

Iran Would Use The Weapons It Isn't Making

The **Jerusalem Post** is first with an AP story quoting the Iranian defence minister letting slip the fact that his country's nuclear programme is military, and intended for use:

Iran's defense minister on Thursday vowed that his country would "use nuclear defense as a potential" if "threatened by any power."

But the idea that Iran is merely responding to a threat is a cynical, transparent excuse and is the reverse of the truth. Now surrounded by US allies, Iran is not faced by any military threat from any power, except that caused by the fear that it itself has created, and continues to exacerbate, as a matter of policy. In reality, Iran could dismantle not only its nuclear weapons programme but its entire armed forces tomorrow and not a single harmful consequence would result. On the contrary, there would be prodigious benefits to all Iranians and the whole of mankind.

Teheran has denied accusations by the US and its allies that Iran was seeking uranium enrichment technologies in order to develop nuclear weapons, saying its program was only meant to generate electricity.

These standard denials will no doubt be repeated shortly. Perhaps the minister mis-spoke. Perhaps the AP misheard or misinterpreted. Perhaps he let slip the truth or perhaps he isn't even privy to the relevant information. But the weapons programme is real. And the threat is real, whether spoken or not.

Israel and the Jewish people do not want another Holocaust. America does not want another Pearl Harbour or 9-11 many times over. The world does not want a catastrophic war. What do Iranians (not counting the evil regime and its supporters) want? Is it possible that they, too, are miscalculating? Are they halfway OK with this escalating tension because they reckon that, at worst, they will be liberated by external force without making more sacrifices than they already are? That line of thinking would certainly be understandable but it would be a mistake. People of Iran: for everyone's sake, deny that the tyrants act in your name, and deny them the means to do so. Time is short, and the only alternatives are very bad.

Iran

I have some first hand experience of working with the Iranian state and the one thing I would say is it is difficult for us to comprehend just how paranoid they are. It's the legacy of decades of isolation but also hundreds of years of history and Shia persecution. They have the imagination to see conspiracy and ulterior motives in almost everything. Fundamentally they don't trust anybody.

This is really worrying because you can see why they keep their nuclear ambitions ticking along. It's actually a position very similar to the post Gulf War standoff with Iraq. As far as the Iranians see it they have two choices. (1) Dismantle their programs and allow in inspectors or (2) press on for the bomb and hope they can get there before sanctions cripple them. From a paranoid Iran's perspective all recent precedents say that their best choice is (2). After all the only country to opt for (1) was Iraq while North Korea, Pakistan and India both went for option (2) and they've received little punishment. I know this is a gross simplification of recent events but I fear Iran thinks that everything will be ok once they have the bomb.

Would they use the bomb on Israel?

I don't think they would, at least not in a pre-emptive strike. I hope that even an Iranian theocracy will realise that if they used a nuclear bomb on an enemy it would invite a retaliatory strike of devastating force. It's the principle of mutually assured destruction that kept the cold war cold, kept the skuds CBRN free during the first Gulf war and stopped Nazi Germany using their nerve agents against the allies.

by A new reader on Fri, 06/16/2006 - 12:41 | [reply](#)

Re: Iran

Thanks for the illuminating comment.

However:

After all the only country to opt for (1) was Iraq while North Korea, Pakistan and India both went for option (2) and they've received little punishment.

Is is not true that Libya has taken option (1) with great success? And South Africa? And Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus? And all the countries that have not even embarked on a nuclear weapons programme?

by [Editor](#) on Fri, 06/16/2006 - 13:50 | [reply](#)

Fair point

You're certainly right about Libya I was forgetting about that. It's a

good example to remember because the two countries share a few similarities in their circumstances. There certainly wasn't a lot of trust there but Ghadaffi took the leap of faith and it's been rewarded. Maybe we should draft Libya into the negotiating team!

The others are a slightly different type and I'm not sure if you can draw any lessons from them. In each of those there was a regime change (end of apartheid and collapse of the Soviet Union) that predated the decision to disarm. Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus were all left with Soviet sites they couldn't afford to maintain or even secure and the decision to be paid to disarm was an obvious one. I don't mean to belittle the achievement of getting these countries to agree but the problem was made much easier by the regime changes. Also none of the countries thought they were at any military risk. The ex USSR countries were all still in the CIS and protected by Russia (although I wonder if Ukraine wishes it had hung on to a couple of nukes now) and South Africa is economically so far ahead of it's neighbours that it isn't worried.

by a reader on Fri, 06/16/2006 - 14:46 | [reply](#)

Unrealistic hope

I think the important point to realize about Iran today is that a fundamental change in the political system from within would be more than the counterparts in Eastern Europe etc. It would be a combination of Greek Golden age revolution, the Renaissance, the enlightenment and the modern political democratic revolutions all wrapped in one because Iran has never really undergone the other periods of growth in the Western sense. If this is true, it should be clear that the hope for such an accomplishment from the people in such short time is unrealistic to say the least.

The intellectuals and the students have gone a long way towards the right ideas and demands but it takes much more time than you realize for this to be absorbed by the mass population. As I said a couple of years before, as far as the majority of people are concerned they are fed up with this system, perhaps for the first time with the over arching traditional and revolutionary interpretations of Islam (and in urban parts perhaps of Islam altogether) but the gap from this to rational systematic movements and demands is still very huge.

The West has no choice but to interfere with Iran to prevent the imminent danger, but that must be clear to all that a regime change is the absolute necessity here. Anything short of that would mean a definite defeat and a huge catastrophe in the long term. However there exists alternatives between internal revolution and outside war. The West can actively engage in forming unrest and guiding it to a outright regime change. Even limited military action can be used to weaken the regime and embolden the population enough to take risks (like in Serbia for example).

But unfortunately I have to say that if you are hoping for an all Iranian solution to this crisis you will be disappointed.

I also agree with the reader above about paranoia in Iranian

mindset. It is just one instance of the need for an over all cultural renaissance to really get out of this historical backwardness. I think the point is that that could only come after gradually and after a regime change and not before it given the very little time left to avoid a catastrophe.

As for the Libyan example it won't work in Iran. Iran is ruled by a mafia like ideological oligarchy not a personal tyrant as in Libya. There is constant struggle between the different fraction inside the regime just like between different mafia families. The real power base is the hardliner fanatic bassiji and islamist core (something like 5% of the population though the figure it is basically a guess) who are in it really for the revolutionary zeal. Any kind of deal from any fraction inside the regime will alienate the power base from that fraction to the rivals (as the defeat of Rafsanjani showed once more to the surprise of us all). It would be a great risk for them to go soft now I think, especially after the way this last election went.

by [AIS](#) on Sat, 06/24/2006 - 23:23 | [reply](#)

The Mid East in general

To trust the Mid East and Muslims in particular has proven to be a major mistake for the west. These backward dumpster dwellers have proven time and time again especially with Israel that they are natural born thieves and liars. I think that they need to have a hurting put on them the likes of which they have never experienced before. It's the only thing they understand.

by Spanky on Fri, 07/28/2006 - 16:35 | [reply](#)

Re: The Mid East

natural born thieves and liars

There is no evidence for that racist characterisation of Middle Easterners or "Muslims in particular". On the contrary, the current violence and viciousness of various Islamic movements is clearly an entirely cultural problem, made much worse by tyrannical governments and by the cynicism and often complicity of Western governments.

Also, "thieves" is a misleading characterisation of them, for thieves seek benefit for themselves at the expense of harming others, while Islamists and their sympathisers seek to harm Jews and Americans and the West even when they themselves are harmed much more by clinging to that position.

Consequently, there is no reason to believe that being hurt "is the only thing they understand", or that they would understand it at all, in the relevant sense.

They need to be *defeated*.

by [Editor](#) on Fri, 07/28/2006 - 17:13 | [reply](#)

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