



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on September 28, 2012

Netanyahu Warns of “Medieval Forces of Radical Islam”

Describing the conflicts in the Middle East as “the clash between modernity and medievalism,” Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned against “the medieval forces of radical Islam” in his [address](#) at the United Nations September 27 and repeated his call for a “red line” to be drawn before Iran has enough highly enriched uranium to build its first nuclear bomb.



“Iran completed the first stage,” Netanyahu told the General Assembly. “Now they are well into the second stage. By next spring, at most by next summer at current enrichment rates, they will have finished the medium enrichment and move on to the final stage.” Drawing a line on a crude diagram of a bomb he used as a prop, Netanyahu said, “The red line should be drawn right here — before Iran completes the second stage of nuclear enrichment necessary to make a bomb.”

Suggesting military force might be necessary, Netanyahu said Iran’s current stage of nuclear production “requires thousands of centrifuges spinning in tandem in very big industrial plants. Those Iranian plants are visible and they’re still vulnerable.” At a later stage of development, the Iranians might be working on a detonator that can be made “in a small workshop the size of a classroom,” he said. “It may be very difficult to find and target that workshop, especially in Iran. That’s a country that’s bigger than France, Germany, Italy and Britain combined. The same is true for the small facility in which they could assemble a warhead or a nuclear device that could be placed in a container ship. Chances are you won’t find that facility either. So in fact, the only way that you can credibly prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon, is to prevent Iran from amassing enough enriched uranium for a bomb.”

Though Netanyahu has thus far been frustrated in his efforts to get President Obama to draw that “red line,” the Israeli leader praised the U.S. president for stating in his address at the UN September 25 that the danger from a nuclear-armed Iran could not be contained.

“I very much appreciate the president’s position as does everyone in my country,” said Netanyahu, who dismissed as a “dangerous assumption” that Iran with a nuclear bomb could be deterred as the Soviet Union was.

“Militant Jihadists behave very differently from secular Marxists,” he said. “There were no Soviet suicide bombers. Yet Iran produces hordes of them. Deterrence worked with the Soviets, because every time the Soviets faced a choice between their ideology and their survival, they chose their survival. But deterrence may not work with the Iranians once they get nuclear weapons. There’s a great scholar of the Middle East, Prof. Bernard Lewis, who put it best. He said that for the Ayatollahs of Iran, mutually assured destruction is not a deterrent, it’s an inducement.”

But a “clear red line” drawn now, Netanyahu said, could deter Iran before it has the capacity to wreak nuclear havoc in the Middle East or elsewhere in the world.

“If the Western powers had drawn clear red lines during the 1930s, I believe they would have stopped



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Nazi aggression and World War II might have been avoided,” he said. “In 1990, if Saddam Hussein had been clearly told that his conquest of Kuwait would cross a red line, the first Gulf War might have been avoided. Clear red lines have also worked with Iran. Earlier this year, Iran threatened to close the Straits of Hormuz. The United States drew a clear red line and Iran backed off.”

The response from the Iranian mission to the United Nations suggested Netanyahu’s red lines are viewed by Tehran as a red flag.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran is strong enough to defend itself and reserves its full right to retaliate with full force against any attack,” the Iranian mission said in a written statement that dismissed Netanyahu’s warnings about Iran’s nuclear ambitions as “baseless and absurd accusations” against an “exclusively peaceful nuclear program.” Iran insists it is developing nuclear power for peaceful purposes such as energy production and the making of medical isotopes.

Netanyahu warned that Iran is “70 percent of the way” to the uranium enrichment level needed for a nuclear bomb. “From there, it’s only a few months, possibly a few weeks before they get enough enriched uranium for the first bomb.”

While the United States and Israel are agreed that Iran must be prevented from acquiring a nuclear bomb, they have different assessments over whether or when that might happen. U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta has said it would take Iran [“about a year”](#) from the time it decides to make a bomb to come up with a nuclear weapon. But Panetta and all the U.S. intelligence agencies have said there is yet no evidence Iran has made that decision. In an [interview](#) with CBS News earlier this month, Panetta made it clear the United States will make its own decision about when and where to draw the “clear red line.”

“When they make the decision to go ahead and build a nuclear weapon, that, for us, is the red line,” the defense chief said.

Photo: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel shows an illustration as he describes his concerns over Iran’s nuclear ambitions during his address to the 67th session of the United Nations General Assembly at U.N. headquarters, Sept. 27, 2012: AP Images



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