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Israelis consider attack on Iran

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Amos Dror, the former head of research in Israeli military intelligence, recently made the following statement to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Lateline programme: "If Israel will be hit by any missile, the Iranians will not have enough people to count their dead. It will lead to the destruction and the end of Iran and as a civilisation."

In plain English, he was saying that, if Israel is hit even by a single conventional Iranian missile, Israel will retaliate with a massive attack which will a) leave few Iranians alive and b) destroy, not just the state of Iran, but also the ancient Persian civilization. As only nuclear weapons have the capacity for destruction that he was speaking of, he was advocating a kind of nuclear/cultural holocaust for Iran. It is true that he was speaking, not as an accredited representative of the Israeli government, but as a senior member of Israel's close-knit military/intelligence establishment. Dror's apocalyptic statement is evidence of just how close the Middle East is to a nuclear conflagration whose political, military and economic consequences will be felt throughout the world. Surely the time is ripe for our government, which has in the past gone into battle for disarmament, to enlist the support of other like-minded governments for a major international initiative to avert nuclear war in the Middle East? Why are we sitting on our hands, while this deadly game of nuclear ping-pong is played out beneath our noses?

Bob Rigg (New Zealand)

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

[TV PROGRAM TRANSCRIPT](#)

Broadcast: 09/03/2006

Reporter: Matt Brown

TONY JONES: As the diplomatic brinkmanship between Iran and the United States continues, there is mounting concern in Israel about Iran's continued calls for it to be "wiped off the map". Senior Israeli intelligence analysts within and outside the government are weighing the need for a military attack, preferably conducted by others, to bring Iran to heel. Middle East correspondent Matt Brown reports from Jerusalem.

MATT BROWN: Inside this Iranian nuclear enrichment plant, the engineers are involved in a dangerous game of brinkmanship. Iran is developing the technology that will certainly deliver nuclear energy and possibly also a nuclear bomb. Much of the world is warning Iran that this work must stop, but it's not clear what the ultimate sanction would be.

JOHN BOLTON, US AMBASSADOR TO THE UN: The Iranian regime must be made aware that if it continues down the path of international isolation, there will be tangible and painful consequences.

MATT BROWN: Tehran has already proved it's willing to gamble. Iran has a history of building research facilities in secret and underground. And, 1,500 kilometres away, Major General Giora Eiland, the National Security Advisor to Israel's Prime Minister, is weighing the options.

GIORA EILAND, NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL CHIEF: It is obvious that if Iran has nuclear weapons, then every other conflict in the Middle East, whether Israel is involved or is not involved, will take place under Iranian nuclear umbrella. The implications are much more than severe.

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MATT BROWN: Most Israelis know they live here within range of the best Iranian missiles. They have their own formidable nuclear arsenal, but most believe they can't afford to accept the existence of even one Iranian nuclear weapon. Officially, Israel still puts in faith in diplomacy and sanctions and, to some extent, in the people of Iran.

GIORA EILAND: Most of the people in Iran do want to be part of the international community. They don't want to be isolated.

MATT BROWN: But in 1981, Israel successfully brought Saddam Hussein's nuclear program crashing to the ground with a strike on his nuclear reactor. If diplomacy fails, the former head of research in Israeli military intelligence, Ami Dror, says the same fate must now befall Iran.

AMI DROR, FORMER MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER: I think that the alternative of nuclear Iran is so dangerous to the world that nothing could be more dangerous than that.

MATT BROWN: Some Israeli analysts even believe that, rather than inflaming the Middle East, a successful military strike could give Israel's other enemies pause for thought.

AMI DROR: The Iranians will lose part of their influence in some of these organisations and countries and I think that that, for itself, is very important.

MATT BROWN: In Iran, the newspapers have been full of defiance, arguing Iran's right to enrich uranium for the peaceful purposes it's declared. Mohammad Mahmoudi, a school teacher in Tehran, says, "Nuclear energy is an absolute right and the Westerners want to make us reliant on them". But if Iran ever does build an atom bomb, some believe Israel will have to respond with the kind of threat only a nuclear arms state could deliver.

AMI DROR: The Iranians understand that if Israel will be hit by any missile, the Iranians will not have enough people to count their dead. It will lead to the destruction and the end of Iran and as a civilisation.

MATT BROWN: Clearly if the diplomats fail to stop the research underway in Iran, a new series of grave dilemmas will unfold.

Matt Brown, Lateline.