



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on December 6, 2013

Rep. Duncan Hunter Wants Nukes Used If U.S. Bombs Iran

The United States should use tactical nuclear weapons if a preemptive strike is necessary to prevent Iran from producing a nuclear weapon, U.S. Rep. Duncan D. Hunter (R-Calif.; shown) said in an interview on C-Span Wednesday. Any U.S. strike should be a “massive aerial bombing campaign,” he added, with no American “boots on the ground.”



“If you have to hit Iran, you don’t put American boots on the ground, you do it with tactical nuclear weapons and you set them back a decade or two or three,” [asserted](#) Hunter, a member of the House Armed Services Committee.

Asked if he considered war with Iran inevitable, the congressman replied, “I sure as hell hope not.” But he was sharply critical of the recently concluded interim, six-month agreement with Iran that includes a lifting of some of the economic sanctions against the Islamic republic in exchange for limits on the production of centrifuges and a cap on uranium enrichment levels. Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency are to monitor assembly and storage facilities and inspect uranium mines and mills.

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“Iran has to do nothing,” [said](#) Hunter, who characterized President Obama’s strategy as merely to “pray Iran will act differently” than its leaders have “for the last 40 years.” Iran cannot be trusted in negotiations, he said, because it is part of [“the Middle Eastern culture.”](#)

“In the Middle Eastern culture it is looked upon with very high regard to get the best deal possible, no matter what it takes — and that includes lying,” he said. “That’s one reason that these Gulf states like to work with the United States — because we’re honest and transparent and we have laws that we have to live by.”

Asked by the interviewer if he was taking about all Middle East nations, Hunter replied: “I would say not necessarily all Middle Eastern countries. I know that’s a big generalization,” adding, “They do business different than we do business in the West.” He was adamant, however, insisting Iran’s leaders and diplomats are nether rational nor honest.

“They have lied over and over and over. They are liars,” he said. He also described Afghanistan president Hamid Karzai as “not an honest broker.”

“He’s a little bit crazy. He’s not trustworthy,” Hunter said.

A [third term congressman from Alpine California](#), Hunter, 37, is the son of former Rep. Duncan L. Hunter, who served in the House from 1981 to 2009 and sought the Republican presidential nomination in 2008. In addition to the Armed Services, Hunter serves on the committees on Transportation and Infrastructure and Education and Welfare. His recommendation for the use of tactical nuclear weapons



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in Iran is similar to statements the elder Hunter made in his presidential bid.

“That a senior Republican member of the House Armed Services Committee is even suggesting such a possible course of action is the height of reckless irresponsibility and so far out of bounds it is astonishing,” Kingston Reif of the Center for Arms Control and Non-proliferation [told](#) *Defense News*. “The first use of nuclear weapons against Iran would guarantee a mad Iranian dash to acquire nuclear weapons to deter future such US attacks, [and] likely convince other potential US adversaries in the region and around the world to acquire their own nuclear weapons to ward off a potential future US attack.”

Tactical nuclear weapons are often described as battlefield weapons, smaller and more limited in scope than strategic nuclear bombs that are aimed at entire populations. They could be used as enhanced “bunker buster” bombs that penetrate deep to destroy underground facilities. One such bomb can carry a [nuclear charge equivalent](#) to anywhere from 1,000 to as much as 300,000 tons of TNT, or 20 times the explosive force of the atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing hundreds of thousands, at the end of World War II.

Over the past several years, U.S. leaders of both political parties have repeatedly refused to rule out nuclear weapons among the options that are “on the table” to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon of its own. Speaking in Jerusalem in March of this year, President Obama [said](#): “All options are on the table. We will do anything to make sure Iran doesn’t get a nuclear weapon.”

Asked at the White House in 2006 if his administration was planning for the possibility of a nuclear strike on Iran, President George W. Bush [replied](#), “All options are on the table.” CNN newsman Wolf Blitzer [asked](#) the nine Republicans in a presidential candidates forum in 2007 if they would be willing to use tactical nuclear weapons in a preemptive strike against Iranian nuclear facilities. Only Congressman Ron Paul of Texas spoke out against the idea.

“I would authorize the use of tactical nuclear weapons if there were no other way to preempt those centrifuges,” said the senior Duncan Hunter.

“I think it could be done with conventional weapons, but you can’t rule out anything and you shouldn’t take any option off the table,” said former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani.

“You don’t take options off the table,” agreed former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney.

Paul rejected the option of a preemptive strike altogether: “And now, tonight, we hear that we’re not even willing to remove from the table a preemptive nuclear strike against a country that has done no harm to us directly and is no threat to our national security,” he objected.

In October of this year, billionaire Sheldon Adelson, the top contributor to Republican political groups, [suggested](#) that an initial blast in a desert area, killing “maybe a couple of rattlesnakes, and scorpions, or whatever,” might persuade Iran to forsake its nuclear program.

“Then you say, ‘See! The next one is in the middle of Tehran. So, we mean business. You want to be wiped out? Go ahead and take a tough position and continue with your nuclear development.’”

Iran’s nuclear development program goes back at least to the 1970s. At the time the Shah of Iran was overthrown by the Islamic revolution, he was “deep in negotiations with the United States, France, and West Germany, on a nuclear-energy spending spree that was to yield 20 reactors,” according to the [Christian Science Monitor](#). After the Shah was ousted the United States stopped supplying Iran with highly enriched uranium. Yet reports of an imminent Iranian nuclear bomb appeared as early as 1984,



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when *Jane's Defence Weekly* quoted West German intelligence sources saying Iran's bomb production "is entering its final stages."

Iran has insisted that its nuclear development is for peaceful uses, including the generation of electricity and the use of nuclear isotopes in medical applications. National Intelligence Estimate reports, based on the findings of all 16 U.S. intelligence agencies, said in [2007](#) and again in [2011](#) that no evidence was found that Iran was engaged in nuclear weapons production.

"As U.S. and Israeli officials talk publicly about the prospect of a military strike against Iran's nuclear program," the *Los Angeles Times* noted in February 2012, "one fact is often overlooked: U.S. intelligence agencies don't believe Iran is actively trying to build an atomic bomb."

"If Iran were hell-bent on a bomb, why has she not produced a bomb?" [asks](#) columnist Pat Buchanan.

The talk of war, even nuclear war, with a country over a weapons program it may not have appears, to say the least, premature. It might also be reminiscent of the last time the United States and its allies went to war with a nation over its alleged weapons program — in Iraq over its non-existent "weapons of mass destruction."

Correction: *We had originally published this article with a photo of Duncan L. Hunter, who had served in Congress prior to the election of his son Duncan D. Hunter, the subject of this article. We have replaced the photo with the correct one, and we apologize for the mistake.*



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