

# NYTimes Mentions Israeli Nukes

**Exclusive:** The U.S. press is very tolerant of Israeli cross-border attacks inside Syria, like the latest one against a military target in Latakia. Israel's nuclear arsenal usually goes unmentioned, too. But the New York Times surprisingly deviated from that pattern, notes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

In a rare break from the selective outrage over who possesses WMDs in the Middle East, the New York Times acknowledged on Friday that, yes, Israel does have an undeclared nuclear arsenal.

Apparently the Times had little option but to include this inconvenient truth because the context was the complaint from some Syrians that their government was wrong to surrender its chemical weapons capability in an agreement with the United Nations because the CW was needed to deter a possible Israeli nuclear attack.

The [article](#) by Anne Barnard reported, "Some government supporters, and indeed, some rebel fighters, have criticized the deal as giving up weapons that belong to the Syrian people and are needed as a deterrent against Israel, which maintains an undeclared nuclear arsenal.

"But Syrian officials said that the weapons were of little practical use and that giving them up allowed them to claim new moral standing and draw attention to the push for the elimination of Israel's nuclear weapons."

Amazing! References to Israeli nukes in back-to-back paragraphs. More typically, the Times and other U.S. news outlets avoid mentioning Israel's rogue nuclear arsenal even when the context calls for it, such as when writing about Syria's reasons for possessing chemical weapons or why Iran might actually want a nuclear bomb. By leaving out Israel's secret nukes, the media denies the U.S. public an understanding of why these Muslim countries might legitimately fear that Israel will attack them with nukes.

Israel's nuclear arsenal is usually even ignored in the U.S. press when Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is threatening to attack other countries to punish them for their possession or their possible future possession of weapons of mass destruction. For instance, Netanyahu has threatened to bomb Iran if it crosses his "red line" in refinement of nuclear fuel, despite Iran's repeated assurances that it wants only a peaceful nuclear program.

Israel's use of aggressive air strikes also is not just hypothetical. Israeli

jets have struck Syrian military targets, presumably to destroy what are primarily defensive weapons, i.e. Russian-made surface-to-air missiles. In those cases, the Israeli claim is that the missiles might be transferred to Hezbollah, the militant Lebanese militia that fought Israel's occupation of South Lebanon in the 1980s and 1990s and was the target of an Israeli air war in 2006.

These Israeli attacks receive only cursory notice in the U.S. news media. For instance, there were a few brief references in some U.S. news outlets on Friday, describing an attack on Thursday by Israeli warplanes against the Syrian port city of Latakia.

I'm told that some U.S. intelligence analysts believe the latest strike was a show of Israeli anger over the failure of President Barack Obama to intervene militarily in the Syrian civil war and to demonstrate to Israel's new ally, Saudi Arabia, that Israel is ready to assist in efforts to tip the Syrian conflict in favor of Saudi-backed rebels.

### **Principles of Journalism**

The lack of objectivity in mainstream U.S. reporting about the Middle East and particularly issues relating to Israel has distorted how many Americans understand the issues in that strategic region. Pro-Israeli propagandists have been particularly effective in intimidating editors and writers with accusations that they are "anti-Israel" or "anti-Semitic" if they don't adopt Israel's preferred narratives on developments in the Middle East.

Often that pro-Israel slant is reflected not just in what editors put in a story but what they choose to leave out. That is most noticeable in the endless alarm expressed on the news pages of major American newspapers over the alleged possibility that Iran might build one nuclear bomb when Israel already possesses hundreds. It's also rarely noted that Iran has signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, accepting international observers, while Israel hasn't.

That relevant context doesn't even show up often when Israel threatens to bomb Iran, i.e. a nuclear-armed state announcing plans to attack a non-nuclear state. So, for the casual reader, the selective rendering of the story ignoring Israel's actual nuclear arsenal and exaggerating the possibility that Iran might build a bomb someday creates the impression that Israel is undertaking the noble cause of trying to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons into the Middle East, when the reality is that Israel is seeking to keep its nuclear monopoly in the Middle East.

Some Americans may like that idea trusting Israel to be responsible in what they do with their nuclear bombs while fearing that a Muslim country would be

reckless but journalism is not supposed to about taking sides. It's supposed to be about providing relevant information to the reader, something that the New York Times did on Friday.

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his new book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)). For a limited time, you also can order Robert Parry's trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes *America's Stolen Narrative*. For details on this offer, [click here](#).

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