

## SECURITY ASSURANCES

Hersh's source, a Pentagon adviser on the 'war on terror', says: 'The problem is that the Iranians realize that only by becoming a nuclear state can they defend themselves against the US.' <[tinyurl.com/hyfsf](http://tinyurl.com/hyfsf)>

The alternative is for the US to offer Iran cast-iron **security assurances**. (This has been missing from the EU proposals so far.) With North Korea, the US participated in direct talks, and signed an agreement in which Washington promised not to attack North Korea with either nuclear or conventional weapons. <[tinyurl.com/pk8gy](http://tinyurl.com/pk8gy)>

## GRAND BARGAINS

Senior Republican Senator Chuck Hagel urges: 'Ultimately, **any resolution will most likely require security assurances for Iran.**' (*FT*, 8 May 2006, p. 17)

The *Financial Times* warns that attacking Iran would be 'a catastrophe', and proposes this bargain: 'Iran would have to halt uranium enrichment and stop work on its heavy water reactor as well as fully account for past and current nuclear activity. The US would have to complement European trade and investment carrots with **security guarantees** (including not to invade) and by facilitating regional security arrangements. This is an opportunity that must be seized.' (15 May, p. 16 <[tinyurl.com/rav7r](http://tinyurl.com/rav7r)>)

A 'grand bargain' could also include Israel's nuclear weapons as part of a deal to rid the region of all weapons of mass destruction. The biggest incentive to proliferation is **Israel's nuclear monopoly** in the region.

Note that the new Israeli vice prime minister Shimon Peres has also used unacceptable language: 'Now when it comes to destruction, **Iran too can be destroyed** [but] I am not suggesting an eye for an eye.' (*Telegraph*, 9 May 2006 <<http://tinyurl.com/nhyuv>>)

## INSPECTIONS, GUARANTEES, DISARMAMENT

If Iran wants to acquire nuclear weapons, no one can now prevent this—by airstrikes or otherwise. We can restrain Iran's nuclear ambitions by **UN inspections** on the ground, monitoring and reporting. We can remove the incentive to proliferate by meeting Iran's genuine security needs, with cast-iron **security guarantees** from the US, and a **regional WMD disarmament** process that includes **Israel's nuclear arsenal**.

# DON'T ATTACK IRAN

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## THE AVOIDABLE CRISIS

Airstrikes on Iran would kill considerable numbers of people; would be illegal and counterproductive; would undermine international treaties and encourage nuclear weapons proliferation; and would boost al-Qaeda and other forms of terrorism. There is a safer, less costly alternative.

## NEGOTIATIONS: A PATH AWAY FROM DISASTER

After North Korea announced that it had nuclear weapons, the US participated in direct talks (which started in Aug. 2003 and which have not yet ended). North Korea has not been referred to the UN Security Council (UNSC). (See BBC report <<http://tinyurl.com/fj5r4>> and links).

With Iran, the US **refuses** direct talks, and is calling for sanctions and a UNSC resolution that can be taken as authorization for military action. But no one is alleging that Iran **has acquired** nuclear weapons, the allegation is only that Iran may **one day** be able to develop nuclear weapons.

## IRAN'S NUCLEAR RIGHTS

By signing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Iran agreed not to develop nuclear weapons (Article 2), but also gained the right to 'develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination' (Article 4). (NPT text: <<http://tinyurl.com/qgv3q>>)

International concern centres on two issues. Firstly, Iran hid part of its nuclear power programme from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) until this was exposed in Dec. 2002. Secondly, the technology for uranium enrichment that Iran is using to produce nuclear fuel (3% enriched uranium) can also be used to produce material for nuclear weapons (90% enriched uranium).

Worrying as these facts are, it remains the case that Iran has the legal right to uranium enrichment technology under Article 4 of the NPT.

## IRAN'S NUCLEAR STATUS

Since Feb. 2003, IAEA inspectors in Iran have operated with greater freedom under a new agreement with Tehran. On 27 Feb. 2006, the IAEA

again confirmed that 'all the declared nuclear material in Iran has been accounted for', and that 'the Agency has not seen any diversion of nuclear material to nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices'. (<tinyurl.com/oab6j> para 53)

Questions remain, but as yet there is no proven weapons programme.

In Sept. 2005, the International Institute for Strategic Studies said that 'Iran's nuclear option is **not imminent**': 'On purely technical grounds, Iran appears to be **at least several years away** from producing enough fissile material for a nuclear weapon, and whether Iran has the **expertise** to fabricate a nuclear weapon from this material is unknown.' <tinyurl.com/lmzx9> It would only take 'several years' if Iran prioritized speed over secrecy, and did not try to conceal its programme from the outside world.

### IRAN'S NUCLEAR POLICY

On 14 Jan. 2006, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said: 'The countries which seek nuclear weapons are those which want to solve all problems by the use of force. **Our nation does not need such weapons.**' <http://tinyurl.com/p9dwn>

More significantly, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is said to have issued a 'fatwa' or legal ruling that: 'the production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons are **forbidden under Islam** and that the **Islamic Republic of Iran shall never acquire these weapons**'. (Announced in Aug. 2005 <http://tinyurl.com/rcnrd>)

### THREATENING GENOCIDE?

Ahmadinejad has been reported as calling for Israel to be 'wiped off the map'. In fact, a better translation (by Israeli monitoring group MEMRI <tinyurl.com/e2au3>) is 'eliminated from the pages of history'. He quite clearly meant the **political state** of Israel, not the **people** of Israel; one of his examples of apparently invincible regimes which had been 'eliminated' was Iran—the dictatorship of the Shah of Iran. <tinyurl.com/qskl7>.

Ahmadinejad's influence over foreign policy is actually quite limited. In Iran, it is the Supreme Leader (currently Ayatollah Ali Khamenei) who controls foreign and military policy. <tinyurl.com/mklrc> Ayatollah Khamenei responded to these remarks by saying: 'We will not commit aggression towards any nations.' <tinyurl.com/oqmuw> As we have seen, he is also said to have forbidden the acquisition of nuclear weapons.

### PREVENTIVE WAR—ILLEGAL

Under the standard view of international law, pre-emptive self-defence can only be justified when the threat is 'instant, overwhelming, and leaving no choice of means, and no moment for deliberation'. <tinyurl.com/qosh7> According to its 'National Security Strategy', the US will attack enemies 'before they are **able** to threaten or use weapons of mass destruction'. <tinyurl.com/ltyd6> This is not **pre-emptive**, this is **preventive war**, before the enemy is even **able** to attack.

**A US attack would be totally illegal.** When Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw accepted this: 'We could not justify it under Article 51 of the UN charter which permits self-defence.' <http://tinyurl.com/me73e>.

### COUNTERPRODUCTIVE AIRSTRIKES

IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei says: 'I do not believe that military strikes can solve this problem. They can **delay** development at best. Following an attack, the Iranians would most certainly go underground to produce a weapon as quickly and deliberately as possible.' <tinyurl.com/n6mvmk>

**If** there are airstrikes, civilians will be killed (<iranbodycount.org>), Iran will refuse UN inspections and leave the NPT, anti-Western terrorism will rocket, and we will be no nearer knowing the truth about Iran's ambitions. Iranian missile attacks could reach every oilfield in the Gulf.

Airstrikes would also undermine the IAEA, and the Non-Proliferation Treaty itself. An NPT signatory nation would have been attacked simply for exercising its rights under Article 4 of the NPT.

### REGIME CHANGE AND NUCLEAR THREATS

US reporter Seymour Hersh was told by a former US defence official, who still deals with sensitive issues for the Bush Administration, 'that the military planning was premised on a belief that "a sustained bombing campaign in Iran will humiliate the religious leadership and lead the public to rise up and overthrow the government."' <tinyurl.com/hyfsf>

According to Hersh, Pentagon officials have concluded that the only way to destroy deeply-buried Iranian facilities would be to use nuclear weapons, which they did not recommend. But when the US Joint Chiefs of Staff tried to remove the nuclear option from evolving war plans for Iran, the White House **vetoed** this move. Senior US officers are apparently considering resigning over this issue. <tinyurl.com/hyfsf>