

# Cheney: Iran at “top of the list” of Trouble Spots, “asks” Israel to carry out the Attack

By [Global Research](#)

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US Vice President Dick Cheney said Thursday that Iran was “right at the top of the list” of global trouble spots and worried that Israel might strike to shut down Tehran’s nuclear programs. “One of the concerns people have is that Israel might do it without being asked,” Cheney, who led the chorus of voices calling for Saddam Hussein’s ouster ahead of the March 2003 invasion of Iraq, told MSNBC in an interview.

“Given the fact that Iran has a stated policy that their objective is the destruction of Israel, the Israelis might well decide to act first, and let the rest of the world worry about cleaning up the diplomatic mess afterwards,” he said.

Zbigniew Brzezinski comments on PBS that it appears that Cheney wants Israel to carry out the task.

“Iran I think is more ambiguous. And there the issue is certainly not tyranny; it’s nuclear weapons. And the vice president today in a kind of a strange parallel statement to this declaration of freedom hinted that the Israelis may do it and in fact used language which sounds like a justification or even an encouragement for the Israelis to do it.”

## Cheney has advice for Tehran

**David E. Sanger**

**The New York Times, January 22, 2005**

Just hours before being sworn in for a second term, Vice President Dick Cheney publicly raised the possibility that Israel “might well decide to act first” to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons.

In an interview Thursday on the MSNBC program “Imus in the Morning,” a highly unusual forum for Cheney, he appeared to use the danger of Israeli military action as one more reason that the Iranians should reach a diplomatic agreement to disarm, noting dryly that any such strike would leave “a diplomatic mess afterwards” and should be avoided.

President George W. Bush, in his inaugural speech Thursday, appeared to have Iran, among other countries, in mind when he said he was committed to “the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.”

After defending the administration’s decision to invade Iraq, Cheney, who appeared on the

show with his wife, Lynne, was asked about the Iranian threat.

"We believe they have a fairly robust new nuclear program," he said of the Iranians, avoiding the word "weapons," though in the U.S. and European intelligence communities there is a widespread belief that the program is intended to build a nuclear arsenal.

Cheney called Iran "a noted sponsor of terror," particularly in its support for Hezbollah, and said the combination of nuclear technology and terrorism "is of great concern."

"You look around at potential trouble spots, Iran is right at the top of the list," he said.

Cheney focused on diplomacy, not military action, as the key to the Iranian situation.

"At some point, if the Iranians don't live up to their commitments, the next step will be to take it to the UN Security Council, and seek the imposition of international sanctions," he said, restating the administration's longstanding position.

Europe has opposed any such move, saying it would only drive Iran to break out of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and openly pursue an atomic weapon, the path that North Korea took two years ago.

Don Imus, who during the election campaign made no secret of his dislike of the policies of Bush and Cheney, then asked, "Why don't we make Israel do it?" – a reference to a military option much discussed in Washington but rarely talked about in public by top officials.

"Well, one of the concerns people have is that Israel might do it without being asked," Cheney said. "If, in fact, the Israelis became convinced the Iranians had a significant nuclear capability, given the fact that Iran has a stated policy that their objective is the destruction of Israel, the Israelis might well decide to act first, and let the rest of the world worry about cleaning up the diplomatic mess afterwards.

"We don't want a war in the Middle East, if we can avoid it," he said. "In the case of the Iranian situation, I think everybody would be best suited or best treated and dealt with if we could deal with it diplomatically."

For more than a year the CIA and other intelligence agencies have been intently focused on identifying Iranian nuclear facilities.

Imus, unable to resist the temptation to tease Cheney about his reputation as the real decision maker in the White House, also asked him: "Do you want to be president now?"

"No," the vice president said, with no hesitation.

Imus pressed: "Are you the president now?"

"No," Cheney said. "But that was a nice try."

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