

Tony Benn calls on Scots to oppose growing US threat towards Iran

Possible nuclear attack on Iran

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Labour firebrand Tony Benn has called on Scots to stand up against a possible atomic attack on Iran by British and American forces.

The former MP and cabinet minister, known for his independence from the official party line, spoke out in Edinburgh after President Bush last week refused to rule out military action against Iran.

“He’s not going to invade Iran because he hasn’t got enough troops,” said Benn. “Instead, he will bomb installations in Iran where nuclear work is going on. Just imagine an American bomb landing on a nuclear power station.

“He is planning an atomic attack with a release of radioactivity and consequences that would make previous wars shrink into insignificance.”

While tensions over Iran have escalated since the country resumed its uranium enrichment programme – believed to be geared towards developing nuclear weapons – Benn drew comparisons with the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

“The same line is being used, that Iran might have weapons of mass destruction, just as was said about Iraq. It was a lie – we know it was a lie. It was because [Bush] wanted the oil and the attack of Iran will be for a similar reason.”

Benn, as president of the Stop the War Coalition, was speaking in Edinburgh ahead of an appearance at the Edinburgh International Book Festival. He famously resigned from the House of Commons in 2001 to “devote more time to politics”.

Glasgow-based human rights lawyer Aamar Anwar joined Benn in calling for an urgent rethink on Britain’s Middle Eastern policy. He said: “If we carry on doing as George Bush and Tony Blair say then we are in real trouble in this country.

“We’re in real trouble right across this planet because there will indeed be a war without end and a war throughout the world.”

Dan Plesch of European think tank the Foreign Policy Centre said: “It is hard to see Britain uninvolved in US actions. The prime minister is clearly of a mind to no more countenance Iran’s WMD than he did Iraq’s.

“In Iran’s case the evidence is more substantial. The Iranians do have a nuclear energy

programme and have lied about it.”

He added: “In any event, Blair is probably aware that the US is unlikely to supply him with the prized successor to the Trident submarine if Britain refuses to continue to pay the blood sacrifice of standing with the US.”

The Edinburgh Stop the War Coalition is backing a major demonstration in London next month, where the build up of military tension against Iran likely to be a key issue.

“Our immediate task is to see there’s no support in this country for a war against Iran,” said Benn. “It is a policy which could have consequences that go far beyond this generation. I see this war lasting as far ahead as the human race.”

Having spent 50 years in parliament, Benn is the longest serving Labour MP in the history of the party.

A Labour spokesperson said: “Fortunately, Mr Benn does not speak for the government.”

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