

The battle against the bomb

Israelis experts can't agree on how far away Iran is from developing nuclear weapons, but researchers, politicians, and top military officials all recognize the need to have a reliable, available military option in case we wind up having to act alone.

By [Yoav Limor](#) / Jan. 15, 2021

A few weeks ago, the IDF held a closed-door meeting in which Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Aviv Kochavi issued ordered to prepare a new operational plan to "handle" Iran's nuclear weapons program. Actually, not a single plan, but three options, to be prepared soon and presented to the top political echelon.

[...]

Institute for National Security Studies director Maj. Gen. **Amos Yadlin** tells *Israel Hayom* that "Israel and the Americans had three hopes. The first, that the regime would collapse as a result of the sanctions and the economic pressure. The second, that the regime would panic and join a new, better deal, and third, that Iran would make a major mistake, like trying to make a breakthrough toward a bomb, and then the US would attack it."

[...]

"That year, Iran discovered that it was paying a heavier economic price than it thought it would," says Dr. **Raz Zimmt**, an **INSS** researcher and Iran expert. "They were surprised by the sharp drop in their oil exports (from 2.5 million barrels to 500,000), and mostly by the fact that Europe really couldn't, and possibly didn't want, to help them."

[...]

In an article published on the INSS website last week, Yadlin and **Ephraim Asculai**, a former member of the Israel Atomic Energy Commission, ask the key question of just how far Iran is from building a nuclear bomb. They agree that the decision to start enriching uranium to 20% was meant to serve as a bargaining chip it could forgo in future negotiations, but will also serve to cut down the "breakout time" from the moment Iran decides it wants a bomb to the time it has one.

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