

Preventing the Impending War on Iran

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Rhetoric flowing out of the White House indicates the Bush administration is planning a military attack on Iran . Officials in Saudi Arabia , a close Bush ally, think the handwriting is on the wall. “George Bush’s tone makes us think he has decided what he is going to do,” according to Rihab Massoud, Prince Bandar ben Sultan’s right-hand man. Saudi Social Affairs Minister Abdel Mohsen Hakas told Le Figaro, “We are getting closer and closer to a confrontation.”

As Bush and Cheney try to whip us into a frenzy about the dangers Iran poses, their argument comes up short. They say Iran is developing nuclear weapons, but Mohamed ElBaradei, director of the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), says there is “no evidence” of this. They say Iran is sending deadly weapons into Iraq to kill U.S. troops, but those devices can be manufactured in any Iraqi machine shop. Now the New York Times reports most of the foreign fighters in Iraq come, not from Iran , but from two Bush allies – Saudi Arabia and Libya . An estimated 90 percent of suicide bombings are carried out by foreign fighters. And senior U.S. military officials believe the financial support for Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia comes primarily from Saudi Arabia .

Yet the Bush/Cheney rhetoric about Iran continues to escalate. In light of the lack of evidence Iran is actually developing nukes, Bush equated Iranian “knowledge” to make nuclear weapons with World War III. “If you’re interested in avoiding World War III,” he said recently, “it seems like you ought to be interested in preventing them from having the knowledge necessary to make a nuclear weapon.” This substantially lowers the bar for a U.S. attack on Iran .

A few days after Bush warned of World War III, Cheney called Iran “the world’s most active state sponsor of terrorism,” adding, “The Iranian regime needs to know that if it stays on its present course, the international community is prepared to impose serious consequences . . . We will not allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon.” These threats are eerily reminiscent of his rants in the run-up to the U.S. invasion of Iraq .

In an unprecedented move, the Bush administration labeled the Iranian Revolutionary Guard a terrorist organization. It appears the administration applied that label in an effort to trigger language in the 2002 Congressional authorization for the use of military force in Iraq . That authorization 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 .”

Like Bush’s invasion of Iraq , an attack on Iran would violate international and U.S. law. The U.N. Charter prohibits the use of military force except in self-defense or with the approval of the Security Council. Iran , which has not attacked any country for 2,000 years, hasn’t

threatened to invade the United States or Israel . Rather than protecting Israel , U.S. or Israeli military force against Iran will endanger Israel , which would invariably suffer a retaliatory attack.

In making its case against Iran , the administration points to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad's alleged comment that Israel should be wiped off the map. But this is an erroneous translation of what he said. According to University of Michigan professor Juan Cole and Farsi language analysts, Ahmadinejad was quoting Ayatollah Khomeini, who said the "regime occupying Jerusalem must vanish from the page of time." Cole said this "does not imply military action or killing anyone at all." Journalist Diana Johnstone points out the quote is not aimed at the Israeli people, but at the Zionist "regime" occupying Jerusalem . "Coming from a Muslim religious leader," Johnstone wrote, "this opinion is doubtless based on objection to Jewish monopoly of a city considered holy by all three of the Abrahamic monotheisms."

It seems significant that support for Ahmadinejad may be waning among the real power brokers in Iran , particularly the supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The Jomhuri Eslami daily in Iran , which has close ties to Khamenei, has denounced Ahmadinejad's characterization of those opposed to his nuclear program as traitors.

If the United States attacks Iran , the results would be catastrophic. Three Europeans, including former French Prime Minister Michel Rocard and Yehuda Atai, a member of the Israeli Committee for a Middle East without Weapons of Mass Destruction, wrote in Libération, "We are being warned about it from all sides: The United States is at the brink of war, ready to bombard Iran. The only thing lacking is the presidential order." Drawing parallels with the U.S. war in Iraq , they caution, "An attack against Iran , whatever its targets, its methods and its initial scope, will significantly aggravate the situation, achieving similar results, without even talking about the disastrous impact on the global economy." They add, "It would be still worse if the insane idea of using tactical nuclear weapons - which exist - to prevent Iran from building, in spite of its denials, the nuclear weapons that recent IAEA inspections have found no trace of, were implemented."

The threats against Iran appear to be politically motivated. Seymour Hersh's extensive research has convinced him that Bush/Cheney will invade Iran . They likely think embroiling us in Iran will ensure a GOP victory in 2008. It will certainly make it harder for the new President to withdraw from Iraq once we are mired in Iran .

If Hillary Clinton becomes that new President, she will likely continue Bush's foreign policy. Clinton, who favors leaving a large contingent of U.S. troops in Iraq, says nothing about disbanding the huge U.S. military bases there. Clinton is also rattling the sabers in Iran 's direction. She voted to urge Bush to label the Iranian Revolutionary Guard a terrorist organization and she, too, misquotes Ahmadinejad about Israel .

As we go to the polls in the coming months, it is imperative we scrutinize the candidates' positions on Iraq and Iran . The security of the United States , as well as the Middle East , is hanging in the balance.

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