

February 7th, 2006

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# THE AMERICAN THINKER

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## Take Out the Mullahs – Tonight

February 7th, 2006

To think clearly about the looming crisis with Iran, close your eyes and imagine that you're standing outside your children's school. It's 2:55pm, and you're chatting amiably with other parents while waiting for the 3pm bell to ring. Suddenly you see a man running toward the school, holding a hand grenade and shouting: "*I hate kids. I welcome death.*"

Now, what do you propose to do?

One option is to engage your fellow parents in a dialogue about the serious and complex questions raised by the running man with the grenade.

For instance, you might try to calculate precisely how long it will take him to reach the school. When he does reach the school, will he stop or go inside? If he does go inside, will he run toward the basement, or toward the auditorium where the third and fourth grades have been brought to watch a video? (It's probably about "safe sex" – but what the schools teach our kids is another subject for another day.) Is the hand grenade real, or might it be a fake? If the grenade is real, does the man really know how to pull the pin? And if he does, how big will be blast radius be and what's the potential number of casualties?

And why is the man doing this? Is he really a vicious killer? Or is he a harmless but mentally disturbed individual who didn't take his medication today and slipped out of the house without being noticed by his wife? Or is this just a case of a well-meaning but very misguided protester who's mad at the Bush administration for not signing the Kyoto accords, or who's upset because dolphins are still getting caught in tuna nets? Oh, and is it possible that in addition to the hand grenade he's got a gun inside his coat pocket?

Should you try to talk with the man? Or would it be better to notify the school's principal, and perhaps suggest he call the police?

And remember—while you and your fellow parents debate all this, the distance between the man holding the grenade and your kids is narrowing.

### The Option to Act

Your other option is to take the man down – now, this minute, however you can – and to sort out

the mess later.

If you go for this option, it's because you believe that anyone who runs toward a school with what appears to be a live grenade while shouting "*I hate kids. I welcome death*" forfeits all rights to a cautious, comprehensive inquiry about his motives and real capabilities. If it turns out that the grenade was a fake, or that the man is a harmless nut who really wouldn't hurt a fly – too bad. And if the man or his family sues you or the school district for injury or wrongful death – so what.

If you choose this option, it's because you understand that when someone puts your children's lives at risk, the instinct for survival trumps the analytic process. Take too long to think, and you may lose the opportunity to act – and it's impossible to accurately project when this line will be crossed until you're already over it.

Okay, now let's turn our attention to Iran.

The country is led by individuals who are proven, ruthless killers. Several of them – most especially the country's president, Mahmoud Amadinejad – are visibly insane. They have launched huge programs to develop nuclear weapons and the missiles to deliver them, and Iran has both the money and talent to pull it off. They have pledged to wipe at least one country off the map – Israel—and they don't like us, either.

In response, our diplomats are fanning out to engage our allies in "frank and comprehensive" consultations about the looming, potential crisis. They are even struggling mightily to bring non-allies including France, Russia and China into the dialogue. Our State Department is "cautiously optimistic" that the issue will eventually be brought to the U.N. Security Council.

Meanwhile, members of Congress are demanding to know how much time we have before it will be too late to act. Just last week the Director of National Intelligence, John Negroponte, testified before the Senate Intelligence Committee that in the judgment of our country's intelligence experts, Iran "probably" hasn't yet built a bomb or gotten its hands on enough fissile material to build one. Over in Vienna the International Atomic Energy Agency estimates that it will be several years, at least, before Iran's mullahs have a nuke.

### **What Can We Do?**

Based on public comments by officials of the Bush Administration and of various European and Asian governments, there are four options on the table for dealing with Iran: First, do nothing since Iran won't actually have nukes for several years – and hope that the mullahs really aren't serious about using them. Second, engage the mullahs diplomatically in hopes of dissuading them from pursuing their present course. Third, help trigger a revolution by providing as much covert support as possible to those within Iran – students and a growing range of worker organizations, for example – who are already demonstrating against their hated regime. And fourth, launch a military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities to destroy, or at least delay, that country's weapons programs.

Alas, none of these options is any good. The first is feckless, and the second is hopeless. The

third – helping support a revolution – is terrific, but even under the best possible circumstances would take a long time to bear fruit. And the fourth option – taking out the nuclear facilities with military force – is extraordinarily difficult to execute, runs the real risk of igniting a political explosion throughout the Moslem world, and in any case it isn't imminent.

Meanwhile, with each day that passes the distance between Iran's mullahs and nuclear weapons is narrowing. And remember: *Take too long to think, and you may lose the opportunity to act – and it's impossible to accurately project when this line will be crossed until you're already over it.*

Indeed, we may already be over the line. While it may be correct, as Director Negroponte has testified, that Iran “probably” hasn't yet built a bomb or gotten its hands on enough fissile material to build one—it also may not be correct. Given our intelligence community's recent track record, it would be foolhardy to place much confidence in this judgment. Generally, countries trying to build nuclear weapons succeed sooner rather than later – usually to the great surprise of Western intelligence services. And isn't it possible that Iran already has a bomb or two that it bought rather than built itself? When the Soviet Union fell apart in 1991 there were the so-called “loose nukes” that the Soviet military wasn't able to account for. Make a list of those countries with the money and desire to get its hands on one of these weapons – and Iran tops the list.

### **It Isn't Only Nukes**

Most worrisome, while everyone in Washington is focusing on nuclear weapons, no one has uttered so much as a peep about the possibility that Iran may be developing chemical or biological weapons. These weapons are far less costly than nuclear weapons, and the technology required to develop them is more widely available. And since a cupful of anthrax or botulism is enough to kill 100,000 people, our ability to detect these weapons is – zilch. So why wouldn't the mullahs in Teheran order the development of chemical and biological weapons? If they really do plan to wipe Israel – or us – off the map, these will do the job just as well as nukes. And if reports are true that Saddam Hussein had such weapons before the war and shipped them out to Syria and Iran before we attacked in 2003 – then the mullahs already have stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons.

Simply put, Iran's nuclear weapons program, combined with the murderous comments of that country's president, is the political equivalent of a man running toward your children's school holding a hand grenade and shouting “*I hate kids. I welcome death.*” The risk of taking time—to think, to talk, to analyze, to co-ordinate with other countries – is just too high. We know where Amadinejad and the mullahs work, and we ought to know where they live. (And if we don't know, the Israelis do and would be more than happy to lend a hand.) We have cruise missiles, Stealth fighters, and B-1 bombers that can fly from the US to Teheran, drop their lethal loads, then return to the US without ever landing en route. We have skilled, courageous Special Forces teams that can get themselves on the ground in Teheran quietly and fast.

The question is whether we still have within us the instinct for survival. If we do, then our only course is to act – now, this minute, however we can – and to take out the mullahs. Tonight.

*Herbert E. Meyer served during the Reagan Administration as Special Assistant to the Director of Central Intelligence and Vice Chairman of the CIA's National Intelligence Council. His DVD on [The Siege of Western Civilization](#) has become an international best-seller.*

***Herbert E. Meyer***