

Iran's virtual nukes

by GWYNNE DYER

'Devastating Iran's nuclear facilities was...very hard to do,' Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin 'Bibi' Netanyahu told the United Nations General Assembly last month, 'but for me it was one of the easiest decisions I've ever had to make as prime minister. Because if we hadn't done it, we'd all be dead.'

Really? Everybody dead? All at once, everywhere? Those Iranians are evil geniuses.

It's not clear whether Netanyahu meant the nuclear weapons that Israel and the United States claimed to have destroyed 'just in time' last February, or the ones that Donald Trump said his bombers 'obliterated' in the previous year, or perhaps the nuclear weapons that 'Bibi' said Iran would have within one year in 2024. It doesn't matter, because they are all virtual nukes.

'Virtual', in this context, means imaginary but very useful. Those imaginary Iranian nuclear weapons provided the pretext for the Israeli-US assault on Iran in the Twelve-Day War of June 2025 (1,000-plus deaths). Magically reincarnated, the same virtual nukes also served as an excuse for this year's much larger US-Israeli surprise attack (Iranian deaths so far around 3,500).

Weirdly, the fact that thousands of real people are now being killed in the name of eliminating these non-existent nuclear weapons lends weight to Netanyahu's and Trump's persistent claim that they really exist. People find it hard to accept the idea that their leaders would kill all those Iranians if the 'nuclear threat' is false. But of course it is.

Bibi has been warning that Iran is on the brink of getting nuclear weapons for the entire length of his political career. In 1992 he predicted they would have them by 1995-97, and he has made similar predictions at frequent intervals in venues like the Knesset, the US Congress and the United Nations, adjusting the dates so that Doomsday is usually just 2-5 years away.

The media always pick it up (which is why he kept doing it), but his own intelligence services have never believed him. They deal in actual evidence, and Mossad told him in 2023 that Iran was enriching uranium but was making no effort to turn its nuclear fuel into bombs. The US intelligence agencies were telling Trump the same thing, but he chose to believe Bibi instead.

Just three months before the first American air strikes on Iran in June 2025 Tulsi Gabbard, U.S. Director of National Intelligence, told Congress that Iran was not yet trying to weaponize its enriched uranium, but Trump believed Netanyahu and bombed three key Iranian nuclear facilities.

He crowed that the strikes were 'a spectacular military success. Iran's key nuclear enrichment facilities have been completely and totally obliterated.' Gabbard recanted, saying Trump was right about everything, and resigned soon after. But the point about virtual weapons is that they can't be destroyed. In less than a year they were back and ready to be bombed again.

Israeli intelligence found out early this year where and when the entire Iranian leadership would be meeting in person, and Netanyahu realized it was a golden opportunity to kill them all. Recollections vary about how Netanyahu persuaded Trump to join in this surprise attack while he was still in active negotiations with Iran, but it probably wasn't hard.

Iran's virtual bombs were resurrected, and the public was told that in only two weeks they would be ready to deliver nuclear death and destruction all the way to the United States. So Netanyahu and his ignorant American sidekick started their next war on 28 February, and bits of it are still flaring up from time to time.

Interestingly, Iran's virtual nuclear weapons are hardly mentioned any more apart from occasional chanting of the mantra 'Iran must never have nuclear weapons'. It probably won't, although the continuing attacks on the country certainly give it a reason to wish that it did.

But how did Iran get this status of World's Most Dangerous Country?

North Korea has a brutally repressive regime, a militarized frontier with South Korea, and dozens of nuclear weapons, some of which can now reach the United States. President Trump is currently seeking another meeting of the Mutual Admiration Society with President Kim Jong Un.

Israel fights many wars, some of which are not its fault, and it has about a hundred nuclear weapons deliverable via air, space and sea. They can certainly reach anywhere between Ireland and India. It refuses to answer any questions about its nukes, and nobody asks.

Iran has an extremely nasty regime, but it doesn't have nukes and it doesn't start wars. (It backs some insurgencies in other countries, but who doesn't?) How did Iran become the pariah of the world?

Thirty years of dedicated work by Binyamin Netanyahu, plus the world's worst PR department.