



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on March 13, 2012

Former Israeli Mossad Spymaster: Wait on Air Strike Against Iran

On the heels of Prime Minister Netanyahu's meeting with President Obama concerning what to do about Iran's supposedly dangerous race for nuclear weapons, the former chief of Israel's intelligence service told CBS News that he believes it would not make sense for Israel to launch an air strike against its enemy's uranium enrichment facilities before all other options are exhausted.



Former Mossad spymaster [Meir Dagan \(left\)](#) told Lesley Stahl of CBS' *60 Minutes* that while Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad may appear to be obsessed with Israel's annihilation, in reality he and his regime are operating out of their own peculiar rationality. "The regime in Iran is a very rational one," he told Stahl, and that includes Ahmadinejad — "not exactly our rational, but I think he is rational."

While the country may not be possessed of the geo-political mindset that informs nations such as Israel and the United States, Iran's officials are nonetheless keenly focused on their country's safety and survival, particularly concerning the implications of moving forward with their nuclear project. Even though Ahmadinejad has made it clear that he wants to destroy Israel, Dagan said Iranian officials are nonetheless "considering all the implications of their actions.... They will have to pay dearly.... And I think the Iranians, in this point in time, are going very careful in the project. They are not running in it."

The former intelligence chief "doesn't advocate a pre-emptive Israeli military strike against Iran's nuclear industry anytime soon," reported Stahl, "an attack that he said would have to be against 'a large number of targets.'" Since available intelligence seems to confirm that Iran is still several years from producing its own nuclear weapon, Dagan said that Israel can bide its time and pursue other tactics that would change Iran's political complexion and make it less dangerous to Israel. One of those tactics, he told Stahl, is covertly fomenting a regime change in Iran. "It's our duty to help anyone who likes to present an open opposition against their regime in Iran," he said. What exactly those tactics included, he would not elaborate to Stahl.

Dagan was emphatic that for Israel's security, Iran must be prevented from arming itself with a nuclear weapon. He added that the instability created in the region by a nuclear Iran would mean a continued global impact of oil prices. "They have an interest, a basic interest to raise the price of oil, because this is the most important source of income for Iran," he said. "If Iran will be armed with a nuclear capability, [it would increase] their ability to create instability in the region, and by this indirectly to increase the price of oil. That would be much worse than it is now."



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He warned, however, that attacking the country's nuclear sites "before you are exploring all other approaches is not the right way."

Unfortunately for those who would like to see the United States curtail its military response to the Middle East's ongoing turmoil, Dagan believes that Netanyahu came away with some form of assurance that should Israel decide to pull the trigger on an Iranian air strike, the U.S. would provide military support. He noted to Stahl that President Obama has "said openly that the military option is on the table and he is not going to let Iran become a nuclear state. And from my experience, I usually trust the president of the U.S." He added that an "Iran armed with a nuclear capability is not an Israeli problem — it's an international problem."

In fact, Dagan candidly conceded that it would actually be in his country's best interest to wait until the very last moment to confront Iran militarily, because an Iran on the leading edge of going nuclear would likely draw the United States directly into the conflict, with Israel's "ally" doing the dirty work of assuring that Iran's nuclear weapons capability is destroyed. "If I prefer that somebody will do it," Dugan said of such an attack, "I always prefer that Americans will do it."

Whoever ultimately leads an attack against Iran's facilities, Dugan predicted that the assault will doubtless prompt a "rain of missiles" against Israel that could number 50,000, along with the igniting of a "regional war" that could devastate Israel. "It will be a devastating impact on our ability to continue with our daily life," he told Stahl. "I think that Israel will be in a very serious situation for quite a time."

Asked about the ability of an air strike to completely destroy Iran's nuclear project, Dagan agreed that in the past he said there is "no military attack that can halt the Iranian nuclear project. It could only delay it."

Dagan's recommendation of restraint in dealing with Iran is famously in conflict with what Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak have been pushing. While in the United States in an attempt to pressure Obama to move beyond his frequently voiced "diplomacy and economic sanctions" against the country, Netanyahu complained at a meeting of the [American Israel Public Affairs Committee](#), Israel's U.S. lobbying arm: "Israel has waited patiently for the international community to resolve this issue. None of us can afford to wait much longer."

While keeping the options open for America's next military adventure, President Obama nonetheless used rhetoric of caution following his meeting with Netanyahu. "We have a window through which we can resolve this peacefully," he said at a White House news conference. "The notion that we have a choice to make in the next week or two weeks or one month or two months is not borne out by the facts."



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