



Pickaxe Mountain: Iran's "Unbustable" Nuclear Bunker?

July 21, 2026

Featuring Andrea Stricker

Hosted by Mark Dubowitz

DUBOWITZ: So, Andrea, welcome to *The Iran Breakdown*.

STRICKER: Well, thank you. It's an honor to be with you.

DUBOWITZ: It's wonderful to have you on the show and as a colleague. And so, Andrea, today we're going to be talking about Iran and all things nuclear and specifically about Pickaxe Mountain. But before we get into that topic, I wanted to just have our audience get to know you a bit. So, tell us about yourself, where are you from and how did you become a nuclear expert?

STRICKER: Sure. Well, I was born in Phoenix, Arizona, sort of to Michigan refugees, really strong German American values, family focused kind of go to church on Sunday, get an education, work hard type of people. I think I became interested in non-proliferation when I wrote a paper in college on North Korea's nuclear program. So, I kind of honed in on wanting to be part of trying to solve these huge challenges. And then I got accepted to George Washington University for my master's. And while touring campus, I got a call from David Albright's Institute for Science and International Security or the Good ISIS, as we call it. They offered me an internship so it kind of made DC an easy decision. And then at the Good ISIS, I got to specialize in open-source analysis of nuclear programs using technical assessments to draw policy conclusions. And they were really pioneers in using commercial satellite imagery to track developments in states of proliferation concern.

So, for example, my first summer there in 2007, they uncovered new evidence of Iran expanding the Natanz enrichment plant, now a destroyed site almost 20 years later. That fall they also located the Syrian reactor that Israel had bombed, which was also built with North Korean help. And so, I was kind of hooked on the subject and on how impactful these discoveries were and really how much momentum they could give to policy debates. And we did a lot of other impactful work. For example, we wrote a book on Taiwan's former nuclear weapons program. I tracked down a former Taiwanese informant of the CIA and got to interview him directly, which was pretty incredible. And then we worked quite a bit with FDD on Iran related analysis over the years. We analyzed the documents from Iran's nuclear archive, which was seized by Israel in 2018 and really detailed Iran's pre-2004 nuclear weapons program.

So, I ended up staying there for about 12 years getting some of the best training that you can get in the business from David Albright before moving to FDD in 2019. And now I feel like I get to do more policy facing work. I still view my role as translating difficult non-proliferation issues, but I feel like I have really benefited from exposure to a lot of different expertise, not only on Iran and the Middle East, but other issues, which I feel like has sharpened my work as an analyst. And it definitely helps a lot that the CEO is himself an expert on non-proliferation. So, I get to have this excellent guidance and insight on a daily basis.

DUBOWITZ: You've been a wonderful addition to the team. Seven years working with you, total delightful colleague. And you're much too kind. I play a non-proliferation expert on TV, but every time I go on TV, I speak to you to make sure I actually have got my talking points, and I've got the technical understanding. And I think that's really incredible what you've brought to both FDD and to the field itself. And obviously we remain very close to David Albright and the Institute and do a lot of work together. So, Andrew, I want to jump in with the news that just came out. *The Wall Street Journal* had a story written by Laurence Norman, who's been covering Iran nuclear issues for many, many years. And it's all about something called Pickaxe Mountain. And the discovery that the Iranians have moved, what the story said is thousands of centrifuges to Pickaxe Mountain that are capable of enriching uranium to weapons grade, which would be an essential condition to building a nuclear weapon.



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Why are you so concerned about Pickaxe Mountain in this most recent story? And you've really been on this case for years driving the concern over Pickaxe Mountain into the news.

STRICKER: Yeah. I mean, the Wall Street Journal timed the story very well for this podcast. Pickaxe Mountain is where Iran might be resurrecting a nuclear weapons pathway or could do so in the future. So, it's very massive. It would be difficult to destroy from the air. And according to this reporting, Iran, we have put thousands of centrifuges down inside this facility, which is under a granite mountain sometime around last fall after the June 2025 attacks. So, they're racing to harden it and possibly finish construction. They've been doing so even after signing this memorandum of understanding with United States. But Pickaxe Mountain is the name for what amounts to a giant tunnel complex. It's 300 to 450 feet below this mountain called *Kolang Gaz La*. And Farsi means Pickaxe, *Kolang*, I believe. So, construction started in 2020 after we assume Israel destroyed the above ground Iran centrifuge assembly center where Iran made a lot of their fast advanced centrifuges.

It was a sabotage attack. And in 2021, Ali Akbar Salehi, the former VP of Iran and Atomic Energy Organization of Iran had, he said that Pickaxe was meant to replace that facility. Now the IAEA has never been able to visit the site because Iran would have to be implementing the additional protocol, which is the IA's enhanced inspection agreement in order for Iran to have to allow them access to a centrifuge facility.

And it's worth mentioning if it is a uranium enrichment plant and they decided to put it there, then not reporting this to the IAEA is a violation of their legal safeguards obligations. So, what makes it so difficult to destroy is that it's likely deeper than the Fordow enrichment facility that the US hit with 12 massive ordinance penetrators back in June 2025. And this 450 feet underground estimate, that seems to be a higher end estimate that I've seen lately reported by the Wall Street Journal. So, it's built to withstand a bunker buster attack. It's large enough to hold not just a centrifuge assembly plant but also has the space for a uranium enrichment plant and even weaponization related work like fashioning weapons grade uranium metal into course. And I think unlike other Iranian nuclear sites, and there aren't many that haven't been struck that would really be instrumental to a nuclear breakout in the future.

It wasn't bombed during the 2025 or 2026 strikes aside from I believe a vehicle was hit that was going by the site that was possibly linked to air defense. And then we have our friends at the good ISIS have been monitoring what's going on as far as the satellite imagery. They see that there are two sets of tunnel entrances at pickax. There's an eastern set and a western set and then a separate smaller complex built in 2007. But what they've been doing is actively reinforcing some of the tunnel entrances. So, they've been pouring concrete and adding reinforcement, also moving heavy construction equipment around the site. We've seen cement trucks. So, it looks like they were hardening it against a possible future strike. And then on the eastern tunnels, they actually blocked those tunnels with dirt and rock. So seemingly they wanted to kind of slow or impede anyone who might try to enter, protect the tunnels and the entrances from blast.

And then they've also fortified the security perimeter. So, in short, the imagery shows the complex is still not finished, but construction has continued. And we recall on June 17th, Iran pledged under the MOU to maintain the status of its nuclear program, but they've continued this construction. So, it really raises concerns that they're not keeping their word and that they never intend to commit to long-term restrictions. And we really see Trump commentating on this recently in the news. He told Hewitt that Pickaxe is now on the target list. He said, "We're going to take out Pickaxe Mountain, that the US is watching the site very closely." But he didn't note any urgent activity. But he did say that the US may send a missile in the front door and there's not a damn thing Iran can do about it. So, it may be on the list.



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And an Iranian official definitely sees the importance of this facility. He said Iran will blow the region to hell if the US tries to strike it. So, they're very aware of how important it is and what they would stand to lose that they have hidden down in there.

DUBOWITZ: Okay. So, Andrea, I mean, just sort of zooming out a little bit. So just give our listeners a sense of what Iran had with respect to nuclear infrastructure before the June war of last year. What did it have after and what, if anything, has been done during the current war? And then sort of explain why Pickaxe Mountain would be a perfect place for Iran to develop nuclear weapons. And what would Iran need to actually develop nuclear weapons in that facility? And then we can discuss what, if anything, can we do about it? Because I'm assuming the Iranian response is we can build nuclear weapons and Pickaxe Mountain is not a damn thing the United States can do about it.

STRICKER: Yeah, that's right. Well, I would say after the strikes, both rounds, they're probably set back about two and a half years from being able to build a nuclear weapon. And I think that's very optimistic because they've essentially lost their entire uranium supply line, their weaponization capabilities and a good deal of the people who would actually be instrumental in assembling a nuclear weapon. So, they had amassed about 22 weapons worth of enriched uranium, 11 of that at the HEU or 60% level. And military strikes have really rendered all of this destroyed or inaccessible. We have a recent visual on FDD's website that goes through the number of the sites that were destroyed in their nature. But overall, just to give you a sense, in June 2025, there were about 12 to 14 fuel production sites eliminated, including the Natanz above ground enrichment plant, the below ground enrichment plant for four down enrichment plant, and then a new enrichment plant in the Isfahan tunnels.

That includes their uranium conversion capability, their ability to make weapons grade metal, which is what you need for the core of a nuclear weapon. And 11 weaponization sites in the June strikes and 12 scientists assassinated. And then in 2026, Israel did a lot more. It kind of flew under the radar, but they hit four fuel production sites, eight to nine weaponization sites, and then eight more scientists according to Netanyahu. So, this really represented most of their nuclear weapon's infrastructure. They do have a lot of civil facilities left, research facilities. And then they may have remnants in terms of advanced centrifuges, equipment and expertise. And clearly the remnants can be a problem since you just need a few hundred advanced centrifuges to restore a uranium enrichment plan. But again, because of the strikes, it has really set them back quite significantly.

DUBOWITZ: Okay. So, zero in on Pickaxe Mountain, tell us what would Iran need to reconstitute that program in Pickaxe Mountain? I mean, it would need centrifuges. And the Wall Street Journal is saying thousands of centrifuges have been transferred to Pickaxe Mountain. My understanding is that Iran had about 23,000 centrifuges before the wars. About 18, 19,000 of them were destroyed. It leaves four to 5,000 centrifuges. You only need a few hundred advanced models to enrich uranium to weapons grade, as you said. But then you're going to need a number of other facilities and you're going to need enriched material in order to actually complete that dash to a bomb or more worth of weapons grade uranium. What does Iran need to reconstitute under Pickaxe Mountain? And what are the chances that Iran can bring all of that underground in this heavily fortified facility?



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STRICKER: Yeah, it's an important question. There are shorter estimates. They came out a few months ago reported on by Reuters as leaks from the US intelligence community that factor in Iran, I believe, likely being able to recover their enriched uranium stocks or maybe importing that material pre-made and then maybe having some kind of direct weaponization assistance from a foreign country like Russia or North Korea. So, these shorter estimates while they're alarming, I think they're probably unrealistic because a lot of that is subject to being detected. So, if they did start from scratch, they would have to gain access to raw uranium and be able to mill it. And we know that Israel hit their uranium mine and mill. They would have to convert it, and they no longer have a uranium conversion capability, which was destroyed at Isfahan. They don't have enrichment capabilities except for apparently these stockpiled centrifuges.

And enrichment plants require a lot of supporting infrastructure and equipment. So, it's not simple to simply cobble one together. They would also have to be able to recover potentially some of that equipment from the destroyed facilities and it may not be recoverable. It may not be operable anymore. And then they would have to transfer this to weapons grade metal form, which was also destroyed at Isfahan. And then they have to do several very difficult complex engineering weaponization steps to actually fabricate the nuclear device. All those different activities in the past were taking place across Iran at different fortified sites. So essentially, they had different steps such as creating the implosion mechanism for a nuclear weapon, fabricating the weapons grade uranium metal, working on all the different parts of a nuclear weapon at different places. And so, if they were uncovered, then they wouldn't all be destroyed at once.

And Israel took out basically all of the weaponization facilities that they had active during the pre-2004 Amad Plan. And so, it is a question mark what they still have left. They even took out the headquarters of the nuclear weapons program called SPND in Tehran. So maybe they don't have as much documentation as they would need. And then of course the scientists, they likely remain nervous about restarting any weaponization work. So, to be able to get all of these efforts back together to salvage what they still have, I think is an activity that would be very detectable to the United States and Israel, assuming that they still have good eyes on what the Iranians are up to.

DUBOWITZ: Well, that's really the question about what we can do about it. I mean, if we have eyes on Pickaxe Mountain, if we have seen trucks moving in there, I mean, I guess my question is we saw trucks probably moving in there after the June war or maybe before the June war. Multiple trucks were obviously going to Pickaxe Mountain. It turns out now maybe they were transferring centrifuges to the mountain. There's a question why we didn't actually bomb those trucks and why we allowed those trucks to transfer the centrifuges to Pickaxe Mountain. And then in addition, they would have to move enriched material there, uranium metal facilities, conversion facilities. They'd have to have nuclear scientists working there, weapon scientists working there. If they were going to actually locate all of their equipment and expertise in on place, presumably we would see it. And I hope the United States and Israel would eliminate it because it seems if you wait too long and then all of this is buried under Pickaxe Mountain, there is this open question about whether we can actually destroy this facility from the air the way that the US and Israel did Fordow, Natanz and Isfahan.

STRICKER: Yeah, that's right. I think being complacent would be a real mistake. We don't want to let them continue working on the facility or stockpiling whatever remnants of their program that they can there. And we don't want to assume that after Trump leaves office, after Netanyahu leaves office, that their successors will act against this site. And so I think Trump does need to probably take action against it. I think there's a few options for targeting and disabling the site. I know you may have others in mind. The top three that come to mind, I think they could try dropping the massive ordinance penetrators so they could go for the ventilation shafts like with Fordow. As a second one, I think simply blocking the entrances like they did with missile strikes on the Isfahan tunnels could be effective. That's where Iran stored most of their highly enriched uraniums.



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And then we've seen Trump kind of warning them off from trying to recover any of these materials from inside. And then obviously the most risky option is an underground raid. So that would put boots on the ground. But I mean, we can walk through all the options if you'd like.

DUBOWITZ: Yeah. Well, let's walk through those options. I mean, I'd put two more on the table, which are quite controversial as you can imagine and quite provocative. But if massive ordinance penetrators can't destroy this deeply buried facility and Iran could reconstitute a nuclear weapons program in its entirety under Fordow or under Pickaxe Mountain, then another option is dropping a tactical nuke to actually destroy the facility entirely. And then a fifth option, again, also very controversial and certainly I'm sure would be controversial in your eyes given all the work that you've done on chemical weapons but using some kind of chemical substances to render Pickaxe Mountain inaccessible to human beings for the next hundred years. So, let's walk through those five options. Your three options, obviously less controversial. And then maybe you could say a few words about the nuclear and chemical options.

STRICKER: Yeah, of course. So, on the mass ordinance penetrators, it seems like no one really knows if they would be effective. We may not even know even if we did use them, the extent of the destruction. I'm not sure we know if Fordows fully disabled or what the damage is down there. Maybe we do, but it's very tightly held. And even Trump had mentioned to Hugh Hewitt that no one knows if the bunker busters will work. But let's assume you could try. I think one positive is that Iran's air defenses at other nuclear sites, they don't seem to be an issue, not a major obstacle. We could defeat those easily. And then ventilation shafts were obviously a vulnerability at Fordow and at another targeted weaponization tunnel facility called Shahid Boroujerdi that was a former Amad Plan weaponization site. So maybe those could provide a passageway for the mobs.

One downside is that there are no public schematics of Pickaxe Mountain's internal layout that have surfaced unless the US or Israel have them. So, they really may have limited knowledge of where they're hitting and what they're trying to hit as far as the internal structure. On access denial and precision strikes on the entrances. So, we have the two tunnel entrances that are hardened with the concrete and earth, but the other two, the western pair, they seem to remain open so far, which could be a point of exposure for precision weapons. And obviously that ventilation infrastructure is a weak point. So, if you do strikes limited just to stealing the tunnel entrances, you may get some shock waves, blast effects that would further destroy the inside of the tunnel complex, essentially cause temporary denial of access, meaning Iran could eventually try to reopen them or rebuild access.

And that's I think similar to what we saw at the Isfahan tunnels, again, where Iran has most of its HEU. And if you're looking at an indefinite access denial effort, then the president will have to continue warning Iran not to go in as he's done with Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan. He said there are Space Force cameras and satellites all over it. If that's all that we can do, that's something that future presidents could sustain really to prevent Tehran from restoring the site or digging out assets. And that may have to be enough at least to prevent them from going further or hiding additional equipment in there. So, I don't love the idea, but in a world where that regime is still in power, that could have to be enough for now. And so, then on the ground forces option, I think realistically that's something that you would only see Trump authorize if he's worried about a significant uptick in Iranian activities.



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So perhaps a specific or speedy reconstitution effort, maybe moving in nuclear material obtained from abroad or catching wind of a sensitive plan. I think given the vulnerabilities of US forces conducting a raid with boots on the ground, he's been really hesitant to authorize these types of raids. He hasn't authorized one, for example, to recover the HEU from the Isfahan tunnels, because it would take several days to weeks basically to excavate the damaged tunnels, you'd have to fly in all kinds of equipment and WMD hazard material specialists and then ward off any Iranian fire and troops and basically leave US personnel very exposed. Maybe it's different if you're going into a facility very quickly for a raid that's not damaged, possibly go down inside, plant bombs on whatever you find and then get out of there as soon as possible. Maybe it's different. So maybe we'll find out more in the coming weeks.

But he can't rule out a ground operation if needed. And I believe Israel has conducted similar operational planning for underground nuclear site raids based on reports I've seen. And then of course, as part of access denial disabling the facility, we could target the power lines, the supply routes for construction and personnel. So those are also weak points that we could try to hit. As far as using a nuclear weapon, I can't condone that as a non-proliferation person. I think it would violate the NPT, and I think would further degrade the treaty certainly. I think Trump is very anti-nuclear weapon too. He said on many occasions that he hates nuclear weapons. I believe he had an uncle that told him all about the horrible effects of these weapons. And so, I don't think he wants to be the president that would use them again. And then on chemical weapons, also not a great option as far as US standing.

We have dismantled our chemical weapons program. We abide by the Chemical Weapons Convention and we're trying to keep that convention hanging. It's hanging by a thread essentially with so many violators. So, it would be a very bad precedent for the US to use chemical weapons. And so, I would discourage that, but I guess I can't stop whatever Trump decides to do. Hopefully we don't have stocks of chemical weapons lying around because that would be a violation.

DUBOWITZ: Okay. So, five options, three viable, two in your view, not. Of course, it's not just a US decision because it's also an Israeli decision and there may be a whole set of calculations, different calculations if there is evidence that Iran is building a nuclear weapon underground and that there's no other way to stop it. Let's move away from Pickaxe and talk a little bit about what else keeps you up at night with respect to Iran's nuclear program. And obviously damage done to other enrichment facilities, conversion facilities, uranium metal facilities they've killed. Maybe it's a dozen, maybe more nuclear weapon scientists. But when you look across the sort of vast expanse of what was Iran's nuclear program, where else are you concerned? What else should we be watching? What's sort of the next Pickaxe Mountain that people should be concerned about that they may not even have ever heard of?

STRICKER: Well, certainly Iran recovering any of their highly enriched uranium remains front and center is a concern. They could try to get access to the Isfahan tunnels. The canisters of HEU are likely probably fine back in the tunnels. They appear to know how to get to it according to news reporting. And so, we certainly want the US to be focused on this, not drop the ball there, including future US presidents who may have to continue to monitor that site. I'd also be worried about Iran while it may be unlikely importing weapons grade uranium from North Korea, for example. We know that North Korea has been willing to provide turnkey nuclear weapons assistance in the past to Syria and they've been willing to likely help Iran's weaponization program in the past. So those are concerning. Also, we can't rule out that Russia would provide some kind of weaponization assistance in thanks for Iran's help on the Ukraine war and all the drones they provided.



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So, we do need to be on top of those monitoring those potential foreign avenues. And then we want to look at anything that Iran is illicitly procuring from abroad in terms of direct or dual use equipment. Something that would signify that they're trying to restore a new centrifuge plant conversion capabilities or even imports of raw uranium, for example, from Niger, which has been a concern. We've seen Occasional reports that Niger is planning these sales very illicitly to proliferate states. So those are all issues that you'd want to keep an eye on. And then as far as the IAEA's access, that's also really concerning. Iran has basically restricted access since the June 2025 strikes. They've let them into just a few non-damaged facilities as well as the Bushehr nuclear reactor. I believe it Russia's insistence, but they stopped all access except for Bushehr after the February strikes.

And the has a legal right to inspect 22 declared facilities and one associated facility in Iran. So, this is a problem. I think the MOU at a minimum; it should have required that Iran let the IAEA back in to restore routine inspections and monitoring. So that would give the international community, the US, Israel more insight. But on the other hand, Iran wants to use this as leverage for negotiations, and they feel like that they've been unjustly attacked and so they're going to hold out as long as possible in letting the back in. So, it's a difficult situation, but I think with how far we have set back the program, it's not a bad position. Certainly, we have hopefully many months to years to act on a new reconstitution effort.

DUBOWITZ: And Andrea, you've been working on this issue for many years, though you don't look old enough for me to even say that, but it may be what, close to 15 years? Over 15 years?

STRICKER: 19. 19.

DUBOWITZ: Years. Wow. So almost two decades. And you were very involved in also the JCPOA analysis and debate. So looking back at that agreement and looking where we are today with respect to Iran's nuclear program, help our listeners understand, are we better off than we would have been under JCPOA? And if so, why? If not, why?

STRICKER: Right. We have a good visual that you and I worked on – on FDD's website, which shows where US policy has gone as far as Iran's nuclear expansion. So, it shows it's enriched uranium stocks and deployed centrifuges since 2008 when the figures became available from the IAEA. And what you basically see is with the military strikes, as you mentioned, they've lost over 22,000 centrifuges, both basic and advanced models. They've lost access to their enriched uranium. They no longer have the ability, as far as we understand, to be able to weaponize a nuclear weapon. Whereas if they had just abided by the JCPOA's permitted centrifuge expansion, which the deal had a plan for, they would have had a near zero breakout time legally by 2031. And they would have had no sanctions at the UN, no restrictions on their ability to import nuclear related goods of any kind.

Essentially, they would have fortified their economy against future sanctions. And so, we would have been in a similar position had Iran simply just abided by the terms of the JCPOA. And the JCPOA really did not address the issue of Iran's past nuclear weapons work. They basically had the write up a cursory report and Iran stonewalled. It didn't provide technically credible answers. The IAEA never inspected all of the nuclear weapons related sites that had come to light later in the archive and previously before that. So, it really didn't address whether there was a nuclear weapons program, whether it had been fully dismantled. So that's something that you would want to see addressed in any future deal.



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DUBOWITZ: Okay. So, under the JCPOA, basically Iran would have had these patient pathways to a industrial size nuclear program. Fordow would still be there. Natanz would still be there. Isfahan would still be there. They'd be able to build Pickaxe Mountain. They would have 23,000, maybe even more centrifuges. They'd be able to actually do testing on advanced models. And by 2031, there would be effectively no restrictions on their ability to enrich material to any level than any quantity to install as many centrifuges as they wanted in these existing facilities and to build out many more both enrichment facilities and plutonium reprocessing facilities. Plus, they would have received what we had estimated about a trillion dollars' worth of sanctions relief. And I want you to address one other thing in conclusion. And that is what your view of sort of Iran's nuclear doctrine was. I mean, because Secretary Rubio has recently said that what he saw is that Khamenei, the late Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader of Iran, was really building a missile shield under which he would build his nuclear weapons program.

And these were the thousands of intermediate range ballistic missiles that could threaten Israel and US forces, US allies, as well as an intercontinental ballistic missile program that could target the American homeland. Now, of course, that has been severely degraded and as you say, much more difficult for Iran to defend against the United States and Israel today without those missiles and without air defenses that prevent US and Israeli pilots to really fly at will over Iran.

Where would we have been compared to where we are now? And what is your view of Iran's nuclear doctrine? Has that changed? Is Iran now more committed to developing nuclear weapons than before? Or is Iran just, let's say, less patient than the old man was in taking those patient pathways?

STRICKER: It's a good question. So, there's an argument that they are deterred from developing nuclear weapons because it essentially got them attacked and so that they will be reticent to restore those capabilities because they might be discovered and re-attacked. But then there's another argument that they're full of vengeance. They're ready for revenge. They want a nuclear weapon as fast as possible so that they're not attacked in the future for deterrence. I think we have to consider both of those possibilities, and I hope our intelligence communities are all over this. What we want to monitor for, I think again, is any imports that we see any conversations about putting things into Pickaxe Mountain, getting any travel abroad to get assistance from Russia, China even, or North Korea and sort of cobbling together a crash breakout program. And I think whether they try to restore a nuclear weapons pathway indigenously or through some more foreign help, they still face this threat of detection.

So, this offers us chances to stop them, to further penetrate their nuclear program and hopefully see what they're doing relatively quickly. And I think then this dovetails into the options that you and our colleagues at FDD are recommending to weaken the regime further to help the Iranian people seek freedom because there may be no durable or realistic good deal here. There may be no solution diplomatically to the nuclear issue with this regime still in power. So, I think the worst case would be for Trump to leave office and to leave the problem to the next person. So, he really has a responsibility to do as much as he can while he's in office before they get started back to a march to nuclear weapons.

DUBOWITZ: Yeah. At the end of the day, what permanently stops states from building nuclear weapons is regime change. There's a change in that state. We saw that in Taiwan. You mentioned that example when Taiwan went from a military government to a democracy. We saw that in South Africa when we went from apartheid to a democracy. We saw that certainly in Libya where the United States persuaded Qaddafi that it was in his best interest to give up nuclear weapons or he would be bombed. And we certainly saw that in Iraq where despite not finding evidence of a reconstituted nuclear weapons program in the second Gulf War, we certainly knew that Saddam was engaged before that in the pursuit of nuclear weapons. Iraq today, I don't think we're worried about Iraq developing nuclear weapons anymore. So certainly, four examples from non-proliferation history that if you change the government, you may change their nuclear doctrine.



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And I think the only way we're going to stop Iran from developing a nuclear weapon ultimately is to change the regime. Andrea, thank you so much. Thank you for your two decades of work on these issues. Thank you for your great work at FDD and looking forward to having you back on as we continue to talk about Iran and the pursuit of the atomic weapon.

STRICKER: Thank you, Mark. Thanks for your guidance always.