

Israeli Interior Minister Meir Sheerit (Kadima): Israel must not attack Iran, except in line of defense, *Ha'aretz*, 8/22/08

Two months ago, [Israel's Interior Minister Moshe] Sheerit read [Israel Minister of Transportation Shaul] Mofaz's remarks about attacking Iran, and now, in the midst of the contest for Kadima leadership, he chooses to respond. "Israel must on no account attack Iran," he says. "Israel must defend itself only if attacked by Iran, but attacking Iran on our own initiative is a megalomaniacal reckless idea. Israel is a small country, and its role is to make the world aware of the issue. Israel should certainly not be the one to attack or talk about attacking. Iran is not all that much of a threat, and there is no need to frighten us every morning. I am not sure that when Iran has nuclear weapons it will immediately use them against us."

Sheerit is a regular participant in meetings of the security cabinet, and in the past two years has received intelligence updates in his capacity as the minister responsible, on behalf of the prime minister, for the secret services (the Mossad espionage agency, the Shin Bet security service, the Atomic Energy Commission and Military Intelligence).

"Israel must deploy for the option that Iran will possess nuclear weapons, but it must be modest," he explains. "Are we really capable of attacking the Iranian nuclear project? You know, if we do attack, I am not sure it will scuttle the project, or even delay it. These declarations are a terrible mistake, and very unnecessary. Even if someone thinks that, he certainly must not say so.

"I doubt we will be attacked [by Iran with nuclear weapons]," Sheerit adds. "Every country will fully understand the consequences of such an attack. Moreover, Israel has excellent anti-missile defense systems. They will fire a missile? Let them. Maybe it will blow up on its way here? Maybe they will miss? To attack Iran is a gamble Israel must not take."

Many senior army figures share his opinion, he says. But they are not permitted to air their views. He, on the other hand, can speak out, and it is he who is caught up in the midst of a difficult and frustrating contest in which, it seems, anything goes and everything is allowed.

Excerpted from Barak's Sinking Ship, *Ha'aretz*, by Yossi Verter, 8/22/08

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1014155.html> and

Sheerit: Israel must not attack Iran, except in line of defense, *Ha'aretz*, by Mazal

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