

Iran nuclear program is on verge of breakthrough



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VIENNA (AP) ? Iran is on the threshold of being able to create weapons-grade uranium at a plant it has heavily fortified against Israeli attack, diplomats told The Associated Press on Thursday, calling into question an Israeli claim that Iran had slowed its nuclear time table.

One of three diplomats who discussed the issue said Iran was now technically ready within days to ramp up its production of 20 percent enriched uranium at its Fordo facility by nearly 700 centrifuges. That would double present output, and cut in half the time it would take to acquire enough of the substance needed to make a nuclear weapon, reducing it to just over three months.

Such a move would raise the stakes for Israel, which has said it believes the world has until next summer to stop Iran before it can get nuclear material and implied it would have time to decide whether to strike Fordo and other Iranian nuclear facilities.

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