

Secret State Agencies: 'No Hard Evidence' Iran Building Nukes, March to War Continues

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Although all 16 U.S. secret state intelligence agencies confirmed, again, that “Iran had abandoned its nuclear weapons program years earlier,” reaffirming the “consensus view” of not one, but two National Intelligence Estimates [The New York Times](#) reported last week, the march towards war continues.

Last Saturday [The Daily Telegraph](#), citing The Wall Street Journal, reported that “military planners have asked for emergency funding from Congress to address a perceived shortfall in defence capabilities that could undermine the ability of US forces to respond to an Iranian closure of the Strait of Hormuz.”

Plans are underway “to modify weapons systems on ships that are at present vulnerable to Iranian fast-attack boats, many of which carry anti-ship missiles,” the Telegraph averred.

Feeling the heat from pro-Israeli lobby shops and congressional grifters, President Obama told [The Atlantic](#) on Friday: “When I say we’re not taking any option off the table, we mean it. I think that the Israeli government recognizes that, as president of the United States, I don’t bluff. I also don’t, as a matter of sound policy, go around advertising exactly what our intentions are. But I think both the Iranian and the Israeli governments recognize that when the United States says it is unacceptable for Iran to have a nuclear weapon, we mean what we say.”

In other words, despite repeated assertions by Iran that its nuclear program is strictly for civilian, not military purposes, facts borne out by multiple on-the-ground inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency and assessments by American spy agencies, the bar for Iranian “compliance” is continually set higher, moved from an “active program” to a mere “capability,” it is now clear that war is the first, last, indeed only “option.”

With this mind, Times’ journalists James Risen and Mark Mazzetti informed us that lying “at the center of the debate is the murky question of the ultimate ambitions of the leaders in Tehran.”

While there is “no dispute among among American, Israeli and European intelligence officials that Iran has been enriching nuclear fuel and developing some necessary infrastructure to become a nuclear power,” the Times disclosed that secret state agencies also “believe that Iran has yet to decide whether to resume a parallel program to design a nuclear warhead—a program they believe was essentially halted in 2003 and which would be necessary for Iran to build a nuclear bomb.”

In his January 31 Senate testimony, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper “stated explicitly that American officials believe that Iran is preserving its options for a nuclear weapon, but said there was no evidence that it had made a decision on making a concerted push to build a weapon.”

Clapper’s assessment is shared by other top Obama administration officials including CIA Director David Petraeus, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey.

According to the Times, “intelligence officials and outside analysts believe there is another possible explanation for Iran’s enrichment activity, besides a headlong race to build a bomb as quickly as possible. They say that Iran could be seeking to enhance its influence in the region by creating what some analysts call ‘strategic ambiguity’.”

Given the belligerent rhetoric and hostile military maneuvers by the United States, Israel and NATO, why wouldn’t the Iranians aim for “strategic ambiguity” in their dealings with the West?

Ringed by U.S. military bases, targets of a CIA/Mossad “active program” to assassinate scientists, bomb military installations, wage cyberwar against nuclear facilities and impose crippling sanctions intended to crater their economy, it’s surprising the Iranians haven’t sought the illusory “security” afforded by possessing nuclear weapons!

Disappeared History

While disinformation specialists such as [The Washington Post’s](#) Joby Warrick shamefully assert that “Iran already has enough enriched uranium to build four nuclear weapons,” he trumpets this specious charge—and gets away with it—by hiding behind the skirts of anonymous “U.S. officials and nuclear experts.”

In fact Iran’s “Supreme Leader,” Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei stated the obvious not only for Iranians but for the entire planet: “We believe that using nuclear weapons is haram and prohibited, and that it is everybody’s duty to make efforts to protect humanity against this great disaster.”

Khamenei, the head of Tehran’s repressive mullahocracy, whose hand was strengthened in recent parliamentary elections, also reiterated that “besides nuclear weapons, other types of weapons of mass destruction such as chemical and biological weapons also pose a serious threat to humanity.”

“The Iranian nation which is itself a victim of chemical weapons feels more than any other nation the danger that is caused by the production and stockpiling of such weapons and is prepared to make use of all its facilities to counter such threats,” Khamenei declared.

The Grand Ayatollah pointedly alluded to chemical attacks on Iran during the 1980-1988 war with Iraq.

Though studiously ignored by corporate media today’s rush to war, we would do well to recall that Iraq had been given a green light to invade the Islamic Republic by the Carter administration.

During that period, Western-supplied technology and logistical support, including geospatial

intelligence provided by America's fleet of spy satellites, along with billions of dollars in arms provided by Britain, France, Germany and the United States were lavished on Iraq when Saddam was America's "best friend forever." American and European firms literally handing over the know-how that allowed Iraq to kill and maim Iranian civilians and soldiers during that disastrous war. By the conflict's end, Iran had suffered an estimated one million casualties, killed or wounded, and the near-destruction of their economy.

Investigative journalist Alan Friedman, the author of *Spider's Web: The secret history of how the White House illegally armed Iraq*, documented how early in the conflict, the U.S. began providing tactical battlefield advice to the Iraqi Army.

"At times," Friedman wrote, "thanks to the White House's secret backing for the intelligence-sharing, U.S. intelligence officers were actually sent to Baghdad to help interpret the satellite information. As the White House took an increasingly active role in secretly helping Saddam direct his armed forces, the United States even built an expensive high-tech annex in Baghdad to provide a direct down-link receiver for the satellite intelligence and better processing of the information."

According to Friedman's definitive account: "The American military commitment that had begun with intelligence-sharing expanded rapidly and surreptitiously throughout the Iran-Iraq War. A former White House official explained that 'by 1987, our people were actually providing tactical military advice to the Iraqis in the battlefield, and sometimes they would find themselves over the Iranian border, alongside Iraqi troops'."

But such support was not limited to providing advice and battlefield intelligence to Saddam's generals; it also extended to Iraqi procurement of banned chemical and biological weapons, actual "weapons of mass destruction," backed by billions of dollars in loan guarantees extended to Iraq by the U.S. Commerce Department.

Indeed, as Scotland's [Sunday Herald](#) reported more than a decade ago, months before America and Britain's rush to war with Iraq, an investigation all but suppressed by American media, "The US and Britain sold Saddam Hussein the technology and materials Iraq needed to develop nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction."

Investigative journalists Neil Mackay and Felicity Arbuthnot reported at the time that "the US Senate's committee on banking, housing and urban affairs—which oversees American exports policy—reveal that the US, under the successive administrations of Ronald Reagan and George Bush Sr, sold materials including anthrax, VX nerve gas, West Nile fever germs and botulism to Iraq right up until March 1992, as well as germs similar to tuberculosis and pneumonia. Other bacteria sold included brucella melitensis, which damages major organs, and clostridium perfringens, which causes gas gangrene."

Weapons that were used to deadly effect against Iran with the full knowledge, and complicity, of Western governments.

As [Fars News Agency](#) reported last June, Iran's Parliamentary Speaker Ali Larijani "condemned the use of chemical weapons against innocent people throughout the world, and lamented that the Iranians who came under Iraq's chemical attacks during the imposed war on Iran (1980-1988) are still suffering from the impacts of these invasions."

"On June 28, 1987," Fars reported, "Iraqi aircraft dropped what Iranian authorities believed

to be mustard gas bombs on Sardasht, in two separate bombing runs on four residential areas.”

“Sardasht was the first town in the world to be gassed. Out of a population of 20,000, 25% are still suffering severe illnesses from the attacks.”

As the [National Security Archive](#) revealed in declassified documents published in 2003, “By the summer of 1983 Iran had been reporting Iraqi use of using chemical weapons for some time. The Geneva protocol requires that the international community respond to chemical warfare, but a diplomatically isolated Iran received only a muted response to its complaints. It intensified its accusations in October 1983, however, and in November asked for a United Nations Security Council investigation.”

What was the Reagan administration’s response?

“A State Department account indicates that the administration had decided to limit its ‘efforts against the Iraqi CW program to close monitoring because of our strict neutrality in the Gulf war, the sensitivity of sources, and the low probability of achieving desired results’.”

Those “desired results”? The destruction of Iran by Saddam’s military, propped-up by the repressive Gulf monarchies that now constitute the Gulf Cooperation Council (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates) whom Asia Times Online analyst Pepe Escobar has characterized as the “Gulf Counter-Revolution Club” and “NATOGCC.”

Indeed, as the Archive revealed “the department noted in late November 1983 that ‘with the essential assistance of foreign firms, Iraq ha[d] become able to deploy and use CW and probably has built up large reserves of CW for further use. Given its desperation to end the war, Iraq may again use lethal or incapacitating CW, particularly if Iran threatens to break through Iraqi lines in a large-scale attack’.”

Meanwhile, by 1984 “Ronald Reagan issued another presidential directive (NSDD 139), emphasizing the U.S. objective of ensuring access to military facilities in the Gulf region, and instructing the director of central intelligence and the secretary of defense to upgrade U.S. intelligence gathering capabilities.”

According to documents published by the Archive, “It codified U.S. determination to develop plans ‘to avert an Iraqi collapse.’ Reagan’s directive said that U.S. policy required ‘unambiguous’ condemnation of chemical warfare (without naming Iraq), while including the caveat that the U.S. should ‘place equal stress on the urgent need to dissuade Iran from continuing the ruthless and inhumane tactics which have characterized recent offensives.’ The directive does not suggest that ‘condemning’ chemical warfare required any hesitation about or modification of U.S. support for Iraq.”

As we now know, U.S. support continued and American and British firms supplied Iraq with chemical precursors used in the manufacture of chemical weapons subsequently deployed against the Iranian city of Sardasht, whose inhabitants “are still suffering severe illnesses from the attacks,” as Fars noted.

Bottom line for the Reagan administration’s State Department? “Gas the hajis and let God sort ‘em out!”

Another 'Just War' on the Horizon

As with the Bush administration's ginned-up "evidence" used to slaughter some million Iraqis when the U.S. launched its "preemptive and premeditated" invasion of Iraq in 2003, as the National Security Archive disclosed, U.S. perception management over the use of banned weapons reflected "the realpolitik that determined this country's policies during the years when Iraq was actually employing chemical weapons. Actual rather than rhetorical opposition to such use was evidently not perceived to serve U.S. interests."

Indeed, the "U.S. was concerned with its ability to project military force in the Middle East, and to keep the oil flowing."

Fast forward to 2012 and the manufactured hysteria over an "aggressive" Iran's alleged pursuit of nuclear deterrence.

Is there a disconnect here? What "red line" have the Iranians allegedly "crossed" that would necessitate extorting billions of dollars from our disreputable Congress for war while Americans go hungry and lose their homes, congressional thieves in thrall to pro-Israel lobby groups and the Military-Industrial cabal of war profiteers who pull their collective strings? Are we to flatten yet another nation that hasn't attacked us solely on the basis of ill-defined "ultimate ambitions"?

Increasingly, it looks like the answer is yes.

The [Associated Press](#) reported Tuesday that an unnamed "U.S. intelligence official" familiar with discussions amongst top administration officials and their Israeli counterparts averred that Israel "won't warn the U.S. if they decide to launch a pre-emptive strike against Iranian nuclear facilities."

Why not? Well, we're supposed to believe a ludicrous fairy tale spun by Benjamin Netanyahu's unhinged government that keeping "the Americans in the dark" would actually "decrease the likelihood that the U.S. would be held responsible for failing to stop Israel's potential attack."

Washington "peacemakers" eager to "avoid" war with the Islamic Republic, including senior "U.S. intelligence and special operations officials," AP reported, "have tried to keep a dialogue going with Israel" by "sharing options such as allowing Israel to use U.S. bases in the region from which to launch such a strike, as a way to make sure the Israelis give the Americans a heads-up, according to the U.S. official, and a former U.S. official with knowledge of the communications."

With this in mind, [Haaretz](#) reported that "Netanyahu is expected to publicly harden his line against Iran during a meeting with U.S. President Barack Obama in Washington on March 5, according to a senior Israeli official."

Correspondent Barak Ravid disclosed that Israel is demanding that Obama "make further-reaching declarations than the vague assertion that 'all options are on the table'." In fact, Netanyahu "wants Obama to state unequivocally that the United States is preparing for a military operation in the event that Iran crosses certain 'red lines'."

Apparently, administration officials and Pentagon war planners got the message. On Thursday, [Bloomberg News](#) reported that "the U.S. could join Israel in attacking Iran if the

Islamic republic doesn't dispel concerns that its nuclear-research program is aimed at producing weapons."

"Four days before Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is scheduled to arrive in Washington," Bloomberg averred, "Air Force Chief of Staff General Norton Schwartz told reporters the Joint Chiefs of Staff have prepared military options to strike Iranian nuclear sites in the event of a conflict."

"What we can do, you wouldn't want to be in the area," Schwartz told reporters in Washington.

In keeping with Obama's statement that his administration is marching in "lockstep" with Israel, "Pentagon officials said military options being prepared start with providing aerial refueling for Israeli planes and include attacking the pillars of the clerical regime, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and its elite Qods Force, regular Iranian military bases and the Ministry of Intelligence and Security."

[The Guardian](#) disclosed on Friday that "Israel is to test an advanced anti-ballistic missile system in the coming weeks, inevitably fuelling speculation about preparations for a possible military confrontation with Iran."

"The unusual advance notification of the test," The Guardian noted, "follows an unannounced test in November of a long-range ballistic missile that intensified speculation that Israel was preparing for a military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities."

Just yesterday, [TASS](#) disclosed that "the carrier group of the USS Carl Vinson has re-entered the Gulf. Another US carrier group, of the USS Abraham Lincoln, continues to patrol the Arabian Sea just south of the Strait of Hormuz. It is backed by three attack submarines, one of which is carrying 154 Tomahawk missiles."

In other words, preparations for a joint U.S.-Israeli-NATO attack will target Iran's entire defense infrastructure, and in all likelihood its civilian infrastructure as well, in preparation of Washington's long-standing goal of "regime change."

Driving home the point that the United States American is preparing to launch a new war of aggression in the Middle East, [The Washington Post](#) reported last week that contingency plans have already been drawn up for attacking the Fordow nuclear facility.

"Built into a mountain bunkers designed to withstand an aerial attack," Pentagon stenographer Joby Warrick informed us, "U.S. military planners ... are increasingly confident about their ability to deliver a serious blow against Fordow should the president ever order an attack."

"In arguing their case, U.S. officials acknowledged some uncertainty over whether even the Pentagon's newest bunker-buster weapon—called the Massive Ordnance Penetrator—could pierce in a single blow the subterranean chambers where Iran is making enriched uranium," Warrick wrote.

However, "a sustained U.S. attack over multiple days would probably render the plant unusable by collapsing tunnels and irreparably damaging both its highly sensitive centrifuge equipment and the miles of pipes, tubes and wires required to operate it."

"If you can target the one piece of critical equipment instead of the whole thing, isn't that just as good?" an anonymous official told the Post. "Even by reducing the entrances to rubble, you've effectively entombed the site."

It isn't just centrifuges however that American and Israeli war criminals plan to "entomb."

Close aides to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told Tel Aviv's [Yedioth Ahronoth](#) newspaper Wednesday that "Iran's citizens should be starved in order to curb Tehran's nuclear program."

"Suffocating sanctions could lead to a grave economic situation in Iran and to a shortage of food," YNET's anonymous source said. "This would force the regime to consider whether the nuclear adventure is worthwhile, while the Persian people have nothing to eat and may rise up as was the case in Syria, Tunisia and other Arab states."

"The Western world led by the United States must implement stifling sanctions at this time already, rather than wait or hesitate," YNET disclosed. "In order to suffocate Iran economically and diplomatically and lead the regime there to a hopeless situation, this must be done now, without delay."

As left-wing analyst Richard Silverstein pointed out on the [Tikun Olam](#) web site: "Keep in mind, this particular gem of an Israeli isn't advocating merely putting Iran 'on a diet' as Dov Weisglass, Ariel Sharon's advisor, did toward Gaza. He's advocating death, malnutrition, pestilence: the whole nine yards of incremental genocide."

"It's especially telling that this genius came up with such a policy proposal on the eve of Bibi's trip to Washington to meet with Pres. Obama, who will certainly warm to such an idea," Silverstein noted. "I guess the Israelis must see this as an ice-breaker to bring the two leaders, who have a history of icy relations, closer."

Mass starvation? Genocide? No problem!

And why not? After all, as Karl Rove told journalist Ron Suskind back in 2004: "We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality."

But as Iran specialist Gary Sick recently observed in [Le Monde Diplomatique](#), "When sanctions began Iran had only a rudimentary nuclear programme, without a single centrifuge. Today, after 16 years of ever-stronger sanctions, the IAEA reports that Iran has a substantial nuclear programme with some 8,000 operational centrifuges installed in two major sites, and a stockpile of about five tons of low-enriched uranium. This is the definition of a failed policy."

"The US and its allies have responded by increasing the sanctions to a point where Iran would no longer be able to sell its petroleum products, depriving it of more than 50% of its revenues. This amounts to a military blockade of Iranian oil ports, an act of war," Sick wrote.

"So sanctions, supposed to be the alternative to war, are gradually morphing into economic warfare. The point at which economic pressure becomes undeclared war will be reached by mid-2012 when near-total boycotts of Iranian banks and Iranian oil by the US and the EU will formally take effect. No one can be sure how Iran will respond, but it is difficult to believe it will meekly surrender or simply do nothing."

And when Obama and Netanyahu meet tomorrow in Washington, “neither heads of state will have to worry too much about plotting their war on Iran. Pentagon officials are saying that those wheels are already in motion,” [Russia Today](#) noted.

“With Obama preparing to go before the AIPAC conference this weekend, there are already talks that the United States’ commander-in-chief is considering giving in to Israeli pressure to align against Iran with force, fearing what repercussions could come on Election Day should he walk,” RT observed.

Although “Obama has been hesitant to throw his weight behind any actual endorsements of war so far—and much to the chagrin of Israel—but this week’s meeting between Barak and Panetta suggest that Obama may soon crack.”

Should the United States engage Iran militarily however, it just might be more than Obama that would “soon crack.”

As [Global Research](#) analyst Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya warned, citing the results of a 2002 Pentagon war game: “Iran would react to U.S. aggression by launching a massive barrage of missiles that would overwhelm the U.S. and destroy sixteen U.S. naval vessels—an aircraft carrier, ten cruisers, and five amphibious ships. It is estimated that if this had happened in real war theater context, more than 20,000 U.S. servicemen would have been killed in the first day following the attack.”

While we do not know where belligerent moves by the West will lead, it is also clear that despite these threats Iran will “not go gentle into that good night.”

Tom Burghardt is a researcher and activist based in the San Francisco Bay Area. In addition to publishing in Covert Action Quarterly and [Global Research](#), an independent research and media group of writers, scholars, journalists and activists based in Montreal, he is a Contributing Editor with [Cyrano’s Journal Today](#). His articles can be read on [Dissident Voice](#), [Pacific Free Press](#), [Uncommon Thought Journal](#), and the whistleblowing website [WikiLeaks](#). He is the editor of Police State America: U.S. Military “Civil Disturbance” Planning, distributed by [AK Press](#) and has contributed to the new book from [Global Research](#), The Global Economic Crisis: The Great Depression of the XXI Century.

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