

## Looking for a Gulf of Tonkin-like Incident

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

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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“The spirit of this country is totally adverse to a large military force.” Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) 3rd American President

“Force is the vital principle and immediate parent of despotism.” Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) 3rd American President

“If there is one principle more deeply rooted in the mind of every American, it is that we should have nothing to do with conquest.” Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) 3rd American President

“I fully understand that they [the Congress] could try to stop me from doing it. But I’ve made my decision. And we’re going forward.” President George W. Bush, (in an interview broadcast on CBS 60 Minutes, Jan. 14, 2007)

Obviously, President George W. Bush is busily looking for a [Gulf of Tonkin-like incident](#) in order to further escalate the war in Iraq and to start a fresh one with Iran.

Let us remember that when the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, another Texan, wanted to escalate the war against North Vietnam, in 1964, it fabricated a tale about a maritime incident in the Gulf of Tonkin, which many historians believe never happened. Congress was then steamrolled into passing the [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#), which was used by the Johnson administration, and later by the Nixon administration, to escalate U.S. military involvement in Indochina. Tens of thousands of young Americans and hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese died as a consequence of this resolution.

And the same scenario is repeating itself today. Politicians, when facing a quagmire of their own making and feeling powerless and under attack, will spend unlimited amounts of public money and will sacrifice unlimited numbers of other people’s lives, in order to save face. —Anxious to provoke Iran into a military confrontation, George W. Bush [authorized](#), in early January, an attack on an Iranian consulate in the town of Irbil, in Iraq, capturing five staff members. This was an act of war, because it was carried out on a diplomatic compound. The Iraqi and Iranian governments have both called for the men’s release.

This aggression came after the Bush-Cheney administration sent two large [nuclear aircraft carriers](#), the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower and the USS John C. Stennis, each accompanied by guided-missile cruisers, destroyers, frigates, submarine escorts and supply ships, to the Persian Gulf. As a consequence, the Persian Gulf is teeming with American military gear.

In this relatively small sea, such a concentration of military equipment is bound to result in accidents. Indeed, around January 8, a U.S. nuclear submarine hit a Japanese oil tanker in the [Strait of Hormuz](#) near the Arabian Sea. The Strait of Hormuz connects the Persian Gulf with the Arabian Sea and is a most strategic shipping lane for transporting oil products from countries such as Saudi Arabia and Iran.

All this military gear is deployed in order to blockade two Iranian oil ports on the [Persian] Gulf and to start bombing Iran, possibly with nuclear weapons, as soon as Bush can invent a pretext to launch a war against Iran. It seems the only thing this politician knows how to do is to launch wars. Countries such as Israel and the Gulf states are being equipped with advanced Patriot missile systems, in preparation for missile counter-attacks that Iran is expected to launch, after it has been bombed. As soon as some 'Persian Gulf incident' can be orchestrated, the table will be set for starting a bombing campaign of Iran, possibly, according to some observers, sometime in [April](#) (2007). As the neocon plan calls for, such a war is designed to create "a new power balance" in the Middle East, beneficial both to Israel's strategic interests and to American oil interests. In fact, what the Bush-Cheney administration and its neocon advisors ideally would hope to accomplish is to repeat the [1953 CIA coup](#) that ousted from power the democratically elected prime minister of Iran, Mohammad Mossadegh, after the latter nationalized the oil industry. The result was a concentration of all power in a puppet, the Shah of Iran.

What can be expected from another illegal war in the Middle East? First, politically, it will further weaken the United Nations, a long held goal of the Neocons, because it is most unlikely that the Security Council will go along with a war of aggression. Such wars are against the U.N. Charter, which calls for the maintenance of international peace and security, not for initiating [wars of aggression](#). Second, economically, the U.S. blockade of Iranian ports would automatically stop the flow of oil from Iran, one of the world's major petroleum exporting nations, and will precipitate an [international oil crisis](#). This in turn is likely to provoke a worldwide stock market crash and initiate an international economic recession. —But Bush doesn't care. —Saving face has no price in his mind. Besides, he enjoys playing war with America's large stocks of military gear, like kids like to play cowboy. Most Americans disapprove of the way he is governing and they told him so democratically in the November 2006 election. [Bush's approval rating](#) has fallen to 30 percent, but he doesn't care what the American people think. He couldn't care less for democracy.

The same infamous think tank, the [American Enterprise Institute](#), which was directly instrumental in pushing Bush II into escalating the Iraq war in early January, is also deeply involved in the push for a larger war of aggression against Iran. Its so-called 'fellows' have been laying out the [case for war](#) by hyping the threat that a nuclear Iran would pose to Israel and other Gulf states. The [Neocons](#) say that the Iranian clerics' atomic weapons program must be destroyed because the mullahs see the world through a 'good-versus-evil' lens. How ironic that this also seems to be the perspective on the world that permeates Bush's White House!

As for [Iran](#), it doesn't matter that this country is in breach of no international agreement, since the [Non-Proliferation Treaty](#) allows signing nations to develop nuclear technology for their own energy needs. It doesn't matter either that even if Iran, in a more or less remote future, were to opt out of the Treaty and acquire defensive nuclear armaments, it would only be joining a club of regional countries that already have nuclear arms, i.e. Israel, Pakistan and India. In fact, the main impetus for many nations today to acquire a nuclear

capacity is to gain some protection against unlawful states that feel justified in attacking non-nuclear states at will. That is why North Korea went nuclear, (and has been left alone since), and other countries such as Brazil and even Australia are considering doing the same. The truth is that nuclear armaments may be the only way for a country to protect its sovereignty in a world where [international law](#) seems to have collapsed. In this sense, a government that does take all the necessary steps to protect its sovereignty may be considered in dereliction of duty.

This is an issue that the new U.N. Secretary General, [Ban Ki-moon](#) should place high on his agenda and on the United Nations General Assembly's agenda. —As for Bush's neocon escalation plan for Iraq, it is not only illegal according to American law, being in violation of the [1973 War Powers Act](#), but it is profoundly anti-democratic since only [12 percent of Americans](#) support it. When you come down to 10 percent approval in any democracy, you are usually left with the support of only the lunatic fringe.

In these circumstances, and to confront the surrounding [hypocrisy](#), U.S. representatives and senators who really believe in democracy and in the rule of law may want to sign on to Republican Representative (N.C.) Walter Jones' resolution [HJR 14](#) that upholds the right of the elected Congress to prevent a warmongering president from initiating wars of aggression of his own volition.

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