

America's Step Off the Nuclear Edge: Take the nuclear option off the table now!

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Remember the old cartoons where the character walks off a cliff and continues walking on thin air until he looks down and plunges? America walked off the cliff on April 18, 2006, and has been suspended above the nuclear abyss since, set to plunge down at a moment's notice. Meanwhile, it is in a catatonic state of collective [stupor](#), or perhaps it should be called collective [suspended animation](#). Even according to Fox News, a [U.S. nuclear strike against Iran is now only a question of when](#), not if.

Since April 18, 2006, America has been illegally and immorally threatening to use its weapons of mass destruction against a state that is not known with certitude to possess any weapons of mass destruction, to prevent that state from [acquiring knowledge that is being acquired by other states at this very moment](#).

Since April 18, 2006, America has shattered the legal and moral basis of all international agreements relating to arms control and nonproliferation to which it is a party, and indeed has punctured the legal and moral basis for the United Nations itself.

And we all see it coming, slowly and inexorably. The actual attack [was not in April as was predicted in this column](#), so it may be June or August, any time before the November election that could change the face of Congress. Those [who want it](#) and [those who don't](#) are equally impotent to influence the course of events to [speed it up](#) or [slow it down](#): it follows a script in which every cartoon character repeats the same tired clichés that can be predicted without any imagination [\[1\]](#), [\[2\]](#), [\[3\]](#), [\[4\]](#), [\[5\]](#), [\[6\]](#). All the while, [the U.S. plan to nuke Iran continues to move forward, focused and unrelenting](#).

The Evidence That Iran Will Be Nuked

The single focus of [this column](#) for many months has been to [gather and expose the evidence that a nuclear strike against Iran is being planned](#), not just as a contingency but as a deliberate, premeditated goal that guides the actions of this administration. A brief recap:

- [Sept. 29, 2005](#): "Because when Iran's case comes before the S[ecurity] C[ouncil] and no sanctions are passed due to Russia's and China's vetoes, the U.S. will be left with no diplomatic options – not a desirable position to be in, unless the purpose all along was to resort to a military option."
- [Oct. 7, 2005](#): "Bunker-busting nuclear gravity bombs (B61-11 or similar) will be more effective than conventional ones in destroying Iranian underground

installations, and at the same time will send a clear message to Iran that any response would be answered with an immensely more devastating nuclear attack.”

- [Oct. 17, 2005](#): “[A] nuclear superpower will have nuked a non-nuclear state that is an NPT [Nonproliferation Treaty] signatory and is cooperating with the IAEA, at the instigation of a state that is not an NPT signatory, that reportedly has over 100 nuclear bombs of its own....”
- [Nov. 1, 2005](#): “The *real* reason for nuking Iran, however, is none of the above. It was spelled out with surprising candor in the Pentagon draft document ‘Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations’”
- [Nov. 12, 2005](#): “*The IAEA resolution of Sept. 24, 2005, allows the United States to carry out a nuclear attack against Iran ‘legally.’*”
- [Nov. 21, 2005](#): “Because the United States is counting on the ‘nuclear option’ to ensure the success of military action against Iran, it is not seriously pursuing diplomatic alternatives, such as negotiating directly with Iran....”
- [Nov. 26, 2005](#): “John Bolton ... will be the ideal person to explain to the world, after the fact, why a preemptive nuclear strike on Iran was justified.”
- [Dec. 5, 2005](#): “The much-touted nuclear deterrent is not a credible strategy against ‘rogue’ non-nuclear nations, because nobody believes that the U.S. will use nuclear weapons in the scenarios described in the policy documents. They are just empty words – until the U.S. demonstrates, by doing it once, that it is actually willing to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear countries. And it is planning to do just that in the upcoming war with Iran.”
- [Dec. 16, 2005](#): “In preparation for the nuclear strike on Iran, the Bush administration in its second term has deployed into key positions hardliners that have *both* expertise in nuclear weapons *and* a known history of advocating the aggressive use thereof.”
- [Dec. 28, 2005](#): “The U.S. will claim the right under Chapter VII of the UN to enforce UNSCR 1540 by aerial bombing of Iran’s nuclear and missile facilities. ... A supporting role will be provided by UNSC ‘anti-terrorism’ Resolution 1373, adopted after Sept. 11, also under UN Chapter VII....”
- [Jan. 9, 2006](#): “15 Reasons Why Iran Will Be Nuked...”
- [Feb. 20, 2006](#): “The United States is preparing to enter a new era: an era in which it will enforce nuclear nonproliferation by the threat and use of nuclear weapons. The use of tactical nuclear weapons against Iran will usher in a new world order.”
- [March 10, 2006](#): “Initially, it will seem that the use of tactical nuclear weapons

was required by military necessity. Slowly, evidence will accumulate that the use of nuclear weapons against Iran was a premeditated act, following many years of planning....”

- [April 1, 2006](#): “Nuclear earth penetrating weapons may be used in the initial attack, and certainly will be used in the large scale attack that will follow....”

Independently, Michel Chossudovsky [\[1\]](#), [\[2\]](#) and [others](#) have analyzed the evidence and predicted the existence of a carefully crafted plan for a U.S. nuclear attack on Iran.

Then, on April 8, 2006, came the [Seymour Hersh bombshell](#): “One of the military’s initial option plans, as presented to the White House by the Pentagon this winter, calls for the use of a bunker-buster tactical nuclear weapon, such as the B61-11, against underground nuclear sites.” Finally, [America paid some attention](#) [.pdf]. But only briefly.

Seymour Hersh’s and Other’s Revelations

From independent sources, [the Washington Post reported April 9](#) that “Pentagon planners are studying how to penetrate eight-foot-deep targets and are contemplating tactical nuclear devices.” The [New York Times reported](#) that a senior Pentagon official said, “I’ve never heard the issue of nukes taken off or put on the table,” which is hardly reassuring. Seymour Hersh’s article further stated, “The attention given to the nuclear option has created serious misgivings inside the offices of the Joints Chiefs of Staff,” confirming my article of March 10, 2006: [“Gen. Pace to Troops: Don’t Nuke Iran. Illegal, Immoral Orders Should Be Disobeyed.”](#) As also [predicted in my column](#), the “blame” for planning a nuclear attack is being put on the military.

In science, a key test of the validity of a theory is its ability to predict results of experiments before they are performed. The fact that I and others were able to predict the [“Iran Plans”](#) from analysis of data that are completely independent of Hersh’s sources lends credibility both to Hersh’s report and to our analysis and its conclusion: that [“America is embarked in a premeditated path that will lead inexorably to the use of nuclear weapons against Iran in the very near future.”](#)

In a carefully calculated response, evidenced by the fact that Scott McClellan [repeated the same two words eight times](#) in the same press conference, the Hersh report was labeled “wild speculation” by [the Bush administration](#). A spokeswoman for the Central Intelligence Agency stated, [“The article contains information that is inaccurate.”](#) No explicit denial was issued by anyone in the administration.

On April 13, Donald Rumsfeld was directly asked by an al-Arabiya reporter: [“Is there a nuclear option on the table or off the table?”](#) Rumsfeld’s answer: “The more anyone discusses this, the more misinformation gets communicated. The president has spoken on this repeatedly. There is no need for people who work for the president to rephrase anything he has said. He has said it all, and I’ll leave it with him.”

Off the Nuclear Cliff

But the president had not said it all yet. Rumsfeld was predicting what Bush would say just five days later. When asked on April 18, [“Sir, when you talk about Iran and you talk about](#)

[how you have diplomatic efforts, you also say all options are on the table. Does that include the possibility of a nuclear strike? Is that something that your administration will plan for?](#)," Bush responded ([watch it by clicking here](#)): "All options are on the table." *That was the watershed moment when America walked off the nuclear cliff.*

Because, as President Bush himself said a few days later, "[When people speak, it is important that we listen carefully to what they say and take them seriously.](#)"

President Bush has told the world that America, the greatest nuclear superpower, is considering using nuclear weapons against Iran, a non-nuclear state that does not have a military alliance with a nuclear state *and* is a signatory to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, as well as of the [chemical](#) and [biological weapons](#) convention treaties.

What is the legal, moral, ethical, or logical argument now for America to demand that other countries not develop nuclear weapons, or any other "weapon of mass destruction," for that matter? What is the legal, moral, ethical, or logical argument now for "nonproliferation"? What is the legal, moral, ethical, or logical argument for [demanding](#) that Iran should not even have the knowledge, the know-how, or the capacity to ever build a nuclear weapon?

Since April 18, 2006, it is the United States' official policy that it will [enforce nonproliferation of nuclear and other WMD by the threat and use of its weapons of mass destruction](#), whether or not [there is any real evidence](#) that the adversary state is actually pursuing such weapons.

What is left of the legal, moral, ethical, or logical basis for the United Nations itself, which was created "[to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained](#)"?

What is left of the right of self-defense guaranteed by the [United Nations Charter](#)?

Since April 18, 2006, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty is history.

[UNSC Resolution 1540](#), introduced by the United States and adopted under [Chapter VII](#):

- "Affirm[s] that proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, as well as their means of delivery, constitutes a threat to international peace and security."
- "Encourag[es] all Member States to implement fully the disarmament treaties and agreements to which they are party."
- "Calls upon all States to promote dialogue and cooperation on nonproliferation so as to address the threat posed by proliferation of nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons, and their means of delivery."

With breathtaking hypocrisy, the U.S. is about to undertake sanctions and military action against Iran based on UNSC 1540, because it [will certainly not get Russia and China to approve any new Chapter VII resolution against Iran](#).

Bolton, Rice, Bush, Joseph, Burns, Rumsfeld, Cheney, and the others in the gang: whatever you do, could you at least spare us the heinously hypocritical double-talk? Please? Do you

believe there is *anybody* left who believes your charade?

The Reality of a Threat

Imagine your next-door neighbor mows the lawn on Saturday afternoon when you are taking a nap. You ask other neighbors to join in an initiative to report this nuisance to the homeowners association, but they point out that the noise level is below the maximum allowed by city ordinance. You then take a bullhorn, go out on the street and broadcast: "I am going to gun down my next-door neighbor if he continues to mow the lawn while I am having my nap." What will happen?

1. Your next-door neighbor will be "deterred" by your threat and stop mowing the lawn. Unlikely, since he is acting within the law.
2. Your other neighbors will worry a bit but say, no, he's never going to do it, he never has gunned down anybody before. Wait, actually he did, 60 years ago, but I was told there was a good reason for it then. So let's not worry about it? No.
3. Most likely, your next-door neighbor and other neighbors will report you to the police. The police will come and ask you whether you really meant that you are going to gun down your neighbor. If you reply, "All options are on the table," you will go straight to jail.

Under [California Penal Code Sect. 422](#), "Any person who willfully threatens to commit a crime which will result in death or great bodily injury to another person, with the specific intent that the statement, made verbally, in writing, or by means of an electronic communication device, is to be taken as a threat, even if there is no intent of actually carrying it out, which, on its face and under the circumstances in which it is made, is so unequivocal, unconditional, immediate, and specific as to convey to the person threatened, a gravity of purpose and an immediate prospect of execution of the threat, and thereby causes that person reasonably to be in sustained fear for his or her own safety or for his or her immediate family's safety, shall be punished by imprisonment in the county jail not to exceed one year, or by imprisonment in the state prison." Other states have similar provisions.

The "unequivocal, unconditional, immediate, and specific" Bush nuclear threat is the April 18 statement together with the myriad of documents, speeches, and initiatives on nuclear policy and nuclear weapons by the administration in the last five years [\[1\]](#), [\[2\]](#), starting with these statements in the ["Nuclear Posture Review" of 2001](#): "U.S. nuclear forces will now be used to dissuade adversaries from undertaking military programs or operations that could threaten U.S. interests or those of allies and friends," and "Nuclear weapons could be employed against targets able to withstand non-nuclear attack."

Much has been made of Ahmadinejad's "threat" that Israel is [a "disgraceful blot" that should be "wiped off the map."](#) No matter how much we may dislike his words, that was not a "threat," because it did not refer to a future action by Iran. If you say "I wish my neighbor would die," you will not go to jail.

There are good reasons why criminal law considers an individual's threat to commit a crime to be itself a crime. The same reasons apply to a [country's threat to commit](#) the [illegal and](#)

[immoral act](#) of [using a nuclear weapon](#) against [a non-nuclear country](#). Yet America is waiting for the threat to become reality to react to it. It will be too late then.

The Numbness of America

The president could have said: a nuclear option is not being considered. He could at least have said: we will only consider using nuclear weapons if attacked with weapons of mass destruction. He could have said, [as Tony Blair did](#): “I don’t know anybody who has even talked or contemplated the prospect of a nuclear strike on Iran. That would be absolutely absurd.” He didn’t. He said instead that “all options are on the table.” [When people speak, it is important that we listen carefully to what they say and take them seriously.](#)

It doesn’t matter if [nuking Iran](#) is [one of six options being considered, as Seymour Hersh reported](#), or one of 100. And it doesn’t matter that Hersh’s report is labeled a [“left-wing” rant](#) by some and [not credible](#) by others, and it doesn’t matter that Britain’s [Jack Straw](#) called it [“completely nuts.”](#)

All that matters is that [the U.S president has officially declared that a nuclear strike on Iran is an option for America](#). America has been a different nation since that day.

Did you hear the outcry in the media? In Congress? College campuses? National Academy of Sciences? Nonproliferation NGOs? [\[1\]](#), [\[2\]](#), [\[3\]](#), [\[4\]](#), [\[5\]](#), [\[6\]](#), [\[7\]](#). I didn’t. By and large, there was a collective yawn. Sure it is an option, but surely he won’t exercise it.

There is something profoundly disingenuous about America’s attitude toward nuclear weapons that cuts across party lines and political philosophies. It is the desire to extract benefit from keeping the option on the table, while not being willing to take responsibility and pay the price for it. Most Americans surely oppose using nuclear weapons against Iranian underground installations, and they will be outraged if it happens. Yet they will [support keeping the option “on the table”](#) to “deter” Iran. And they are not willing to consider the obvious fact that they will not be asked when the decision is made to drop nuclear bombs on Iran, and that after it happens it is too late to turn back.

On April 18, 2006, America issued a grave threat. No matter how much you want to ignore it, it is a reality. Threats have consequences.

The Future

The levees are broken, and there is no physical barrier to hold the waters from flowing, following the laws of physics, and drowning everyone and everything in their path. [The president has sole authority to order the use of nuclear weapons](#) against Iran. He and Cheney and Rumsfeld have nothing to lose, as they will not be running in 2008. They are convinced that [establishing the usability of America’s nuclear arsenal against non-nuclear adversaries](#) is [in the long-term interest of America](#), and they will not ask your permission to launch a B61-11 against Iran. In a sense, they already asked on April 18, and you nodded by ignoring it. They are [surrounded by like-minded people who were put in high places](#) for that very reason. Those who don’t agree, [like Gen. Pace](#), will not be asked, or will resign before it happens. Bush is convinced that this will be [his valuable legacy to America](#), and he and his cronies are willing to pay the price of a Democratic victory in the next presidential election.

Floating over the nuclear abyss, we just have to look down, and following the laws of [cartoon physics](#), we will plunge down into the new world of unrestrained use of nuclear

weapons. Can we still reach back and get hold of firm ground? Can we still repair those levees before the water starts flowing? Only if we are willing to immediately confront the facts and build a concrete barrier, urgently. Wishful thinking will not do. In our constitutional system of government, only Congress can erect the barrier: [a new law](#) that would outlaw America's use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear countries, or at the very least make it illegal for the president to order such use without explicit congressional authorization. [We need to get that law to pass!](#)

America's Collective Responsibility

The cards are on the table. It is no longer possible to plead ignorance. If you agree with what is about to happen, at least you are consistent. But if you don't, you are evading your responsibility. Speak out now, act within your sphere of influence, do everything you can.

Scream it from the top of your lungs; wear it on your T-shirt; use it as a bumper sticker on your car, on your Web pages, in your business stationery: [AMERICA WANTS THE NUCLEAR OPTION OFF THE TABLE!](#)

Or forever hold your peace, and face the consequences.

Just don't come later and say you didn't know and you didn't agree and you didn't support that course of action and you are sorry. Because you did know and you did agree and you did support it by your inaction. Being sorry will not make up for it.

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