

Target Iran: Washington's Countdown to War

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In-depth Report: [IRAN: THE NEXT WAR?](#)

The Iranian people know what it means to earn the enmity of the global godfather.

As William Blum documented in [Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II](#), 1953's CIA-organized coup against Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh, guilty of the "crime" of nationalizing the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, may have "saved" Iran from a nonexistent "Red Menace," but it left that oil-rich nation in proverbial "safe hands"—those of the brutal dictatorship of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi.

Similarly today, a nonexistent "nuclear threat" is the pretext being used by Washington to install a "friendly" regime in Tehran and undercut geopolitical rivals China and Russia in the process, thereby "securing" the country's vast petrochemical wealth for American multinationals.

As the U.S. and Israel ramp-up covert operations against Iran, the Pentagon "has laid out its most explicit cyberwarfare policy to date, stating that if directed by the president, it will launch 'offensive cyber operations' in response to hostile acts," according to [The Washington Post](#).

Citing "a long-overdue report to Congress released late Monday," we're informed that "hostile acts may include 'significant cyber attacks directed against the U.S. economy, government or military'," unnamed Defense Department officials stated.

However, Air Force General Robert Kehler, the commander of U.S. Strategic Command ([USSTRATCOM](#)) told [Reuters](#), "I do not believe that we need new explicit authorities to conduct offensive operations of any kind."

The Pentagon report, which is still not publicly available, asserts: "We reserve the right to use all necessary means—diplomatic, informational, military and economic—to defend our nation, our allies, our partners and our interests."

Washington's "interests," which first and foremost include "securing its hegemony over the energy-rich regions of the Middle East and Central Asia" as the [World Socialist Web Site](#) observed, may lead the crisis-ridden U.S. Empire "to take another irresponsible gamble to shore up its interests in the Middle East ... as a means of diverting attention from the social devastation produced by its austerity agenda."

Recent media reports suggest however, that offensive cyber operations are only part of Washington's multipronged strategy to soften-up the Islamic Republic's defenses as a prelude to "regime change."

Terrorist Proxies

For the better part of six decades, terrorist proxies have done America's dirty work. Hardly relics of the Cold War past, U.S. and allied secret state agencies are using such forces to carry out attacks inside Iran today.

[Asia Times Online](#) reported that "deadly explosions at a military base about 60 kilometers southwest of Tehran, coinciding with the suspicious death of the son of a former commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, have triggered speculation in Iran on whether or not these are connected to recent United States threats to resort to extrajudicial executions of IRGC leaders."

And [Time Magazine](#), a frequent outlet for sanctioned leaks from the Pentagon, reported that the blast at the Iranian missile base west of Tehran, which killed upwards of 40 people according to the latest estimates, including Major General Hassan Moqqadam, a senior leader of Iran's missile program, was described as the work "of Israel's external intelligence service, Mossad."

An unnamed "Western intelligence source" told reporter Karl Vick: "'Don't believe the Iranians that it was an accident,' adding that other sabotage is being planned to impede the Iranian ability to develop and deliver a nuclear weapon. 'There are more bullets in the magazine,' the official says."

While Iranian officials insist that the huge blast was an "accident," multiple accounts in the corporate press and among independent analysts provide strong evidence for the claim that Israel and their terrorist cat's paw, the bizarre political cult, Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK) were responsible for the attack.

Richard Silverstein, a left-wing analyst who writes for the [Tikun Olam](#) web site, said that the blast was a sign that "the face of the Israeli terror machine may have reared its ugly head in the world."

Citing "an Israeli source with extensive senior political and military experience," Silverstein's correspondent provided "an exclusive report that it was the work of the Mossad in collaboration with the MEK."

Hardly a stranger to controversial reporting, Silverstein published excerpts of secret FBI transcripts leaked to him by the heroic whistleblower Shamai Leibowitz. Those wiretapped conversations of Israeli diplomats caught spying on the U.S., "described an Israeli diplomatic campaign in this country to create a hostile environment for relations with Iran."

In a [Truthout](#) piece, Silverstein wrote that Leibowitz, a former IDF soldier who refused to serve in the Occupied Territories, "explained that he was convinced from his work on these recordings that the Israel foreign ministry and its officials in this country were responsible for a perception management campaign directed against Iran. He worried that such an effort might end with either Israel or the US attacking Iran and that this would be a disaster for both countries."

Unfortunately, while Leibowitz sits in a U.S. prison his warnings are all but ignored.

According to Silverstein's latest account, "it is widely known within intelligence circles that the Israelis use the MEK for varied acts of espionage and terror ranging from fraudulent Iranian memos alleging work on nuclear trigger devices to assassinations of nuclear scientists and bombings of sensitive military installations."

Silverstein noted that “a similar act of sabotage happened a little more than a year ago at another IRG missile base which killed nearly 20.”

Terrorist attacks targeting defense installations coupled with the murder of Iranian scientist, five “targeted killings” have occurred since 2010, aren’t the only aggressive actions underway.

On Friday, [The Washington Post](#) reported that “a series of mysterious incidents involving explosions at natural gas transport facilities, oil refineries and military bases ... have caused dozens of deaths and damage to key infrastructure in the past two years.”

According to the *Post*, “suspicions have been raised in Iran by what industry experts say is a fivefold increase in explosions at refineries and gas pipelines since 2010.”

With Iran’s oil industry under a strict sanctions regime by the West, maintenance of this critical industrial sector has undoubtedly suffered neglect due to the lack of spare parts.

However, “suspicions that covert action might already be underway were raised when four key gas pipelines exploded simultaneously in different locations in Qom Province in April,” the *Post* disclosed.

“Lawmaker Parviz Sorouri told the semiofficial Mehr News Agency that the blasts were the work of ‘terrorists’ and were ‘organized by the enemies of the Islamic Republic’,” hardly an exaggerated charge given present tensions.

Whether or not these attacks were the handiwork of Mossad, their MEK proxies or even CIA paramilitary officers and Pentagon Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) commandos, as Seymour Hersh revealed more than three years ago in [The New Yorker](#), it is clear that Washington and Tel Aviv are “preparing the battlespace” on multiple fronts.

‘Collapse the Iranian Economy’

Along with covert operations and terrorist attacks inside the Islamic Republic, on the political front, a bipartisan consensus has clearly emerged in Washington in favor of strangling the Iranian economy.

Indeed, congressional gifters are threatening to crater Iran’s Central Bank, an unvarnished act of war. [IPS](#) reported that neocon Senator Mark Kirk (R-IL), “a key pro-Israel senator,” has offered legislation “that would effectively ban international financial companies that do business with the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) from participating in the U.S. economy.”

“Dubbed the ‘nuclear option’ by its critics,” Jim Lobe reported that “the measure, which was introduced Thursday in the form of an amendment to the 2012 defence authorisation bill, is designed to ‘collapse the Iranian economy’... by making it virtually impossible for Tehran to sell its oil.”

However, “independent experts,” Lobe wrote, “including some officials in the administration of President Barack Obama, say the impact of such legislation, if it became law, could spark a major spike in global oil prices that would push Washington’s allies in Europe even deeper into recession and destroy the dwindling chances for economic recovery here.”

That amendment was introduced as tensions were brought to a boil over allegations by the

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in its latest [report](#) that Iran may be seeking to develop nuclear weapons.

IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano claims the Agency has “identified outstanding issues related to possible military dimensions to Iran’s nuclear programme and actions required of Iran to resolve these.”

“Since 2002,” Amano averred, “the Agency has become increasingly concerned about the possible existence in Iran of undisclosed nuclear related activities involving military related organizations, including activities related to the development of a nuclear payload for a missile, about which the Agency has regularly received new information.”

However, despite the fact that the “Agency continues to verify the non-diversion of declared nuclear material at the nuclear facilities,” to wit, that such materials have *not* been covertly channeled towards military programs, Amano, reprising former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld’s famous gaff that “the absence of evidence is not the evidence of absence,” the IAEA “is unable to provide credible assurance about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran, and therefore to conclude that all nuclear material in Iran is in peaceful activities.”

Far from being an independent “nuclear watchdog,” the IAEA under Amano’s stewardship has been transformed into highly-politicized and pliable organization eager to do Washington’s bidding.

As a 2009 State Department cable released by [WikiLeaks](#) revealed, U.S. Ambassador Glyn Davies cheerily reported: “Yukiya Amano thanked the U.S. for having supported his candidacy and took pains to emphasize his support for U.S. strategic objectives for the Agency. Amano reminded Ambassador on several occasions that he would need to make concessions to the G-77, which correctly required him to be fair-minded and independent, but that *he was solidly in the U.S. court on every key strategic decision*, from high-level personnel appointments to the handling of Iran’s alleged nuclear weapons program.” (emphasis added)

Although the new report “offered little that was not already known by experts about Iran’s nuclear programme” IPS averred, “it cited what it alleged was new evidence that ‘Iran has carried out activities relevant to the development of a nuclear device’ since 2003—the date when most analysts believe it abandoned a centralised effort to build a nuclear bomb’.”

But as the United States, with the connivance of corporate media, bury the conclusions of not one, but *two* National Intelligence Estimates issued by the U.S. Director of National Intelligence, it is clear to any objective observer that “nonproliferation” is a cover for aggressive geopolitical machinations by Washington.

Both estimates, roundly denounced by U.S. neoconservatives and media commentators when they were published, insisted that “in fall of 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program,” a finding intelligence analysts judged with “high confidence.”

In contrast, the highly-politicized IAEA report is a provocative document whose timing neatly corresponds with the imposition of a new round of economic sanctions meant to crater the Iranian economy. Never mind that even according to the IAEA’s own biased reporting, they could find *no evidence* that Iran had diverted nuclear materials from civilian programs

(power generation, medical isotopes) to alleged military initiatives.

Indeed, with sinister allusions that hint darkly at “undeclared nuclear materials,” the agency fails to provide a single scrap of evidence that diverted stockpiles even exist.

Another key allegation made by the Agency that Iran had constructed an “explosives chamber to test components of a nuclear weapon and carry out a simulated nuclear explosion,” was denounced by former IAEA inspector Robert Kelley as “highly misleading,” according to an [IPS](#) report filed by investigative journalist Gareth Porter.

With “information provided by Member States,” presumably Israel and the United States, the IAEA said it “had ‘confirmed’ that a ‘large cylindrical object’ housed at the same complex had been ‘designed to contain the detonation of up to 70 kilograms of high explosives’”. That amount of explosives, it said, would be ‘appropriate’ for testing a detonation system to trigger a nuclear weapon.”

“Kelley rejected the IAEA claim that the alleged cylindrical chamber was new evidence of an Iranian weapons programme,” Porter wrote. “We’ve been led by the nose to believe that this container is important, when in fact it’s not important at all,” the former nuclear inspector said.

But as Mark Twain famously wrote, “A lie can travel half way around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes.” This is certainly proving to be the case with the IAEA under Yukiya Amano.

Another player “solidly in the U.S. court” is David Albright, the director of the Institute for Science and International Security ([ISIS](#)), a Washington, D.C. “think tank” [funded](#) by the elitist Carnegie, Ford and Rockefeller Foundations.

In an earlier piece for [IPS](#), Porter demolished Albright’s “sensational claim previously reported by news media all over the world that a former Soviet nuclear weapons scientist had helped Iran construct a detonation system that could be used for a nuclear weapon.”

“But it turns out that the foreign expert, who is not named in the IAEA report but was identified in news reports as Vyacheslav Danilenko, is not a nuclear weapons scientist but one of the top specialists in the world in the production of nanodiamonds by explosives,” Porter wrote.

“In fact,” Porter averred, “Danilenko, a Ukrainian, has worked solely on nanodiamonds from the beginning of his research career and is considered one of the pioneers in the development of nanodiamond technology, as published scientific papers confirm.”

“It now appears that the IAEA and David Albright ... who was the source of the news reports about Danilenko, never bothered to check the accuracy of the original claim by an unnamed ‘Member State’ on which the IAEA based its assertion about his nuclear weapons background.”

It is no small irony, that Albright, corporate media’s go-to guy on all things nuclear, penned an alarmist [screed](#) in 2002 entitled, “Is the Activity at Al Qaim Related to Nuclear Efforts?”, an article which lent “scientific” credence to false claims made by the Bush White House against Iraq.

As investigative journalist Robert Parry pointed out on the [Consortium News](#) web site, “Albright’s nuclear warning about Iraq coincided with the start of the Bush administration’s propaganda campaign to rally Congress and the American people to war with talk about ‘the smoking gun in the form of a mushroom cloud’.”

“Yet,” Parry noted, “when the [Washington Post](#) cited Albright on Monday, as the key source of a front-page article about Iran’s supposed progress toward reaching ‘nuclear capability,’ all the history of Albright’s role in the Iraq fiasco disappeared.”

History be damned. Congressional warmongers and corporate media who cite these fraudulent claims, are “spurred by Israel’s whisper campaign to create a sense of urgency on Capitol Hill where the Israel lobby, acting mainly through the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, exerts its greatest influence,” as IPS noted, and punish Iran for the “crime” of opening its nuclear facilities to international inspection!

That “whisper campaign” has now bloomed into a full court press for war by “liberal” Democrats and “conservative” Republicans alike, even as public approval of Congress’s work by the American people tracks only slightly higher than the popularity enjoyed by child molesters or serial killers.

As tensions are dialed up, the United States is spearheading a relentless drive to throttle Iran’s economy. [The New York Times](#) reported that “major Western powers took significant steps on Monday to cut Iran off from the international financial system, announcing coordinated sanctions aimed at its central bank and commercial banks.”

A strict sanctions regime was also imposed on Iran’s “petrochemical and oil industries, adding to existing measures that seek to weaken the Iranian government by depriving it of its ability to refine gasoline or invest in its petroleum industry,” the *Times* reported.

In a move which signals that even-more stringent sanctions are on the horizon, the U.S. Treasury Department “named the Central Bank of Iran and the entire Iranian banking system as a ‘primary money laundering concern’.”

That’s rather rich coming from an administration which slapped Wachovia Bank on the wrist after that corrupt financial institution, now owned by Wells Fargo Bank, pleaded guilty to laundering as much as \$378 billion for Mexico’s notorious drug cartels as [Bloomberg Markets Magazine](#) reported last year!

Going a step further, France’s President Nicolas Sarkozy called on the major imperialist powers “to freeze the assets of the central bank and suspend purchases of Iranian oil.”

[The Guardian](#) reported that Britain “went the furthest by, for the first time, cutting an entire country’s banking system off from London’s financial sector.”

Playing catch-up with war-hungry Democrats and Republicans, President Obama stated that the “new sanctions target for the first time Iran’s petrochemical sector, prohibiting the provision of goods, services and technology to this sector and authorizing penalties against any person or entity that engages in such activity.”

“They expand energy sanctions, making it more difficult for Iran to operate, maintain, and modernize its oil and gas sector,” Obama said.

“As long as Iran continues down this dangerous path, the United States will continue to find ways, both in concert with our partners and through our own actions, to isolate and increase the pressure upon the Iranian regime.”

Last summer, Rep. Brad Sherman (D-CA), a strong backer of punishing sanctions, echoed Richard Nixon’s vow to “make the economy scream” prior to the CIA’s overthrow of Chile’s democratically-elected socialist president, Salvador Allende, and wrote in [The Hill](#) that “critics ... argued that these measures will hurt the Iranian people. Quite frankly, we need to do just that.”

With a new round of crippling economic sanctions on tap from the West, “liberal” Democrat Sherman might just get his wish.

Targeting Civilian Infrastructure

While the Obama administration claims that their aggressive stance towards Iran is meant to promote “peace” and “help” the Iranian people achieve a “democratic transformation,” ubiquitous facts on the ground betray a far different, and uglier, reality.

Anonymous U.S. “intelligence officials” told [The Daily Beast](#) “that any Israeli attack on hardened nuclear sites in Iran would go far beyond airstrikes from F-15 and F-16 fighter planes and likely include electronic warfare against Iran’s electric grid, Internet, cellphone network, and emergency frequencies for firemen and police officers.”

According to *Newsweek* national security correspondent Eli Lake, “Israel has developed a weapon capable of mimicking a maintenance cellphone signal that commands a cell network to ‘sleep,’ effectively stopping transmissions, officials confirmed. The Israelis also have jammers capable of creating interference within Iran’s emergency frequencies for first responders.”

But Israel isn’t the only nation capable of launching high-tech attacks or, borrowing the Pentagon’s euphemistic language, conduct “Information Operations” (IO).

The U.S. Air Force Cyberspace & Information Operations Study Center ([CIOSC](#)) describe IO as “The integrated employment of the core capabilities of electronic warfare, computer network operations, psychological operations, military deception and operations security, in concert with specified supporting and related capabilities, to influence, disrupt, corrupt or usurp adversarial human and automated decision making while protecting our own.”

In this light, *The Daily Beast* disclosed that “Israel also likely would exploit a vulnerability that U.S. officials detected two years ago in Iran’s big-city electric grids, which are not ‘air-gapped’—meaning they are connected to the Internet and therefore vulnerable to a Stuxnet-style cyberattack—officials say.”

The anonymous officials cited by Lake informed us that “a highly secretive research lab attached to the U.S. joint staff and combatant commands, known as the Joint Warfare Analysis Center (JWAC), discovered the weakness in Iran’s electrical grid in 2009,” the same period when Stuxnet was launched, and that Israeli and Pentagon cyberwarriors “have the capability to bring a denial-of-service attack to nodes of Iran’s command and control system that rely on the Internet.”

But as Ralph Langer, the industrial controls systems expert who first identified the Stuxnet

virus warned in an interview with [The Christian Science Monitor](#), the deployment of military-grade malicious code is a “game changer” that has “opened Pandora’s box.”

Among a host of troubling questions posed by Stuxnet, Langer said: “It raises, for one, the question of how to apply cyberwar as a political decision. Is the US really willing to take down the power grid of another nation when that might mainly affect civilians?”

But as we have seen, most recently during the punishing air campaign that helped “liberate” Libya—from their petrochemical resources—the U.S. and their partners are capable of doing that and more.

Future targeting of Iran’s civilian infrastructure may in fact have been one of the tasks of the recently-discovered Duqu Trojan, which Israeli and U.S. “boutique arms dealers” are suspected of designing for their respective governments.

And whom, pray tell, has the means, motives and expertise to design weaponized computer code?

As [BusinessWeek](#) disclosed in July, when one of America’s cyber merchants of death, Endgame Systems, pitch their products they “bring up maps of airports, parliament buildings, and corporate offices. The executives then create a list of the computers running inside the facilities, including what software the computers run, and a menu of attacks that could work against those particular systems.”

According to *BusinessWeek*, “Endgame weaponry comes customized by region—the Middle East, Russia, Latin America, and China—with manuals, testing software, and ‘demo instructions’.”

“A government or other entity,” journalists Michael Riley and Ashlee Vance revealed, “could launch sophisticated attacks against just about any adversary anywhere in the world for a grand total of \$6 million. Ease of use is a premium. It’s cyber warfare in a box.”

Kaspersky Lab analyst Ryan Naraine, writing on the [Duqu FAQ](#) blog averred that Duqu’s “main purpose is to act as a backdoor into the system and facilitate the theft of private information. This is the main difference when compared to Stuxnet, which was created to conduct industrial sabotage.”

In other words, unlike Stuxnet, Duqu is an espionage tool which can smooth the way for future attacks such as those described by *The Daily Beast*.

As [The Washington Post](#) disclosed last May, while the military “needs presidential authorization to penetrate a foreign computer network and leave a cyber-virus that can be activated later,” it does not need such authorization “to penetrate foreign networks for a variety of other activities.”

According to the *Post*, these activities include “studying the cyber-capabilities of adversaries or examining how power plants or other networks operate,” and can “leave beacons to mark spots for later targeting by viruses.”

Or more likely given escalating tensions, Iranian air defenses and that nation’s power and electronic communications grid which include “emergency frequencies for firemen and police officers” who would respond to devastating air and missile attacks.

Countdown to War

We can conclude that Israel, NATO and the United States are doing far more than placing “all options on the table” with respect to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Along with ratcheting-up bellicose rhetoric, moves to collapse the economy, an assassination and sabotage campaign targeting Iranian scientists and military installations, cyberwarriors are infecting computer networks with viruses and “beacons” that will be used to attack air defense systems and civilian infrastructure.

After all, as Dave Aitel, the founder of the computer security firm [Immunity](#) told *BusinessWeek*, “nothing says you’ve lost like a starving city.”

As [Global Research](#) analyst Michel Chossudovsky warned last year, now confirmed by CIA and Pentagon leaks to corporate media: “It is highly unlikely that the bombings, if they were to be implemented, would be circumscribed to Iran’s nuclear facilities as claimed by US-NATO official statements. What is more probable is an all out air attack on both military and civilian infrastructure, transport systems, factories, public buildings.”

With the global economy in deep crisis as a result of capitalism’s economic meltdown, and as the first, but certainly not the last political actions by the working class threaten the financial elite’s stranglehold on power, the ruling class may very well gamble that a war with Iran is a risk worth taking.

As Chossudovsky warned in a subsequent [Global Research](#) report, “there are indications that Washington might envisage the option of an initial (US backed) attack by Israel rather than an outright US-led military operation directed against Iran.”

“The Israeli attack—although led in close liaison with the Pentagon and NATO—would be presented to public opinion as a unilateral decision by Tel Aviv. It would then be used by Washington to justify, in the eyes of world opinion,” Chossudovsky wrote, “a military intervention of the US and NATO with a view to ‘defending Israel’, rather than attacking Iran. Under existing military cooperation agreements, both the US and NATO would be ‘obligated’ to ‘defend Israel’ against Iran and Syria.”

This prescient analysis has been borne out by events. As regional tensions escalate, the USS George H.W. Bush, “the Navy’s newest aircraft carrier, has reportedly parked off the Syrian coast,” [The Daily Caller](#) reported.

Earlier this week, the financial news service [Zero Hedge](#) disclosed that “the Arab League (with European and US support) are preparing to institute a no fly zone over Syria.”

“But probably the most damning evidence that the ‘western world’ is about to do the unthinkable and invade Syria,” analyst Tyler Durden wrote, “and in the process force Iran to retaliate, is the weekly naval update from Stratfor.”

According to *Zero Hedge*, “CVN 77 George H.W. Bush has left its traditional theater of operations just off the Straits of Hormuz, a critical choke point, where it traditionally accompanies the Stennis, and has parked... right next to Syria.”

In an earlier report, citing Kuwait’s *Al Rai* daily, [Zero Hedge](#) warned that “Arab jet fighters, and possibly Turkish warplanes, backed by American logistic support will implement a no fly

zone in Syria's skies, after the Arab League will issue a decision, under its Charter, calling for the protection of Syrian civilians."

The [BBC](#) reports that the Arab League "has warned Syria it has one day to sign a deal allowing the deployment of observers or it will face economic sanctions."

"Meanwhile," BBC averred, "France has suggested that some sort of humanitarian protection zones," à la Libya, "be created inside Syria."

American moves towards Syria are fraught with dangerous implications for international peace and stability. As analyst Pepe Escobar disclosed in [Asia Times Online](#) the Arab League, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Saudi Arabia and repressive Gulf emirates, dances to Washington's tune.

"Syria is Iran's undisputed key ally in the Arab world-while Russia, alongside China, are the key geopolitical allies. China, for the moment, is making it clear that any solution for Syria must be negotiated," Escobar wrote.

"Russia's one and only naval base in the Mediterranean is at the Syrian port of Tartus. Not by accident," Escobar notes, "Russia has installed its S-300 air defense system-one of the best all-altitude surface-to-air missile systems in the world, comparable to the American Patriot-in Tartus. The update to the even more sophisticated S-400 system is imminent."

"From Moscow's-as well as Tehran's-perspective, regime change in Damascus is a no-no. It will mean virtual expulsion of the Russian and Iranian navies from the Mediterranean."

"In other words," *Zero Hedge* warned, "if indeed Europe and the Western world is dead set upon an aerial campaign above Syria, then all eyes turn to the East, and specifically Russia and China, which have made it very clear they will not tolerate any intervention. And naturally the biggest unknown of all is Iran, which has said than any invasion of Syria will be dealt with swiftly and severely."

Despite, or possibly *because* no credible evidence exists that Iran is building a nuclear bomb as a hedge against "regime change," belligerent rhetoric and regional military moves targeting Syria and Iran *simultaneously* are danger signs that imperialism's manufactured "nuclear crisis" is a cynical pretext for war.

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