

The Bully Who Cried “Iran!”

By [Daniel Larison](#)

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [IRAN: THE NEXT WAR?](#)

Ali Vaez rebuts Mike Pompeo's terse, evidence-free [statement](#) accusing Iran of responsibility for the two tanker attacks in the Gulf of Oman:

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.@SecPompeo's little performance aimed at accusing Iran for this morning's tanker attacks was stunning in one sense: how many inaccuracies can one jampack into a 4 min speech? Here is a short list: <https://t.co/HPp0AbX671>

— Ali Vaez (@AliVaez) [June 13, 2019](#)

Pompeo delivered his remarks without providing any evidence to support his accusations, and then walked off the stage without taking any questions. The Secretary of State's credibility has already been shot to pieces by his frequent lies and misleading statements on a range of issues touching on everything from North Korea to Yemen to Iran, so he needed to clear an even higher bar than usual to back up his accusations. He didn't come close. Aside from misleading the public and Congress about important issues, Pompeo's serial fabrications have a real cost in that no one believes a word he says about anything. It might be the case that Pompeo is telling the truth for once, but if so it would be extremely unusual for him. I made that point earlier today:

Note that Pompeo routinely lies about Iran, the nuclear deal, and Iranian involvement in the region. He is one of the least credible messengers around. No one should take his word for anything

— Daniel Larison (@DanielLarison) [June 13, 2019](#)

I have previously discussed Pompeo's [complete lack of credibility](#), and it is worth revisiting part of that post now:

Pompeo is the chief representative of the United States abroad besides the president, so his habit of making things up out of thin air and telling easily

refuted lies can only harm our reputation, undermine trust, and cause even our allies to doubt our government's claims.

Pompeo is the bully who cried "Iran!" so many times that we have no reason to trust his anti-Iranian claims now. The fact that he and the National Security Advisor are so clearly slavering at the possibility of increased tensions with Iran gives us another reason to be skeptical. We assume that they are trying to turn even the smallest incident into an excuse for escalation, and so we naturally look at their claims of Iranian responsibility with great suspicion. Vaez's thread goes through Pompeo's statement very carefully and points out the serious flaws and falsehoods, of which there are quite a few.

Once again, we see Pompeo's tendency to pin the blame for anything and everything that happens in the region on Iran, and many of these are no more than unfounded assertions or deliberate distortions. For example, the Houthi attacks on Saudi pipelines and airports are a result of the ongoing war on Yemen and the Saudi coalition bombing of Yemeni cities and towns. All indiscriminate attacks on civilian targets and infrastructure are wrong and should be condemned, but we also need to remember that these attacks are the direct consequence of belligerent and destructive policies of Saudi Arabia and the UAE backed by the United States. If the Saudis and Emiratis stopped bombing Yemen tomorrow, the missile attacks on Saudi targets would almost certainly cease thereafter. Just as Pompeo won't acknowledge the administration's role in goading and provoking Iran, he refuses to acknowledge the role of the Saudi coalition's war in provoking Yemeni retaliation. He desperately tries to make Iran the culprit of every crime, but instead of proving Iran's guilt it only calls into question Pompeo's judgment and honesty.

Probably the most galling part of Pompeo's statement was his declaration that "Iran should answer diplomacy with diplomacy." What diplomacy would Iran be responding to? Does Pompeo think his list of preposterous demands delivered as a diktat last year counts as diplomacy? Does he think that waging relentless economic war on a country of eighty million people qualifies as diplomatic? The Trump administration has chosen the path of provocation and confrontation for at least the last thirteen months, and then they have the gall to fault Iran for its lack of diplomacy. If the administration had not trashed the most important diplomatic agreement that our government had with Iran and proceeded to penalize them for keeping up their end of the bargain, our two countries would not be as dangerously close to war as they are now. The administration bears responsibility for creating the heightened tensions between the U.S. and Iran, and it is their obnoxious and destructive policy of collective punishment that has brought us to this point.

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