

# Target Iran

Contributed by ABCnews  
Saturday, 24 November 2007

## Bomb Iran?

**Bomb Iran? U.S. Requests Bunker-Buster Bombs**  
White House Bomber Request Leaves Some Wondering if U.S. Is Preparing Action in Iran

By JONATHAN KARL  
Oct. 24, 2007

Tucked inside the White House's \$196 billion emergency funding request for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is an item that has some people wondering whether the administration is preparing for military action against Iran.

The item: \$88 million to modify B-2 stealth bombers so they can carry a newly developed 30,000-pound bomb called the massive ordnance penetrator, or, in military-speak, the MOP.

The MOP is the the military's largest conventional bomb, a super "bunker-buster" capable of destroying hardened targets deep underground. The one-line explanation for the request said it is in response to "an urgent operational need from theater commanders."

What urgent need? The Pentagon referred questions on this to Central Command.

ABC News called CENTCOM to ask what the "urgent operational need" is. CENTCOM spokesman Maj. Todd White said he would look into it, but, so far, no answer.

There doesn't appear to be any potential targets for a bomb like that in Iraq. It could potentially be used on Taliban or al Qaeda hideouts in the caves along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, but there would be no need to use a stealth bomber there.

So where would the military use a stealth bomber armed with a 30,000-pound bomb like this? Defense analysts say the most likely target for this bomb would be Iran's flagship nuclear facility in Natanz, which is both heavily fortified and deeply buried.

"You'd use it on Natanz," said John Pike of GlobalSecurity.org. "And you'd use it on a stealth bomber because you want it to be a surprise. And you put in an emergency funding request because you want to bomb quickly."

"It's kind of strange," Pike said. "It sends a signal that you are preparing to bomb Iran, and if you were actually going to bomb Iran I wouldn't think you would want to announce it like that."

The MOP is a massive bomb -- 20 feet long and encased in 3.5 inch thick high-performance steel. It is designed to penetrate up to 200 feet underground before exploding.

The bomb was developed by Northrop Grumman and Boeing for the Pentagon's Defense Threat Reduction Agency.

In an interview earlier this year with Air Force Times, Bob Hastie, the manager of the MOP program explained its purpose: "We have a mission to defeat ... hard and deeply buried targets where our adversary would have the support structure for WMD-type systems."

<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/story?id=3771522&page=1>

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Cheney: 'We Will Not Allow' Iran Nukes  
Vice President Threatens 'Serious' Consequences

By JOHN HENDREN  
WASHINGTON, Oct. 21, 2007

Vice President Dick Cheney today issued his sternest warning to date on Iran, saying the Persian nation will not be

allowed to pursue its nuclear program.

Dismissing Iran's claims that it is seeking only nuclear energy and not a weapons program, Cheney accused Iranian leaders of pursuing a practice of "delay and deception in an obvious effort to buy time."

"Our country, and the entire international community, cannot stand by as a terror-supporting state fulfills its grandest ambitions," Cheney told the Washington Institute for Near East Studies. "The Iranian regime needs to know that if it stays on its present course the international community is prepared to impose serious consequences."

The rising rhetoric could signal that President Bush intends to take action -- possibly military action -- to halt Iran's nuclear program before the president leaves office on Jan. 20, 2009, some analysts said.

"That's pretty firm, clear language," Michael O'Hanlon, a military analyst for the Brookings Institution, told ABC News of Cheney's wording. "And it raises more clearly the specter of military action. That is much more than saying this isn't just an option that we've taken off the table."

Cheney's statement bore a striking resemblance to this warning before an audience of Republicans on Jan. 31, 2003, less than two months before the U.S. invasion of Iraq: "We will not permit a brutal dictator with ties to terror and a record of feckless aggression to dominate the Middle East and to threaten the United States."

A spokeswoman for the vice president said his statements today echoed his previous comments on Iran.

On March 7, 2006, for instance, he told the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, "And we join other nations in sending that regime a clear message: We will not allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon."

And on May 11, 2007, he said, "We'll stand with others to prevent Iran from gaining nuclear weapons and dominating this region."

But analysts said the administration's talk on Iran has taken on a tone of rising warning and aggressiveness, particularly on a week that included an unusually strongly worded admonition from President Bush earlier this week.

"We got a leader in Iran who has announced that he wants to destroy Israel," Bush told reporters at the White House. "So I've told people that if you're interested in avoiding World War III, it seems like you ought to be interested in preventing them from having the knowledge necessary to make a nuclear weapon."

<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/story?id=3757406&page=1>

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 Blogs in Iran Offer Voice of Dissent  
 Country's Blogosphere Gives Interesting Glimpse into Young Iranians By CASEY SCHWARTZ  
 April 7, 2007

Over the last two weeks, bloggers have been rare voices of public dissent inside Iran, criticizing their government's seizure of the 15 British soldiers. Much of their criticism centered on the negative impact they feared this episode would have on Iran's reputation in the world.

"Why is Iran losing its case in international public opinion and why doesn't the Iranian government care about this?" one blogger asked at <http://viewfromiran.blogspot.com>.

Another blogger, at <http://persianperspective.wordpress.com/>, in an entry entitled "Things you HAVE TO know about Iran," directed his message specifically to Americans, writing, "Ahmadinejad for all of his rhetoric only represents one of many circles of power &hellip; the Iranian leadership is not insane."

There is a different tone running through the newest entries on many of these same blogs. On Wednesday, announcing the release of the captive soldiers, Ahmadinejad was seen as having achieved a political victory, or at least a draw; the outcome sent a ripple of pride through the Iranian blogosphere.

Earlier in the week, Mr. Behi (<http://mrbehi.blogs.com/>), a popular blogger from Tehran, had written, "Iran is afraid. &hellip; It is cornered politically and militarily. &hellip; I think this is a panic reaction."

Updating his blog on Wednesday, he expressed satisfaction at the soldiers' release, but not before remarking, "I hope that the world would also please stop evil-izing Iran. So we have a naughty government. &hellip; You do not have to tell us over and over, we already know it. &hellip; And you told on us to the Security Council?"

In an entry on the blog, "Persian Students in the UK," one blogger wrote, "What's all this about allowing the captives to write letters home saying they are all right? It's time the Iranians fell into line with the rest of the civilized world: they should allow their captives the privacy of solitary confinement. That's one of the many privileges the U.S. grants to its captives in Guantanamo Bay" (<http://www.persianstudents.org/>).

The sarcasm of the entry highlights the feeling shared by many bloggers in Iran that the West has reacted hypocritically in the international face off. Many were quick to remark on the discrepancy between the treatment the British soldiers had received in captivity and the experiences of political prisoners under British and American control. The comparison lent itself to a certain online swagger.

Iran has a notably large and passionate blogging community. Some estimates put the number of blogs at around 700,000. Most of the bloggers are young and educated. In a country where roughly two-thirds of the population is under 30, the blogs provide a direct view into the questions and beliefs of Iran's majority demographic.

"Bloggers in Iran are the post-revolution baby boom generation," said Nasrin Alavi, editor of the anthology "We Are Iran: The Persian Blogs." "It's all about this empowered youth. It is like a taunt. They are saying, 'We are the future of Iran.'"

According to Alavi, the urge that young Iranians have to write Weblogs comes from an urgent desire to express themselves -- and a limited number of ways in which to do so.

"During the last 10 years, over 100 media publications have been closed down. Blogs offer a sanctuary where people can speak out. &hellip; Iranians are tired of the image the West has of them foaming at the mouth, burning the American flag," she said.

Alavi said that she believes that the overriding political sentiment in the Iranian blogosphere runs in opposition to the government, but Hossein Derakhshan, an Iranian blogger based in Canada, disagrees.

"In the beginning, it was dominated by people who were very critical of the government, but now you can't say that," he said. "It is truly mainstream. Even Ahmadinejad has a blog."

Derakhshan writes several Weblogs, including the widely read "Editor: Myself." He has also compiled a comprehensive set of links to English language blogs in Iran at [Hoder.com](http://Hoder.com).

Like Alavi, Derakhshan describes Iranian bloggers as being mostly young and educated, driven by an intense desire for self-expression.

"Also," he said, "Iranians love new technology."

Derakhshan believes that the continuously expanding blog world might provide a way to address the frustration many Iranians feel about constant government propaganda. Through blogging, Derakhshan tries to encourage a more independent way of thinking.

For both Derakhshan and Alavi, it is clear that the world of Iranian blogs represents a change. It is the chance for new voices to be heard, new possibilities considered.

And what does Derakhshan think of this week's conclusion to the British-Iranian face-off?

"Ahmadinejad is one heck of a street-smart politician," he blogged.

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=3018582&page=1>