



# Colin Powell Acknowledges Israeli Nuclear Arsenal: 200 Israeli Nukes Targeted against Iran...

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*According to hacked emails reviewed by LobeLog, Former Secretary of State Colin Powell acknowledged Israel's nuclear arsenal, an open secret that U.S. and Israeli politicians typically refuse to acknowledge as part of Israel's strategy of "nuclear ambiguity." Powell also rejected assessments that Iran, at the time, was "a year away" from a nuclear weapon.*

The emails, released by the hacking group *DCLeaks*, show Powell discussing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's controversial speech before a joint meeting of Congress with his business partner, Jeffrey Leeds.

Leeds summarizes Netanyahu as having "said all the right things about the president and all the things he has done to help Israel. But basically [he] said this deal sucks, and the implication is that you have to be an idiot not to see it."

Powell responded that U.S. negotiators can't get everything they want from a deal. But echoing a point that many Iran hawks [have questioned](#), Powell said that Israel's nuclear arsenal and rational self-interest make the construction and testing of an Iranian nuclear weapon a highly unlikely policy choice for Iran's leaders.

[Powell wrote:](#)

Negotiators can't get what he wants. Anyway, Iranians can't use one if they finally make one. The boys in Tehran know Israel has 200, all targeted on Tehran, and we have thousands. As Akmdinijad (sic) [said], "What would we do with one, polish it?" I have spoken publicly about both nK and Iran. We'll blow up the only thing they care about—regime survival. Where, how would they even test one?

Israel, which isn't a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, has long maintained ambiguity about the size, and even the existence, of its nuclear weapons program.

Later in the email chain, Powell acknowledged Iran's right to enrich uranium for nuclear power, said that sanctions alone wouldn't be enough to "break" Iran, and pointed out that the assessment that Iran could make a dash for the bomb and construct a nuclear weapon within a year was exaggerated.

Powell wrote:

They say, correctly, that they have every right to enrich for energy. Russians

helped build a power reactor at Buser. Can't get enough sanctions to break them. Lots of bs around about their progress. Bibi likes to say "a year away," as do our intel guys. They say it every year. I ain't that easy to do.

Powell ultimately supported the nuclear agreement reached by the Obama administration, [telling Meet The Press](#) that "It's a pretty good deal," on September 6, 2015. In the lead up to his endorsement, Powell had harsh words for foreign policy experts who stayed on the sidelines or opposed the deal.

On August 30, 2015, Powell wrote to Ken Duberstein, President Ronald Reagan's former chief of staff, who suggested that Powell might refrain from endorsing the deal in a television interview where he would face questions about Hillary Clinton's emails.

Powell said he could handle the political questions, defended the deal to Duberstein as a "good one for the country," and blasted Council on Foreign Relations President Richard Haass and Ret. Gen. David Petraeus for publicly remaining undecided about the agreement. [Powell told Duberstein](#):

The Iran deal is a good one for the country and our alliances. Retired generals and admirals popping off. I have studied it pretty thoroughly...I have done emails before on tv. Have to deal with ISIS. Richard] Haass, Petraeus et al claiming to be undecided. BS, they are just protecting their future options. I don't have or want any. Baker, Shultz know what's right, as does Henry. Brent showed some guts.

But even Duberstein, who had urged Powell to avoid a high-profile endorsement of the deal and hasn't publicly spoken about the deal, couldn't resist sharing with Powell his assessment of former George W. Bush administration ambassador to the United Nations [John Bolton](#)'s fundraising email, which described the nuclear deal as "the single largest global security crisis."

Duberstein [forwarded the email](#) to Powell, adding a succinct message at the top: "Haha! What is he smoking?"

***Eli Clifton*** reports on money in politics and US foreign policy. Eli previously reported for the American Independent New Network, ThinkProgress, and Inter Press Service.

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