



Senior Israeli official: If nuclear talks fail, Bush will order Iran attack between November and January

DEBKAfile Special Report

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This assessment was reported by Israeli national radio Saturday overnight quoting a high-placed “security-political” official.

The source predicted that President George W. Bush would order Iran attacked between the November 4 presidential election and his exit from the White House in January. The quote was aired shortly after the six-power talks with Iran in Geneva – with US official participation for the first time – failed, and just before Israel chief of staff Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi set out for Washington. He is to spend a week there as guest of Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

DEBKAfile’s political sources describe the disclosure as a step aimed at slowing down the collapse of Israel’s stated policy of relying on international diplomatic pressure to thwart Iran’s acquisition of nuclear arms. It is expected to raise a furious outcry from the powers spearheading the diplomatic effort and prompt extreme reactions from Tehran.

Our sources report that the unidentified Israeli “security-political” source sought to achieve three objectives:

1. Underlining the signal that the US military option had not been taken off the table after the state department spokesman said Iran must choose between cooperation with the international community and confrontation.

The official was also giving Israel’s answer to the latest evaluations making the rounds in Washington that the Israeli Air Force does not have enough warplanes to strike Iran’s nuclear sites without American military support.

2. A signal that the presence at the Geneva talks Saturday, July 19, of Under Secretary of State William Burns, far from being a concession, was an implicit ultimatum. Tehran was being told that no more than three months remained for it to suspend uranium enrichment before Bush made good on his pledge to resolve the issue before he left the White House. No member of the Bush administration is saying this directly, whether Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Defense Secretary Robert Gates or the president himself. Israel will not doubt be rebuked for its disclosure.

3. As a high-risk step to derail the accommodations Washington and Tehran are on the way to reaching in their secret talks on a wide range of issues, with the exception of the nuclear controversy, as revealed by **DEBKA-Net-Weekly** and **DEBKAfile**. Israel fears being abandoned and left out in the cold on all its fronts against Iran by these accommodations.

Tehran may well seize on the Israeli disclosure as a pretext to ditch the nuclear negotiations on all levels, unless all six powers offer guarantees against their pursuit of military initiatives.



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