The E.U. foreign ministers, for example, have urged Israel to share Jerusalem with the Palestinians.¹⁸ This position is directly opposed to Prime Minister Netanyahu's position that Jerusalem should be an undivided capital.

Beyond these specifics, there is more and more discussion in the American and European press on the need for a general diplomatic separation of the U.S. from Israel. Clearly, Israel has reason to be concerned about the commitment of the Americans.¹⁹

If Tel Aviv had any doubts that Washington was not very focused on Iran, it need look no farther than the U.S. President's State of the Union Message on January 27, 2010. His speech was primarily about jobs and the U.S. economy. Very little was on foreign policy issues. Although he did mention Iran there was only in a single sentence in the speech. In what parallels the many years of vague threats, he said, "... as Iran's leaders continue to ignore their obligations, there should be no doubt: They, too, will face growing consequences."²⁰

All of this is part of the message Israel is getting that it has to take care of its own security interests. Taking care of its own security interests more and more has to do with destroying the Iranian nuclear facilities and reducing Iran's influence in the region.

18. "EU Urges Israel to Share Jerusalem", Reuters, December 8, (2009).

19. As an example of this concern, a recent article accused U.S. analysts of planning the unthinkable. See Tovah Lazaroff, "Interview: Planning for the Unthinkable – A Nuclear Iran", Jerusalem Post, November 19, (2009).

20. "State of the Union Message Transcript", White House, January 28, (2010).

21. "Iran Drills Simulate Defense of Nuclear Sites", Payvand Iran News, November 23, (2009).

Iran's Focus on Israel

THE IRANIANS SEEM to have become more concerned about the possibility of an Israeli strike on their nuclear facilities. At the end of November 2009, Iran conducted a five-day air defense exercise. On the first day of the exercise, a general in the Revolutionary Guard said, "... even if Israeli warplanes evade Iranian defenses, Iran will launch surface-to-surface missiles to destroy Israeli air force bases."²¹ He was clear. He sees a threat from Israeli warplanes.

Israeli Grand Strategy

ISRAEL HAS ALWAYS had the problem of a multi-front conflict. The Israeli planners have to be concerned in their strategic calculations for a strike on Iran about other fronts.

Hezbollah is the most serious threat on other fronts. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has been saying recently that Israel used to consider Hezbollah as a militia, but he says they now must think of Hezbollah as the real army of Lebanon.²² The planners have to take seriously the threat by Hezbollah to attack Israel if Iran is hit. The threat is made more serious by the increasing ranges and number of Hezbollah weapons. From recent statements, the Hezbollah leader made it clear that he has no intentions of giving up the group's weapons as required by the U.N. resolution after the 2006 fighting with Israel.²³

Hezbollah is now a more serious threat than it was in 2006. It most likely possesses missiles capable of reaching major Israeli cities.²⁴ In addition, its major defensive positions are now north of the Litani River. The consequence of the increased range of the weapons and the movement *outside* southern border areas is that any future conflict would be broadened.²⁵ Israel would have to go deeper into Lebanon to deal with the threat.

From a strategic perspective, it would be more desirable to get the threat from Lebanon out of the way before an attack on Iran, but the hangover from the 2006 conflict is probably too great for Israel to get support at home for a pre-emptive strike against Hezbollah before an Iran operation.²⁶

Countries in the region that would tacitly support an Israeli strike on Iran, like Saudi Arabia and Egypt, would find it hard to support another Israeli invasion of Lebanon if it were done simultaneously with the attack on Iran. This most likely leaves Israel with being prepared to invade Lebanon but waiting for a Hezbollah provocation. Israel is left with a defensive and incident-based strategy, continuing to deploy systems to defend against Hezbollah rocket attacks and being ready to attack into Lebanon if there is a compelling enough incident either before or after its attack on Iran.

Beginning in late October 2009, reports surfaced in the Middle East and France that Israel was planning the next operation into Lebanon, and it would take place in the spring of 2010. According to the Jordanian daily newspaper *Ad-Dustour*, the operation was discussed with U.S. and French military experts at a meeting in France.²⁷ In a more concrete indication, Lebanon's Ambassador to the U.N. in a note to the Secretary-

22. He said this in a speech to the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. See Rebecca Anna Stoll, "Iran Can Now Produce a Nuclear Bomb", Jerusalem Post, September 9, (2009).

23. "Hezbollah Threatens Weapon Buildup", Wall Street Journal, November 30, (2009).

24. Steve Weizmann, "Israel Says Major Cities in Hezbollah Rocket Range", Associated Press, November 10, (2009).

25. The argument for this strategic change can be found in Howard Schneider, "Hezbollah's Relocation of Rocket Sites to Lebanon's Interior Poses Wider Threat", Washington Post, January 23, (2010).

26. There was a serious rumor in 2006 in Washington that Vice-President Dick Cheney encouraged or at least withheld open opposition to the attack into Lebanon because of this same strategic view. An attack on Iran requires a neutralized Hezbollah. Get Lebanon done first.

27. "Israel May Begin New War in Lebanon in Spring 2010", RIA-NOVOSTI, November 6, (2009).

General warned that there were signs that Israel is preparing for an attack into Lebanon.²⁸

The Hamas leader has said, "All Islamic militant groups will form a united front with Iran against Israel if it attacks Iran."²⁹ The Israeli effort to negate the Hamas threat is included in the continuous Israeli efforts to bomb tunnels. In addition, the U.S. and French are helping Egypt on their side of the border to prevent tunneling.

The Syrian threat, meanwhile, although not really very serious, is fundamentally negated by the offer of negotiations and by the United States efforts to improve relations with Damascus.

PLANNING THE STRIKE

Getting the Israeli Strike Package to Iran

THE ISRAELIS SAY the attack would resemble the kind of operation they used against Egypt in 1967. They say the plan involves more than just air strikes from the "Hammers" of 69 Squadron: it would include Shaldag commando teams, perhaps some version of sea-launched missiles, and perhaps explosive-carrying dogs that would penetrate the underground facilities.³⁰

Israel has conducted an open exercise of the kind of strike package it might send to Iran, 100 aircraft, F-16s and F-15s. The package flew a round-trip simulated mission to Greece. Air refueling aircraft and rescue helicopters supported the operation.³¹

Israel is one of the countries that are most capable of projecting power in the world.³² The best way to grasp its capabilities to launch an attack on Iranian nuclear facilities is to look at previous operations. Israel has a history of projecting combat power at greater distances and in more complex operations than it would face with the Iran effort.

ENTEBBE. In 1976 Israel freed a group of hostages at the Entebbe airport in Uganda. Four C-130s and two Boeing 707s flew 4,000 kilometers to conduct this combat operation, over twice the distance to the Iranian nuclear facilities. In order to cover the raid, the 707s flew as disguised as flights of the Israeli

28. "Lebanon Envoy Warns U.N. of Possible Israeli Attack", RIA-NOVOSTI, October 31, (2009).

29. "Hamas Says Will Unite with Iran if Israel Attacks", Reuters, December 15, (2009).

30. Israel has periodically (and uncharacteristically) released elements of a plan. "Taking Aim at Iran", Sunday Times (London), March 13, (2005), is the best illustration I have found. When Israel leaks information like this, is Iran meant to be the audience, or is the United States the target?

31. Michael Gordon and Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Says Exercise by Israel Seem Directed at Iran", New York Times, June 20, (2008).

32. Israel probably ranks among the top five nations with capabilities to project combat power. Others in the groups are the United States, Russia, the U.K. and France. Although China would be ranked high in combat power, it does not have a legacy of power projection.

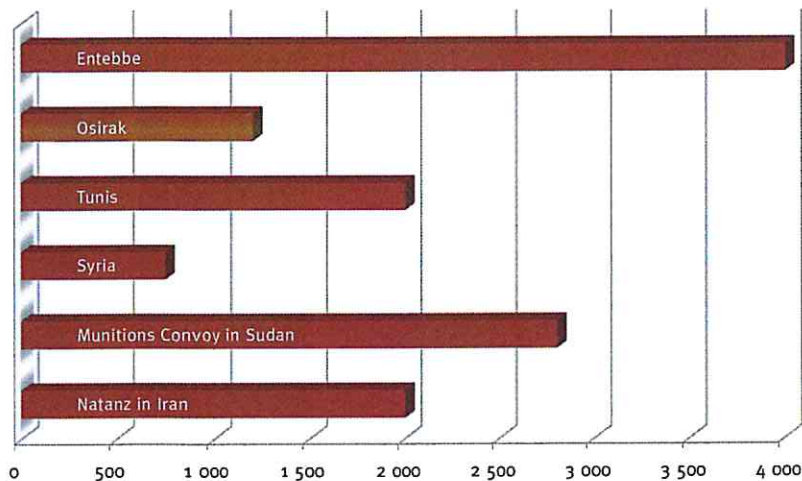


Figure 2. Israeli Power Projection: Comparing Earlier Strikes to an Attack on the Iranian Nuclear Enrichment Facility at Natanz

airline, El Al. El Al facilities and personnel were used to service the aircraft on the mission.

The United States has told Israel that it must be informed of a strike on Iran. In 1976, Israel informed the United States. The Israeli Ambassador in Washington contacted Henry Kissinger as operation Thunderbolt was underway, in what was to become a pattern in this kind of strategic operation.

A major mission of Israeli commandos is to accumulate intelligence on military systems Israel might encounter in future operations. That was being done even in this hour-long stay at Entebbe. A portion of the force that landed went after the hostages in the terminal, another guarded the gate to prevent the Ugandan military from reinforcing their troops at the airport, and a third went to the Russian radar facility to get critical equipment to take back to Israel.

Describing what he called “surgical operations,” the Commander of Thunderbolt said, “If we can do this in Africa, we can do it anywhere.”³³

OSIRAK. The 1,200-kilometer 1981 Israeli attack on the Iraqi nuclear facility at Osirak has other aspects in addition to what could be the components of an Iran operation. It had important political and operational dimensions.

In his justification for the attack, Prime Minister Begin argued that without the strike Israel would have been confronted with the possibility of another Holocaust, the same argument Prime Minister Netanyahu uses about Iran.³⁴ In his specific justification for pre-emption, Begin said it was a “mo-

33. William Stevenson, *90 Minutes at Entebbe* (New York: Bantam Books, Inc, 1976), p. 127.

34. Prime Minister Begin said during the press conference after the Osirak attack that had Israeli not done it “another Holocaust would happen.” See “Begin Says Israel Would Attack Again”, *Washington Post*, June 10, (1981). In his speech on Holocaust Remembrance Day 2009, Prime Minister Netanyahu said, “Holocaust deniers cannot commit another Holocaust against the Jewish people.” See “Israel Pledges to Protect Itself from a ‘New Holocaust’ Threat Posed by Iran’s Nuclear Programme”, *Daily Telegraph*, April 21, (2009).

35. Dan McKinnin, *Bullseye One Reactor: The Story of Israel’s Bold Surprise Air Attack That Destroyed Iraq’s Nuclear Bomb Facility* (San Diego, CA: House of Hits, 1987), p. 5.

rally supreme act of national self-defense.”³⁵ It is certainly easy to imagine Netanyahu making the same kind of statement the day after an Israeli attack on Iran.

TUNIS. The range was 2,000 kilometers when Israel struck the headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1985. It was again a package of F-16s and F-15s, the F-16s doing the bombing and the F-15s standing ready to protect the strike package.³⁶

With an element one could expect to see in a future attack, an Israeli ship was nearby in support of the air operation. In addition, any thought that Israel might be concerned about civilian casualties in a strike on the Iranian nuclear facilities finds a counter-example in the Tunis effort. Sixty Palestinians and Tunisians were killed, and the Israeli bombs injured over 100 while only “several” Arafat bodyguards were killed.³⁷

MUNITIONS CONVOY. The most recent power projection operation was against a convoy of trucks in Sudan reported to be carrying munitions from Iran to Hamas in January 2009. Israeli F-16s and F-15s flew 2,800 kilometers to conduct the strike, again a much greater distance than a similar operation against Iran would involve.

A new component of this operation was the use of remotely piloted vehicles to provide real-time assessment of battle damage.³⁸

36. A description of the attack can be found in William E. Smith and John Borrell, “Middle East Israel’s 1,500-Mile Raid”, *Time*, October 14, (1985).

37. The *Time* piece on the attack cited above put the number of casualties at 60 killed and 100 wounded. At the press conference held by the Israeli Defense Minister, the casualties were described as “between 30 and 50 killed, and a large number wounded.” See: “Press Conference Following Israel Air Force Attack on PLO Base in Tunis 1 October 1985”, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

38. “How Israel Foiled an Arms Convoy Bound for Hamas”, *Time*, March 30, (2009).



THE MIDDLE EAST. Map Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin.
Source: C.I.A. Factbook

This was a new dimension of the Israeli operations that would be very helpful in an attack on Iran. A shoot-look-shoot tactic maximizes the effectiveness of the munitions load carried on the mission.

The speculation on how Israel would get the strike package to Iran is a tactical detail that is very often discussed and much written about. Imagination has spanned the entire Middle East map and more.

- At a period when the connection between Georgia and the Israeli military industry was growing, there was speculation that Georgia had offered Israel the use of two of its air bases for a strike on Iran.³⁹
- For a short period we were seeing articles reporting that Israel aircraft were secretly using U.S. bases in Iraq, and that this was in preparation for a strike on Iran.⁴⁰
- A few years ago we were reading that Turkey would turn a blind eye to overflights of its territory.⁴¹ The improvement in relations between Turkey and Iran and the souring of Turkish-Israeli relations make this unlikely. In fact Prime Minister Erdogan has warned Israel that using Turkish airspace would have serious consequences.⁴²
- We have seen articles reporting that Saudi Arabia, because of its desire to stop the Iranian nuclear program, has secretly offered to allow Israel to fly over its territory on a strike.⁴³
- One can even find press reports that suggest that India has offered Israel the use of some of its bases for operations against Iran.⁴⁴

Although the route to the target areas in Iran is important, radar coverage is more important than borders. For the Osirak attack, the Israeli F-15s and F-16s flew over portions of both Saudi Arabia and Jordan below 400 feet, under radar coverage. The strike package then descended even lower as it entered Iraqi airspace, below 100 feet.⁴⁵ The same tactic could be used for striking Iran. Israel knows how to do this kind of operation. A way into the target areas for the aircraft can be found.⁴⁶

HYPOTHESIS:

The Discussion that Takes Place When Israel Crosses into the Iraq Air Defense Zone

Scene: The Command Center in Iraq.

Air Situation Duty Officer to the Senior Officer in the center:
"Sir you need to take a look at this. We have a large flight of aircraft that have penetrated into Iraqi airspace from Jordan at

39. Arnaud De Borchgrave, "Israel of the Caucasus", UPI, September 2, (2008). According to this author, "In a secret agreement between Israel and Georgia, two military airfields in southern Georgia had been earmarked for use of Israeli fighter-bombers in the event of pre-emptive attacks against Iranian nuclear installations."

40. Gwen Ackerman and Patrick Donahue, "Israel Denies Report of Iraq Military Exercises", Bloomberg.com, July 11, (2008).

41. Tim Butcher, "Israel Willing to Go It Alone on Iran Attack", Daily Telegraph, December 4, (2008).

42. "Erdogan Warns Israel Over the Use of Turkish Airspace to Attack Iran", Al Bawada, December 12, (2009).

43. Uzi Mahnaimi and Sarah Baxter, "Saudis Give Nod to Israel on Iran", Sunday Times, July 5, (2009). According to this article, "The head of Mossad...has assured Benjamin Netanyahu...that Saudi Arabia would turn a blind eye to Israeli jets flying over the kingdom during any future raid on Iran's nuclear sites." It goes on to quote a diplomatic source, "The Saudis have tacitly agreed to the Israeli air force flying through its airspace on a mission that is supposed to be in the common interests of both Israel and Saudi Arabia."

44. Zaheerul Hassan, "Indian Air Bases and Israeli Strike Against Iran", China Daily: China Forum, July 7, (2009). The article says that for an Israeli strike on Iran, "India will provide air bases for refueling and other administrative support to Israel."

45. The attack profile for Osirak is described in "Factfile: How Osirak Was Bombed", BBC News, June 5, (2006). There is a trade between altitude and fuel consumption on a mission. It would technically be possible to fly the entire route to Iran at very low altitudes, but fuel consumption would be too high. I can imagine a sophisticated attitude management based upon intelligence on radar coverage in the countries being transited.

46. I have found, in discussing an Israel attack on Iran, that background is an important part of how others see the issue of how Israel would get combat power to Iran. Military audiences accept that a way could be found. Academics want to argue that it could not be done. In my class at the U.S. National War College, one of the operations I used to have the students

Continued on p. 22

Continued from p. 22

examine was the 1980 U.S. attempt to rescue U.S. hostages in Iran. One could have made the same argument for that operation. How could U.S. combat power get into Iran? The answer in the operation was that helicopters met refueling aircraft on the ground in the open desert, a technique that could be used by Israeli commandos on their way to attack a nuclear facility. For the details of the rescue mission, see Colonel James H. Kyle, USAF (retired), *The Guts to Try: The Untold Story of the Iran Hostage Rescue Mission by the On-Scene Desert Commander* (New York: Orion Books, 1990).

47. This hypothetical conversation comes from my own experience during the later stages of the Vietnam War. I was stationed at an air base where the C.I.A. operated. We did not know what they did but would often get a notification of a special flight that was to be ignored. The standing order would probably be, when notified of such a flight, just to ignore it and not inform Iraqi officials.

48. In the first Gulf War, the United States shut down 85% of Iraq's electricity-generating capacity. In a single attack on Serbia on May 7, 1999, 70% of the lights in the country went out. See "CBU-94 Blackout Bomb", Global-Security.org.

49. David E. Sanger, "U.S. Rejected Air for Israeli Raid on Iranian Nuclear Site", *New York Times*, January 11, (2009). According to Sanger the covert U.S. program on which there has been intelligence sharing "started in early 2008, [and] includes renewed American efforts to penetrate Iran's nuclear supply chain abroad, along with new efforts, some of them experimental, to undermine electrical systems, computer systems and other networks on which Iran relies." [changes needed, otherwise there is no main verb in this sentence].

low altitude. We had been informed that there would be a 'special mission' tonight. As usual, we assumed it would be a single C-130 at this time and on this heading."

Senior Officer: "Check the notification again."

Air Situation Duty Officer: "Sir, it says single aircraft on a special mission, radio silence. As you can see, this is not single aircraft."

Senior Duty Officer to General Ordierno's Executive Officer, the colonel who operates as the traffic policeman for the general: "Tom, this is Bill in the Command Center. We have a situation. I think you need to wake the general."

Executive Officer: "He is awake. He's on the phone to General Petraeus. I think the Israelis are up to something. Stand by. I'll get back to you."

(15 minutes later)

*Executive Officer calling the Command Center: "Bill, I'm not certain what's going on here, but it has been all the way to General Jones at the White House. Our orders are to ignore the flight, and do not inform the Iraqis."*⁴⁷

Targeting

FUNDAMENTAL TO THE attack on Iranian nuclear facilities is framing the strategic objective.

Setting back the Iranian nuclear program can take forms other than just the destruction of major facilities. One particularly effective means would be dropping carbon fibers on power lines. The U.S. used this tactic extensively in the first Gulf War and against Serbian targets in 1999. The fibers create arcs. The result is extensive electrical damage to generating capacity.⁴⁸

Iran's vulnerability to the carbon fiber weapon is obvious by looking at Google Earth satellite images. Three above-ground heavy power lines cross the open desert and terminate at the Natanz facility. Even images of the new tunnel enrichment facility near Qom show a power line that parallels the access road to the area of construction.

One could expect other non-kinetic components of an Israeli strike on the Iranian nuclear facilities. According to the *New York Times*, the United States and Israel have been sharing intelligence on covert methods to disrupt the entire Iranian nuclear system.⁴⁹ This could take the form of a computer network attack in an integrated targeting plan.

Israel has been improving its capabilities to conduct a strike

on Iranian nuclear facilities. It has the capability to get there, and it has the capability to do serious damage to the Iranian nuclear program.⁵⁰

The Trigger

ACCORDING TO MANY Israeli officials, Israel has had a plan for a strike on Iranian nuclear facilities for a long time. But militaries have lots of plans for lots of operations. Having a plan is not a prediction of a future event. What would trigger the execution of the plan? That is the important question.

One possibility would be the overwhelming realization in Israel that the United States and the rest of the world had no stomach for being tough on Iran. The path to this could be indirect. Iran continues to defy the international community. In the U.S. more and more think tanks and officials within the Government talk about containing a nuclear Iran. The unwillingness to deal with Iran would be compounded by a weak sanctions package. Israel concludes that it has to be responsible for its own security.

Another trigger could be a piece of intelligence. Israel might receive a report that suggests Iran is very close to building a nuclear weapon, closer than everyone thought. It could receive intelligence on a third, secret nuclear enrichment facility operating more sophisticated centrifuges than at the Natanz facility.

A trigger could be an event. According to press reports, the International Atomic Energy Agency has evidence that Iran has experimented with sophisticated nuclear warhead design.⁵¹ Nations' first uranium-based nuclear weapons are most often the so-called gun-type design; a single shot into the uranium pit produces the nuclear detonation. According to some reports, Iran has experimented with two-point implosion devices, a technique for detonating a uranium device from two directions that would produce a smaller warhead that could be put on its medium-range missiles.⁵²

According to International Atomic Energy Agency documents on testing that took place in 2003, Iran has a 400-meter deep shaft for testing. If Iran were to run a test of a two-point implosion device at its test facility at Parchin, it would indicate a high degree of sophistication in warhead design. It would indicate that Iran is not only close to possessing a weapon but also that it is close to a reduced-size weapon suitable for its missiles. Such a test could probably be a trigger for Israel.

Israel has said that the sale by Russia of the S-300 sophisti-

50. The best technical analysis of an Israeli strike I have found is: Whitney Raas, Austin Long, "Osirak Redux? Assessing Israeli Capabilities to Destroy Iranian Nuclear Facilities", MIT Security Studies Program Working Paper, April (2006). "...the IAF [Israeli Air Force], after years of modernization, now possesses the capability to destroy even well-hardened targets in Iran with some degree of confidence. The operation appears to be no more risky than the earlier attack on Osirak..."

51. Catherine Philp, "Secret Document Exposes Iran's Nuclear Trigger", Timesonline, December 14, (2009).

52. Julian Borger, "Iran Tested Advanced Nuclear Warhead Design – Secret Report", The Guardian, November 5, (2009) and *ibid*.

cated air defense missile system to Iran was a red line. Reports of a sale of this air defense missile system have been around for over five years. Although releases from both Moscow and Tehran say that a contract has been signed, delivery has been delayed with both the United States and Israel trying to convince Russia not to complete the contract.⁵³ If delivery were made, it would be as long as six months before the system would be operational. The delivery, however, could be a trigger for Israel.

The decision to go with a military option has another aspect, a component that makes the decision very finely balanced. This has to do with the Israeli leadership's assessment of the condition of the regime in Tehran. A belief that the regime is faltering, and it will not be long before there is a change from within, would make a decision for a strike easier to make. This assessment counters the argument that if attacked Iran would move even faster to a nuclear capability. Although the facts do not support it, the logic says that the program does not have to be set back very long because Iran is on the verge of an internal disruption that will bring a more moderate regime to power.⁵⁴

Zanék:⁵⁵ Go

53. An article in the Tehran Times on November 29, 2009 quoted Iranian officials as saying they have assurances that the missile system will be delivered within two months. "Russia 'Will' Deliver S-300 to Iran in 2 Months", Tehran Times, November 29, (2009). Delivery dates promised by Russia have to be treated with some skepticism.

54. Optimism about a course of action can undermine a rational decision. Decision makers tend to overestimate their own capacity and underestimate uncontrollable consequences. That dynamic would probably be present in an Israeli decision to attack Iran. See Dan Lovallo and Daniel Kahneman, "Delusions of Success: How Optimism Undermines Executives' Decisions", Harvard Business Review, July 1, (2003), pp. 27-37.

55. Zanék is Hebrew for "jump." It was the "go" signal transmitted to the aircraft participating in the raid on Entebbe. William Stevenson, op. cit., p. 99.

56. "Angel" was the call sign of the rescue helicopters on the Osirak operation. A new call sign would most likely be used for this operation.

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS prior to the attack, the participating Israeli air bases would be locked down. The Israeli military are good at secrecy prior to an operation. Other nations would not know what was about to happen. Attachés, whose job it is to find out when something like this is unfolding, would be in the dark. No opening would be there to turn events around.

HYPOTHESIS:

Briefing the Pilots.

At the mission briefing, the Commander talks through flight profiles. He goes over call signs, take-off sequence, first tanker rendezvous to top off tanks, routes and altitudes into Iran and the approach to the targets. He reviews radio frequencies and emergency procedures.

He talks about the rescue helicopters, call sign "angel."⁵⁶ Their take-off time is two hours before the fighter package. The CH-53s will be refueled by C-130s. He also shows the map of good locations to eject in order to be picked up by U.S. troops.

The airborne command post will also take off two hours before the fighters. It will transit into the region using an El Al flight number for the regularly scheduled commercial flight that services

India.⁵⁷ After the operation, the aircraft will recover in India.

The Commander describes supporting operations. Conventional Jericho missiles will be launched to reach their targets inside Iran at the time the fighter package is entering Iranian airspace. The missiles will target a few key air defense locations, but their main target is the nuclear facility at Arak and the processing facility at Esfahan. Everything there is above ground; expect good results.

"We'll have UAV support over Natanz. The airborne command post will be giving directions on our second passes for our aim points there. As you know, that worked well on the strike on the munitions convoy."

Although he only gives limited detail, the Commander mentions commando and other covert operations that will be part of the strike. Iranian command and control computer and radar systems will be shut down by cyber-attacks. He says special techniques will be used to neutralize the TOR-M1 air defense system. He concludes this part of the briefing proudly: "Tehran will not know what has hit them."

He wishes them "good hunting." The pilots quietly leave the briefing room to go to the van to be taken to their aircraft.⁵⁸

Prior to and During the Attack

IF HISTORY IS ANY guide, the notification to other nations, particularly the United States, would take place after the launch. As Israeli officials are reported to have said about the operation into Uganda, they did not want to give anyone a chance to object or interfere.

With the pattern set over 30 years ago, the Israeli Ambassador to Washington would call the U.S. National Security Adviser, General James Jones. Because Israeli aircraft would be operating near ongoing U.S. operations in the region, a call would most likely also be made to General David Petraeus, the Commander of U.S. Central Command.

Israel would adhere to the letter of the relationship with the United States, but would not give it any opening to stop the operation. Overflying Iraq, if Israel decides to do that, would be an embarrassment to the United States, but it would not be first time Israel has embarrassed the United States. The United States would not shoot down Israeli aircraft.

57. This technique of using El Al flight numbers to disguise military aircraft was used in the Entebbe operation.

58. The Commander's briefing hypothesized here builds on the briefing given before the strike on the Iraqi nuclear facility and the techniques used in the attack on the convoy in Sudan. The use of the airborne command post comes from the Entebbe operation.

ZANÉK – H+12: TWELVE HOURS AFTER THE STRIKE

Immediate Global Reaction After the Strike

THE UNITED NATIONS Security Council (U.N.S.C) would immediately meet to consider the Israel strike. The draft submitted to members would most likely be similar to the resolution submitted after the Israel attack on Tunis in 1985. The U.N.S.C:

*CONDEMNS vigorously the act of armed aggression perpetrated by Israel in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and norms of conduct; 2. DEMANDS that Israel refrain from perpetrating such acts of aggression or from the threat to do so; 3. URGENTLY REQUESTS the States Members of the United Nations to take measures to dissuade Israel from resorting to such acts against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States...*⁵⁹

The United States would be under pressure by other nations to support the resolution condemning Israel. If other nations insisted on this kind of language, the United States would abstain as it did in 1985.

Israel has been condemned before by the U.N.S.C. and would not fail to protect its security interests because it might be condemned again.

Immediately after the strike in 1981 on the Iraqi nuclear facility, there were a great many public outcries by government leaders but almost no action to punish Israel for the strike. In the wake of an attack on Iran, speechwriters could easily reuse what was said after the 1981 operations:

- "... an act of international terrorism that cannot be accepted," Egyptian Foreign Minister.
- "The Arab Republic of Syria has warned more than once about the Zionist enemy aggressions and its constant aggressive nature that constitutes a dangerous threat to the Arab nations and peace in the region," a Syrian spokesman.
- "... dismay and concerned" about the attack, a (West) German spokesman.
- "Israeli actions cannot be justified under any circumstances," Japanese Foreign Minister.
- "... a clear contravention of international law," U.N. Secretary-General.

59. "Text of U.N. Resolution on Israeli Air Strike", New York Times, October 6, (1985).

- "... enemies of world peace, Chinese Foreign Minister.
- "... an act of international gangsterism," spokesman for Pakistan.⁶⁰

Immediately after an Israeli strike, it would be clear that the Obama Administration's Middle East peace efforts would be damaged. In a similar way, in 1985 the Israeli strike on Tunis damaged the peace process. The risk of that happening did not stop Israel then. It is hard to imagine that it would hold Israel back now.

The strategic communications coalition in the United States that supports Israel would move into high gear. The story lines have already been developed and would be replayed. Iran is not just a threat to Israel; it is a threat to the world. Iran is the world's largest supporter of terrorism. Iran was close to possessing a nuclear weapon. Israel has acted to prevent another Holocaust.

An Israeli Army communications unit would verbally attack the United States and Europe at once. In September 2009, the Israeli Army formed a special unit to wage the public relations battle for Israel on the Internet.⁶¹ The unit maintains connections with bloggers, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter in order to push a favorable slant for Israeli. The Internet unit will be brought into the fight.

Israeli Actions

ISRAEL WOULD MOST LIKELY begin efforts to control escalation immediately after the strike. After the attack on the Syrian facility in 2007, Israel found a channel to inform the Syrian Government that it would not make an issue of the event if Syria did not.⁶² Israel would likely try to get the same kind of message to Tehran in this situation.

After the Israeli strike on the Iraqi nuclear facility, Israel hoped to have the United States announce the operation. If the announcement had come from Washington, it would appear as if there had been prior American approval. The story began to leak, however, and the Israeli Prime Minister gave the first official announcement. An effort to have the Americans announce this strike would probably be made.

60. Dan McKinnen, *Bullseye – One Reactor* (San Diego: House of Hits Publishing, 1987), pp. 192–194.

61. Gwen Ackerman, "Israel Army Unit Waging Internet Battle After Gaza Criticism", *Bloomberg.com*, December 3, 2009. This unit was used heavily recently to get out the Israeli message when a ship was captured with munitions on board, reportedly bound for Hezbollah from Iran.

62. Israeli Prime Minister Olmert called Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan and asked him to pass the message to Syria that no more strikes were planned. Erich Follath, Holger Stark, "The Story of Operation Orchard: How Israel Destroyed Syria's Al Kibar Nuclear Reactor", *Spiegel Online*, November 11, (2009).

Inside Iran

IRAN WOULD MOST LIKELY not decide on its strategic response quickly after the strike. The decision process is very slow. Characteristically, meetings of the Supreme Security Council chaired by the Supreme Leader are not even held until there is agreement on a course of action among the major players.⁶³

Given the consequences of the presidential election of 2009 and events since then, the leadership in Iran could have some fear of losing control of the domestic situation. That would become an area of focus, as well as the strategic response to the Israeli strike.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps will push for a hard line against Israel and the United States. Making it very difficult to control escalation, the Revolutionary Guard might take some actions on its own without waiting for a decision.

Iran would probably not respond to the Israeli suggestion that the strike be downplayed.

The First Meeting of the U.S. National Security Team After the Strike

THE PICTURES RELEASED while the White House was deliberating on the Afghanistan strategy could be released again without change. All the participants are looking very serious, and the men still have their suit jackets on.

The President is sitting at the end of the table. On his right is Vice-President Biden; on the President's left is his National Security Adviser, General James Jones. Secretary of Defense Gates is next to Biden. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff sits to Gates' right. Secretary of State Clinton sits to Jones' left. Further down the table, leaning forward to catch the President's words, we see the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., the Director of National Intelligence, the Director of the C.I.A. and the President's Chief of Staff. A few staffers sit in the chairs away from the table along the side of the room. On the wall facing the President are four screens. One of the larger screens is showing General Petraeus who is on a secure video link from Florida.

In the normal course of considering strategic issues within the U.S. Government, there is a hierarchy of committees. The Deputies Committee consists of the deputy Cabinet members and is normally chaired by the Deputy National Security Adviser. Above the deputies is the Principals Committee. This group is made up of the Cabinet members and would be chaired by the National Security Adviser. Because of the gravity of

63. I have done some decision simulations focused on understanding how the Iranian Supreme Security Council addresses major strategic issues. What becomes obvious is that the process is very slow. "Slow" would almost certainly apply during an unfolding crisis like this.

the situation, the President himself would be in the Situation Room so as to be able to hear directly from the Cabinet, as he was during the discussion of the U.S. Afghanistan strategy.

Damage Assessment

THE PRESIDENT ASKS TO start with an update on the Israel strike. The Director of National Intelligence begins a short briefing. His PowerPoint slides and satellite pictures appear on the screen to the left of Petraeus' image.

HYPOTHESIS:

First Assessment by the Director of National Intelligence

"Mr. President," the DNI begins. "The results of the Israeli strike are mixed." He is telling what the assessment would have been had we known about the strike before it took place. "Since most of the facility was above ground, the heavy water plant at Arak, as you can see from this image, is very seriously damaged." He continues, "Serious damage was done the above-ground facilities at Esfahan; two weapons were aimed at tunnel entrances there, but we do not believe there was serious damage.

"The damage assessment for the buried enrichment facility at Natanz is more difficult. Israel used the tactic of putting multiple penetrating weapons on a single aim point, the same spot above the centrifuge chambers. From our own tests, we know this can cause serious damage even through the earth and concrete cover. Since we can't see inside, we can't be certain."

The DNI concludes. "Mr. President, we cannot say with certainty how much the Iranian nuclear program has been damaged, but it has been damaged."

As for intelligence on other aspects of the region, as in Iran, the reports would most likely suggest preparations but without clarity on future actions. Hezbollah would be making military preparations. From signals intelligence sources, there would most likely be reports of increased traffic between Hezbollah and its global cells. There would probably be reports that the Revolutionary Guard had been communicating with its personnel in southern Iraq and in Afghanistan. It would appear dangerous, but it would be difficult for intelligence analysts to say exactly what was taking place.

Syria signed an agreement on strategic cooperation with Iran in 2006, a military agreement in 2007, and another agreement on cooperation in 2009. None of these agreements is specific

about what Syria would actually do if Israel were to attack Iran; however, there would be most likely indications of military preparations by Syria. This would probably be assessed as a strategic situation to be watched.

The assessment of how Iran would react would also be given with caveats. The briefing chart on possible Iranian courses of action would probably look something like this:

- Iran could decide not to respond immediately and to accept a period of “victim status,” gaining support within the Middle East and the rest of the Muslim world.
- Iran could respond with low-DNA attacks (not attributable to itself) against Israeli and U.S. interests.
- Iran could respond with full and open military attacks.

Although the regime has publicly promised to conduct an open military response, early after an attack the United States intelligence community cannot know how Iran would respond. Iran will not have decided itself. The uncertainty, however, would be an important factor in the early and tough decision from the U.S. leadership.

The Director of National Intelligence would have to be more specific. In his briefing, we could expect him to say:

- The Revolutionary Guard will most likely win the internal argument. Their influence in the regime has continued to grow. This guardian of the revolution will have even more influence now that Iran has been attacked.
- Iran and the Revolutionary Guard have told the world how they would respond if they were attacked by Israel. Until we see evidence to the contrary, we have to take them at their word.
- We have to expect that Iran will attack U.S. installations in the region. One of the Supreme Leader’s aides has said that if Iran were attacked it would respond and “destroy 32 U.S. bases in the region.”⁶⁴
- We can expect oil flow out of the Gulf to be disrupted by mines, small boats and land-based anti-ship missiles.
- We can expect the Quds units of the Revolutionary Guard to support attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- We can expect violence against Israel from Hamas and Hezbollah to increase.
- Finally, and of most concern, it is possible that sleeper cells inside the United States and Europe could conduct terrorist attacks.

64. “Khamenei Aide: Iran Would Attack the Heart of Israel”, Jerusalem Post, June 12, (2008).

Even this early in the crisis, regime change might surface for discussion. The Director of the Central Intelligence Agency might make a statement that the situation could unfold into a long conflict despite U.S. desires to get it over with quickly. He might point out that Iran fought an eight-year war with Iraq with over half a million dead and that a real ceasefire came only after it appeared that the regime in Tehran might be in danger.⁶⁵ He might conclude with a dramatic statement that eventually the United States is going to have to consider eliminating the regime in Tehran. He might be challenged by someone around the table who would say there was no way would the United States send ground forces into Tehran to do stability operations. He might respond that he was careful to say “regime elimination.”

The idea of doing away with the current leadership in Tehran would not be new to those sitting around the table in the White House Situation Room. After the apparent failure of negotiations, the U.S. press has increasing number of references to the possibility of enforcing a different leadership in Iran. On one day, the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* both carried lead editorials suggesting that it was time to focus on a change.⁶⁶

At this meeting, the attendees would not consider the domestic political component of the situation. It would be in the back of their minds, however. The echo of the conservative message would be in the room. Obama appeased the Iranians and look at where it has gotten us. Obama has been dithering; now we have this situation. Let’s hope he doesn’t take three months to decide what to do this time. A subtle but real pressure would be felt in the Situation Room. Those present would be aware of the likely trajectory of public opinion.

Beginning the Tough Decisions

DISCUSSION OF THE potential damage and the Iranian options would continue around the table. As people begin to rehash the same points, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff might speak up. “Mr. President, I have to underline my concern that Iran still has all of its capabilities to strike at the United States and our allies in the region.” In the homespun sort of talk he sometimes uses, “We’ve stirred up the bee, but he still has his sting.”

The President asks the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff about the Iranian capability to close the Strait of Hormuz.

65. An Israeli Defense Ministry researcher, Dr. Moshe Vered, recently wrote a paper while on sabbatical in which he argues that an Israeli strike on Iran could lead to a very long war not unlike Iran’s eight-year war with Iraq. Amos Harel, “Analysis: It Won’t end in Six Days”, Haaretz.com, August 11, (2009).

66. “The Key to Dealing With Iran: Press Ties With the Opposition”, Editorial, *Washington Post*, January 30, (2010); and “Iran, After the Deadline”, Editorial, *New York Times*, January 30, (2010).

He replies that the Iranians have the capability to endanger ['hazard' means to risk the loss of] the Strait, "but I believe the ability to sustain that is not there."⁶⁷

In addition, discussing the capability of the Iranians to disrupt the flow of shipping through the Gulf, the participants would have to address the other Iranian threats. On numerous occasions, Iranian officials have said that if either the United States or Israel were to attack them, the U.S. bases would be hit. This would become a policy dilemma. Should the United States react based upon what the Iranians have threatened to do, or should it respond only on provocation?

There is also a domestic component of the hard decision making at this first meeting. The price of oil is likely to spike immediately.⁶⁸ The longer there is fighting or even the prospect of fighting, oil prices will stay high. If prices were to stay high for a long time, President Obama's economic recovery plans could be dealt a serious blow. There is even the consequences of higher oil prices on the President's Afghanistan strategy. The cost of a gallon of fuel delivered into Afghanistan is extremely high. One estimate puts it at \$400 per gallon.⁶⁹ The consequences would be serious if the price of fuel to support operations in Afghanistan doubled. There would be intense pressure to get this situation with Iran resolved quickly.

It could be at this first meeting, but soon after the Israeli strike the President is going to be asked to make a decision on the surge deployments to Afghanistan. He will most likely receive a recommendation from the Pentagon to put any additional troop movements to Afghanistan on hold. There would be two reasons for the recommendation from the U.S. military. The first would be the availability of airlift assets. Moving fighter squadrons and missile defense units to prepare for an Iran contingency is going to require everything that is available.⁷⁰

The other reason for the pressure to suspend deployments to Afghanistan has to do with the U.S. strategic reserve, the forces held for those unanticipated contingencies. In July 2008, after the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff had spent two days visiting Israel, he was asked about the military option for Iran. He said, "From a military perspective, opening up a third front right now would be extremely stressful on us..."⁷¹ If it were stressful then, it would be extremely stressful given the deployment of over 30,000 additional troops to Afghanistan since.

Refocusing away from the Afghanistan strategy would have other, less observable components. For example, early in the process, U.S. Central Command would probably decide to shift a major portion of its drone activity from Afghanistan to

67. These are the words Admiral Mullen used in 2008 following his two-day visit to Israel. Jim Garamone, "Mullen Discusses Iran, Broader Middle East With Israel", *Armed Forces Press Service*, June 6, (2008).

68. The Secretary General of OPEC has warned that the member countries of the organization would be unable to replace the loss of oil if the United States or Israel were to strike Iran. He said "the prices would go unlimited..." See "OPEC Warns War With Iran Would Cause 'Unlimited' Oil Price Hike", *Associated Press*, July 12, (2008).

69. Christopher Drew, "High Costs Weigh on Troop Debate for Afghan War", *New York Times*, November 15, (2009).

70. The airlift of additional troops into Afghanistan began in mid-December 2009 and will be ongoing until the "end of the summer or early fall" of 2010, according to Admiral Mullen. See Ed Homick, Chris Lawrence and Fred Pleitgen, "Logistical Problems Could Plague Afghanistan Troop Surge", *CNN.com*, December 3, (2009). Subsequent statements by officials have suggested the deployment could last into the fall because of the problems of logistics.

71. Jim Garamone, *op. cit.*

Iran. The C.I.A. would probably refocus Predators from Pakistan to Iran. During the Bush Administration, U.S. special operations forces, according to press reports, were operating inside Iran.⁷² At a smaller session in the White House, the President would be asked to approve additional C.I.A. operations inside Iran and the insertion of special operations troops to gather intelligence and to be prepared to conduct direct action missions if fighting broke out between the United States and Iran.

Three choices in the first few hours of the developing situation would seem to cover the strategic landscape.

- “It was Israel.” – Separate the United States and its policy from the strike and then sanction Israel for its action.
- Defend – Deploy additional forces to the region but do not conduct strikes against Iran unless there are attacks against U.S. bases or troops in the region that can be traced to Iran.
- Finish the job – Deploy additional forces to the region, and as soon as possible, initiate air strikes on the remaining Iranian nuclear facilities and Iran’s retaliatory capabilities.

The First Decisions

AFTER THE ISRAELI attack on Iraq’s Osirak reactor, the United States openly condemned Israel. A similar approach is a potential major policy option in the wake of this Israeli attack. The United States could make every effort to make the operation appear to be Israel going it alone. The United States could take actions to underscore its disapproval as it did when it delayed the delivery of some of the F-16s Israeli had purchased in 1981.

Another crisis with some of the same characteristics was the Israeli attack against Egypt in October 1956. President Eisenhower, seeing the Suez crisis in a broader context, took actions against Israel as well as the French and British who had colluded. The U.S. imposed sanctions on all three countries and was successful in getting a U.N. ceasefire resolution passed. The U.S. Administration was so upset with the Israeli invasion, Eisenhower reflected in his memoirs of the crisis, that if Israel had not withdrawn from the territory it occupied, a blockade of the country might have been initiated.⁷³ However, unlike the occupation of Egyptian territory, which could be undone, the air strike on Iran would be a completed action. There would be no walking back.

Another limitation of the “It was Israel” option is that it is

72. Seymour M. Hersh, “Preparing the Battlefield: The Bush Administration Steps Up Its Secret Moves Inside Iran”, *New Yorker*, July 7, (2008).

73. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Waging Peace, 1956–1961* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965), p. 98.

not likely to work. First of all, no matter how the U.S. tried to make it appear and no matter what the reality, it would seem to the world that the United States permitted the attack even if it was not directly involved. Second, even if the Israel-alone campaign were successful on some level, an isolated Iran–Israel conflict would seriously damage U.S. interests in the Middle East, and the U.S. would be confronted with a period of high oil prices as Israeli and Iranian moves and countermoves unfolded. Finally – and the most important reason why this is not a good policy option – Iran is unlikely to want to accept it as Israel operating on its own. In the end, whether or not the situation is an Israel-only affair, it is an Iranian decision. In the Iranian calculation, and as the leadership has said for years, the Great Satan and Israel would be one at this point.

Finishing the job on Iran is not the kind of policy decision that is likely to be made in the face of not knowing how Iran is going to react. In addition, the military argument at this point would most likely have the most influence on the presidential decision. Moving air and naval forces into the region is the same immediate decision if the United States were going to prepare to finish the job or if the U.S. were only moving to defend its interests. There would be no need to decide to finish the job now. That could wait. Get in place and get ready.

One of the President's early and difficult decisions would be whether to deploy ground-based missile defense capabilities to Israel. The United States has periodically deployed missile defense units from Europe and Fort Hood, Texas to participate with Israel in an exercise called Juniper Cobra.⁷⁴ Not knowing how Iran is going to react would make this a tough call. The President would be relieved when someone from the Department of Defense speaks up and says that the United States can provide just as much missile defense capability, and be less provocative, by moving an additional Aegis cruiser with its missile defense capabilities into the eastern Mediterranean. Some missile defense deployments were started under the Bush Administration and continued under the Obama Administration.⁷⁵ The decision would be to accelerate the moves. It would not be a difficult decision.

The President will most likely be confronted with another decision on which he had not been briefed. Although this is mentioned very little in the open press, since 1990 the United States has had a stockpile of conventional munitions inside Israel,⁷⁶ and in January 2009 at least 325 cargo containers-worth of munitions were added to the stockpile.⁷⁷ The question for the President would be whether the U.S. would allow Israel to

74. "Despite Rift, Obama Keeps Israel Armed", UPI.com, January 29, (2010).

75. Some degree of speeding up of the deployment of missile defense assets to the Persian Gulf region was recently announced. See David E. Sanger, Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Speeding Up Missile Defenses in the Persian Gulf", New York Times, January 31, (2010).

76. Clyde R. Mark, "Israel-United States Relations", Congressional Research Service, September 26, (2002), p. 13.

77. Stefano Ambrogi, "U.S. Says Arms Shipment to Israel Not Linked to Gaza", Reuters, January 10, (2009).

withdraw from drawn on ? [i.e. use some of] the stockpile. The President would probably again find comfort in the fact that this decision could wait until later. With the single mission so far and with fighting not taking place yet in Lebanon, Israel can wait for a decision.

HYPOTHESIS:

The President's Speech at the End of the Meeting with Key Cabinet Officers.

"At this point we do not know how the Iranians are going to react. I am convinced, however, that we must be prepared for any eventuality. To that end, I am ordering the Department of Defense to begin movement of appropriate air, naval and missile defense assets to the region.

"I want the State Department to work out a coalition and work with the nations of the region for basing support for our aircraft.

"I'm concerned about the impact of high oil prices on the recovery. I want some recommendations on what we do about the Strategic Petroleum Reserve."

Deployment of Forces to the Region

THIS DEPLOYMENT TO protect U.S. interests would not resemble the six months of preparations for Desert Shield, and the preparations will be much less visible than the movements to the region in early 2003. For the most part this will not be a CNN event. Preparations will involve the quiet deployment of Air Force tankers to staging bases and fighters into bases in countries that would prefer little press coverage. U.S. Navy assets will move into the region without much fanfare.

On the other hand, the deployments will not be without difficulties for the U.S. Department of Defense. Even for the carrier strike groups that do not have basing problems, it will take time to get them in place. The ongoing operation in Afghanistan involves one carrier group. The single carrier has been providing approximately 30% of the close support of operations in Afghanistan.⁷⁸ As part of strategic refocusing, this means a decision must be made on whether Iran or Afghanistan is the priority for these air assets.

The surge in additional carrier strike groups would take some time. The status of the U.S. fleet at one point in mid-November 2009 illustrates the problem. The *U.S.S. Nimitz* was supporting operations in Afghanistan. The *Reagan* had just returned to San Diego from a deployment. The *Truman*

78. "Soldiers, Sailors Keep Nimitz CSG in Line with Tactical Directive", Navy News Service, November 16, (2009).

was doing deployment certification training in the Atlantic. The *George Washington* was doing a port visit in Hong Kong. The *Truman* and the *George Washington* could have moved to the region, but it would have been ten days to two weeks before any significant level of combat sorties could be launched against Iranian targets.

Then there is the question of where to deploy ground-based fighters. Protecting its own relations with Iran, Iraq would most likely prohibit offensive operations from its bases. Turkey would most likely not be an option. Prime Minister Erdogan has even openly opposed sanctions against Iran.⁷⁹ Kuwait has been somewhat supportive of the Iranian nuclear program. It is not clear that the United States would be able to use bases there.

Afghanistan is not a good choice for additional sustained high-intensity operations. The reason why carriers now provide one-third of the close support there is the great difficulties of getting fuel and munitions into the country. Fuel is trucked along the 1,000-mile road from the port in Pakistan to bases in Afghanistan.

The United States Air Force has exercised tactical fighters with the Gulf Cooperation Council in order to “promote regional security.”⁸⁰ The Air Force has also participated in an F-16 exercise in Jordan and an F-15/F-16 exercise in the United Arab Emirates. In addition, French President Sarkozy opened a permanent base in Abu Dhabi in May 2009. These have been messages to Iran. These are also the outlines of a coalition-basing framework in a period following an Israeli strike.

The U.K. would most likely give the green light to basing U.S. bombers on the island of Diego Garcia. In addition, the U.S. is likely to be able to use the recently upgraded air base close to the Black Sea at Fetesi, Romania, an ideal place to stage aerial tankers.

However, the basing is going to require negotiations, and those negotiations will be made difficult by the uncertainty. One certainty emerges, however. Even the preparations just to protect its own interests in the region will require more than two weeks, a period during which the United States is vulnerable to Iranian initiatives.

Inside Iran

HOW WOULD THE Iranian opposition react following a strike by Israel? According to reports, the opposition has argued against a military strike in multi-source messages to the United

79. Jay Solomon, “Turkey Balks at Iran Sanctions”, *Wall Street Journal*, July 12, (2009).

80. “F-22s, F-16s deploy to UAE”, *Air Force Times*, November 18, (2009).

States.⁸¹ In the aftermath of a strike, however, the choices are limited. Taking to the streets in the way they did after the presidential election and on the anniversary of the U.S. Embassy takeover and on Students' Day is the only real option available.

The Iranian Government began worrying even before the election tension about what they describe as "soft power." Enemies have been using the media and the Internet to attack the revolution. In this case, we could expect the Supreme Leader to repeat what he has said many times. "Therefore, those who take their cue from the enemy and try to confront the principles of the Islamic Republic and the constitution should know that their efforts will [fail]."⁸²

The leadership tensions in Iran would make demonstrations on the street more likely. The Iranians accused the United States of supporting the opposition demonstrations after the election. The U.S. might provide some forms of support in this situation, at least cyber support.⁸³ The tensions would push the Iranian leadership to respond. Revolutionary Guard reaction would be swift, brutal and visible.

Images in the global press would be heart-wrenching. We would see the crowds of demonstrators running down the streets of Tehran as thugs on motorcycles swinging batons drove into them. We would probably see another young, beautiful Iranian woman lying in a pool of her own blood in the arms of a friend. The images would be played over and over again as breathless news anchors reviewed the history of the cruelty of the regime. The CNN anchor would ask the rhetorical question, "Is this the beginning of the end of the brutal regime in Iran?" After a short commercial, the anchor would move into an interview with an Iranian living in the United States who would say that the regime is unable to control the demands of the people for human rights.⁸⁴

The world press might have some cell phone pictures of smoke rising from the Arak and Natanz facilities, but Iranian officials are not likely to open the nuclear facilities for outside coverage. The Tehran street scene, however, would become the dominant image of the strike because there would be very few other images. Young Iranians would be shouting, "Death to the dictator!" The young people, as they did in the Student Day demonstrations, would probably be shouting to President Obama, "Either you are with us or you are with them."

U.S. newspapers have taken a strong position supporting the demands that surfaced in the often-repeated street demonstrations in Tehran. That could be expected to continue. Editorials would call for American solidarity with the democratic move-

81. Robin Wright, "Why the Opposition Movement Complicates Nuclear Diplomacy", *Time*, November 23, (2009). "Via public and private channels, the Obama Administration has received several appeals in recent weeks to take a stronger stand against human-rights abuses in Iran, avoid military action and impose more aggressive and rapid-fire sanctions..."

82. "Leader Urges Measures to Counter Enemy's Soft War", *PRESS TV*, November 29, (2009)

83. In December 2009, a bill called the Iranian Digital Empowerment Act was introduced into the U.S. Congress. The purpose of the bill was to facilitate empowering Iranians with Internet tools to "promote democracy and civil society" in Iran.

84. What would happen if the United States were to conduct a strike on Iranian nuclear facilities? I raised that question at an international conference with Iranians who would later become a strong part of the opposition during and after the April 2009 election. Although there were some arguments against the position, one of those present said the regime would have trouble controlling the situation. Again, this was prior to the election demonstrations.

ment in Iran.⁸⁵ The theme that democracy is emerging in Iran would gain the support of both Republicans who rally behind democracy movements as a matter of course and Democrats who are supporters of Israel.

When the U.S. President meets with his Cabinet and national security team, the backdrop would most likely be the young people of Iran crying out to the West for human rights.

ZANÉK – H+24: TWENTY-FOUR HOURS AFTER THE STRIKE

Another Meeting of the U.S. National Security Team

THE UNITED STATES would face a delicate situation as the national security team gathered for an update and decisions on how to respond to the crisis. The pivotal piece is the Iranian response. What is the decision in Tehran? Has the Revolutionary Guard argument to be firm won out?

On one level, U.S. intelligence agencies with their greatly increased focus on Iran will be observing Iranian behavior that is open some interpretation. In the crisis, however, these actions will be interpreted in the most threatening light.

Even if Iran has not followed through on its pre-attack threats, much of what it does will be viewed through the lens of those threats. For example, the Director of National Intelligence might brief that in the past twenty-four hours there has been a large increase in the volume of communications between the headquarters of the Revolutionary Guard and Quds forces in southern Iraq. The real message of those communications might be that they should keep a low profile, but the interpretation in Washington would be that they are likely getting ready to attack U.S. troops in Iraq. The DNI might say that the National Security Agency has identified encrypted communications between Tehran and the North American Directorate of the Quds. It is possible that this could be preparation for terrorist attacks inside the United States. However, the real situation might be that Iran is only ensuring that certain units remain under tight control.

Because of the doctrine of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy, one of the early actions by Iran would be to disperse its small boats, Kilo Class submarines and mini-sub-

85. A recent example of what we would likely see was "U.S. Should Back Iran's Students", Boston Globe, editorial, December 12, (2009).

marines around the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.⁸⁶ This could be purely a defensive move. An equally valid interpretation in Washington, however, would be that the Iranians are preparing to begin naval asymmetric warfare. The Iranians are setting the stage for a long war that will have a serious impact on oil prices and damage the global economic recovery.

The Iranians would likely move their mobile medium-range ballistic missiles. One of the deployment locations for these is in the area Iran used for missile attacks on Iraq during the war with that country. This again might be a purely defensive move but in Washington it would likely be seen as preparations for missile attacks on U.S. bases in Iraq. Obviously, the Iranians have said that that is what they would do.

Beyond the non-threatening acts, the decision makers in Washington could be faced with ambiguous events that would push them toward open conflict. An explosion at an offshore oil rig would point to the Iranians even if they were not to blame. The Iranians have told us they would attack these facilities, and they did it during their war with Iraq. Iran must be behind the explosion. If a sophisticated explosive device killed a truckload of U.S. soldiers in Iraq, Iran would be blamed even if it were an al Qaeda-planted device. The Commander would say and the press would report that these sophisticated devices were similar to the ones that have come into Iraq from Iran. The interpretation of the statement would be that the devices came from Iran.

Units of Iran's regular army are responsible for guarding the border with Afghanistan. It is not uncommon for a regular unit to be pulled from its border positions and replaced by a Revolutionary Guard unit. This kind of switch-out is done when counter-drug operations are to be conducted. In this crisis situation a similar move could very easily be misinterpreted in Washington. A conclusion could be that Iran is preparing to infiltrate Quds units into Afghanistan, a threat to NATO forces there.

The discussion at the meeting would include the observation that the dispersal of Iranian missiles, naval assets and other capabilities means that the United States has lost an opportunity. More importantly, however, the serious question facing the President would be whether to wait for major U.S. casualties before taking action. He would be unlikely to accept that as an option. The echo in the Situation Room would be the "dithering" charge. Is this President going to dither and wait for the Iranians to kill Americans?

What begins to become clear is that very early in the crisis,

86. "Iran's Naval Forces: From Guerrilla to a Modern Naval Strategy", Office of Naval Intelligence, Fall (2009), pp. 21-22.

pre-war threats by Iran drive U.S. policy decisions. Israel initiated the fight, but the U.S. becomes more and more involved because of what might happen.

Iran has threatened to strike at Israeli nuclear facilities with its missiles if Israel were to attack Iran. The thought of radiation spreading around Israel is horrific. Even if the President earlier had been able to put off the question of the deployment of U.S. missile defense units to Israel, the pressure would now increase for him to make a decision. Just as he would not want to be responsible for U.S. casualties, he would not want to be blamed for Israeli casualties. United States missile defense units would probably be ordered to Israel.

The President would likely ask about U.S. casualties if the decision were made to proceed. He would be probably be told that, although the U.S. would suffer casualties in any Iranian retaliation, the assessment is that there would be very few casualties in the air and naval attacks on Iran. The only aircraft initially penetrating deep into Iranian airspace will be the F-22s and B-2s at night. B-52s will stand off, firing cruise missiles. Other missile attacks will come from Navy ships firing at a safe distance. Once the Iranian air defense system has been destroyed, there will be very little threat to U.S. or coalition aircraft. This assurance would make his decision easier.

It becomes clear. The dynamic of the strategic situation is driven as much by what the Iranians had said they would do as by what they would have actually done. Beyond the way in which the Iranians respond, the long and strong connections between the U.S. and Israel are pulling the United States into supporting the Israeli action. The low-casualty assessment would make it very hard for the President to resist. Finally, the President would be hearing the argument that U.S. casualties will be fewer if the Iranian military capabilities are destroyed quickly.

At this point in the discussion, one of the President's Cabinet might raise the question of the legal justification for pre-emption. Does the President have the legal basis for attacking Iran prior to an Iranian attack on U.S. forces? The lawyers in the Situation Room would probably agree rather quickly that the legal authority already exists. They would point to two attacks with Iranian connections that would justify a U.S. attack under both the United Nations Charter and the U.S. Constitution, the bombing of the Marine barracks in Lebanon and the bombing of Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia in which U.S.A.F. personnel were killed.⁸⁷

HYPOTHESIS:

87. Syracuse University Law School sponsored a symposium in which the question of the legal justification was explored. International and constitutional lawyers at that symposium presented the argument that the strike on Iran by the United States would not be pre-emption because the United States has been attacked by Iran. The symposium is summarized in "A Nuclear Iran: The Legal Implications of a Preemptive National Security Strategy", *Syracuse Law Review*, no. 3, 2007. Included in the collection is a paper I presented at the symposium in which I pointed out the preference one finds in recent U.S. policy for the offense, a preference that would probably have a major influence as the situation with Iran unfolded.

The President's Speech at the End of the Next Meeting with Key Cabinet Officers.

"I cannot wait for Iranians to kill American men and women in uniform and American civilians. I have a responsibility to protect our people. The Iranians have said they will attack us. I have a responsibility to stop the attacks before they can take place. Those in Iran who are seeking the blessings of freedom are crying out for us to do something.

"In addition, I cannot sit idly by and watch Iranians kill innocent Israel citizens."

He continues: "Our message to the world and to the people of Iran should be the words I used in Oslo, 'These movements of hope and history, they have us on their side.'

"The intelligence community has assessed that Hezbollah could be motivated at this time to attack our homeland. I have to believe that assessment. I have to do something to prevent an attack." ⁸⁸

Looking to the Secretary of Defense, the President says, "I am ordering the Department of Defense and United States Central Command to develop a military option for attacking Iranian capabilities to damage U.S. interests globally. I also want the option to simultaneously deal a fatal blow to the remaining Iranian nuclear facilities." ⁸⁹

"The Iranians have the capability and the intent to kill civilians. It is just that we should enter this fight.

"This has to be done rapidly. The American people have just gone through the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. We cannot slip backwards."

ZANÉK – D+14: TWO WEEKS AFTER THE STRIKE

The U.S. National Security Team with New Issues

ONCE THE ROBUST attacks against what remained of the Iranian nuclear capability and the Iranian military capabilities had begun, the process would be systematic. Military priority would go to "knocking down the door," striking Iranian aircraft like the F-14s that stand on air defense alert at Esfahahan,⁹⁰ and other components of the air defense system. A priority for the carrier strike groups would be Iranian naval assets, its submarines, surface ships, small boats, ground-based anti-ship missiles

88. In 2007, the U.S. intelligence community concluded, "We assess (Iran-backed) Lebanese Hezbollah...may be more likely to consider attacking the homeland over the next three years if it perceives the United States as posing a direct threat to the group or Iran." See "National Intelligence Estimate, The Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland", National Intelligence Council, July 2007.

89. The I-can't-wait-for-the-bad-guys-to-attack-our-men-and-women speech is one I have heard many times in decision simulations. There is often in that speech some mention of the judgment of history. When I hear it, I sense it is the Pearl Harbor fear surfacing. It is the question often raised. Did Roosevelt know it was coming and fail to do anything?

90. Using Google Earth, it is possible to get a good sense of the targeting issues that would surface during the early phase of an attack against Iran.

and naval mine storage areas.

The initial target priorities would be:⁹¹

- *Iranian air defense assets would be a top priority. Once they were gone, non-stealth aircraft would operate over Iranian airspace fairly freely during the day.*
- *Medium-range ballistic missiles and strike aircraft would be an early target. These represent the capabilities to attack Israel and U.S. bases in the region.*
- *Iranian naval assets that could affect the flow of oil through the Strait of Hormuz would probably be the U.S. Navy's first priority.*
- *The remaining nuclear facilities would be struck. Attacks would be made easier as the threats to attacking aircraft would have been eliminated. The damage would be serious as a shoot-look-shoot tactic over multiple days is used.*
- *Terrorist training camps would be struck. These are not particularly lucrative targets, but the attacks would be meant to highlight that Iran has been the world's most important supporter of terrorism. These targets would be as much about message sending as about real destruction of capabilities.*
- *The Quds, the Revolutionary Guard's tool of terror export, would be struck. The most visible target would be its headquarters in Tehran.*
- *The 23rd Commando Division would be attacked. This elite unit, largely located in Tehran and Shiraz, is the special operations arm of the regular Iranian Army. Soldiers are required to undergo 20 months of training to be part of this outfit.*

Beyond the initial priorities, the target list would probably expand as the United States searched for leverage. The more the Iranians were able to carry through and did carry through with the retaliation they promised before the conflict, the more the target list would be expanded. Attacks would probably include the Revolutionary Guard engineering division that was working on the nuclear program.

A logical addition to the targets in the search for leverage over Iran would be refineries and refined product storage areas. The military argument for adding these to the target list would have been the same argument that was used for sanctioning refined petroleum products. Iran has had to import 30% to 40% of its refined products. A way to bring increase pressure to bear on Tehran would be to dry up the fuel that runs the Iranian war machine.

The coalition against Iran would have probably expanded.

91. This target list comes from a previous analysis. See Sam Gardiner, "Potential Targets, Likelihood of Success and Consequences", Iran: Reality, Options and Consequences, Part 3, Regional and Global Consequences of U.S. Military Action in Iran, Statement to the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Government Oversight and Reform, U.S. House of Representatives, November 14, (2007).

The French would probably be entering with some enthusiasm, and the British with more reluctance.⁹² The British and the French would be flying sorties into Iran. Israel would be heavily involved, launching a daily strike package.

Despite two weeks of attacks, the Iranians would still have the capacity to carry out some of what they had threatened. All the time their capabilities are being destroyed, they could lash out. A few missiles could hit inside Israel. A few missiles could strike on or near U.S. bases. Commercial ships in the Gulf could be damaged. Some of the thousands of naval mines in their inventory could be planted in the Gulf. Some oil facilities in Saudi Arabia could be hit. Synagogues in Europe could be bombed. There could even be mysterious terrorist incidents in Europe or the United States.

By this time Israel would probably be involved in a two-front war. Hezbollah would have done something that could be used to justify an Israeli response. The increased range of Hezbollah's missiles will make this fight more dangerous for Israel than it was in 2006.

Also by this time the sense that Israel was the bad guy in the situation would begin to fade. Images of damaged Israeli houses with frantic rescue workers searching the rubble would be repeated and familiar. CNN coverage of Israeli schoolchildren in bomb shelters would present Israel as a victim and not the aggressor. The images of students in Tehran demonstrating would reinforce the cause against Iran as a just one. Iran would have become the bad guy.

As the U.S. President called his primary Cabinet members together two weeks into the war, he would be facing some major issues. On the broader international scene, relations with Russia would be strained. Russia protested would have protested[?] very strongly from the beginning against military operations against Iran.⁹³ A new reset will be necessary. China would also have been against the use of force, but two weeks into the fight, China's primary concern would become the price and availability of oil. China would be putting as much pressure as possible on both sides to stop the conflict.

On the economic side, there would be signs that the fighting in the Gulf was doing what the President feared. Oil prices and gasoline prices would have skyrocketed, particularly as the markets assessed that the conflict would continue for quite a while. Some economists would be predicting inflation, which would mean that interest rates would have to be increased, a threat to investments. The dollar's value would have increased, a threat U.S. exports.

On the military front the real results would be mixed. On

92. At the time of writing, the inquiry in London of the British involvement in the Iraq War was still ongoing. The outcome of this very public discussion of Tony Blair being depicted as a "sidekick" of George W. Bush will probably have some long-term consequences and introduce a new reluctance on the part of the U.K. to answer yet another call of the United States.

93. Russia is not without leverage over the United States. The United States is working to get more fuel into Afghanistan from Russian sources. It is not known if the situation in Iran would have an impact on those sources. Steven Mufson and Walter Pincus, "Supplying Troops in Afghanistan with Fuel is a Challenge for the U.S.," *Washington Post*, December 15, (2009).

one hand U.S. and coalition casualties would be far below the levels predicted by the analysts on the international news channels. Even casualties in Iran would not be too high. Precision weapons and the use of unmanned aerial vehicles would have produced remarkable results in the destruction of the facilities and hardware of war.

On the downside of the military dimension, Iran would have turned out to be hard to target. The Iranian military is probably one of the most hardened in the world against air attacks. All the Iranian fighter aircraft are in shelters dispersed around their bases. Revolutionary Guard divisions are dispersed and their equipment is stored in covered shelters. The landscapes of military facilities are filled with large and small storage bunkers. The administrative buildings of the Revolutionary Guard units are even surrounded by high bunkers.⁹⁴ The hardening does not mean that the equipment in the shelters and bunkers could not be destroyed, but it does mean that each bunker and shelter would have to be hit with an individual weapon, a time-consuming process.

Then there is the Revolutionary Guard. The Revolutionary Guard would have believed at the beginning of the conflict that it could withstand an attack by the United States. There are probably two reasons for their grossly off-the-mark appreciation. They believe they were able to endure many years of war against Saddam Hussein. They could do the same against the United States. Products of Iran's 30 years of isolation from the world community, they do not grasp the military capabilities they would face, and they exaggerate the quality of their own technology.

If after two weeks of fighting the Revolutionary Guard continued to believe what they did before the fighting took place, and if they were to strike out as they have said they would, the U.S. President would be talking to his key staff against the background of a conflict without an end in sight. He would want to know how he could bring this thing to an end quickly.

The question would lead to another question. What could the coalition target to make the leadership in Tehran understand they have to stop?

The slide the President would see on the screen in the Situation Room would probably contain these targets as potential high-leverage attacks:⁹⁵

- Revolutionary Guard units – the remaining divisions and headquarters.
- Command and governance assets
 - Intelligence

94. This assessment of the hardening of the Iranian military comes from my own analysis of Google Earth images of their installations. I would assess the Iranians as being a more difficult target than even the North Koreans.

95. In a previous paper, I described in detail the kind of targets that might be attacked in Iran. See Sam Gardiner, "The End of the 'Summer of Diplomacy': Assessing U.S. Military Options on Iran", Century Foundation, (2006).

- Military command
- Radio and television
- Communications
- Security forces in Tehran
- Leadership – targeted killing

At some point in the discussion someone at the table might raise the issue of chemical weapons and mention that the U.S. intelligence community has assessed that Iran does have chemical weapons.⁹⁶ Continued discussion around the table would most likely raise the possibility of these falling into terrorists' hands. The President might hear a recommendation that would dismay him: the United States may have to put troops on the ground in Iran to capture the chemical weapons and take them out of the country.

The President would be feeling heavy pressure to get this thing over with as soon as possible. He would be attracted to the notion that there are some high-leverage targets that might achieve that objective. The decision makers at this point would take their final step toward eliminating the regime in Tehran.

HYPOTHESIS:

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Briefing to the President After Two Weeks of Fighting Against Iran

Admiral Mullen: "Mr. President, their Supreme Leader and most of the members of the Supreme Security Council have been isolated from what we have done to them. We've hit very few targets inside Tehran. They haven't seen much destruction.

"We are not certain the Revolutionary Guard is telling the whole story to the Supreme Leader.

"Our assessment is that we need to begin to include leadership targets in our target list. They have to know it is time to bring this thing to an end.

"This slide shows what we think should be added to the target list.

"In addition, Mr. President, I believe we need to give some indications to Tehran of willingness to stop them. I'm not proposing an invasion, but I believe it prudent both for the purposes of sending a message to the Iranians and in order to be ready for an unknown situation. Central Command will have more specific recommendations, but I am recommending we disengage a number of brigades in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and have these units begin training in the area near the Iranian border for large unit operations. This large unit training is the kind of training these units would need if you were to order an invasion of Iran.

"Beyond that, Mr. President, no actions are being taken, but

96. "[Iran] continues to seek production technology, training, and expertise from foreign entities that could advance a CW program." "We judge that Iran maintains a small, covert CW stockpile." See: "Unclassified Report to the Congress on the Acquisition of Technology Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction and Advanced Conventional Munitions for the Period 1 January to 31 December 2006", Office of the Director of National Intelligence, (2008).

Central Command is beginning to do contingency planning for an amphibious assault on Kish Island. It's the Iranian island in the Gulf. It has an airfield and would be an ideal support base if you were to order ground operations inside Iran.

"Finally, Mr. President, we believe we need to begin planning if it later becomes necessary to take control of Iran's chemical weapons. It may mean the introduction of troops, but you need that option."

BACK TO THE PRESENT

Preventing an Israeli Strike

CAN THE SEQUENCE of events be broken? Is the scenario inevitable? Is there a way to prevent Israel from inevitably conducting the strike on Iran?

Suggestions for policy options to persuade Israel against a strike have sometimes involved pledges of support.⁹⁷ The argument goes that if the security relationship were strengthened and if Israel were more capable of dealing with the threat from Iran, Israel would be less likely to feel the need to attack. The limitation of these options is that they would not have any effect on the Iranians. As the Iranians continued to defy the international community and continued their support of Hezbollah and Hamas, Israel's sense of insecurity is unlikely to be mitigated by such actions as making the U.S. security guarantee less ambiguous.

The limitation of more guarantees and support to Israel goes beyond their not having an impact on Iran. Early in the Obama Administration there was discussion of extending the U.S. nuclear umbrella over Israel. In fact, Hillary Clinton suggested such a thing during her presidential election campaign.⁹⁸ The reaction from Israel was overwhelming because it saw this option as openly accepting an Iran with nuclear weapons. There is an irony here. The more the United States moves to stop Israel feeling insecure, the more Israel feels insecure because it believes the United States is moving toward a policy of containment rather than actually dealing with the Iranian threat.

In the argument for pledges, the Scud example during the 1991 conflict with Iraq is often cited. Pledging to take care of the Scuds, the United States persuaded Israel not to strike into

97. A recent paper by the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations is a good example of the proposals for these kinds of policies. It suggests such things as the United States continuing to declare a nuclear Iran unacceptable; sending high-profile officials to Israel on reassurance missions; ramping up air and missile defense resources; and discussing basing options with countries in the region. Steve Simon, "An Israeli Strike on Iran", Council on Foreign Relations, November (2009).

98. Aluf Benn, "Obama's Atomic Umbrella: U.S. Nuclear Strike if Iran Nukes Israel", Haaretz.com, December 11, (2008). This article also lays out the Israeli objection to the umbrella idea, "Granting Israel a nuclear guarantee essentially suggests the U.S. is willing to come to terms with a nuclear Iran."

Iraq. The argument does not hold water in this case. The United States is not pledging to take care of Iran. It would seem in Jerusalem to be just the opposite.

On a more basic level there is evidence that pledges of support have not dissuaded Israel in the past. In 2008, President Bush in responding to a question said in his own earthy way, "If Iran did strike Israel...we will defend our ally, no and's, if's or but's."⁹⁹ Israel has not moved away from the pre-emption option because of that assurance.

The United States has publicly and privately made it clear to Israel that a pre-emptive strike on Iran would be a mistake. It would make the situation worse. It would be against U.S. interests. It could destabilize the entire region. Although Israel has agreed to give the Obama Administration some space for negotiations and for sanctions, there are no indications that the Israeli leadership has moved away from the possible use of military force. As suggested by the Harvard decision simulation, getting the Israeli Prime Minister to pledge that Israel would not attack Iran without U.S. permission would be an impossible task.¹⁰⁰

Where might there be greater leverage points? Where could the Obama Administration pressure Israel to give up the idea of a strike on Israel?

The largest financial connection between the U.S. Government and Israel is currently in Foreign Military Financing. The United States has a ten-year agreement with Israel, in order to allow Israel to plan, for \$3 billion per year. The money is given in cash at the beginning of the fiscal year, in order to allow Israel to plan. Most of the money goes to U.S. arms suppliers. Only 26.3% can be spent in Israel.¹⁰¹

One leverage option to prevent the strike might be to tell Israel that if it did not promise not to attack Iran without U.S. permission, then the U.S. would limit the size of Foreign Military Financing. The problems with this as an option are the ones that surface for almost all the options. The White House has to have congressional agreement before it can cut Israel funds. That is very unlikely to be forthcoming at a time when congressional leaders believe Israeli security is threatened. The Israel lobby in the United States would certainly weigh in very strongly on this issue, and they still have a great deal of influence on Capitol Hill. Very few of the President's own party would support threatening to cut defense funds for Israel.

In May 1986, the United States and Israel signed an agreement (the contents of which are secret) for Israeli participation in the U.S. missile defense program.¹⁰² For 2009–2010 this is fun-

99. "Bush Says U.S. Would Defend Israel if Iran Attacks", Agence France Presse, January 6, (2008).

100. Ignatius, *op. cit.*

101. This and subsequent identification of U.S. programs supporting Israel come from Carol Migdalovitz, "Israel: Background and Relations with the United States", Congressional Research Service, (RL33476), April 2, (2009).

ded at approximately \$350 million. Withdraw from the agreement unless Israel pledges not to attack Iran? That is not likely. This is defensive, and there is the need for congressional action.

Israel is openly trying to purchase the U.S. F-35 fighter. It would like to buy the stealth F-22 at some point in the future. An option would be for the U.S. Administration to tell the Government of Israel that it would not permit these purchases if it did not pledge to refrain from attacking Iran. Although this kind of action could come from the White House, congressional agreement in the future would be necessary. Israel would most likely count on the Congress not to honor the restrictions.

The United States provides commercial loan guarantees for Israel. Limiting these is an option, but it would not have the kind of impact on Israel that is likely to change its behavior.¹⁰³ The United States has a free trade agreement with Israel, also not a good option for leverage to prevent a strike.

The United States *may have* this means it is possible that it has, as of today, in real life. Do you mean this or do you mean The United States might by this stage have [?] told Israel that it would not support an attack on Iran. On the surface, that sounds like the next step beyond asking them not to do it. It would say to Israel that if it did the United States would pick the it-was-Israel option that was aired in the first White House meeting in the hypothetical flow of events. Telling Israel that the U.S. would withhold support is meaningless. As argued in this paper, events and Iran would dictate U.S. involvement and not a pre-strike threat.

Israel has a long history of conducting operations without notifying the United States and in some cases defying Washington. The United States has a long history of trying to pressure Israel with rebukes, withholding military equipment and even sanctions. None of this had done permanent damage to U.S.-Israeli relations. Israel most likely knows that this is the case now.

102. Cylde R. Mark, "Issue Brief for Congress: Israel-United States Relations", Congressional Research Service, October 17, (2002).

103. As an example of the limited leverage with financial instruments, U.S. Middle East Envoy George Mitchell suggested that these loan guarantees might be withheld to pressure Israel to stop settlement construction. Israel's Finance Minister quickly responded that Israel could do without them. See Ilene R. Prusher, "Israel Shrugs Off Mitchell's Loan Threat", The Christian Science Monitor, January 10, (2010).

Summary

THE SITUATION HAS a quality of inevitability about it. It has the feel of Europe prior to World War I. The United States moves forward with a vague notion of containment, failing to recognize that containment as a strategy has not curbed and in all probability will not curb Iranian influence in the Middle East. Containment will certainly not stop Iran's nuclear program,

and it will not eliminate Israel's security concerns. Iran moves forward with its nuclear program seeing it as a component of its status as an important power but failing to recognize that the ultimate product could be a great loss of influence. Israel moves forward with its exaggerated view of the threat from Iran, failing to recognize that the cost to be paid because of this view may be more of a threat to Israel's security interests than Iran is.

With justification, Israel is losing confidence in the commitment of the Obama Administration to protect its interests with respect to the Iranian nuclear program. The tension is made worse by the fact that the interests of the United States and Israel are quite different in the region. Iran continues to defy the international community and moves in the direction that Israel believes threatens its existence. Israel is pushed to take care of its own security – with consequences.

The consequences are serious for the region and the world. Taking care of its own security, Israel can thrust Afghanistan on to the back burner. The first reallocation would have to be the airlift that is moving units and supplies to Afghanistan; these would be required to deploy air assets to the Gulf region. The close support sorties going into Afghanistan from a carrier strike group would be withdrawn to focus on Iran. The most important reason for a priority shift is the need to deal with Iran as quickly as possible. Higher oil prices would jeopardize the economic recovery. In addition, the price of fuel for coalition forces in Afghanistan could become unacceptable.

Inside Israel there is also the argument sometimes expressed that Iran would never follow through with its threats. Hezbollah would be reluctant to launch enough missiles into Israel to trigger an invasion. Iran would never attack U.S. bases. The limitation of this argument is that the United States would likely be forced into a such position that it would have to prepare as if the threats were going to be carried out. The consequence is that Israel can pull the United States into deploying major air and naval forces into the region to defend its interests and protect the flow of oil through the Gulf.

If Iran responds even in a very limited way, as it has threatened, Israel can pull the United States into finishing the job on the Iranian nuclear sites and destroying Iranian military capabilities. Europe would be pulled into the fight.

The more the U.S. Government and groups in the United States support the opposition in Iran, the more likely it becomes that the opposition would take to the streets in the face of an Israeli strike. If the opposition were visibly opposing the

regime, the pull on the United States into regime elimination in Iran would be all the greater. American good intentions would contribute to a regional war.

Although there are some leverage points for the United States on Israel to prevent Israel from striking Iran, they are limited. Most of the leverage would be in the form of punishment and not prevention. If events continue to unfold, an Israeli strike on Iran can be expected.

The United States is put at a disadvantage if it waits until after an Israeli strike to deploy air and naval forces into the region.

United States interests are damaged less if it moves forward with a combined Israel-U.S. operation and if initial targeting by the forces of the two countries is on both military capabilities and the nuclear sites.

Iran is the only country with the leverage to prevent the seemingly inevitable movement towards disaster for itself, for the region, for Europeans and for the United States.

The Iranians discount a United States military option. Their assessment that the United States' resources are spread too thin for it to be able to conduct a ground force invasion is probably well founded. They assess that an air strike by the U.S. is also unlikely. That part of their assessment is bad. When the Iranians discount an eventual U.S. military option, they miss another point. The very fact that the Obama Administration took over a year trying to engage the Iranians makes it more vulnerable to pressures to respond quickly and decisively to an unfolding Israeli-triggered scenario.

The arrogance of the Revolutionary Guard could be the death sentence for the Iranian regime. The protector of the Islamic revolution could be the cause of the destruction of the revolution.

REFERENCES

Books

- Eisenhower, Dwight D: *Waging Peace, 1956–1961* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965)
- Kyle, James H: *The Guts to Try: The Untold Story of the Iran Hostage Rescue Mission by the On-Scene Desert Commander* (New York: Orion Books, 1990)
- McKinnen, Dan: *Bullseye – One Reactor: The Story of Israel’s Bold Surprise Air Attack That Destroyed Iraq’s Nuclear Bomb Facility* (San Diego: House of Hits Publishing, 1987)
- Stevenson, William: *90 Minutes at Entebbe* (New York: Bantam Books, Inc, 1976)
- Melman, Yossi: “Experts Say Iran Has Clear Path to Nuclear Weapons”, *Haaretz.com*, December 10, (2009)

Reports

- Continuing Iranian Defiance Demands Crippling Sanctions*, American Israel Public Affairs Committee Memo, December 7, (2009)
- Gardiner, Sam: *The End of the ‘Summer of Diplomacy’: Assessing U.S. Military Options on Iran*, Century Foundation, (2006)
- Gardiner, Sam: “Potential Targets, Likelihood of Success and Consequences”, *Iran: Reality, Options and Consequences, Part 3, Regional and Global Consequences of U.S. Military Action in Iran*, Statement to the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Government Oversight and Reform, U.S. House of Representatives, November 14, (2007)
- Mark, Clyde R: *Israel-United States Relations*, Congressional Research Service, September 26, (2002)
- Mark, Clyde R: *Issue Brief for Congress: Israel-United States Relations*, Congressional Research Service, October 17, (2002)
- Migdalovitz, Carol: *Israel: Background and Relations with the United States*, Congressional Research Service, RL33476, April 2, (2009)
- Raas, Whitney and Long, Austin: *Osirak Redux? Assessing Israeli Capabilities to Destroy Iranian Nuclear Facilities*, MIT Security Studies Program Working Paper, April (2006)
- Simon, Steve: *An Israeli Strike on Iran*, Council on Foreign Relations, November (2009)
- Unclassified Report to the Congress on the Acquisition of Technology Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction and Advan-*

ced Conventional Munitions for the Period 1 January to 31 December 2006, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, (2008)

Articles

- Ackerman, Gwen and Donahue, Patrick: "Israel Denies Report of Iraq Military Exercises", *Bloomberg.com*, July 11, (2008)
- Ackerman, Gwen: "Israel Army Unit Waging Internet Battle After Gaza Criticism", *Bloomberg.com*, December 3, (2009)
- Ambrogio, Stefano: "U.S. Says Arms Shipment to Israel Not Linked to Gaza", *Reuters*, January 10, (2009)
- Bednarz, Dieter and Follah, Erich and Schult, Christoph: "Israel's Patience with Tehran Wearing Thin", *Der Spiegel*, December 2, (2009)
- "Begin Says Israel Would Attack Again", *Washington Post*, June 10, (1981)
- Benn, Aluf: "Obama's Atomic Umbrella: U.S. Nuclear Strike if Iran Nukes Israel", *Haaretz.com*, December 11, (2008)
- "Bolton on Iran's Latest Provocation", *National Review Online*, December 2, (2009)
- De Borchgrave, Arnaud: "Israel of the Caucasus", *UPI*, September 2, (2008)
- Borger, Julian: "Iran Tested Advanced Nuclear Warhead Design – Secret Report", *The Guardian*, November 5, (2009)
- "Bush Says U.S. Would Defend Israel if Iran Attacks", *Agence France Presse*, January 6, (2008)
- Butcher, Tim: "Israel Willing to Go It Alone on Iran Attack", *Daily Telegraph*, December 4, (2008)
- "CBU-94 Blackout Bomb", *GlobalSecurity.org*
- "Despite Rift, Obama Keeps Israel Armed", *UPI.com*, January 29, (2010)
- Drew, Christopher: "High Costs Weigh on Troop Debate for Afghan War", *New York Times*, November 15, (2009)
- "ElBaradei Warns Against Any Israeli Attack on Iran", *News.az*, November 6, (2009)
- "Erdogan Warns Israel Over the Use of Turkish Airspace to Attack Iran", *Al Bawada*, December 12, (2009)
- "EU Urges Israel to Share Jerusalem", *Reuters*, December 8, (2009)
- "F-22s, F-16s deploy to UAE", *Air Force Times*, November 18, (2009)
- "Factfile: How Osirak Was Bombed", *BBC News*, June 5, (2006)
- Follath, Erich and Stark, Holger: "The Story of Operation

- Orchard: How Israel Destroyed Syria's Al Kibar Nuclear Reactor", *Spiegel Online*, November 11, (2009)
- Garamone, Jim: "Mullen Discusses Iran, Broader Middle East With Israel", *Armed Forces Press Service*, June 6, (2008)
- Gordon, Michael and Schmitt, Eric: "U.S. Says Exercise by Israel Seem Directed at Iran", *New York Times*, June 20, (2008)
- " Hamas Says Will Unite with Iran if Israel Attacks", *Reuters*, December 15, (2009)
- Harel, Amos: "Analysis: It Won't end in Six Days", *Haaretz.com*, August 11, (2009)
- "Harvard Simulation: U.S. Will Fail to Stop Iran Nucs", *IsraelNN.com*, December 6, (2009)
- Hassan, Zaheerul: "Indian Air Bases and Israeli Strike Against Iran", *China Daily: China Forum*, July 7, (2009)
- Hersh, Seymour M: "Preparing the Battlefield: The Bush Administration Steps Up Its Secret Moves Inside Iran", *New Yorker*, July 7, (2008)
- "Hezbollah Threatens Weapon Buildup", *Wall Street Journal*, November 30, (2009)
- Homick, Ed and Lawrence, Chris and Pleitgen, Fred: "Logistical Problems Could Plague Afghanistan Troop Surge", *CNN.com*, December 3, (2009)
- "How Israel Foiled an Arms Convoy Bound for Hamas", *Time*, March 30, (2009)
- Ignatius, David: "Who Loses the Iran Game", *Washington Post*, December 6, (2009)
- "Iran, After the Deadline", Editorial, *New York Times*, January 30, (2010)
- "Iran Drills Simulate Defense of Nuclear Sites", *Payvand Iran News*, November 23, (2009)
- "Iran's Naval Forces: From Guerilla to a Modern Naval Strategy", *Office of Naval Intelligence*, Fall (2009), pp. 21-22
- "Israel May Begin New War in Lebanon in Spring 2010", *RIA-NOVOSTI*, November 6, (2009)
- "Israel Pledges to Protect Itself from a 'New Holocaust' Threat Posed by Iran's Nuclear Programme", *Daily Telegraph*, April 21, (2009)
- "Khamenei Aide: Iran Would Attack the Heart of Israel", *Jerusalem Post*, June 12, (2008)
- Lazaroff, Tovah: "Interview: Planning for the Unthinkable – A Nuclear Iran", *Jerusalem Post*, November 19, (2009)
- "Leader Urges Measures to Counter Enemy's Soft War", *PRESS TV*, November 29, (2009)
- "Lebanon Envoy Warns U.N. of Possible Israeli Attack", *RIA-*

- NOVOSTI*, October 31, (2009)
- Lovallo, Dan and Kahneman, Daniel: "Delusions of Success: How Optimism Undermines Executives' Decisions", *Harvard Business Review*, July 1, (2003)
- Mahnaimi, Uzi and Baxter, Sarah: "Saudis Give Nod to Israel on Iran", *Sunday Times*, July 5, (2009)
- Mufson, Steven and Pincus, Walter: "Supplying Troops in Afghanistan with Fuel is a Challenge for the U.S.," *Washington Post*, December 15, (2009)
- "National Intelligence Estimate, The Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland", *National Intelligence Council*, July (2007)
- "OPEC Warns War With Iran Would Cause 'Unlimited' Oil Price Hike", *Associated Press*, July 12, (2008)
- "Our Goal is to Defeat Al-Qaida and Its Extremist Allies", *Spiegel Online*, November 15, (2009)
- Philp, Catherine: "Secret Document Exposes Iran's Nuclear Trigger", *Times Online*, December 14, (2009)
- Pomfret, John and Warrick, Joby: "China's Backing on Iran Followed Dire Predictions", *Washington Post*, November 26, (2009)
- Prusher, Ilene R.: "Israel Shrugs Off Mitchell's Loan Threat", *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 10, (2010)
- Ravid, Barak and Mozgovaya, Matasha: "Obama Told China: I Can't Stop Israel Strike on Iran", *Haaretz.com*, December 17, (2009)
- "Russia 'Will' Deliver S-300 to Iran in 2 Months", *Tehran Times*, November 29, (2009)
- Sanger, David E.: "U.S. Rejected Air for Israeli Raid on Iranian Nuclear Site", *New York Times*, January 11, (2009)
- Sanger, David E. and Schmitt, Eric: "U.S. Speeding Up Missile Defenses in the Persian Gulf", *New York Times*, January 31, (2010)
- Schneider, Howard: "Hezbollah's Relocation of Rocket Sites to Lebanon's Interior Poses Wider Threat", *Washington Post*, January 23, (2010)
- Smith, William E. and Borrell, John: "Middle East Israel's 1,500-Mile Raid", *Time*, October 14, (1985)
- "Soldiers, Sailors Keep Nimitz CSG in Line with Tactical Directive", *Navy News Service*, November 16, (2009)
- Soloman, Jay: "Turkey Balks at Iran Sanctions", *Wall Street Journal*, July 12, (2009)
- "State of the Union Message Transcript", White House, January 28, (2010)
- Stoil, Rebecca Anna: "Iran Can Now Produce a Nuclear Bomb", *Jerusalem Post*, September 9, (2009)

- “Taking Aim at Iran”, *Sunday Times*, London, March 13, (2005)
- “Text of U.N. Resolution on Israeli Air Strike”, *New York Times*, October 6, (1985)
- “The Key to Dealing With Iran: Press Ties With the Opposition”, *Washington Post (editorial)*, January 30, (2010)
- Timbie, James: “A Nuclear Iran: The Legal Implications of a Preemptive National Security Strategy”, *Syracuse Law Review*, no. 3, (2007)
- “U.S. Should Back Iran’s Students”, *Boston Globe (editorial)*, December 12, (2009)
- Weizmann, Steve: “Israel Says Major Cities in Hezbollah Rocket Range”, *Associated Press*, November 10, (2009)
- Wright, Robin: “Why the Opposition Movement Complicates Nuclear Diplomacy”, *Time*, November 23, (2009)

Internet Sources

“92. Press Conference Following Israel Air Force Attack on PLO base in Tunis, 1 October 1985”, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1984-1988/92%20Press%20Conference%20Following%20Israel%20Air%20Force%20Att

Unitedagainstnucleariran.com

FOI, the Swedish Defence Research Agency, is one of Europe's leading research institutes in the defence and security sector. The agency is financed through contracts and government appropriations for specific projects and is responsible to the Ministry of Defence. FOI's core business is research, method and technology development and studies.

For more information visit us at www.foi.se.

FOI Special Reports are monographs on contemporary issues of particular policy relevance authored by FOI researchers or by outside individuals. Papers are chosen and commissioned by FOI research teams on account of their quality and contribution to policy formulation and debate.

Drafts are normally reviewed by several experts from FOI and other institutions. Responsibility for views expressed in the monographs lies exclusively with authors.

About the Author

SAM GARDINER is a retired United States Air Force colonel. He has taught strategy at the U.S. National War College, Air War College and Naval War College. He has also been a visiting scholar at the Swedish National Defence College.

He has participated in various projects with the Swedish National Defence Research Organization for the past 20 years.

He has written extensively on military options for Iran, and has conducted numerous war games to examine military options and possible outcomes. One of these games was done for Atlantic Monthly to gauge how a U.S. President might respond, militarily or otherwise, to Iran's rapid progress toward developing nuclear weapons. He lives in Arlington, Virginia.