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Panetta: Iran is Not Developing Nuclear Weapons

By [John Glaser](#)

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Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said Thursday that Iran is enriching uranium in a peaceful nuclear program but that [Tehran has not decided to develop an atomic bomb](#).

Top U.S. military and intelligence officials gave separate testimonies in congressional hearings on Thursday regarding Iran, and while they all [reiterated the consensus that Iran's nuclear program is purely civilian in nature](#), they also kept up the tough talk, hoping to satisfy hawks eager to preemptively strike Iran.

Panetta explained emphatically that any move from Iran to develop nuclear weapons is a “red line” for the U.S. “We will not allow Iran to develop a nuclear weapon,” he said. “That is the red line that would concern us and that would ensure that the international community, hopefully together, would respond.”

“But the intelligence does not show that they’ve made the decision to proceed with developing a nuclear weapon,” Panetta added. This has been a bit of an inconvenient truth for Washington as they continue to heap [crippling economic sanctions](#) on Iran supposedly out of suspicion of their nuclear program. They’ve also continued to support Israel – and refuse to criticize it – even while Tel Aviv has [supported terrorist operations against Iranian nuclear scientists](#).

Iran, on the defensive, has made announcements about new, domestically-made centrifuges were installed at the main uranium enrichment site at Natanz, branding that and other such

developments as some nuclear “milestone.” But U.S. State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said Wednesday [the announcement was “hyped” for a domestic audience.](#)

“Our view on this is that it’s not terribly new and it’s not terribly impressive,” she said.

Panetta also reiterated the oft-repeated euphemism for potential military attack against Iran, “we do keep all options on the table.” This helped lend legitimacy for political opportunists in the GOP to fear-monger about an imminent Iranian nuclear bomb, [as House Speaker John Boehner did.](#)