

Threat of War Against Iran

Over the course of the last two months, the drumbeat for a potential immediate strike against Iran's nuclear construction sites, either by Israel or by the United States, has been getting louder and louder, to the point where some have anticipated such a move occurring even before the November election. It is likely this momentum which led some to act on the "Israeli spy" scandal.

Highlights of this public drive include:

July 3: Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom attacked Iran during a meeting with U.S. National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice. "We cannot allow the Iranians to move forward in their efforts to develop nuclear weapons. The Iranians still continue to do everything they can in order to develop nuclear weapons that might, of course, be used against Israel," he told her.

July 18: The *Sunday Times* of London cited "Israeli sources" claiming that Israel has "completed rehearsals for a strike against Iran," and that "Israel will on no account permit Iranian reactors—especially the one being built in Bushehr with Russian help—to go critical. . . . If worse comes to worst, and international efforts fail, we are very confident we'll be able to demolish the ayatollahs' nuclear aspirations in one go."

July 21: Israel's Military Intelligence branch presented its National Estimate of the Situation report to the Israeli Security Cabinet, which declared that "the development of unconventional weapons in the Middle East is the most important existential threat to Israel," and warned that Iran could produce a nuclear weapon as early as 2007.

On the same day, Shin Bet domestic intelligence director Avi Dichter briefed the Knesset (parliament), during which he held Iran responsible for the actions of Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

July 29: On a visit to the Gulf region, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell made threatening statements toward Iran, saying it was not abiding by its commitments, and the U.S. would likely take the case to the UN Security Council.

Aug. 8: National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice issued a statement declaring that the world was "worried and suspicious" about Iran's nuclear program, believing that the Islamic Republic was seeking nuclear weapons.

Aug. 17: Neo-conservative Undersecretary of State



This Iranian nuclear power plant is a potential target for a strike—even a nuclear strike—either by Israel or the United States.

for Arms Control and International Affairs John Bolton told an audience at the Hudson Institute in Washington, D.C. that Iran's nuclear program had to be urgently taken up by the UN Security Council, because Iran was allegedly moving rapidly to get nuclear weapons, and the ability to deliver them.

Aug. 19: UPI senior analyst Martin Sieff warned that the danger of a war between the United States and Iran was very real, and could lead to the use of nuclear weapons. "Forget an October Surprise," Sieff wrote. "A much worse one could come in September: Full-scale war between the United States and Iran may be far closer than the American public might imagine."

Aug. 21: Israeli strategist and military historian Martin van Creveld wrote in the *International Herald Tribune*: "Ariel Sharon may be on the warpath again and the target is Iran," he said. But, he continued, "The claim that Iran is working on nuclear weapons and would have them within three years has now been floating about for a decade and a half and, so far, has always proved false. Perhaps this is no wonder. Having witnessed the Americans' vain hunt for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, some of us may be less inclined to accept whatever intelligence does or does not say—including Israeli intelligence, which has more than once invented nonexistent threats."

—Nancy Spannaus