

Iran: Ten Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is Iran building nuclear weapons?

No. Lieutenant General Ronald Burgess, the chief of the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, said in January 2010 that there is no evidence that Iran has decided to build a nuclear weapon.

Iran has stated its uranium enrichment program is exclusively for peaceful purposes. A public and categorical religious decree (fatwa) against the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons has been issued by the supreme leader of the Islamic Republic Ali Khamenei, and the rest of the clerical establishment.

Iran has signed and ratified the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Moreover, it has called for nuclear weapons states to disarm and for the Middle East to be a nuclear weapon free zone. The Non-Aligned Movement, Turkey, China, Syria, Afghanistan, the Gulf Cooperation Council, and the Arab League have expressed their support for Iran's right to develop peaceful nuclear energy.

2. Does Iran have weapons of mass destruction?

No. Iran has signed treaties repudiating weapons of mass destruction, including the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

3. Has Iran invaded any other country within living memory?

Iran has not invaded anyone since 1826-1828 when it fought and lost the last of a series of wars with the Russian Empire.

4. Why does the U.S. insist that Iran poses a nuclear weapons threat?

There seems to be a contradiction. On one hand, U.S. intelligence agencies maintain that either Iran does not have a nuclear weapons program or that if it does, it is years away from being able to produce a weapon. However, leading politicians,

including Barack Obama and Hilary Clinton continue to insist Iran is developing nuclear weapons.

This continuing campaign to demonize Iran and isolate it diplomatically is eerily similar to the strategy of the George W. Bush when he falsely accused Iraq of having weapons of mass destruction and used this as a pretext to invade in 2003.

5. If Iran is not a danger to the world, why would the U.S. threaten it?

The U.S. is currently conducting covert military operations in Iran. This is not new. In 1953, the American CIA overthrew the democratically elected government of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh. The motive for the coup was Iran's 1951 nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. After installing the Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the U.S. and Britain obtained access to Iranian oil, an arrangement that lasted until the Shah was overthrown in 1979.

Iran has an estimated ten percent of global oil and gas reserves and ranks third after Saudi Arabia (25 %) and Iraq (11 %) in the size of its reserves. Of significance is the recent discovery in Iran of the second largest known reserves of natural gas at Soumar and Halgan estimated at 12.4 trillion cubic feet.

Iranian oil and gas reserves are significantly larger than those of the U.S. and they want them back.

6. Why is there a danger that a U.S. attack on Iran could escalate into a nuclear war?

Iran has been repeatedly threatened with a nuclear first strike by the United States, first by Bush and more recently by Obama. Under President Obama, the United States has committed not to use nuclear weapons against nonnuclear states that comply with the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. In a New York Times interview (April 9, 2010), Obama said he would make an exception

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for “outliers like Iran and North Korea” that have (in his opinion) violated or renounced the main treaty to halt nuclear proliferation. So, if the U.S. decides to go to war with Iran, they have said they will use nuclear weapons.

7. Why is there a danger that a U.S. attack on Iran could escalate to world war?

International resentment of the United States for its wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan is boiling. The Middle East could erupt in violence, particularly if Israel, America's staunchest Middle Eastern ally, instigates an attack on Iraq or participates in it. Arab governments that go along with such an attack could find themselves at risk from their own populations. The situation could rapidly deteriorate.

Other great nations, such as China and Russia want continued access to Iran's energy resources. They would view a U.S invasion as a threat to their interests and as one more major U.S. encroachment in their part of the world. It is not difficult to see how this could escalate into a world war.

8. What are the likely consequences of a world war?

Millions of deaths; environmental catastrophe; economic collapse.

9. What are the likely consequences of nuclear war?

Hundreds of millions of deaths; environmental collapse; the end of our civilization.

Winnipeg is not immune. We have a military base and we are a major transportation hub; that makes us a target.

The nuclear missile equipped US Air Force Base in Fargo, ND is a mere 120 km south of us. Even if Winnipeg isn't targeted, Fargo is. Do you want to share in the radioactive fallout from a nuclear strike on Fargo?

10. Iran has a terrible human rights record; wouldn't an invasion be good for the Iranian people?

War is the greatest violation of human rights ever devised. For example, while Iraq had a terrible human rights record, it is unlikely that the 1.4 million dead Iraqis or the 4 million Iraqi refugees who resulted from the U.S. invasion in 2003 would think it was worth it.

Iran has a lousy human rights record. There are dozens of countries just like it. Should we fight them all?

Sources:

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- Obama Limits When U.S. Would Use Nuclear Arms; New York Times, April 9, 2010
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/06/world/06arms.html?_r=1
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Additional Resources:

- Campaign Against Sanctions and Military Intervention in Iran
<http://www.campaigniran.org/casmii/>

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