

# Israel's Top Brass Slam Netanyahu, Barak

April 30—Israel's highest ranking active duty officer has joined the ranks of former Mossad chief Meir Dagan and other senior members of the military-security establishment who have spoken against the determination of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak to launch a military strike against Iran.

While stating that a nuclear armed Iran is unacceptable to Israel, Gen. Benny Gantz, the Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces, in an interview in the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, nonetheless expressed caution about whether or when a military operation should be carried out. While saying that 2012 would be a "critical year," it would "not necessarily [be] a 'go, no-go,' year," and that the "military option is the last chronologically, but the first in terms of its credibility." While Iran was "going step by step to the place where it will be able to decide whether to manufacture a nuclear bomb, it hasn't yet decided whether to go the extra mile."

Gantz pointed out that Iran's nuclear facilities are very vulnerable to air attack; therefore, his assessment was that the supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, "will want to go the extra mile. I think the Iranian leadership is composed of very rational people. But I agree that such a capability, in the hands of Islamic fundamentalists, who at particular moments could make different calculations, is dangerous."

In making the point about Iran's "rationality," Gantz was echoing his counterpart in the United States, U.S. Chief of Staff Gen. Martin Dempsey, with whom he had discussions a few weeks ago. The U.S.-Israeli military relationship has emerged as one significant part of the international war-avoidance effort, which has blocked the British imperial drive for war

against Syria and Iran—as part of a confrontation with Russia—for the past six months.

## Barak Blows a Gasket

It did not take long for Defense Minister Barak to react to this criticism from Israel's highest serving officer, and within 24 hours of the appearance of the interview, Barak sought to refute Gantz with a detailed presentation at an Independence Day reception that left no doubt that he was committed to a military attack against Iran. Barak claimed that it was not the current harsh sanctions that were restraining Iran, but the threat of "an American, Israeli, or international military operation." Nonetheless, he said that a military threat alone will not "change the mind of the [Iranian] leadership or prevent it from moving toward a nuclear weapon." He rejected the idea that the regime was rational.

Dismissing the caution of both the Israeli and American military establishments, Barak said that they should concentrate on "building operational capabilities," while "the political echelon, both here and in Washington, is responsible for taking all things into consideration."

Barak did not have the last word. Former Israeli Shin Bet (the internal security service) chief Yuval Diskin came to the defense of his colleague Gantz. At a public event in Israel, he blasted the dubious leadership qualities of Netanyahu and Barak.

"My major problem is that I have no faith in the current leadership, which must lead us into an event on the scale of war with Iran or regional war," Diskin said. "I don't believe in a leadership that makes decisions based on messianic feelings. . . . Believe me, I have observed them from up close. . . . They are not people whom I, on a personal level, trust to lead Israel to an event on that scale and carry it off. These are not people that I would want to have holding the wheel in such an event. They are misleading the public on the Iran issue. They tell the public that if Israel acts, Iran won't have a nuclear bomb. This is a misrepresentation. Actually, many experts say that an Israeli attack would accelerate the Iranian nuclear race."



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Gen. Benny Gantz, Chief of the Israel Defense Force