

# That Iranian "Bomb"? Relax.

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With the Bush administration swirling around the drain -- get out the plunger! -- it's now time to stop hyperventilating about the "Iranian bomb." For goodness sakes, let it go!

Ever since the U.S. intelligence community concluded, in that famous National Intelligence Estimate a year ago, that Iran had halted its secret weapons program, assorted neocons and hawks have tried to continue sounding the alarm about Iran, with only limited success. With the election of Obama, now, the hawks are regrouping -- see, the formation of the bipartisan collection of hawks flocking together in [United Against Nuclear Iran](#) -- and the usual suspects at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP) are venting their spleens. But it's clear that Iran isn't going to build a bomb next week, or next year, or even the year after, and that Obama will have lots and lots of time to deal with this problem in a leisurely manner. So relax.

Umm, Israelis? That means you, too.

Which brings us to the piece in the *New York Times* today about Iran's uranium. The story, by William Broad and David Sanger, is headlined: "Iran Said to Have Nuclear Fuel for One Weapon." Now, Broad and Sanger don't write headlines, but that one is a doozy. Here is the lede:

Iran has now produced roughly enough nuclear material to make, with added purification, a single atom bomb, according to nuclear experts analyzing the latest report from global atomic inspectors.

Note the important caveat, "with added purification." The fact is -- and the article points this out, as it meanders along -- to build a bomb Iran would (a) have to take industrial-strength uranium and spin it in those centrifuges until it reaches weapons-strength, (b) figure out how to make a bomb out of the stuff, and (c) figure out how to deliver it. And even then, it would have one bomb, and a small one at that.

How alarming is this? Not very. When and if Iran decides to super-enrich its uranium, it would have to kick out the IAEA inspectors and run all that stuff through the centrifuges, and we'd know about it. (To be clear: I'm not advocating a military attack on Iran, even if they do that. But it would be quite public what they're doing, and why they're doing it.)

Obama has said clearly and repeatedly that he will talk to Iran without preconditions, meaning that he won't insist on the bogus idea that Iran must first halt its refinement program before any talks begin. Even as it swirls down the drain, the Bush administration is still spouting that [nonsense](#):

The White House accused Iran Wednesday of an "unfortunate and disappointing" failure to cooperate with the UN nuclear watchdog agency and effectively rejecting a US offer for high-level talks.

"The Iranian government's failure to comply with the IAEA and UN is unfortunate and disappointing," spokesman Gordon Johndroe said after the latest International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report on Tehran.

"The door is open if Iran will suspend its enrichment activity, but they don't seem to want to walk through it," he said in a brief statement.

Israeli hawks are still [bloviating](#) about how ready they are to attack Iran:

Former IDF chief of staff Moshe Ya'alon, widely rumored to be weighing a run for Knesset on Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud list, said Monday that the military option for an attack on Iran still exists.

He's wrong. It doesn't exist. First, Israel doesn't have the capability to attack Iran effectively. Second, they can't get there without flying over the air space of U.S. allies and over Iraq, where they'd fly over 150,000 U.S. troops. And third, the political consequences of an Israeli attack would be devastating to Israel's standing overseas. (Example: India. Right now, nearly half of Israel's military sales abroad go to India, and India is trying to build good ties with Iran to gain access to its oil and gas, including through a pipeline across Pakistan. How would India react to an Israeli attack on Iran?)

Once in office, Obama needs to send an envoy to Jerusalem with a simple message for the Israelis: when it comes to Iran, sit down and shut up.