



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on June 25, 2026

Flashback: Operation Midnight Hammer “Destroyed” Iran’s Nuclear Program. Yet Destroying That Program Cited as Reason to Start War

A year ago today, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard announced that Iran’s nuclear facilities “have been destroyed” in Operation Midnight Hammer. The facilities would require “years” to rebuild.

CIA chief John Ratcliffe said much the same thing.

Next day, the [White House published](#) a news release: *Experts Agree: Iran’s Nuclear Facilities Have Been Obliterated*. It cited other top officials who echoed Gabbard and Ratcliffe.

Yet when President Trump launched the war against Iran on February 26 of this year, he cited Iran’s nuclear facilities as a reason for the attack. So also did Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Another important but perhaps forgotten fact: Before Midnight Hammer, the U.S. intelligence community declared that Iran was not building a nuclear weapon.

New intelligence confirms what [@POTUS](#) has stated numerous times: Iran's nuclear facilities have been destroyed. If the Iranians chose to rebuild, they would have to rebuild all three facilities (Natanz, Fordow, Esfahan) entirely, which would likely take years to do.

The...

— DNI Tulsi Gabbard (@DNIGabbard) [June 25, 2025](#)

Three Plants Destroyed

The Twelve Day War of 2025 began on June 13, 2025 when Israel struck Iran. On June 21, as the [War Department reported](#), “U.S. B-2 Spirit bombers out of Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, dropped 14 of those GBU-57 bombs onto Fordow and a second nuclear facility, destroying the facilities and setting back Iranian nuclear efforts by years.”

With his customary brio and bravado, President Trump announced that the facilities were “completely and totally obliterated.”

“New intelligence confirms what [@POTUS](#) has stated numerous times: Iran’s nuclear facilities have been destroyed,” Gabbard wrote on X:



AP Images
Tulsi Gabbard



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If the Iranians chose to rebuild, they would have to rebuild all three facilities (Natanz, Fordow, Esfahan) entirely, which would likely take years to do. The propaganda media has deployed their usual tactic: selectively release portions of illegally leaked classified intelligence assessments (intentionally leaving out the fact that the assessment was written with “low confidence”) to try to undermine President Trump’s decisive leadership and the brave servicemen and women who flawlessly executed a truly historic mission to keep the American people safe and secure.

Said Ratcliffe the same day:

CIA can confirm that a body of credible intelligence indicates Iran’s Nuclear Program has been severely damaged by the recent, targeted strikes. This includes new intelligence from a historically reliable and accurate source/method that several key Iranian nuclear facilities were destroyed and would have to be rebuilt over the course of years.

On June 26, the [White House published](#) a compilation of commentary from the experts who said Iran’s nuclear capability was, as a practical matter, gone.

“Given the power of these devices and the technical characteristics of a centrifuge, we already know that these centrifuges are no longer operational, because they are fairly precise machines: there are rotors, and the vibrations [from the bombs] have completely destroyed them,” [said Rafael Grossi](#), director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Institute for Science and International Security President David Albright likewise [declared that](#) Iran’s centrifuges were destroyed and its nuclear program “severely damaged.”

Former UN weapons inspector David Albright: “Iran can’t make centrifuges and can’t produce, in a sense, the equivalent of the gas ... so their program is severely damaged.”
pic.twitter.com/l8TPGqKsFG

— Rapid Response 47 (@RapidResponse47) [June 26, 2025](#)

Israel Defense Force Chief of Staff [Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir said](#) the program was set back by “years,” while the Israel Atomic Energy Commission averred that “American strikes on Iran’s nuclear facilities, combined with Israeli strikes on other elements of Iran’s military nuclear program, has set back Iran’s ability to develop nuclear weapons by many years.”

Vice President JD Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Dan Caine likewise declared that the strike permanently crippled Iran’s ability to make a nuclear weapon.

Nuclear Threat

When President Trump launched the war after Netanyahu [convinced him](#) that Iranians would rise up and overthrow the Islamic regime, a claim that U.S. intelligence called “farcical,” Trump pointed to Iran’s putative nuclear program as a reason for the attack.

“It has always been the policy of the United States, in particular my administration, that this terrorist regime can never have a nuclear weapon,” [Trump said](#):



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I'll say it again, they can never have a nuclear weapon. That is why in Operation Midnight Hammer last June, we obliterated the regime's nuclear program at Fordo, Natanz, and Isfahan. After that attack, we warned them never to resume their malicious pursuit of nuclear weapons, and we sought repeatedly to make a deal. We tried. They wanted to do it. They didn't want to do it. Again they wanted to do it. They didn't want to do it. They didn't know what was happening. They just wanted to practice evil. But Iran refused, just as it has for decades and decades.

"If we didn't hit within two weeks, they would have had a nuclear weapon," [Trump said](#) on March 4.

More recently, Netanyahu disgorged himself of the same line.

"We have prevented Iran from carrying out a plan to annihilate us, and today they would have had a nuclear weapon, an atomic bomb, to do so," [Netanyahu said](#) at the JNS policy summit a few days ago:

We prevented that from happening. We removed an existential danger. And had we not acted in "Operation Rising Lion" and then in "Operation Roaring Lion," Iran would have had atomic bombs. And let me tell you something: They would have used them. That's what we prevented.

Together with our American friends, the American Air Force and the American military, we carried out the largest airstrike in our history.

We destroyed Iran's nuclear infrastructure.

In other words, Iran had begun to build a nuclear weapon.

No Nuclear Threat

Not so, Gabbard told the Senate Intelligence Committee on March 18.

While Gabbard explained the damage Operation Epic Fury had done to Iran since the U.S.-Israeli attacks began in late February, she also returned to Midnight Hammer. It had destroyed Iran's nuclear program, she said, and Iran did not seek to restart it.

"As a result of Operation Midnight Hammer, Iran's nuclear enrichment program was obliterated," [she said](#):

There has been no efforts [sic] since then to try to rebuild their enrichment capability. The entrances to the underground facilities that were bombed have been buried and shuttered with cement. We continue to monitor for any early indicators on what position the current or any new leadership in Iran will take with regard to authorizing a nuclear weapons program.

That line from her written testimony was the chance Democratic Senator Jon Ossoff was looking for.

Ossoff read Gabbard's omitted testimony back to her, asking whether the intelligence community had concluded that Iran's nuclear capability was "obliterated" in Operation Midnight Hammer.

"Yes," Gabbard answered.

Ossoff then read Gabbard's statement that Iran is not rebuilding its nuclear capability. "That is the assessment of the intelligence community," Ossoff said.



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“Yes,” Gabbard replied.

“We continue to assess Iran is not building a nuclear weapon and that Khamenei has not reauthorized the nuclear weapons program he suspended in 2003, though pressure has probably built on him to do so,” Gabbard’s 2025 [Worldwide Threat Assessment concluded](#).

Still, the United States hit Iran with Operation Midnight Hammer last year, which “obliterated” the nuclear weapon or weapons that Iran wasn’t building. Then the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran again in February to re-destroy the weapon or weapons that Midnight Hammer destroyed.



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