

AIPAC's "War With Iran" Bill Passes House Committee

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According to M. J. Rosenberg, AIPAC is working very closely (hand-in-glove) with the leaders of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) and Howard Berman (D-CA), who are feverishly engaged in promoting a new US war against Iran, a nation far larger and more highly developed than Iraq and Afghanistan combined. Rosenberg claims that the US war against Iran is now AIPAC's number one priority.

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Wasting no time after its success in getting the administration to oppose Palestinian statehood at the United Nations, and still celebrating the UNESCO funding cut-off, AIPAC has returned to its #1 priority: pushing for war with Iran.

The Israelis have, of course, played their own part in the big show. In the last few weeks, it has been sending out [signals](#) that it is getting ready to bomb Iran's nuclear facilities (and embroil the United States in its most calamitous Middle East war yet).

But most observers do not believe an Israeli attack is imminent. (If it was, would Israel telegraph it in advance?) The point of the Israeli threats is to get the United States and the world community to increase pressure on Iran with the justification that unless it does, Israel will attack.

Naturally, the United States Congress, which gets its marching orders on Middle East policy from the lobby which, in turn, gets its marching orders from Binyamin Netanyahu, is rushing to do what it is told. (If only Congress addressed joblessness at home with the same alacrity and enthusiasm.)

Accordingly the House Foreign Affairs Committee hurriedly convened this week to consider a new ["crippling sanctions" bill](#) that seems less designed to deter an Iran nuclear weapon than to lay the groundwork for war.

The clearest evidence that war is the intention of the bill's supporters comes in Section 601 which should be quoted in full. (It is so incredible that paraphrasing would invite the charge of distorting through selective quotation.)

It reads:

(c) RESTRICTION ON CONTACT. — No person employed with the United States Government may contact in an official or unofficial capacity any person that — (1) is an agent, instrumentality, or official of, is affiliated with, or is serving as a representative of the Government of Iran; and (2) presents a threat to the United States or is affiliated with terrorist organizations. (d) WAIVER. — The President may waive the requirements of subsection (c) if the President determines and so reports to the appropriate congressional committees 15 days prior to the exercise of waiver authority that failure to exercise such waiver authority would pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the vital national security interests of the United States.

What does this mean?

It means that neither the president, the Secretary of State nor any U.S. diplomat or emissary may engage in negotiations or diplomacy with Iran of any kind unless the president convinces the “appropriate Congressional committees” (most significantly, the House Foreign Affairs Committee which is an AIPAC fiefdom) that not engaging with Iranian contacts would present an “an unusual and extraordinary threat to the vital national security interests of the United States.”

To call this unprecedented is an understatement. At no time in our history has the White House or State Department been restricted from dealing with representatives of a foreign state, even in war time.

If President Roosevelt wanted to meet with Hitler, he could have and, of course, he did repeatedly meet with Stalin. During the Cold War, U.S. diplomats maintained continuous contacts with the Soviets, a regime that murdered tens of millions and, later, with the Chinese regime which murdered even more. And they did so without needing permission from Congress. (President Nixon was only able to normalize relations with China by means of secret negotiations which, had they been exposed, would have been torpedoed by the Republican right.)

But all the rules of normal statecraft are dropped when it comes to Iran which may, or may not, be working on developing a nuclear capacity. Of course if it is, it is obviously even more critical that the American government officials speak to Iranian counterparts.

But preventing diplomacy is precisely what Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) and Howard Berman (D-CA), leaders of the House Foreign Affairs Committee which reported out this bill, seek. They and others who back the measure want another war and the best way to get it is to ban diplomacy (which exists, of course, to prevent war).

Think back, for example, to the Cuban missile crisis. The United States and the monstrous, nuclear armed Soviet regime were on the brink of war over Cuba, a war that might have destroyed the planet.

Neither President Kennedy nor Premier Khrushchev knew how to end the crisis, especially because both were being pushed by their respective militaries not to back down.

Then, at the darkest moment of the crisis, when war seemed inevitable, an ABC correspondent named John Scali secretly met with a Soviet official in New York who described a way to end the crisis that would satisfy his bosses. That meeting was followed by another secret meeting between the president’s brother, Attorney General Robert F.

Kennedy, and a Soviet official in Washington. Those meetings led to a plan that ended the crisis and, perhaps, saved the world.

Needless to say, Kennedy did not ask for the permission of the House Foreign Affairs Committee either to conduct secret negotiations or to implement the terms of the deal. In fact, it was decades before the details of the deal were revealed.

It is this latitude to conduct diplomacy that the lobby and its cutouts on Capitol Hill want to take away from the White House. And it's latitude that is especially essential if it is determined that Iran is trying to assemble a nuclear arsenal.

Writing in the [Washington Post](#) last week, Fareed Zakaria explained that the best way to approach Iran is not to ban diplomacy but to intensify it, nukes or no nukes.

Obama should return to his original approach and test the Iranians to see if there is any room for dialogue and agreement. Engaging with Iran, putting its nuclear program under some kind of supervision and finding areas of common interest (such as Afghanistan) would all be important goals...

Strategic engagement with an adversary can go hand in hand with a policy that encourages change in that country. That's how Washington dealt with the Soviet Union and China in the 1970s and 1980s. Iran is a country of 80 million people, educated and dynamic. It sits astride a crucial part of the world. It cannot be sanctioned and pressed down forever. It is the last great civilization to sit outside the global order. We need a strategy that combines pressure with a path to bring Iran in from the cold.

In other words, it is time for more diplomacy not less — even if that means offending a powerful lobby that is hell-bent for war.

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