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Obama's October Surprise: Bombing Iran

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President Obama could bomb Iran in late October to try and ensure that it does not develop nuclear weapons. A devastating strike would create an upsurge of patriotism in America and fully neutralize Mitt Romney's contention that Obama is a foreign-policy wimp. It could allow Obama to sweep to victory in November.

Will he do it?

One reason he might is that Mitt Romney is singlehandedly pushing the entire debate about Israel and Iran to the right. The parameters have changed markedly. As TNI editor [Robert Merry](#) and others have noted, Romney's efforts to ingratiate himself with Jewish donors and voters have prompted him to suspend any notion of an independent American foreign policy in the Middle East. Traditionally, the green or red light for military action has come from America, at least when it comes to actions that directly impinge upon American interests. Ronald Reagan, for instance, successfully demanded that Israel halt its attacks on Lebanon in 1983. Romney, by

contrast, has effectively promised to give Israel a veto power over military action, indicating that he will do whatever Benjamin Netanyahu wants. As Romney [observed](#) in December, he would never, ever criticize Israel. Instead, he would get on the phone with Prime Minister Netanyahu and ask, "What would you like me to do?" So it's fair to say that Romney would outsource his foreign policy to Netanyahu when it comes to Israel and its enemies.

What's more, anyone who thinks that Romney is bluffing should think again. It's no accident that his senior adviser on the Middle East is Dan Senor, a hard-line neoconservative. As the *New York Times* [notes today](#), Romney relies upon him for advice and frequently cites his book *Start-Up Nation*. Senor wasn't dissembling when he said in Israel that Romney was prepared to endorse an attack on Iran—he simply got a little ahead of the program.

Obama has not been far behind in giving Netanyahu close to carte blanche. But he has not gone as far as Romney in endorsing the threat that Iran should be precluded from having the capability of building a nuclear weapon. But as Netanyahu champs, or tries to give the impression of championing, at the bit to bomb Iran, Obama must be weighing whether or not he should call Netanyahu out on his threats. So far, the Obama administration has been doing everything in its power to dissuade Israel from speedy action. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta's visit to Israel was another sign that the administration is trying to reassure Israel of its commitment to its security. But his [emphasis](#) was on sanctions:

The most effective way to stop Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon is for the international community to be united, proving to Iran that it will only make itself less secure if it continues to try to pursue a nuclear weapon.

But as Romney calls for "any and all measures" to stop Iran, Obama surely could deflate his sails by launching a strike in October. If it worked, he would be hailed as a hero. The consequences of a strike wouldn't be felt for at least a few weeks—the nightmare scenario is that an oil shock would result in a quadrupling of oil prices, plunging the world into a new Great Depression. Enough time for Obama to sail back into office as a tough foreign-policy president. Given Obama's congenital caution and sobriety, he seems unlikely to follow such a course. But it should not be ruled out. The neocons may be closer to helping bring about an assault on Iran than even they realize. They've already captured Romney. But they may also be on the verge of capturing Obama. Their sustained campaign of pressure, in other words, may be more effective than anyone has acknowledged. For the fact is that Obama already has amply demonstrated his ruthlessness when it comes to confronting America's adversaries. If he were able to carry out regime change in Tehran, he might even start referring to himself as the new Decider.