

# Threat from Iran

[Iran](#) is one of the foremost, self-proclaimed enemies of the West and one of the most serious threats to stability in the Middle East.

The Iranian government's extreme interpretation of [Islamic law](#), and its anti-Western philosophy, inspires the rise of Islamic extremists across the world. Iran is also one of the principal [state sponsors of terror](#), proudly delivering weapons to [Hezbollah](#) and Palestinian terrorists, and the regime also continues to provide safe haven for many international terrorists, including senior [al-Qaeda](#) leaders Yasin al-Suri, Saif al-Adel and Abu Muhammad al-Masri. Moreover, Iranian agents have acted to perpetrate anti-Western and anti-Israel terrorist attacks in more than 20 countries around the world over the past two years. Iran has been implicated in the July 2012 bombing in [Bulgaria](#) that killed 5 Israeli's, the February 2012 attacks on Israeli representatives in [Georgia](#) and [India](#), the failed strikes in [Thailand](#) and [Azerbaijan](#) against Jewish targets, and the foiled attempt to assassinate [Saudi Arabia's](#) ambassador to the U.S. in October 2011. Israel's [Mossad](#) security service also noted that Iran was behind foiled plots to attack Jewish and Israeli targets in [Kenya](#) and [Cyprus](#) as well.

But above all these concerns, the most menacing threat [Iran](#) poses to international security is its harnessing of [nuclear energy](#) for the purpose of developing a nuclear bomb.

In 2005, [Iran](#) made its first advance in the production of enriched uranium and subsequently established a secret nuclear research center to train scientists in all aspects of atomic technology. Intelligence released in 2012 shows that [Iran](#) has now amassed some 10,000 functioning centrifuges and is streamlining the uranium enrichment process so that they can convert their five tons of low-grade fissile material into high-grade, weapons-ready material. Analysts believe it would take Iran nine months, from the moment an order is given, to assemble their first explosive device and another six months to reduce it to the dimensions of a missile payload.

[Iran](#) continues to develop long range missiles, but already has weapons capable of reaching [Israel](#), parts of Eastern and Southern Europe, the Arabian peninsula, and American bases in the Middle East. In July 2012, a report released by the US government and signed by US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta showed evidence that [Iran](#) is continually boosting the accuracy and lethality of its existing missile systems. These improvements are in tandem with regular ballistic-missile training that "continues throughout the country" and the addition of "new ships and submarines," the report found. This report also repeated the long-standing international assessment that Iran, with "sufficient foreign assistance, may be technically capable of flight-testing" an intercontinental ballistic missile by 2015.

There is now little disagreement as to the intentions of the Iranians.

In the [International Atomic Energy Agency's](#) (IAEA) report from [November 2011](#), the UN agency confirmed that Iran is developing nuclear weapons and reiterated the need to address this situation as soon as possible. Director General Yukiya Amano said "It is my responsibility to alert the world. From the indicators I had, I draw the conclusion that it is time to call the world's attention to this risk."

The question has now become how to respond.

As U.S. [President Barack Obama](#) noted, the threat from a nuclear Iran affects not just "one country's interests or two countries' interests ... [but] the entire international community," and therefore cooperative international measures must be taken to stop Iran's progress.

In the [United States](#), [President Obama](#) has [imposed sanctions](#) against companies doing business with Iran, the Treasury Department has worked to [freeze Iranian financial assets](#) and new measures have been passed by [Congress](#) to halt transactions with Iran's Central Bank. Obama's [administration](#) has also made clear they will not accept containment of a nuclear Iran and have drawn red lines for possible military intervention. "The United States ... does not want Iran to develop a nuclear weapon. That's a red line for us," Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said in January 2012. "If [Iran] proceeds ... with developing a nuclear weapon then we will take whatever steps are necessary to stop it."

In Europe, Maj. Gen. Vladimir Dvorkin, head of the Moscow-based Center for Strategic Nuclear Forces, is convinced that if the Iranians fully develop their nuclear program, "they will most likely be able to threaten the whole of Europe." In response to this sense of urgency, [France](#), [Germany](#) and [Great Britain](#) are spearheading European Union efforts to convince [Iran](#) to abandon its nuclear ambitions. In January 2012, these efforts scored a major success when the EU voted to embargo Iranian oil imports and to freeze the assets of Iran's central bank. "We will not accept Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon. Iran has so far had no regard for its international obligations and is already exporting and threatening violence around its region," British Prime Minister David Cameron, French President Nicolas Sarkozy and German Chancellor Angela Merkel said in a joint statement. Following this lead, in March 2012, the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) cut off all business with Iran, effectively stopping transactions with nearly 30 Iranian banks and their subsidiaries worldwide.

Across the [Arab Middle East](#), the Iranian nuclear program is raising grave concerns, primarily with regards to Iran's intentions for regional dominance. In 2009, then-Egyptian President [Hosni Mubarak](#) said, "A nuclear armed Iran with hegemonic ambitions is the greatest threat to Arab nations today." In 2011, [Saudi Arabian](#) government officials noted, "We cannot live in a situation where Iran has nuclear weapons ... If Iran develops a nuclear weapon, that will be unacceptable to

us.” Saudi Prince Turki al-Faisal expounded, noting that if Iran achieved nuclear weapons it would “lead to untold and possibly dramatic consequences.” Those consequences are clear - [nuclear proliferation](#) across the Middle East. Already, at least twelve Arab nations, including [Jordan](#), [Saudi Arabia](#), [Egypt](#), Turkey and the [UAE](#), have begun to explore nuclear energy.

For [Israel](#), a nuclear armed Iran is not tolerable. Not only would Iranian nuclear weapons create an existential threat to Israel’s existence (Iranian Chief of Staff Major General Hassan Firouzabadi said, “The Iranian nation is standing for its cause that is the full annihilation of Israel”), it would also limit Israel ability to protect itself from Iranian terror proxies such as [Hezbollah](#) and  [Hamas](#). In May 2012, IDF intelligence reported that Iran, together with [Syria](#) and [Hezbollah](#), had nearly 65,000 [rockets and missiles](#) assembled within striking distance of Israel. Israeli Minister of Defense [Ehud Barak](#) noted that if Iran gains a nuclear capability, then retaliating against an attack from  [Hamas](#) or [Hezbollah](#) “would be tantamount to an attack on Iran,” and would thus restrict an aggressive range of operations. Therefore, in the words on PM [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), Israel is “determined to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons; we leave all options on the table; and containment is definitely not an option.”

[Barak](#) has made clear that Iran is closing in on its “immunity zone” - the point when its accumulated know-how, raw materials, experience and equipment (as well as the distribution of materials among its underground facilities) would mean any military strike would fail in derailing the nuclear program. It is well past time to more stringently implement an international sanctions regime sufficiently punitive to convince the Iranian leadership to abandon their project. In the absence of such sanctions, or if they are shown to be ineffective, a joint military response, as undesirable as it is, will most likely be only other option.

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## **Major Developments in the Iranian Nuclear Program**

### **February 2013:**

- Satellite pictures of the Parchin military complex, taken October 2012 and uncovered by *The Telegraph*, shows new construction inside the facility. International inspectors have been able to visit the complex since 2004, where Iran is accused of experimenting and running tests on detonators for a nuclear weapon. The satellite imagery shows a cluster of three new buildings near the entrance to a tunnel, the largest building having been constructed in a relatively isolated location, cut into a hillside. The pictures confirm the IAEA’s report earlier this month that Iran has pressed on with construction inside Parchin. Some of the efforts appear to have been designed to cover up evidence of previous work.

**([The Telegraph](#), February 27)**



- Satellite imagery obtained by *The Telegraph* show that Iran has activated the Arak heavy water nuclear plant. The heavy water facility is used to operate a nuclear reactor that can produce plutonium which could then be used to make a bomb. The imagery also indicated that Iran has planted three surface-to-air missile sites and at least 50 batteries of anti-aircraft guns protect this research reactor. Inspectors from the IAEA have been unable to visit the facility since August 2011 and Iran has refused repeated requests for information about the site, which is 150 miles south-west of Tehran.

**([The Telegraph](#), February 26)**

- According to details released from a confidential report of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Iran has already begun installing roughly 180 advanced IR-2M centrifuges at its main uranium enrichment plant in Natanz. While the centrifuges were not yet operational, such machines could enable Iran to significantly speed up its accumulation of material that could be used to make a nuclear weapon. Iran alerted the IAEA in January 2013 of its intention to upgrade the Natanz enrichment facilities.

**([Jerusalem Post](#), February 22)**

- Iranian Culture Minister Seyed Mohammad Hosseini and Cultural Official Sheikh Ali Zaher of a Hezbollah-related organization announced the expansion of cultural ties between the two entities. Hosseini said, "Iran and Hezbollah have inseparable bonds and in Seyed Hassan Nasrallah's words, Hezbollah is continuing the path of the Islamic Revolution and this bond is now present."

**([Bookroom News \[Iran\]](#), February 6)**

### **January 2013:**

- In a letter dated January 23, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) informed the United Nations that it was planning to upgrade its uranium enrichment plant at Natanz by installing more advanced centrifuges, the IR2M. The new centrifuge can enrich two or three times faster than the present equipment being used by Tehran, according to the Associated Press. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) sent a letter to member states saying Iran had informed the agency of its plans to use the improved machines at its fuel enrichment plant in Natanz.

**([BBC News](#), January 31)**

- Jill Bellamy van Aalst, a biological warfare threat analyst, reported that Iran is developing at least 16 different biological agents for possible inclusion in biological weapons. These agents, including anthrax, Ebola, encephalitis, biological toxins, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), cholera, smallpox and plague, may also be undergoing tests to make them ineffective to vaccines. Genetically modified, weaponized biological agents would pose threats for which there are no known medical countermeasures. Biological weapons are silent until they explode in epidemics or pandemics. Calculating kill ratios and controlling strikes as with chemical weapons

and nuclear weapons are nearly impossible with biological weapons.

[\(Washington Times, January 25\)](#)

- At the World Economic Forum in Davos, Nobel Peace Laureate and former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger called for "serious" negotiations between Iran and the West over the former's nuclear program. Kissinger noted that, "Unilateral intervention by Israel would be a desperate last resort, but the Iranians have to understand that if they keep using the negotiations to gain time to complete a nuclear programme then the situation will become extremely dangerous." The major consequences of Iran's drive for nuclear weapons is the proliferation of such weapons across the Middle East and the world, said Kissinger.

[\(BBC News, January 24\)](#)

- Ali Akbar Salehi, Iran's foreign minister, announced that his country is proposing Cairo, Egypt as the venue for restarting negotiations with the West over the Islamic Republic's nuclear program. Salehi also said Egypt has welcomed the Tehran offer and is now consulting about it with the six-nation group - the U.S., Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany - that have been directing negotiations until this point. "[Iran] has suggested that the next meeting be held in Cairo. Egypt has welcomed the proposal," Salehi told reporters after a Cabinet meeting.

[\(Haaretz, January 23\)](#)

- On January 3, US President Barack Obama signed into law the 2013 National Defense Authorization Act, including additional sanctions levied against Iranian energy, shipping and shipbuilding sectors as well as Iran's ports, blacklisting them as "entities of proliferation concern." The bill, HR 4310, passed both houses of the Congress in December 2012 and was signed by President Obama without amendment on any of the Iran-related sections. The bill also imposes penalties on anyone caught supplying precious metals to Iran and sanctions on Iranian broadcasting. Additionally, the bill targets the state broadcast network, called the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, which the law says violated human rights by broadcasting forced confessions and show trials. The law orders the U.S. Treasury to slap sanctions on Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting and its president, Ezzatollah Zargami.

[\(Wall Street Journal, January 3, 2013\)](#)

## **December 2012:**

- On December 13, North Korea successfully launched a satellite into orbit and many analysts believe their rocket work is intricately intertwined with the Iranian nuclear program. According to missile expert Charles Vick, the evidence of the two countries' cooperation can be seen by comparing Pyongyang's Nodong missile with Iran's Shahab missile. "The technology is being transferred in both directions, and I think that's what's going on in the nuclear technology, too," Vick said. MIT missile expert Theodore Postol thinks that this latest North Korean rocket launch was actually a joint production between North Korean and Iranian engineers. "...You don't need access to the intelligence information to see that these programs are very, very strongly

collaborating," he said.

([NPR](#), December 14, 2012)

### November 2012:

- The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said that [Iran](#) installed 700 new centrifuges at its fortified underground facility at Fordo, according to its November report. Iran had already been enriching uranium to 20 percent and the new equipment will allow the facility to double its output of higher-enriched uranium. The IAEA believes this could allow Iran to make the core for a nuclear warhead within months. The plant is now believed to house approximately 2,800 centrifuges.

([AP](#), November 16, 2012)

### October 2012:

- The independent Institute for Science and International Security released a report concluding that in two to four months, Iran will be able to produce enough highly enriched uranium for at least one atomic bomb (about 25 kilograms) at its Nantaz facility. This assessment was made by former IAEA inspectors and other nuclear experts.

([Israel National News](#), October 10, 2012)

- President Obama signed an [executive order](#) and House Resolution 1905, authorizing the implementation of sanctions stipulated in the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012. The order and bill state that the goal of compelling Iran to abandon efforts to acquire a nuclear weapons capability and other threatening activities can be achieved through a policy that includes economic sanctions, diplomacy, and military planning, and urges the President to initiate diplomatic efforts to expand the multilateral sanctions regime against Iran. Secondly, expands sanctions related to the energy sector of Iran and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by Iran, by expanding the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996.

([The White House](#), October 9, 2012)

- Mansour Haqiqatpour, Iranian deputy head of parliament's Foreign Policy and National Security Committee, said that his country would enrich uranium to 60% if negotiations with world powers over its nuclear program fail. This step, if taken, would mean Iran would be another significant step closer to the 90% enrichment level needed to make atomic bombs.

([Chicago Tribune](#), October 2, 2012)

- According to an anonymous Iranian reporter who was recently hired as a researcher at one of Iran's nuclear facilities, Iran is recruiting staff non-stop to work on its nuclear program. The source said that Iran has already enriched uranium to 30% and "by next year, we hope to reach up to 50 or even 60 percent. The experience and knowledge is there, but getting the right parts at times has been difficult," he said. Parts of the equipment being received was "not reliable and

sometimes defective."

[\(Times of Israel, October 2, 2012\)](#)

### September 2012:

- The United States Senate, in a 90-1 vote, passed [Joint Resolution 41](#) which reaffirmed the government's commitment to preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability. The non-binding bill warns that time is limited to ensuring that Iran does not reach this capability and urges the government to put economic and diplomatic pressure on Iran until it suspends uranium enrichment programs, complies with IAEA safeguards and inspections, and promises to only use its nuclear program for peaceful purposes.

[\(Washington Post, September 22, 2012\)](#)

- Iranian atomic energy chief Fereydoun Abbasi-Davani said that "terrorists and saboteurs" used explosives to cut the electricity power lines to Iran's Fordow underground nuclear enrichment plant in mid-August. Abbasi-Davani also said that a similar act had been carried out on power lines to Iran's main enrichment facility at Natanz. Iran's nuclear chief made clear his view that sabotage would not be successful in slowing Iran's nuclear program and he also suggested that whoever carried out the sabotage mission was connected to inspection teams from the IAEA.

[\(Reuters, September 17, 2012\)](#)

- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ramped up threats against Iran while also taking a swipe at the United States, who recently said that it refuses to place red lines on negotiations with Iran over the Islamic Republic's nuclear program. "The world tells Israel 'wait, there's still time'. And I say, 'Wait for what? Wait until when?' Those in the international community who refuse to put red lines before Iran don't have a moral right to place a red light before Israel," Netanyahu said. Netanyahu has said Israel and the United States were in talks on setting a "clear red line" for Iran's nuclear program but the two allies remain at odds over whether to spell out a clear threshold for military action.

[\(Reuters, September 11, 2012\)](#)

- Diplomats from the [International Atomic Energy Agency \(IAEA\)](#) said they received new intelligence that Iran has moved closer to the ability to build a nuclear weapon. They say the intelligence shows that Iran has advanced its work on calculating the destructive power of an atomic warhead through a series of computer models that it ran sometime within the past three years. The information, gathered by the US, Israel, and at least two other Western nations, is significant for the fact that it strengthens IAEA concerns that Iran is continuing to work towards a nuclear weapons capability.

[\(Washington Post, September 11, 2012\)](#)



- Working off concerns voiced by the Costa Rican government, Israel Radio reported that Iran has established training bases in northern Nicaragua near the border with Honduras to prepare for retaliatory strikes in case US or Israel strikes Iran's nuclear facilities. According to the report, approximately 30 members of Hezbollah are based full time in the camp and receive all supplies directly from Tehran.

*([Times of Israel](#), September 6, 2012)*

- In a closed-door intelligence briefing for member states, the [International Atomic Energy Agency \(IAEA\)](#) showed officials a series of satellite images that adds to the growing suspicion that Iran is conducting clean-up activities in Parchin, a site believed to have housed nuclear weapons testing and development. "It was pretty compelling," a senior Western diplomat said about the briefing by IAEA Deputy Director General Herman Nackaerts and Assistant Director General Rafael Grossi.

*([Chicago Tribune](#), September 5, 2012)*

### **August 2012:**

- A [quarterly report](#) on Iran's nuclear program released by the [International Atomic Energy Agency \(IAEA\)](#) says that the Islamic Republic has more than doubled the number of uranium enrichment centrifuges at its impenetrable underground facility Fordow, near the holy city of Qoms and about 80 miles from the capital Tehran. The number of centrifuges now at Fordow had more than doubled to 2,140 from 1,064 in May. The [IAEA](#) report also noted that "extensive activities" at the Parchin complex, which has yet to be inspected, prove that Iran is leading a determined effort to cleanup that site from any evidence of illicit nuclear-weapons-linked testing.

*([Reuters](#), August 31, 2012)*

- According to intelligence gathered by the [United Nations](#), the [US](#) and [Israel](#), Iran's top nuclear scientist, Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh, has kickstarted his nuclear energy and weapons work after having been sidelined for up to nine years. Officials worry that Fakhri-zadeh's research revolves around warhead construction and coincides with steps taken by the Iranian government to push ahead other facets of their nuclear program. The [International Atomic Energy Agency \(IAEA\)](#) says he opened the Organization of Defensive Innovation and Research in 2011 and that elements of Iran's nuclear-arms research is taking place there.

*([Wall Street Journal](#), August 30, 2012)*

- The [International Atomic Energy Agency \(IAEA\)](#) began to form a special "Iran Task Force," drawing together sleuths in weapons technology, intelligence analysis, radiation and other fields of expertise, as it seeks to add muscle to a probe of suspicions that Iran is working secretly on atomic arms. The creation of the unit, much like the agency's "Iraq Action Team" from the 1990's, indicates frustration by UN officials over Iran's refusal to cooperate with [IAEA](#) experts who are trying to follow up on suspicions that the Islamic Republic is secretly working on an arms

program.

([Washington Post](#), August 23, 2012)

- Israeli Ambassador to the United States Michael Oren told Bloomberg Newsweek that Israel would be willing to strike the Iranian nuclear facilities even if such an attack would only delay the Islamic Republic's ability to produce nuclear weapons. "One, two, three, four years are a long time in the Middle East - look what's happened in the last year," Oren said referring to the Arab Spring revolutions. "Diplomacy hasn't succeeded," Oren also said. "We've come to a very critical juncture where important decisions do have to be made."

([Bloomberg Businessweek](#), August 16, 2012)

- A poll released by the Israel Democracy Institute found that 61% of the Israeli public thinks that Israel should not attack Iran without US cooperation while 54.5% say the chances are low that an attack with US help would actually succeed. On the other hand, 56% of Israelis also believe that efforts by the West to stop Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons are neither serious nor sincere, and a large majority (70%) feels that Israel cannot trust US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta's promise that the United States will make sure Iran does not acquire nuclear weapons.

([The Peace Index](#), August 8, 2012)

- Iranian state-run Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) reported that Iran successfully test-fired the newest version of the Fateh-110 missile which is capable of flying 185 miles and could target spots in Eastern Europe or Israel. According to a Pentagon report, "Iran has boosted the lethality and effectiveness of existing systems with accuracy improvements and new submunition payloads," which allow missiles to drop explosives over a wider area thus causing more destruction.

([CNN](#), August 6, 2012)

- Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced in a speech that the only solution to conflict in the Middle East is to destroy Israel. Ahmadinejad said, "Although the main solution is for the elimination of the Zionist regime, at this stage an immediate cease-fire must be implemented" between Israel and the Lebanese terrorist organization Hezbollah. Later in his speech, the Iranian leader also noted that Israel "is an illegitimate regime, there is no legal basis for its existence."

([Washington Post](#), August 3, 2012)

## June/July 2012:

- The National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), an opposition movement to the regime in Iran, claimed to have evidence that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has established a new research unit called the New Defence Research Organisation (NDRO) to rapidly expand Iran's capability to build a nuclear weapon. The NCRI says that this new unit is subdivided into seven branches each with a responsibility for conducting a specific area of

research, including the fissile material needed for a bomb, metals used for a warhead, and device detonators.

***([The Daily Telegraph](#), July 17, 2012)***

- The Aerospace Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) conducted a missile exercise, dubbed Great Prophet 7, which involved firing dozens of missiles at a target that resembled a U.S. airbase situated in Afghanistan, Bahrain, Kuwait, or Saudi Arabia. The exercise was meant as a signal that the Islamic Republic is prepared for a military clash with the West and Israel, and possesses a devastating “second-strike” response capability against any attack on its nuclear sites. IRGC Aerospace Force commander Brig.-Gen. Amir Ali Hajizadeh claimed Iran had already amassed information on 35 U.S. bases in the region and had deployed missiles to destroy them within minutes of an attack on its soil.

***([JCPA](#), July 17, 2012)***

- The United States Department of Defense released a report on the military power of Iran that confirmed the Islamic Republic continues to improve the accuracy and lethality of its long- and short-range missile systems. “Iran has boosted the lethality and effectiveness of existing systems by improving accuracy and developing new submunition payloads” that extend the destructive power over a wider area than a solid warhead, according to the report which was signed by U.S. Defense Secretary [Leon Panetta](#).

***([Bloomberg](#), July 10, 2012)***

- Talks in Moscow between Western powers and Iran over the latter's disputed nuclear weapons program failed to reach any conclusion over future policy as mistrust, miscommunication, and frustration kept the two sides apart. Catherine Ashton, EU foreign policy chief, said that the differences in opinion between the two sides over Iran's program are now so far apart that future meetings were not even scheduled at the close of negotiations. Iran's parliament, meanwhile, told their lead negotiator, Saeed Jalili, to stick to their positions about not giving in to the demands of the West.

***([New York Times](#), June 19, 2012)***

### **May 2012:**

- Satellite photographs released by the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) show intensified Iranian efforts to cleanse and destroy parts of the Parchin military site suspected by the [IAEA](#) of being a nuclear weapons facility. A tentative deal struck last week between the Islamic Republic and the [IAEA](#) would have allowed for international observers to visit the site to assess for nuclear weapons-related work. "The newest image raises concerns that Iran is attempting to raze the site prior to allowing the IAEA visit," said ISIS in its report. "The razing of the two buildings may also indicate that Iran has no intention to allow inspectors access soon."

***([Wall Street Journal](#), May 31, 2012)***

- The [IAEA](#) released a [report](#) that confirmed Iran is still moving ahead with its uranium enrichment work in defiance of Security Council resolutions and agreements stipulated in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The IAEA report shows that Iran has significantly increased its production of 3.5% low-enriched uranium (has amassed nearly 750kg more than what was reported in the previous IAEA report), that it continues to stock 19.75% low-enriched uranium, and that its IR-1 centrifuge performance is increasing. According to independent analysis by the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS), the report means that Iran has enough enriched uranium to fill five nuclear bombs if refined much further.

*(Reuters, May 26, 2012)*

- Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, Major General Hassan Firouzabadi, said threats and pressures cannot deter Iran from its revolutionary causes and ideals, and stressed that the Iranian nation will remain committed to the full annihilation of the Zionist regime of Israel to the end. General Firouzabadi said, "The Iranian nation is standing for its cause that is the full annihilation of Israel."

*(FARS News Agency, May 20, 2012)*

- The United States Senate approved tough new penalties on the Tehran regime to thwart its nuclear ambitions. The bill passed by the Senate would target Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps, require companies that trade on the U.S. stock exchange to disclose any Iran-related business to the Securities and Exchange Commission and would expand penalties for energy and uranium mining joint ventures with Tehran. The bill also would deny visas and freeze assets on individuals and companies that supply Iran with technology that could be used to crack down on its citizens, such as tear gas, rubber bullets and surveillance equipment.

*(Fox News, May 21, 2012)*

### **March/April 2012:**

- Reports surfaced that [Iran](#) is actively seeking to establish its physical presence - ground and naval - in [Yemen](#), a country among those that control the ports and shipping (and weapon-supply) of the Red Sea, as part of Iran's broader strategy for hegemony in the region. According to U.S. Ambassador to [Yemen](#) Gerald Feierstein, the U.S. has evidence that the Iranians are providing military assistance and trainers to several groups in [Yemen](#), information conveyed via [Hizbullah](#) and  [Hamas](#) in Lebanon.

*(Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, April 22, 2012)*

- The Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication, or SWIFT, largely cut off all Iranian banking transactions through its network in order to enforce EU sanctions aimed at deterring [Iran](#) from continuing its nuclear program. SWIFT managed to halt business with nearly 30 Iranian banks and subsidiaries. "Disconnecting banks is an extraordinary and unprecedented step for SWIFT," said Lazaro Campos, chief executive of the company. "It is a direct result of



international and multilateral action to intensify financial sanctions against Iran."  
(*Boston Globe*, March 16, 2012)

### February 2012:

- Iranian President [Mahmoud Ahmadinejad](#) inaugurated three new nuclear projects including the loading of the country's first domestically made nuclear fuel rods into the Tehran Research Reactor, Iranian state TV reported. A European diplomat in Vienna said that [Iran](#) "wants to show that they have the technical expertise to master the fuel cycle." Additionally, the nuclear plants at Natanz and Fordow are now able to enrich uranium to 20% and will use a new type of centrifuge, the 174 IR-1, capable of three times higher enrichment speeds than previous models. There are around 9,000 centrifuges at these central Iranian plants, a 50% increase from the previous amount.

(*Jerusalem Post*, [Haaretz](#) Feb 15, 2012; *American Enterprise Institute*, Feb 21, 2012)

- The [International Atomic Energy Agency](#) (IAEA) reported that their inspectors were unable to obtain any new information on the Iranian nuclear program as Tehran refused to answer questions raised in the agency's November 2011 [report](#). A senior American official characterized the IAEA meeting as "foot-dragging at best and a disaster at worst." U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said, "My view is that right now the most important thing is to keep the international community unified in keeping that pressure on, to try to convince Iran that they shouldn't develop a nuclear weapon, that they should join the international family of nations and that they should operate by all the rules that we all operate by."

(*New York Times*, February 3, 2012)

### January 2012:

- Israeli Vice Prime Minister and Strategic Affairs Minister Moshe Ya'alon said that Israel believes "Iran's nuclear development is clearly intended for military purposes." This came in the wake of an Iranian request from the [IAEA](#) to begin enriching their uranium to a 90% grade. 90% is generally viewed as an indication of weapons-grade material.

(*Israel Hayom*, January 31, 2012)

- U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said that the United States believes [Iran](#) is one year away from developing a nuclear weapon and possibly two years shy of being able to mount it on a deliverable weapons system. "The United States ... does not want Iran to develop a nuclear weapon. That's a red line for us. And it's a red line obviously for the Israelis so we share a common goal here," Panetta said. "If they proceed and we get intelligence that they're proceeding with developing a nuclear weapon then we will take whatever steps are necessary to stop it," he added.

(*Haaretz*, January 30, 2012)

- The European Union adopted an "unprecedented" resolution calling for an embargo on Iranian oil and petroleum imports to European nations. Europe has been one of the leading importers of Iranian oil and an embargo of this nature is meant to show Iran the West's resolve in working towards an end to development in its nuclear weapons program. The EU foreign ministers also passed a resolution freezing all assets of the Iranian central bank in Europe.

([BBC](#), January 23, 2012)

- Yukiya Amano, director general of the IAEA, made clear that he believes the Iranians are developing nuclear energy in order to create atomic or nuclear bombs and that he feels the Iranians have been less than open about their true intentions. "What we know suggests the development of nuclear weapons," Amano said in his interview with the Financial Times of Germany. "I have absolutely no reason to soften my report," he added. "It is my responsibility to alert the world, from the indicators I had, I draw the conclusion that it is time to call the world's attention to this risk." Iranian representatives to the IAEA responded to the comments by saying their country was open to discussing any issues about their nuclear energy program in a series of talks scheduled in Tehran for the end of January.

([Reuters](#), January 19, 2012)

## 2011:

- In the **Winter 2011/2012**, a string of suspicious explosions hit various sites in Iran and killed a number of Iranian nuclear scientists.

- On November 12, an explosion at a Revolutionary Guard Corps weapons depot near Tehran (in Karaj) killed 17 soldiers, including an IRGC rocket expert and long-range missile research specialist. ([Washington Post](#), November 12, 2011)
- On November 28, a large explosion rocked the Iranian city of Isfahan (where a military complex is located) as the government issued conflicting reports thought to deny any notions of damage by way of sabotage on its nuclear sites. ([Telegraph](#), November 28, 2011)
- On November 30, there was a blast on a military facility in the Iranian city of Khorramabad near the Iran-Iraq border.
- On December 14, there was an attack against a plant that manufactures a particular type of steel that is used for nose cones and other parts of missiles. ([Foundation for the Defense of Democracies](#), December 14, 2011)
- On January 11, 2012, nuclear scientist Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan was assassinated when a bomb detonated in his car. Iranian Lawmaker Kazem Jalali immediately blamed both the U.S. and Israeli intelligence services for the strike, though both categorically denied any involvement. ([CNN](#), Jan 11, 2012).



- In **December 2011**, Saudi Prince Turki al-Faisal noted that if Iran develops a nuclear weapon, “[it] would compel Saudi Arabia...to pursue policies which could lead to untold and possibly dramatic consequences”. One of his officials clarified the vague statement by saying, “We cannot live in a situation where Iran has nuclear weapons and we don’t. It’s as simple as that. If Iran develops a nuclear weapon, that will be unacceptable to us and we will have to follow suit.” (*New York Times*, December 6, 2011)
  
- In **November 2011**, the [IAEA](#) Board of Governors [adopted a resolution](#) calling on Iran to comply, fully and without delay, to its obligations under resolutions passed by the [United Nations Security Council](#) and to intensify their dialogue with in order to resolve questions regarding their nuclear development. The resolution expressed support for a diplomatic, negotiated solution to the growing problem in order to restore international confidence in the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program. This resolution came on the heels of yet another [IAEA report](#) - the fourth released in 2011 alone - that confirmed fears that Iran seems to be working towards the development of a nuclear weapon.
  
- In **November 2011**, the US government took two distinct, yet tangible steps to halt funding to Iran in an effort to curb its nuclear programs. These steps by the [Obama Administration](#) sent an unequivocal message to the Government of Iran that it will continue to face increasing international pressure until it addresses the international community's legitimate concerns regarding the nature of Iran’s nuclear program.
  - On November 19, President Obama signed [Executive Order 13590](#) that imposed sanctions on anyone doing business with Iran's energy or chemical programs. If a person is found to have provided a good, service, technology, or support to Iran described in E.O. 13590, the Secretary of State, in consultation with other agencies, has the authority to impose sanctions on these people or businesses, including prohibitions on foreign or banking transactions and property transactions in the United States.
  - Additionally, the US Department of the Treasury identified Iran as a [jurisdiction of primary money laundering](#) concern under Section 311 of the USA PATRIOT Act based on Iran's support for terrorism, pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and the illicit and deceptive financial activities that Iranian financial institutions - including the Central Bank of Iran - and other state-controlled entities engage in to facilitate Iran's illicit conduct and evade sanctions
  
- On **September 3, 2011**, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) released a report on the Iranian nuclear program that expressed grave concern on Tehran's experimental work to develop nuclear weapons, saying that it is becoming "increasingly concerned" at the advancements. The IAEA said Iran has begun deploying so-called second-generation centrifuges

at its largest uranium-enrichment facility at Natanz, which could allow the country to produce nuclear fuel at three times its current rate. (*Wall Street Journal*, September 3, 2011).

- In **September 2011**, Iran moved its most critical nuclear fuel production to a highly guarded underground military facility outside the city of Qum, where - according to intelligence officials - it is less vulnerable to an air or cyberattack such as the 2010 Stuxnet computer worm that reportedly infected 16,000 computers and set back Iran's nuclear program by a year or two. (*New York Times*, September 2, 2011).

- In **June 2011**, a UN panel of experts, which was convened after the UN Security Council imposed stiffer sanctions against Iran in 2010, released a report which compiled information provided by Security Council member nations, monitors sent to various countries where unauthorized Iranian activity has been uncovered and input from outside experts on Iran's development of medium- and long-range missiles, nuclear program and weapons-smuggling operations. The report warned: "Iran's circumvention of sanctions across all areas, in particular the use of front companies, concealment methods in shipping, financial transactions and the transfer of conventional arms and related materiel, is willful and continuing. Iran maintains its uranium enrichment and heavy water-related activities, as noted in reporting by the International Atomic Energy Agency, and in the area of ballistic missiles, continues to test missiles and engage in prohibited procurement." According to the report, in a period of less than six months, the Iranians launched Sejil and Shahab 3 missiles on three occasions, and conducted an additional trial of the Fateh-110 missile. (*Haaretz*, June 10, 2011).

- In **April 2011**, scientists from Iran's atomic energy program announced that they had successfully tested advanced centrifuges for enriching uranium and were less than a month away from starting Iran's first commercial nuclear reactor. Though the advances were not yet fully implemented, the announcements countered international perceptions that Iran's nuclear program had suffered significant setbacks during a series of cyber attacks on the country's main uranium enrichment facilities in 2009 and 2010 and prompted some experts to redraw their forecasts for how quickly the country could build an atomic arsenal (*Washington Post*, April 14, 2011).

- A **January 2011** summit of six world powers meeting with Iran to discuss freezing its uranium enrichment program, failed after two days of negotiations in which Iran demanded an end to UN sanctions and an agreement that it could continue to enrich. Tehran rejected proposals for improved UN monitoring of Iran's nuclear activities and the revival of a subset of international talks focusing on Iran shipping out a limited amount of its enriched uranium in exchange for fuel for its research reactor (*Jerusalem Post*, January 22, 2011).

