

Is Bombing Iran Bush's Call?

By [Patrick J. Buchanan](#)

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In aborting Iran's nuclear program, "all options are on the table."

Some version of this threat against Iran has lately been made by John McCain, Hillary Clinton, John Edwards and Mitt Romney.

Yet, if an attack on Iran is among "options ... on the table," who put it there? Who gave President Bush the authority to attack Iran? And when was it granted? And are all options also "on the table" if North Korea continues to test nuclear weapons?

What makes these questions other than academic is that Bush is putting in place military assets that will enable him to order and effect the rapid nuclear castration of Iran. But scarcely a peep of protest has been heard from our congressional leadership.

Observers have noted the dispatch of minesweepers and another U.S. carrier to the Persian Gulf, the naming of Admiral Bill "Fox" Fallon to head CentCom, which today manages two ground wars, and the return of U.S. fighter-bombers to Turkey. In March's Vanity Fair, Craig Unger reports:

"The same neocon ideologues behind the Iraq war have been using the same tactics - alliances with shady exiles, dubious intelligence on WMD - to push for the bombing of Iran. As President Bush ups the pressure on Tehran, is he planning to double his Middle East bet?"

Ex-Israeli Prime Minister "Bibi" Netanyahu has told CNN: "Iran is Germany, and it's 1938. Except that this Nazi regime that is in Iran ... wants to dominate the world, annihilate the Jews, but also annihilate America."

More ominous than the hawk-talk is Unger's report that "Bush has directed StratCom (U.S. Strategic Command) to draw up plans for a massive strike against Iran at a time when CentCom has had its hands full overseeing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Shifting to StratCom indicates that they are talking about a really punishing air force and naval air attack (on Iran)." So says retired Col. Patrick Lang, formerly of the Defense Intelligence Agency.

Now, this dramatic turn toward Iran - as a menace and source of our troubles in Iraq, which began with Bush's speech announcing the surge - can have other interpretations.

Bush may be waving a big stick in Tehran's face to compel it to negotiate its nuclear program. He may be reassuring the Saudis and Sunnis that America will not leave them to

face a nuclear Iran. He may be recruiting and rallying an anti-Iran coalition of Israel and Sunni Arab states to stand up to the Shia superpower in the Gulf. He may be playing to the home crowd in America, which is more receptive to keeping nuclear weapons away from the mullahs than in making Iraq safe for democracy at a cost of 100 U.S. dead a month.

But whatever motive he has, Bush is putting in place forces to enable him to order an all-out attack on Iran's navy, air force, and anti-aircraft, anti-ship and land-based missiles – and all its known nuclear facilities.

Now, as there is no indication Iran is preparing any attack on U.S. forces or facilities, or the homeland, such a U.S. attack would be the first strike in a preventive war – like the ones Japan executed at Port Arthur in 1904 and Pearl Harbor in 1941. Only Bush could claim Iran had been repeatedly warned of what he would do.

So, we return to the question: Does Bush have the authority to do this? If so, where did he get it, as Congress alone is empowered in the Constitution to declare war?

Discussing preventive war on Iran on “Hardball,” Sen. Jim Webb said he is considering introducing a resolution declaring that Bush has no authority in present law to launch a war on Iran.

Such a resolution, HJR 14, has already been introduced in the House by Rep. Walter Jones, Republican of North Carolina, and now has the backing of 28 members. In an anguished plea to President Bush, [Ron Paul, Republican of Texas](#), implored: “Don’t do it, Mr. President. Don’t bomb Iran. ... We don’t need it. We don’t want it.”

Paul went on to declare that, today, Bush has no authority – in the Constitution, in the law or in morality – to launch a pre-emptive war on another nation that has not attacked us.

So, will the neocons get their way and their new war – on Iran?

Or will Congress follow the guidance of Jefferson: “In questions of powers, then, let no more be heard of confidence in man, but bind him down from mischief by the chains of the Constitution.”

Those member of Congress today apologizing for having voted Bush a blank check for war on Iraq might better tell Bush, by joint resolution, that he has no blank check for a war on Iran.

Or is this Congress, too, terrified of crossing the War Party?

Patrick J. Buchanan is a former American politician. Buchanan was a senior advisor to three American presidents, Nixon, Ford and Reagan, and was an original host on CNN's Crossfire.

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