

## It Turns Out Ahmadinejad Was the Truthful One

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Bush is such a liar. Or is he just out to lunch on the most important issue that he faces? In October, he charged that Iran's nuclear weapons program was bringing the world to the precipice of World War III, even though the White House had been informed at least a month earlier that Iran had no such program and had stopped efforts to develop one back in 2003.

Is it conceivable that Bush was telling the truth at his press conference Tuesday when he stated that he learned of the National Intelligence Estimate report, which contained that inconvenient fact, only last week? Even if Bush read the NIE report, he clearly doesn't respect it, for at his press conference he said "the NIE doesn't do anything to change my opinion about the danger Iran poses to the world—quite the contrary." Not that he has anything against the NIE, whose directors he handpicked. "I want to compliment the intelligence community for their good work. Right after the failure of intelligence in Iraq, we reformed the intelligence community."

But whether or not the intelligence agencies are reformed, the president still ignores them. He didn't listen when they told him he was wrong in claiming that Iraq had purchased yellow cake uranium from Niger and he doesn't listen now when they tell him his alarms about Iran are without factual foundation. The difference this time around is that because Bush is a discredited lame duck the intelligence chiefs were a bit more forthcoming with their findings in a report that has, in part, been made available to the public.

The whole episode shows that our democratic system retains at least some essential checks and balances, but it also is depressing to see that, in this instance at least, the fanatical leader of a theocracy seems to have a higher regard for truth than does the president of the world's greatest experiment in representative democracy.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who took office as Iran's president in August of 2005, two years after Iran's nuclear weapons program ended, has now been vindicated in his claims that Iran has abandoned the weaponization program. Not so Bush, who has summarily dismissed the intelligence community's findings and, using his favorite tactic in dealing with debacles, is sticking to his original story. A story, as in the case of the earlier Iraq threat inflation, that too many in the mass media and Congress, including some leading Democrats, have bought.

Take Hillary Clinton, who said that "Iran is seeking nuclear weapons, and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard is in the forefront of that" by way of defending her vote for a resolution that, like the one she voted for before the Iraq war, blindly supports rather than seriously questions the president's case for war. Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama

was absolutely correct in calling candidate Clinton out on that vote and challenging her lame excuse that she had not read the full intelligence report before her Iraq war vote. "Members of Congress," Obama cautioned, "must carefully read the intelligence before giving the president any justification to use military force."

Not a bad idea. In the case of Iraq's non-nukes, the intelligence evidence supporting Bush was flimsy at best when it did not directly contradict his key assertions. In the case of Iran, it is now publicly understood that there is no such evidence, flimsy or otherwise. But don't count on that to stop the bipartisan coalition of invasion hawks from pushing on.

Once again, they will attack the United Nations' experts, who have been proved right in Iran as they were in Iraq. A spokesman for the International Atomic Energy Agency pointed out that the NIE report supports the agency's view that there is "no evidence" of an undeclared nuclear weapons program in Iran and "validates the assessments of [IAEA Director General] Mohamed ElBaradei, who continuously said in his public statements that he saw no clear and public danger, and that therefore that there was plenty of time for negotiations."

Can we get ElBaradei to run in the Iowa caucus? Why are our leading presidential candidates so easily fooled?

It's humiliating to all of us who believe in a free press, separation of powers and individual liberty that a system of government designed by its founders to hold leaders accountable can be so easily manipulated by an unremarkable loser who has been rewarded throughout his life for screwing up. It is hoped that this time around the truth will catch up with him before he gets us in yet another bloody war, just to show he can.

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