

Iran's Nuclear Program: What the 2008 Presidential Candidates are Saying

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vs.



DEMOCRATS

Hillary Clinton in comments to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee on February 1, 2007: “U.S. policy must be clear and unequivocal. We cannot, we should not, we must not, permit Iran to build or acquire nuclear weapons. And in dealing with this threat as I have said for a very long time, no option can be taken off the table.”

<http://clinton.senate.gov/news/statements/details.cfm?id=268474>

In a September 26, 2007, New Hampshire Democratic Debate: Well, what I have said is that I will do everything I can to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear power, including the use of diplomacy, the use of economic sanctions, opening up direct talks. We haven't even tried... We need a concerted, comprehensive strategy to deal with Iran. We haven't had it; we need it—and I will provide it.

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21013767/>

Barack Obama to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee on March 2, 2007: “The world must work to stop Iran's uranium enrichment program and prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. It is far too dangerous to have nuclear weapons in the hands of a radical theocracy. And while we should take no option, including military action, off the table, sustained and aggressive diplomacy combined with tough sanctions should be our primary means to prevent Iran from building nuclear weapons.”

http://obama.senate.gov/speech/070302-aipac_policy_fo/

Commenting on Ahmadinejad's UN speech, September 25th, 2007: “As John F. Kennedy said, ‘We should never negotiate out of fear, but should never fear to negotiate.’ And by us listening to the views of even those who we violently disagree with, that sends a signal to the world that we are going to turn the page on the failed diplomacy that the Bush administration has practiced for so long.”

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2007-09-26-voa28.cfm>

Bill Richardson in a speech to the National Guard on June 27, 2007: “I am convinced that a concerted diplomatic effort, backed up by tough sanctions, undertaken with our international partners and grounded in bipartisan cooperation at home, stands an excellent chance of persuading Iran to forego nuclear weapons and to adopt more responsible policies....I also believe that we must talk to the Iranians with no preconditions... Let me be clear: talking without preconditions does not mean backing off one inch over fundamental objectives, such as insuring that Iran never acquires nuclear weapons. But preventing Iran from going nuclear will require strong diplomacy backed up credible power and clarity of purpose.”

<http://www.richardsonforpresident.com/newsroom/speeches?id=0013>

At the New Hampshire Democratic Debate, September 26th, 2007: “A fundamental goal of our foreign policy should be not to permit Iran to develop nuclear weapons. [...] The problem that we have with Iran is that we don't build the international support that is needed to put economic pressure on Iran. And my point here is that Iran is susceptible to economic pressure. They import half of their foodstuffs, half of their gasoline. [...] I would not talk necessarily to Ahmadinejad. I would talk to moderate clerics. I would talk to business leaders. But 40 percent of the Iranian people vote for moderate candidates for president. So you first use diplomacy.”

<http://www.cfr.org/publication/14313/>

John Edwards in the June 3, 2007 Democratic *YouTube* Debate: “There is an extraordinary opportunity available to us on Iran. [...] We should put two options on the table: one carrots, we should make the nuclear fuel available to you, the international community, but we'll control it, you can't weaponize it; second, we're going to put a clear set of economic incentives on the table. [...] The alternative, the stick, is if they don't [cooperate], there are going to be serious economic sanctions. We need to drive a wedge between the Iranian people and this radical leader.”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8NdYDrNbYw>

In the New Hampshire Democratic Debate, September 26th, 2007: “I think there's a clear, responsible course for America with respect to Iran, and that responsible course is to recognize that Ahmadinejad is unpopular in his own country. And if we work with our friends in Europe and the European banking system, we can put a clear proposal on the table for the Iranian people, sticks and carrots -- the carrots being we will help you with your economy if in fact you give up your nuclear ambitions, the flip side being there will be severe economic sanctions if you don't.”

<http://www.cfr.org/publication/14313/>

Joseph Biden responding to a question on the use of diplomacy or force to halt Tehran's nuclear program at the Democratic *YouTube* Debate, June 3, 2007: “...I would do away with the policy of regime change. What we're saying to everybody in Iran is, look, by the way, give up the one thing that keeps us from attacking you, and after that, we're going to attack you—we're going to take you down.”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8NdYDrNbYw>

In a statement given following the release of Iranian hostages April 4th, 2007: “The only thing worse than a poorly planned, intentional war is an unplanned, unintentional war. We have to put a premium on hard-headed diplomacy with Iran, which is the best way to achieve our objectives. Some of Iran's leaders may choose confrontation over cooperation. The Iranian people must know that we are not the ones standing in the way of peaceful co-existence.”

<http://biden.senate.gov/newsroom/details.cfm?id=272025&&>

REPUBLICANS

Rudy Giuliani in the September 5, 2007 New Hampshire Republican Debate:

“America has to have a clear position. The position should be that Iran is not going to be allowed to go nuclear... Ronald Reagan won the Cold War without firing a shot, it was because he pointed like a thousand missiles at Soviet cities... And he negotiated with them... well, he talked to them with a thousand missiles pointed directly at their cities.”

http://www.cfr.org/publication/14142/republican_debate_transcript_new_hampshire.html?breadcrumb=%2Fpublication%2Fby_type%2Fessential_document

In the September 26, 2007 New Hampshire Democratic Debate: “Iran is not going to be allowed to build a nuclear power. If they get to a point where they're going to become a nuclear power, we will prevent them; we will set them back eight to 10 years. That is not said as a threat; that should be said as a promise.”

<http://www.cfr.org/publication/14313/>

Fred Thompson in commentary after a speech at Policy Exchange in London, June 2007: “Obviously there are basically three choices that we have: Sanctions, regime change, or military option or fourth I suppose if you consider doing nothing... I think that we made some progress on sanctions but not nearly enough... but Iran is very vulnerable, I think, in many different ways... and some of these problems might work in our favor especially if we ratcheted the sanctions, certainly a blockade could also be an option... We are all in this together, the forces of civilization should be aligned against the forces of annihilation in this world.”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4kT6Oie7mW0>

In a September 6, 2007 interview with Hannity and Colmes: “The military or nuclear option or whatever certainly should be the last thing to be considered. There are an awful lot of good things that can happen between now and then, but there are no options that can be taken off the table of a country that's intent on becoming dangerous to us and the rest of the world forever.”

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,296039,00.html>

Mitt Romney at the CNN Republican Debate, June 3rd 2007:

Question: Do you agree that the use of tactical nuclear weapons, potentially, would be possible if that were the only way to stop Iran from developing a nuclear bomb?

Answer: "You don't take options off the table, but what you do is stand back and say, "What's going on here?" You see what's happening in Sudan and Afghanistan, in Iraq and Iran. All over the world, we're seeing the same thing happening, and that is people are testing the United States of America. And we have to make sure they understand that we're not arrogant; we have resolve. And we have the strength to protect our interests and to protect people who love liberty. For that to happen, we're going to have to not just attack each one of these problems one by one, but say, how do we help move the world of Islam so that the moderate Muslims can reject the extreme?"

And for that to happen, we're going to have to have a strong military and an effort to combine with our allies in such a way, we combine for an effort to help move Islam toward modernity. That's what we're going to have to do, instead of looking at each theater one by one and saying, "We'll bomb here, we'll attack here, we'll go to Sudan."
<http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0706/05/se.01.html>

At the September 5, 2007 New Hampshire Republican Debate: "What do you do next before you actually take up the military action? What you do in action is this. The president meets with leaders, Republican and Democrat, to make sure we're on the same page. We want to make sure that Democrats sign up, that we're all part of this on a unified basis. Number two, you meet with our allies around the world and make sure we're on the same page on this.

Number three, you work with the people on Arabian Peninsula, and you say to them we want you to put some pressure on people like China, like Saudi Arabia. They depend on your oil. We want you to put pressure on China to also be part of it. Now we take the military option off the table. We hold in our hand -- when they see our military option in our hand, a possible blockade or possible aerial strikes, they recognize we mean business, and that's going to -- that's going to make them think twice and hopefully abandon their folly because it is unacceptable to the world for us to have a nuclear Iran."
http://www.cfr.org/publication/14142/republican_debate_transcript_new_hampshire.html?breadcrumb=%2Fpublication%2Fby_type%2Fessential_document

John McCain at an address to Christians United for Israel, July 18th, 2007: "Every option must remain on the table. Military action isn't our preference. It remains, as it always must, the last option. We have some way to go diplomatically before we need to contemplate other measures. But it is a simple observation of reality that there is only one thing worse than a military solution, and that, my friends, is a nuclear armed Iran. The regime must understand that it cannot win a showdown with the world."
<http://www.johnmccain.com/Informing/News/Speeches/df96a751-be4f-4275-8d28-2c38ad036983.htm>

At the September 5, 2007 New Hampshire Republican Debate: "At the end of the day, we cannot allow Iran to have nuclear weapons. Now I believe that we can do a lot of things. We can have a league of democracies to impose sanctions and to cut off the -- many of the things and benefits that the Iranians are now getting from other democracies... We need to work together with our allies, but at the end of the day, it's the United States of America that will make the final decision."

http://www.cfr.org/publication/14142/republican_debate_transcript_new_hampshire.html?breadcrumb=%2Fpublication%2Fby_type%2Fessential_document

Mike Huckabee in an August 15, 2007 interview on MSNBC:

Question: But would you support the Bush administration launching air strikes on Iran today if that's what the administration decided to do?

Answer: I think we have to have a strong justification showing that not only have we established targets that are clearly intended to be hurtful to us or if Iran has established some nuclear capacity that could be weaponized. That certainly would be justification.”
http://www.lexisnexis.com/proxyau.wrlc.org/us/lnacademic/results/docview/docview.do?risb=21_T2088532245&format=GNBFI&sort=RELEVANCE&startDocNo=1&resultsUriKey=29_T2088532248&cisb=22_T2088532247&treeMax=true&treeWidth=0&csi=8104&docNo=3

Ron Paul in a March 26, 2006 interview with Neil Cavuto: “Well, I think that's all blown out of proportion. This [Ahmedinejad] is an elected leader. There has been no proof of any violations of any rules or regulations. There is no evidence that he's developing a nuclear bomb. This is a lot of scare tactics, the same kind of stuff that was thrown at Iraq, weapons of mass destruction, all of these things. This is the same thing that is going on once again. But I do not see one way that Iran is a threat to us. Instead of depending on the United Nations, which, hopefully, they could help us, but we should look after our national security. Iran poses no threat to our national security.”

http://www.lexisnexis.com/proxyau.wrlc.org/us/lnacademic/results/docview/docview.do?risb=21_T2088637188&format=GNBFI&sort=RELEVANCE&startDocNo=1&resultsUriKey=29_T2088637195&cisb=22_T2088637194&treeMax=true&treeWidth=0&csi=174179&docNo=1

On MSNBC on June 6, 2007: “This idea that they're on the verge of having a weapon and we have to put anti-ballistic missiles up in Europe because the Iranians might attack us, I mean, that's a bit of a stretch. No, they're not capable of it. They don't have an air force. They don't have a real military. They have essentially no navy... Israel could wipe Iran off the face of the earth with a few nuclear weapons in no time. And the Iranians aren't going to attack. I mean, they talk belligerently, but so did Khrushchev.”

http://www.lexisnexis.com/proxyau.wrlc.org/us/lnacademic/results/docview/docview.do?risb=21_T2088637188&format=GNBFI&sort=RELEVANCE&startDocNo=1&resultsUriKey=29_T2088637195&cisb=22_T2088637194&treeMax=true&treeWidth=0&csi=8104&docNo=12

Duncan Hunter at the October 9, 2007 Michigan Republican Debate: ““With respect to Iran, Iran is walking down the path to build a nuclear device. They've got now about a thousand centrifuges. They claim they've got 3,000. At some point, we may have to preempt that target. If we do, it should be done, hopefully, with allies, but perhaps by the U.S. alone.”

http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5hUCA9LJAzfidTwN2Jc_GypujEZfQD8S61B081