

Netanyahu Preparing Public for Possible War With Iran

Over the past several weeks, I have been hearing from current and former senior Israeli officials and advisers at the highest possible levels that the showdown with Iran is entering the critical “end game” phase. I’m hearing from people with direct knowledge of the plans that war could come in 2013.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is beginning to prepare the public in Israel and around the world for a “military option.” This is why he appeared on CBS’ *Face The Nation* on Sunday (see an excerpt of the program’s transcript).

Netanyahu called the Iranian a “messianic, apocalyptic” regime bent on genocide, a reference to the Shia eschatology Khamenei holds that Iran must annihilate Israel and the U.S. to usher in the reign of the Twelfth Imam. Netanyahu also called the incoming Iranian president, Hasan Rouhani, a “wolf in sheep’s clothing” who has bragged in the past about negotiating with the West while secretly advancing nuclear enrichment. What’s more, Netanyahu vowed not to “wait too long” to stop Iran.

Expect more public diplomacy by Netanyahu and his team in the weeks ahead.

This is one of the reasons why the prime minister is sending his most trusted foreign policy advisor, Ron Dermer, to the U.S. to serve as Israel’s ambassador. Dermer will work to ensure relations are strong at this critical moment. Dermer, who grew up in Miami Beach and is a native English speaker, will also explain Israel’s principles, objectives and actions to the American people before, during and after any crisis with Iran.

Here’s the key: Israeli intelligence now believes Iran will

likely have a nuclear device in as soon as four to six months and an operational nuclear bomb or warhead within a year.

But top Israeli political and military leaders—up to and including the prime minister—do not believe they can afford to wait that long. Therefore, they are making final preparations for war—a war they increasingly believe may have to be launched before this year is over.

Haven't we heard warnings like this before? Yes, we have. But war was avoided in the past because various countries, including Israel, have used a wide range of covert operations to slow Iran's progress towards building the bomb. However, Israeli leaders are concerned they have few options left in their bag of tricks and that with North Korea's assistance, Iran is about to cross the red line.

Thus, officials here are running out of hope that war can be avoided. They want the U.S. and other world powers to intensify economic sanctions and all other measures necessary to force Tehran to abandon its nuclear plans, give up its enriched uranium and shut down its enrichment facilities.

But they are deeply concerned that the so-called "election" of Rouhani—widely but wrongly perceived to be a moderate and a reformer—will cause officials in Washington and elsewhere to lower their guard and actually ease up pressure on the Khamenei regime rather than crack down harder. And they see Iran running out the clock. Khamenei says no nuclear negotiations can happen before Rouhani takes office in early August. But then they will say Rouhani needs time to build a new team and get up to speed and so forth.

Privately, senior Israeli officials are now saying if they don't see decisive action by the world powers to stop Iran soon—at least by early fall—they are prepared to take action of their own. Indeed, it would appear that a majority of the Security Cabinet are now prepared to authorize such action.

Meanwhile, Israel continues to run homeland security drills, preparing first responders and civilians alike to be ready for a barrage of missiles and terrorist attacks should war come soon.

To be clear: I'm not saying war will definitely come in 2013. For my part, I continue to pray for peace, even as I—and my colleagues at the Joshua Fund—prepare for war and other national crises here. We should be grateful a major regional war between Israel and Iran hasn't occurred yet. It could be devastating. Hopefully, the regime in Iran will fall. Perhaps sanctions and/or diplomacy and/or covert operations will make war unnecessary. But I believe it is important to be honest with you about what I'm hearing and keep you informed.

- Please pray for peace in Syria, in Egypt and in Israel.
- Please pray for U.S., Israeli and other leaders to have wisdom to know just what to do.
- Please pray for Christian leaders in the region to have courage and wisdom.
- Please pray that all the people at the epicenter develop a deep hunger to read the Bible and discover the power of God's Word, as we discussed at the recent Epicenter Conference.
- Please pray for the Joshua Fund team and me to be able to keep providing food, medical equipment and other humanitarian relief supplies for the poor and needy now, while also preparing for the crises that may lie ahead.

Joel C. Rosenberg is the author of numerous New York Times best-selling novels and nonfiction books, with nearly 3 million copies sold. He is also the founder of the Joshua Fund (). His books include *The Last Jihad* (2002), *The Last Days* (2003), *The Ezekiel Option* (2005) and *The Copper Scroll* (2006).

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