

Obama's Plan B? The 30,000-Pound Bomb that Could Be Used against Iran's Nuclear Facilities 'Boggles the Mind'

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At the time of writing, negotiators have been working toward a June 30 deadline for a comprehensive nuclear agreement with Iran.

Should the negotiations [ultimately fail](#) and the talks fall apart, the Obama administration and any future US president will have what Michael Crowley of Politico describes as an awe-inspiring "plan B" — the Massive Ordnance Penetrator (MOP).

[According](#) to Crowley, the US has practiced at least three attack runs over the New Mexico desert. These runs have been flown by B-2 bombers and are meant to test the US' trump card against any attempt to procure a nuclear weapon, the Massive Ordnance Penetrator.

MOP, which is 20 feet long and weighs 15 tons, "boggles the mind," according to a former Pentagon official who [spoke](#) to Politico after watching footage of the tests.

There's no publicly available footage of the tests, but this footage of a BLU-109 in action gives an idea of how the MOP works. Bunker-buster munitions burst through a target's defensive layering before the warhead detonates:

Your browser does not support the video tag.

History Channel/Amanda Macias/Business Insider

The BLU-109 has a [535-pound warhead](#) and weighs about a ton. The MOP carries [about 5,300 pounds of explosives](#), giving it an explosive yield about an order of magnitude greater than the weapon in the video.

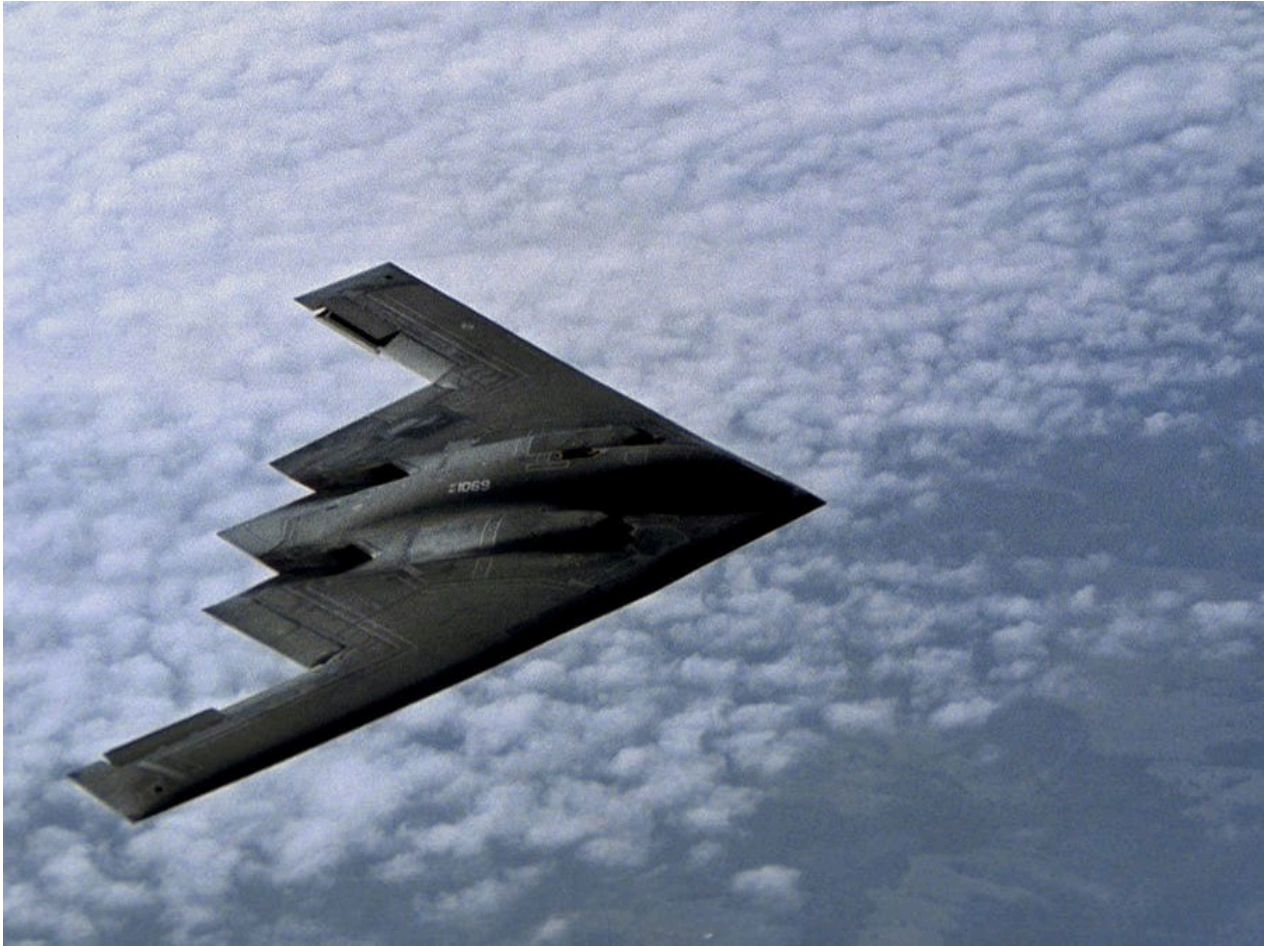
The MOP is the world's largest nonnuclear weapon. Designed to hit hardened targets, bunkers, and locations deep under ground, the MOP hits the ground at supersonic speed after being released from a B-2 bomber. After impact, the bomb can burrow through 200 feet of earth and 60 feet of concrete before detonating.



via Boeing

In the event that negotiations fail, the US is in a position to launch a series of MOP strikes against [Fordow](#), a once secret nuclear facility contained within a hollowed-out mountain and specially hardened against aerial attack. The centrifuges at Fordow are capable of enriching uranium, which could be used for a nuclear weapon.

Destroying Fordow would be a difficult endeavor despite the size and sheer force of the MOP. Politico [notes](#) that the total destruction of the facility would likely require multiple B-2s dropping MOPs at the same GPS-designated location to ensure that the bombs would be able to drill through both the side of the mountain and the facility's hardened shell before detonating.



U.S. Air Force photo/Gary Ell The B-2 is the only aircraft capable of carrying MOP.

But the MOP is supposed to be used in exactly these kinds of coordinated strikes. [According](#) to The Wall Street Journal, the bomb is designed to be dropped in pairs. The first is meant to clear a path for the second hit, heightening the bombs' potent penetration capabilities.

Unnamed officials told The Journal that the MOP's devastation potential is unlike any nonnuclear weapon ever built.

The weapons have been designed by the US to destroy hardened facilities within North Korea and Iran.

Should the US decide to carry out bombing runs against Iranian nuclear sites, the US could run into substantial difficulties.



Google Sat. Image of Iran's Fordow facility.

Russia has [announced](#) that it would be willing to sell the S-300 air-defense system, which can hit aircraft at high altitude from a 150-mile range, to Iran.

If Iran were to acquire the S-300s, Tehran would be able to set up a formidable ring of defense around its nuclear sites.

This would make Iranian air defenses much more difficult to overcome, raising the scale and the stakes of any US bombing run against the country's nuclear facilities.

The MOP is unique for its ability to penetrate enemy defenses, but it is not the largest bomb the US has ever built. That title goes to the T-12 Cloudmaker, a World War II-era bomb that [clocked in at over 40,000 pounds](#).

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