

Bush Still Spinning Nukes in Iran

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The unanimous conclusion of the 16 U.S. intelligence agencies, that Iran ceased pursuing a program of nuclear weapons in 2003, has dealt a severe blow to the Bush-Cheney agenda of forcible regime change in Iran. For several months, the rhetoric emerging from the White House escalated to the point that many observers predicted Bush would attack Iran before he leaves office.

But although the new National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) makes it more difficult to carry out his agenda in Iran, Bush is trying to publicly undermine its conclusions. "I have said Iran is dangerous," he declared, "and the NIE estimate doesn't do anything to change my opinion about the danger Iran poses to the world - quite the contrary." Will Bush provoke an incident with Iran and then respond in "self-defense"?

Bush "rewarded" Iran for its help in consolidating U.S. power in Afghanistan after the 9/11 attacks by inaugurating Iran into his "axis of evil" in January 2002. The following year, Iran offered the U.S. government a comprehensive plan for negotiations and cooperation, which addressed all of Bush's claimed pet peeves about Iran. In Iran's 2003 memorandum, sent to the U.S. government via Swiss diplomats, Iran proposed a "dialogue in mutual respect." It sought negotiations with the United States on the concerns Bush has repeatedly expressed.

Iran proposed "full transparency" to show "there are no Iranian endeavors to develop or possess WMD." It also sought to guarantee "decisive action against any terrorists (above all Al Qaida) on Iranian territory, full cooperation and exchange of all relevant information." In Iraq, Iran proposed "coordination of Iranian influence for activity supporting political stabilization and the establishment of democratic institutions and a non-religious government." Iran agreed to discuss the "stop of any material support to Palestinian opposition groups (Hamas, Jihad etc.) from Iranian territory" and "pressure on these organizations to stop violent action against civilians within borders of 1967." And Iran listed its "acceptance of the Arab League Beirut declaration (Saudi initiative, two-states-approach)." This meant Iran would recognize the state of Israel.

The Iranian memorandum also offered to negotiate the following with the United States: "Halt in US hostile behavior and rectification of status of Iran in the U.S.: (interference in internal or external relations, 'axis of evil', terrorism list)"; "Abolishment of all sanctions: commercial sanctions, frozen assets, judgments (FSIA), impediments in international trade and financial institutions"; "Iraq: democratic and fully representative government in Iraq, support of Iranian claims for Iraqi reparations, respect for Iranian national interests in Iraq and religious links to Najaf/Karbal"; "Full access to peaceful nuclear technology, biotechnology and chemical technology"; "Recognition of Iran's legitimate security interests in the region with according defense capacity"; and "Terrorism: pursuit of anti-Iranian

terrorists, above all MKO.”

This 2003 offer by Iran to negotiate these pressing issues with the United States was an incredible opportunity, which Bush, who claims to pursue diplomacy, should have seized. Yet the White House thumbed its nose at the Iranian offer and then tried to cover up the story.

Why did Bush reject Iran ‘s 2003 offer and now seek to discredit the conclusions of the National Intelligence Estimate? Because even if all his stated gripes with Iran were resolved, Bush’s hidden agenda would not be addressed. That agenda comes into focus on the website of the American Enterprise Institute, a neoconservative think tank that claims Paul Wolfowitz, Lynne Cheney, Richard Perle and John Bolton as members. Under the AEI’s list of “Research Projects” is “Global Investment in Iran.”

Just as “Operation Iraqi Freedom” was about corporate control over Iraq’s oil, Bush’s strategy on Iran is about making Iran safe for global investment. And just as Bush lied about the danger posed by Saddam Hussein, he is now lying about the perils Iran poses.

U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency Director Mohamed ElBaradei has consistently said there is “no evidence” Iran has ever maintained a program of developing nuclear weapons. Yet even though Bush learned about the NIE report in August or September, according to National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley, he invoked World War III in the same breath with Iran in October. On December 4, Bush lied about when he learned Iran had no weapons program, saying, “I was made aware of the NIE last week.”

Hadley’s report on the timing of Bush’s knowledge of the NIE is corroborated by a shift in the rhetoric emerging from the White House. During the last two months, Bush stopped talking about Iran possessing nukes, and began referring to Iran having “knowledge” of nuclear weapons, which he linked with World War III.

In spite of the unanimous conclusion in the National Intelligence Estimate and ElBaradei’s informed judgment, we cannot trust Bush-Cheney to abandon their imperial designs on Iran. Bush will probably provoke a military confrontation with Iran, then invoke the language in the 2002 Congressional authorization for the use of military force in Iraq that says, “The President has authority under the Constitution to take action in order to deter and prevent acts of international terrorism against the United States.”

Congress must support Rep. Neil Abercrombie’s resolution stating that Bush has been given no authority to go to war with Iran.

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