

Washington experts: Iran has fissile material for 50 nuclear bombs

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Israel: Iran has crossed technological threshold in drive for nuclear bomb

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DEBKAFfile's Washington sources quote experts familiar with the Iranian program maintain that it is far more advanced than the US and Israeli governments are willing to admit.

On March 4, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy published a paper with two important disclosures:

1. Iran has enough fissile material available for making up to 50 nuclear bombs. One of the paper's authors, William Schneider, undersecretary of state in the Reagan administration, who has made a study of Iran and its nuclear strategy, estimates that Tehran can go from low enriched uranium to weapons-grade uranium in a relative brief period of time, perhaps a year or so.

Israeli officials, while evading action to curb a nuclear-armed Iran, now go about suggesting that the Jewish state can live in its shadow. They discount the crude threats coming from Iran and argue that Israel is not really the Islamic Republic primary objective; its true goal is subjugation of the Sunni Muslim world.

Another part of this argument is that Tehran will not go into production of single bombs but wait until it can produce batches of 10-15 bombs or nuclear warheads.

This proposition is knocked over by the Washington think tank's report and the briefing delivered to the Israeli cabinet by Israel's intelligence chief, Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin, Sunday, March 8.

Both confirm that Iran is no more than months away from being able to start a nuclear stockpile.

2. Schneider estimates that Israel will face the moment of no-return on action against a nuclear-armed Iran when Russia begins delivering sophisticated S-300 missile interceptors to Tehran. Not if but when, he says, although Israeli officials suggest the Russian-Iran deal has not been finalized.

The US experts' presumption is that these interceptors once installed will make it almost impossible for the US or Israel to attack Iran's nuclear sites.

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Israeli Cassandra: Military intelligence chief Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin
Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin, head of Israeli military intelligence AMAN, confirmed at the weekly government session in Jerusalem Sunday, March 8, that Iran had crossed the technological threshold to a nuclear bomb capability and required only a strategic decision to go into production.

Tehran TV disclosed Sunday that Iran had test fired a new long-range missile, without offering details.

The Israeli intelligence chief said Iran continues to accumulate hundreds of kilos of low-grade enriched uranium. Tehran expects to gain time from diplomacy with the West for consummating its military nuclear program, he said.

Yadlin's evaluation matched that of Adm. Mike Mullen, Chairman of the US Chiefs of Staff, who said last week: "Iran

likely has enough nuclear fuel stockpiled to make a bomb."

The Israeli general reported that Middle East moderates are cynical about the talks President Barack Obama is promoting with Tehran. They fear the dialogue will come at their expense while Iran and Syria would capitalize on the time gained to further boost and arm terrorist and radical groups.

Yadlin warned that the Palestinian unity talks resuming in Cairo Tuesday, March 10, were a vehicle for Hamas to break out of international isolation.

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