

Israel: Iran is only months away from building a nuke, has ballistic warhead capability

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Israel's AMAN military intelligence director, Maj. Amos Yadlin updated the Knesset foreign affairs and security committee on the state of Iran's nuclear progress Wednesday, March 25. He reported that although Iran is only months away from a capacity to make a nuclear bomb and has attained a warhead capability, Tehran has decided not to cross the threshold so as to avoid provoking Western retaliation.

DEBKAfile's military sources report this is not Tehran's true rationale. The Iranians are held back by two more compelling motives:

1. They will not be satisfied with a single nuclear bomb, but would rather build up an arsenal of 10 to 12 bombs and warheads for which they are short of enough enriched uranium at the moment.
2. Tehran is no longer deterred by fear of an American or European attack, Yadlin explained in his briefing Wednesday. Its leaders are standing by to see what rewards are on offer from US president Barack Obama for improving Washington-Tehran and how they may profit in strategic, diplomatic and economic terms. If the American incentives fall short, Tehran can push ahead with its nuclear weapon.

In his briefing, Yadlin avoided pointing out that Obama's projected rewards for Tehran would be at the expense of Israel's strategic standing or even its military might. This awareness has prompted the sharply conflicting US and Israel intelligence evaluations of the point at which Iran's nuclear bomb program stands at present.

While the AMAN chief says the capability is there but not yet fulfilled, the Americans speak of a timeline of 1-5 years or more.

Until now, both Western and Israeli experts maintained Iran has not yet acquired the technology for mounting nuclear warheads on missiles. Yadlin now reveals Tehran is already there, a conclusion reached after the Iranians sent their first earth satellite, Omid, into space on Jan. 3. The launch meant that Iran can deliver nuclear warheads by ballistic missile at any point on earth.

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