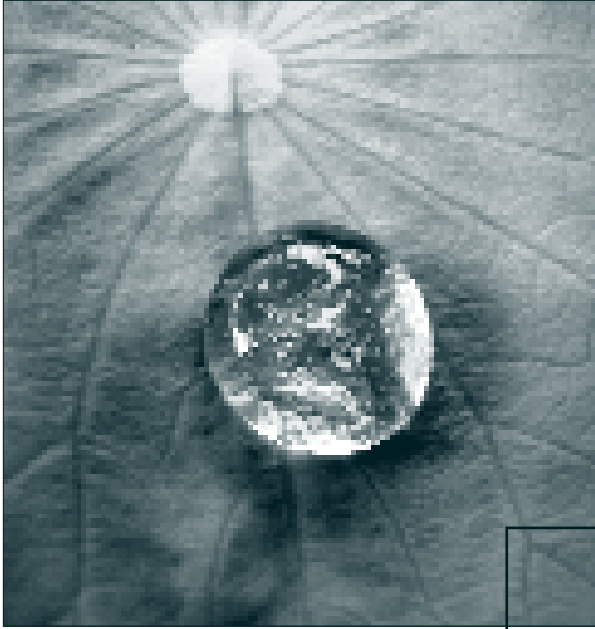


# Factsheet

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Peace Action West is the region's largest and oldest lobby for a just foreign policy and smarter security.

We advocate for a foreign policy that embodies the best values of the American people. As a membership organization we foster broad-based civic activism to create a strong voice for peaceful solutions to global problems.

Through grassroots action, we work to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons, protect human rights around the world, advance U.S. spending priorities that meet the nation's real security and domestic needs, and promote resolution of international conflicts through cooperation and diplomacy.

## DIPLOMACY CAN STOP A MILITARY CONFRONTATION WITH IRAN

Even after the November elections, voices both within and outside the administration have continued pushing for a military strike on Iran. A recent L.A. Times column, by leading neoconservative Joshua Muravchik, begins with a blunt four-word sentence: "We must bomb Iran." A senior administration official quoted by Reuters put it more obliquely: "inevitably people will have to look at the question of preemption." Certainly momentum towards war with Iran has been blunted by the election results and the situation in Iraq. But experts agree that the administration is still considering the most likely military scenario: a few days of air strikes designed to set back Iran's nuclear program.

It is critical that Congress call for forceful diplomatic action now. Below are the facts on Iran. You can stay up to date and take action at [www.PeaceActionWest.org](http://www.PeaceActionWest.org).

### What Can Work: Smart Diplomacy

#### 1. Congress must push the administration to do the tough diplomatic work necessary for real progress.

- At a time when thoughtful diplomacy is needed, the administration and Iran have instead engaged in diplomatic posturing and escalating military rhetoric. The administration's reckless flirtation with preemptive war as a solution to the Iran dilemma must be stopped. The administration has repeatedly rebuffed invitations to direct and substantive negotiation with Iran, instead sitting on the sidelines and leaving the heavy lifting to Europe and Russia.<sup>1</sup> Congress needs to ask the tough questions it failed to ask in the run up to the misguided Iraq war.

- Iran expert and former professor at the National Defense University Ray Takeyh says, the policy "of relentlessly threatening Iran with economic coercion and even military reprisals only empowers reactionaries and validates their pro-nuclear argument ... Only an array of incentives will allow Iran's leaders to justify suspending the program in the face of nationalistic public opinion, aroused in no small degree by continual US threats."<sup>2</sup>

#### 2. Comprehensive, tough-minded diplomacy is the only realistic approach to Iran's nuclear activities.

- Smart diplomacy would include opening up direct talks between Iran and the US, building a united diplomatic front with Europe, Russia and China<sup>3</sup>, and a shrewd use of carrots and sticks to convince Iran to agree to forgo development of nuclear weapons.

- Former UN chief weapons inspector Hans Blix has criticized previous negotiation strategy saying, "I don't think they have made sufficiently interesting offers."<sup>4</sup> Iran's leaders' overarching priorities are 1) protecting the country (and its ruling regime) from attack and 2) growing the country's economy. A savvy combination of security assurances and increased trade opportunities, along with tough nuclear inspections to ensure compliance could prevail upon Iran to give up its nuclear activities.

#### 3. The Iranian government is complex, with many different perspectives and factions represented.

- The Iranian president does not hold the same power as American presidents,

and in the area of foreign policy, he is not the final decision maker. A smart US policy will be designed to reinforce the arguments of those Iranian officials who would prefer to work toward a better relationship with the US. If we refuse to take diplomacy seriously and engage in an escalating war of words, we make it harder for moderate leaders in Iran to get a hearing - just as angry and threatening Iranian rhetoric makes it harder for moderates and thoughtful pragmatists in our country to be heard.

#### **4. An important missing ingredient: U.S. leadership by example on nuclear issues**

- An end to Iran's nuclear ambitions will remain a mirage if we continue to refuse to reduce our own reliance on nuclear weapons in US security strategy. Getting serious about leading means ending our own development of new nuclear weapons, reducing our huge Cold War arsenal, and putting an end to "playing nuclear favorites" as with the nuclear technology deal with India.
- The administration's willingness to entertain a nuclear "first strike" dangerously erodes the taboo against the use of nuclear weapons.<sup>5</sup> The shockingly casual discussion of plans for a possible "Iran nuclear option" illustrates the radical shift the administration has made in nuclear weapons policy. Congress must rein in the administration to end planning for preemptive nuclear first strikes.

### **What Won't Work: Military Strikes**

#### **1. Military strikes could actually accelerate Iran's nuclear programs**

- UN weapons inspectors have identified at least eighteen nuclear related sites in Iran. Others believe there are at least 70 sites spread out across the country-many in populated areas. Most analysts believe that the Iranian nuclear program is too widely dispersed, too well hidden, and includes too many possible decoys for a bombing raid to set back the nuclear program for very long. And as the Iraq war has proven, there are significant weaknesses in the US intelligence capabilities that would guide any such attacks.<sup>6</sup>
- While the attacks would fail to decisively set back Iran's nuclear program, the military's own "war-games" show that they would disastrously escalate the conflict through Iranian retaliation against US interests in Iraq and elsewhere.<sup>7</sup> Iran is also likely to accelerate efforts to develop nuclear weapons in response to any military strike, actually hastening the day Iran has a bomb.

#### **2. Military strikes would kill civilians and strengthen Iranian hard-liners**

- Because of the dispersed nature of the Iranian nuclear program, most military analysts believe that air strikes on the nuclear infrastructure would be likely to resemble the March 2003 "Shock and Awe" bombing raids that opened the Iraq war.<sup>8</sup> Pro-democracy and reform sentiment in Iran could evaporate as Iranian civilians are killed in any bombing.
- Even "precision" bombing attacks would be likely to result in civilian casualties that would be beamed via television to Iranians and around the world. US standing in the Muslim world community would plunge to new lows.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. Barton Gellman and Dafna Linzer. "Unprecedented Peril Forces Tough Calls", Washington Post, October 26, 2004. 2. James Dobbins, Ray Takeyh. "Dialogue can stop Iran at the nuclear threshold", Financial Times April 4, 2006. 3. Other economically powerful states like India and Japan would also be important partners to have. 4. Quoted on Radio Free Europe January 26, 2006. Posted on [www.globalsecurity.org](http://www.globalsecurity.org). 5. For a detailed description of the steps Iran would have to take to make a bomb, see also: David Albright and Corey Hinderstein. "Iran's Next Steps: Final Tests and the Construction of a Uranium Enrichment Plant", Institute for Science and International Security, January 12, 2006. 6. Anna Badkhen. "Experts doubt expediency of attacking Iran", SF Chronicle January 25, 2006. 7. John Barry and Dan Ephron. "War-Gaming the Mullahs", Newsweek, Sep. 27, 2005. 8. See the analysis at [www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iran-strikes.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iran-strikes.htm)

### **What You Can Do**



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