



By: TA | AP Insight

# CIA director confirms Iran's nuclear program has suffered a monumental setback



According to the CIA director, the US attacks on Iran's nuclear facilities are a setback for Tehran's nuclear program for an extended period. His arguments, which he presented to skeptical US lawmakers, reinforce the administration's determination to label the action in Iran as a complete success.

CIA Director John Ratcliffe told skeptical U.S. lawmakers that American military strikes destroyed Iran's lone metal conversion facility and in the process delivered a monumental setback to Tehran's nuclear **program** that would take years to overcome, a U.S. official said.

The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive intelligence, said Ratcliffe laid out the importance of the **strikes** on the metal conversion facility during a classified **hearing** for U.S. lawmakers last week.

Details about the private briefings surfaced as President Donald Trump and his administration keep pushing back on questions from Democratic lawmakers and others about how far Iran was set back by the strikes before last Tuesday's ceasefire with Israel took hold.

"It was obliterating like nobody's ever seen before," Trump said in an interview on Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures." "And that meant the end to their nuclear ambitions, at least for a period of time."

Ratcliffe also told lawmakers that the intelligence community **assessed** the vast majority of Iran's amassed enriched uranium likely remains buried under the rubble at Isfahan and Fordo, two of the three key nuclear facilities targeted by U.S. strikes.

But even if the uranium remains intact, the loss of its metal conversion facility effectively has taken away Tehran's **ability** to build a bomb for years to come, the official said.

## Grossi - Capabilities remain

Rafael Grossi, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said Sunday on CBS' "Face the Nation" that the three Iranian sites with "capabilities in terms of treatment, conversion and enrichment of uranium have been destroyed to an important degree."

But, he added, "some is still standing" and that because capabilities remain, "if they so wish, they will be able to start doing this again." He said assessing the full damage comes down to Iran allowing in inspectors.

**One cannot claim that everything has disappeared, and there is nothing there - Rafael Grossi**

"Frankly speaking, one cannot claim that everything has disappeared, and there is nothing there," Grossi said.

Trump has **insisted** from just hours after three key targets were struck by U.S. bunker-buster bombs and Tomahawk missiles that Iran's nuclear program was "obliterated."

His defense secretary, Pete Hegseth, has **said** they were "destroyed." A preliminary report issued by the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, meanwhile, said the strikes did significant damage to the Fordo, Natanz and Isfahan sites, but did not totally destroy the facilities.

As a result of Israeli and U.S. strikes, Grossi says that "it is clear that there has been severe damage, but it's not total damage." Israel claims it has set back Iran's nuclear program by "many years."

## The metal conversion facility

The metal conversion facility that Ratcliffe said was destroyed was located at the Isfahan nuclear facility.

The process of transforming enriched uranium gas into dense metal, or metallization, is a key step in building the explosive core of a bomb.

## You can't do a nuclear weapon without a conversion facility - Marco Rubio

Secretary of State Marco Rubio in [comments](#) at the NATO summit last week also suggested that it was likely the U.S. strikes had destroyed the metal conversion facility.

"You can't do a nuclear weapon without a conversion facility," Rubio said. "We can't even find where it is, where it used to be on the map. You can't even find where it used to be because the whole thing is just blackened out. It's gone. It's wiped out."

## Israeli officials' battle damage assessments

The CIA director also stressed to lawmakers during the congressional briefing that Iran's air defense was shattered during the 12-day assault.

As a result, any attempt by Iran to rebuild its nuclear program could now easily be thwarted by Israeli strikes that Iran currently has little wherewithal to defend against, the official said.



*You cannot undo the knowledge that you have or the capacities that you have - Rafael Grossi*

Ratcliffe's briefing to lawmakers on the U.S. findings appeared to mesh with some of Israeli officials' battle damage assessments.

Israeli officials have determined that Iran's

ability to enrich uranium to a weapons-grade level was neutralized for a prolonged period, according to a senior Israeli military official who was not authorized to talk publicly about the matter.

Tehran's nuclear program also was significantly damaged by the strikes killing key scientists, damage to Iran's missile production industry and the battering of Iran's aerial defense system, according to the Israeli's assessment.

Grossi, and some Democrats, note that Iran still has the know-how.

"You cannot undo the knowledge that you have or the capacities that you have," Grossi said, emphasizing the need to come to a diplomatic deal on the country's nuclear program.