

Bogus Tales of Iran's Nukes Used to Feed US Militarism

By [Ben Schreiner](#)

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With seemingly each passing day, the tensions between the US and Iran over the latter's nascent nuclear program mount. And with the voices clamoring for conflict growing ever louder, the clouds of war darken.

As Mark Helprin warns in a January 18 [Wall Street Journal op-ed](#), the Iranian nuclear program poses "a mortal threat" to the US. As he explains, "we cannot dismiss the possibility of Iranian nuclear charges of 500 pounds or less ending up in Manhattan or Pennsylvania Avenue."

Jamie Fly and Gary Schmitt, meanwhile, argue in a January 17 [Foreign Affairs piece](#) for outright regime change. As they state: "After all, Iran's nuclear program is a symptom of a larger illness—the revolutionary fundamentalist regime in Tehran." (An anonymous US official was quoted in the *Washington Post* on January 10 to hold regime change aspirations as well, before the paper later ["clarified" the official's remarks](#).)

Such frenzied and war hungry rhetoric, however, has not been limited to the standard purveyors of neoconservative drivel. In fact, dramatically escalating the tensions and sense of fear amongst the American public has been the nation's mainstream press corps, which has readily abandoned any and all pretensions of journalistic integrity in the service of propaganda.

Indicative of this is the fact that it is now a common occurrence to have dire warnings of an Iranian nuclear weapons program splashed across the pages of the nation's preeminent newspapers. This endless chorus, though, comes despite the fact that an Iranian nuclear *weapons* program—as does its purported desire to even develop such a program—currently exists only in one's imagination. This much we know from the [latest US National Intelligence Estimate](#).

Nonetheless, the sheer and utter invention of an Iranian nuclear weapons program has increasingly come to be held by the American press as fact. For as Joseph Goebbels would have it: "If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it."

Illustrative of this dark axiom at work, we read in a January 12 [Los Angeles Times](#) editorial that: "*Iran's development of nuclear weapons* [emphasis added] poses a grave threat to world stability and possibly an existential threat to this country's Middle Eastern ally, Israel." In a January 10 [Washington Post](#) editorial we read that, "Iran may be feeling some

economic pain, and it may be isolated. *But its drive for nuclear weapons continues* [emphasis added]." And in a January 4 [New York Times](#) piece we learn that, "The threats from Iran, aimed both at the West and at Israel, combined with a recent assessment by the International Atomic Energy Agency *that Iran's nuclear program has a military objective* [emphasis added], is becoming an important issue in the American presidential campaign."

Of course, the hysteria over a hypothetical Iranian nuclear weapons program has by no means been limited to US print media. The cable broadcast network CNN (i.e., "the most trusted name in news") has also reported the fictitious claim that Iran's nuclear program has a military objective as fact.

On December 20, [CNN aired an interview](#) by Pentagon Correspondent Barbara Starr with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Army General Martin Dempsey. Starr went on to inform the CNN viewer in her report that, "Behind the scenes Dempsey is quietly leading the ongoing military planning for an attack against *Iran's nuclear weapons* [emphasis added] if the president gives the order to do so." She continued by noting that; "Other countries are also on edge about *Iran's progress toward a nuclear weapon* [emphasis added]."

Then, on January 3, [CNN's Zain Verjee commented](#) on the murder of Iranian nuclear scientist, Mostafa Ahmadi-Roshan, by stating:

"This man was a really important man in Iran because he was actually a supervisor...at the Natanz uranium enrichment facility. Now that's an important site for the US to kept its eye on because it's said to have something like 8,000 centrifuges in operation. And the reason we care about it is because *the US believes Iran is using this program to build a nuclear weapon* [emphasis added]."

But the US government, as previously noted, does not actually make such assertions. In fact, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta stated as much on a January 8 [appearance on CBS's Face the Nation](#). As Panetta said, "Are they [Iran] trying to develop a nuclear weapon? No."

This assessment is one also apparently shared by Israeli intelligence. [According to the Israeli newspaper Haaretz](#), Israeli intelligence believes "Iran has not yet decided whether to make a nuclear bomb."

It is thus nothing less than a remarkable triumph of propaganda when the biggest lies are disseminated not from official state organs and regime mouthpieces, but rather from the highly celebrated American fourth estate: the nation's free press.

Somewhat paradoxically, though, the lies and propaganda proliferating through the mainstream US media are illustrative of a larger and more fundamental truth. For all the belligerent posturing and fear mongering around a nuclearized Iran have never been about a genuine threat to the US. Rather, Iran's nuclear program merely happens to be the lie of convenience used to feed the US war machine at the moment—a la the once alleged Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

In the end, then, the present confrontation with Iran is really about what Ismael Hossein-zadeh deems in this 2007 book, [The Political Economy of US Militarism](#), to be "parasitic

imperialism.” As Hossein-zadeh explains, “under parasitic imperialism, military adventures abroad are often prompted not necessarily by a desire to expand the empire’s wealth beyond the existing levels but by a desire to appropriate the lion’s share of the existing wealth and treasure for the military establishment.”

And with the Pentagon presently facing looming budgetary cuts, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq winding to an end, and the specter of al-Qaeda fading from popular American consciousness, the all-powerful US military-industrial complex has begun to flail about for external threats in order to maintain its disproportional share of the national wealth. ([By some estimates](#), now 48% of the entire US budget.) Enter, then, Iran.

Yet what makes parasitic imperialism particularly dangerous is that it is not, nor can it ever be, satisfied by the mere specter of external threats. It requires nothing less than actual conflict. After all, given that the US military-industrial complex is “subject to market imperatives,” as Hossein-zadeh writes, “actual wars are needed in order to generate ‘sufficient’ demand for war-dependent industries and their profitability requirements.”

Of course, no matter the market imperatives, no war can be launched without first attaining a minimal threshold of popular support. Hence the fabrications and lies coming from the media continue to accumulate. And, unfortunately, through their constant and near ubiquitous repetition, it won’t be long before a greater share of the American people come to believe them. Military confrontation, we see, nears.

Ben Schreiner is a freelance writer living in Salem, Oregon whose work has appeared in *al-Akhbar English*, *Asia Times Online*, *CounterPunch*, *Z Magazine* and others. He may be reached at bnschreiner@gmail.com

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