

# 'A Heartbeat Away' From War With Iran and Pakistan

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As the American people amuse themselves with the illusion that they have any say in the way they are presently governed, our rulers are moving toward war. Two recent incidents underscore the imminence of this prospect.

The Iranian "provocation" in the straits of Hormuz has set the stage for a new "crisis" manufactured wholly by the War Party, the rationale for which is uncritically accepted by our passive "mainstream" media. We are expected to believe that five minuscule speedboats "menaced" the USS Hopper, a destroyer armed with missiles; the cruiser USS Port Royal; and the USS Ingraham, a frigate. That's rather like five gnats "menacing" a trio of elephants. Oh, but that's not all. In addition to intercepting the American flotilla, CNN reports the Iranians supposedly issued explicit threats:

"In one radio transmission, the Iranians told the U.S. Navy: 'I am coming at you. You will explode in a couple of minutes,' the U.S. military officials told CNN."

The Iranians, for their part, say nothing untoward occurred that doesn't happen all the time in the Gulf: they simply asked the ships to identify themselves, and it was all very routine.

I challenge anyone to look at the following video and tell me honestly they hear or see anything that looks like an Iranian "provocation." It's all very murky and dubious:

In any event, this is a provocation, all right – on the part of the Bush administration. As our president travels to Israel, the fulcrum of our policy of Mideast expansionism, there can be little doubt that this is all part of a carefully stage-managed effort to portray Iran as an aggressor – a scenario made doubly ironic when one considers that the U.S. has sent two aircraft carriers into the Gulf and has massed 150,000 troops in neighboring Iraq, where Washington accuses the Iranians of "interference."

We, of course, are allowed to invade countries with impunity: but Iran, which shares a long border with Iraq, and has close political and economic ties with the Iraqis, has no right to secure its own interests in the region. Israel has the right to defend itself: that's the mantra we hear without respite whenever the Israelis take it into their heads to launch yet another "incursion" into the Gaza strip or invade Lebanon – but the Iranians have no such reciprocal right, even a few miles from their own shore.

Funny how that works.

What I would like to know is this: what if Iranian ships were in the Gulf of Mexico, on some

pretext or other – say, keeping the sea lanes open for the transport of material deemed necessary to Iran’s “national security” – how would we feel about it? What, we would want to know, are Iranian ships doing a few miles from American shores?

As I warned during the British sailors’ contretemps, the presence of Western warships in the Gulf makes the likelihood of a confrontation with the Iranians almost inevitable. The maritime boundaries, between Iran and Oman, for instance, are hazy: it is not inconceivable that the American ships went off course, for one reason or another, and the Iranians responded – or vice-versa. In any case, this ongoing game of cat-and-mouse is tailor-made for setting the stage for an all-out war.

The commander of one of the U.S. warships has been quoted as saying that they were “a heartbeat away” from opening fire on their Iranian tormentors, and that just about sums up the chances of an armed conflict breaking out – we’re an incident away from going to war with Tehran, and there is every indication that the administration is marshaling its forces, political and diplomatic as well as military, to launch an assault before Bush leaves office.

This latest incident also underscores the significance of the recently-passed Kyl-Lieberman resolution, which Hillary Clinton voted for, that designates the Iranian Revolutionary Guards a terrorist organization. The Iranian navy has withdrawn from the Gulf, and it is the Guards who constitute Iran’s first line of defense. American warships and troops in the area are therefore empowered and even encouraged to engage in “hot pursuit” of these alleged “terrorists” – and embroil us in a conflict that will make the Iraq war seem like the “cakewalk” it was supposed to be.

More evidence of America’s aggressive intentions comes in the form of news reports of U.S. plans to intervene more directly in Pakistan: Bush is considering “expanded covert operations” using Special Forces, perhaps in a bid to capture Osama bin Laden and/or neutralize al-Qaeda units alleged to be hiding in the tribal areas. Yet we don’t know that bin Laden is in Pakistan, and the prospect of Americans being killed or captured in the course of such operations should certainly cause Washington to hesitate before acting. It isn’t hard to imagine a huge backlash generated by such actions, including the complete destabilization of a country already on the brink.

It’s interesting that none of the “major” presidential candidates has spoken out on this issue: here we are, on the brink of war, and where are the “antiwar” Democrats? Barack Obama is being touted as some sort of savior who can “bring us together” in a Rapture-like mega love-in of “national unity” and “hope.” Yet Obama has said attacking Iran is “on the table,” a view he shares with Hillary, Edwards, and all the rest of the Democrats except for Dennis Kucinich and Mike Gravel.

As Bush travels to the Middle East to gather support for his campaign to isolate Tehran and declares that “Iran was a threat, Iran is a threat, and Iran will continue to be a threat” – in spite of his own National Intelligence Estimate, which says quite the contrary – the Democratic presidential aspirants are strangely silent. Of all the candidates, in both parties, only Rep. Ron Paul, a 10-term Republican congressman from Texas, has warned about the dangers of another Gulf of Tonkin-style incident.

While celebrity politics overwhelms the sleeping electorate and Obama Girl flounces around on YouTube, Americans are under the illusion that they control events, but it isn’t so. The invasion and occupation of Iraq has unleashed forces that cannot be contained and are even

now gathering for an explosive finale. George W. Bush still has the power to change the political landscape with a single command, and it seems fairly certain – to me, at least – that he intends to do so. Perhaps he can be prevented from taking this fatal course by military commanders and rational elements in the national security bureaucracy; perhaps not. In any case, recent events – and especially this ominous Middle East trip, which you can bet has little to do with a “peace plan” – ought to make us all very nervous.

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