

Gulf of Tonkin ‘Crisis’, Iranian Style

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The United States government is always beating the war drums; it's what violent, rogue nations do. Currently, a non-issue in the Middle East is being seized upon as a threat to the mighty U.S.

The headlines were sensational:

- ‘Saudi Arabia Says Oil Tankers Attacked as Iranian Tensions Rise’. – Bloomberg
- ‘President Trump Warns Iran over ‘Sabotaged’ Oil Tankers in Gulf’. – Time

And a third, that might be worth paying attention to:

- ‘U.S. Says Gulf Oil Tankers were Sabotaged by Iran or Iranian allies, but Satellite Images Show no Major Damage’. – National Post.

Let's look again at the second phrase in the National Post headline: "...satellite images show no major damage."

For those who are not cognizant of U.S. history, let's go back fifty-five years, and review another non-event that had catastrophic, deadly consequences.

On August 2, 1964, the U.S. destroyer Maddox had been deployed to the Gulf of Tonkin off the coast of Vietnam, where it had no legitimate business. On that day, personnel on the Maddox reported that the ship had been fired on by North Vietnamese torpedo boats. The Maddox fired back, and one Vietnamese boat was sunk. Tensions between the U.S. and Vietnam, already high, continued to rise.

Two days later, the Maddox and a second ship, the C. Turner Joy, were again in the Gulf of Tonkin. Instruments on the Maddox showed that it was under attack, and both ships fired back, assisted by U.S. war planes.

Yet had there actually been an attack? Within 24 hours, the captain of the Maddox concluded that perhaps there wasn't one. The pilot of a Crusader jet, James B. Stockdale, undertook a reconnaissance flight over the gulf that evening. He was asked if he saw any North Vietnamese attack vessels. Stockdale did not equivocate in his response. Said he: "Not a one. No boats, no wakes, no ricochets off boats, no boat impacts, no torpedo wakes—nothing but black sea and American firepower." Apparently, 'ghost' images on the radar registered an attack that didn't happen.

Yet this non-event was seen as an attack against the sacred United States. Never mind that

there had been no attack. Never mind that, even if there had been, the Vietnamese government had every right to protect its citizen from outside invaders. Within days, Congress passed the 'Gulf of Tonkin Resolution', giving President Lyndon Johnson broad powers to repel the non-existent aggression. Yet prior to the passing of that resolution, it was known to Johnson and his top aides that there was no attack. And the U.S. president wasn't too sympathetic to the faulty equipment that registered an attack where there hadn't been one. A few days after the second attack, he told an aide: "Hell, those dumb stupid sailors were just shooting at flying fish".

It is said that truth is the first casualty of war. The lie of the Gulf of Tonkin incident, exposed within 24 hours but concealed from the public for years, enabled Johnson to greatly increase U.S. presence in Vietnam, causing the deaths of at least 2,000,000 people of Vietnam, and hundreds of thousands, and perhaps millions more, in Cambodia and Laos. Over 55,000 U.S. soldiers died. All this carnage due to a lie that government officials knew from almost the very start was, in fact, a lie.

In terms of history, fifty-five years isn't a long time, but for U.S. government officials, it might as well be an eternity. The National Post article says this: "Four oil tankers anchored in the Mideast were damaged by what Gulf officials described as 'sabotage,' though satellite images obtained by the Associated Press on Tuesday showed no major visible damage to the vessels." Yet the U.S. has sent destroyers to the Persian Gulf, and is ramping up the war-mongering rhetoric. Surprisingly, it isn't the head blowhard, the erratic and ignorant Donald Trump who is leading the charge, but his top aides, including the unhinged National Security Advisor John Bolton, and the evangelical pseudo-Christian Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, who will do anything for Israel. And Iran threatens Israeli hegemony in the Middle East, so U.S. soldiers must be prepared to die so apartheid Israel can maintain its status as powerful rogue state. And this non-event may be just what Bolton and Pompeo need to start another war.

Will the U.S. invade Iran as it did Vietnam in 1964? The Vietnam War was a demoralizing loss for the United States, the government of which underestimated the strength and resiliency of the people of Vietnam. It will make that same mistake about Iranians at its peril. Iran is not an isolated nation; it is powerful in its own right, despite the unjust and illegal sanctions the U.S. has imposed, that the former United Nations rapporteur Alfred de Zayas said could amount to crimes against humanity, and it has powerful allies, including Russia. Any invasion by the U.S. of Iran will be a catastrophe for the Middle East and the United States.

In 1964, Johnson, like all U.S. politicians, needed to show that he was 'strong' against Communism, despite the choices of the people in independent, sovereign countries around the world. Today, all politicians have to demonstrate their strength against 'terrorism', the bugaboo that the U.S. invented, and that it practices with such expertise around the world. Despite its long and ugly record of terrorism - it is estimated that, just since World War II, the U.S. has killed at least 20,000,000 people - and its current terrorist activities in Yemen, Syria and other locations around the world, the U.S. government has, incredibly, accused Iran of being the 'foremost' sponsor of terrorism in the world. Iran has not invaded another nation since 1798. The U.S. has been at war for at least 224 of its bloody 243-year history.

Will there be war? Will the U.S. actually make the colossal mistake of invading Iran? While one hopes that cooler heads will prevail, it's frightening to think that Donald Trump is one of

the 'cooler' heads. But that seems to be the current situation in the United States.

While Trump seems to care not at all what the U.S.'s closest allies think, one hopes that they can somehow influence him to act in a rational manner. It is a lot to hope for, but may be the best that can be expected to prevent the U.S. from self-destructing, and taking much of the world with him, in another needless war.

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