



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on April 9, 2012

Israeli Strike on Iran Would Face Difficulties, Says Study

Amid increasing talk of a possible Israeli preemptive strike against Iran's nuclear facilities, some analysts have noted that little consideration has been given to just how effective such an attack would be on stopping Iran's alleged nuclear proliferation — until now.



According to a study conducted by the British military journal [Jane's Defence Weekly](#), such a mission — involving either long-range missile bombardment or a special forces raid on the ground — would in fact face “substantial difficulties.” *Jane's* observed that despite Israel's powerful air force:

The significant distances involved and hardened [well-protected] features of Iran's nuclear facilities make any “massive surprise” aerial attack a very high-risk operation for Israel to undertake on its own.

The *London Telegraph* has noted that for Israel to deal a substantial blow to Iran's nuclear plants, its air force would have to carry out a number of strikes relying on air-to-air refueling whenever possible over the course of a few days. The Royal United Services Institute's Malcolm Chalmers commented:

This is not going to be one strike and they are out, not like Syria or Iraq where facilities were not underground[;] it is much harder than that.

And the Iranians are experts in building reinforced concrete because of their long problems with earthquakes.

But air strikes could destroy power plants, supply facilities, communications and the centrifuges themselves would be very sensitive to blast. They could do quite a lot of damage which would set back the program for a period.

British officials have warned that Israel may still surprise its allies with an attack. “We underestimated the things that the Israelis have done in the past in sheer out-of-the-book daringness,” one unidentified official noted. One such successful Israeli operation in the past, pointed out *Jane's Defence Weekly*, has been a special forces strike. A former British commander of Special Air Service (SAS) observed that a raid could be launched from a ship carrying helicopters in the Persian Gulf. They [the Israelis] have done it before and they are quite capable of doing off the beaten track operations,” he asserted, adding, “I wouldn't say it was impossible but I would be very surprised if they tried to do it[;] it would be pretty high risk.”

The former SAS commander pointed out that such a strike would be able to target only one facility — more than likely the uranium enrichment site at Fordow. However, that particular facility, built underneath a mountain, would be difficult to reach by air.

But Davis Lewin, political director of the American-aligned think tank Henry Jackson Society (HJS), is



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“100 per cent certain” an Israeli air attack would succeed without U.S. assistance. He explained:

One reason is that the Israeli Air Force has been cognizant of the need for long range strategic bombing for a long time and is extremely adept at making do with the technology it has in challenging missions.

“When Israel identifies a national security threat, it will strike and will strike at great distances,” warns Sam Gardiner, a retired U.S. Air Force Colonel and war games specialist.

For years Israel has reportedly been involved in an assassination program targeting Iran’s nuclear scientists. The *London Telegraph* reports, “Since 2007 there have been seven attempts on Iranian scientists five of which ended in deaths. There was also a ‘blast’ at a rocket storage facility last November that killed 17 Revolutionary Guards including Gen Hassan Moghaddam, a leading figure in the ballistic programme.”

In January, according to [Business Insider](#):

Sources confirm that the Mujahedin-e-Khalq organization, which also is referred to as MEK or MKO, was involved with Israel in the current round of assassinations of two Iranian nuclear scientists and Iran’s top missile designer. To date, some five Iranian nuclear scientists have been targeted.

The British *Daily Mail* also reported at the time that U.S. officials confirmed Israel had been funding and training Iranian dissidents to assassinate Iranian nuclear scientists.

Still, while some ponder if and when such an Israeli-led attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities might occur, Israeli’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has indicated that plans are on hold for now. Jewish American blogger [Richard Silverstein](#) writes:

A senior Likud politician told my confidential Israeli source that Bibi Netanyahu has decided to delay an Israeli attack on Iran until some weeks or possibly months before the next scheduled Israeli election. That will happen by October 2013 unless Bibi determines he wants to go to the nation earlier.

A lot rests on the international talks scheduled to take place this week between Iran and six world powers: the United States, Britain, France, China, Russia, and Germany. Most observers contend that these meetings — set to begin on Friday, April 13 in Turkey — represent the last chance to avoid all-out conflict.

The *National Post* [asserts](#) that if those talks fail, the Middle East “could plunge into a regional war before the year is out.”

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has agreed, [warning](#) that an Israeli strike on Iran would have “disastrous” consequences in the Middle East.

While some are hoping that diplomacy will effectively quiet the increasing tension in the region, others note that Israel’s demands are ultimately unbending.

“Containment is not a policy option from the Israeli perspective,” says Col. Gardiner. “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.” He adds,

Israel has a long history of conducting operations without notifying the United States and in some cases defying Washington.



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The United States has a long history of trying to pressure Israel with rebukes, withholding military equipment and even sanctions. None of this has done permanent damage to U.S.-Israeli relations. Israel most likely knows that this is the case now.

The situation has a quality of inevitability about it. It has the feel of Europe prior to World War I. According to an Israeli security source, any speculation into possible Israeli actions should not be limited. "Don't think conventional," he said. "We are too smart for that."

Meanwhile, Iran continues to assert that its uranium enrichment has been only for the purposes of civilian power generation and research.

Photo: An Israeli Air Force jet fighter



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