

# War with Iran – On, Off or Undecided?

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Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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

There's good news and bad, mostly the latter but don't discount the good. On May 22, (non-binding) HR 362 was introduced in the House – with charges and proposals so outlandish that if passed and implemented will be a blockade and act of war. It accused Iran of:

- pursuing “nuclear weapons and regional hegemony” that threatens international peace and America’s national security interests;
- overtly sponsoring “several terrorist groups, including Hamas and Hezbollah;”
- having close ties to Syria;
- possibly sharing “its nuclear materials and technology with others;”
- developing “ballistic technology” and ICBMs exclusively to deliver nuclear weapons;
- calling for the “destruction of Israel;”
- refusing to suspend its uranium enrichment program despite its legality;
- using its banking system to support proliferation and terrorist groups;
- supporting Hezbollah to dominate Lebanon and wage war on its government (of which Hezbollah is part);
- helping Hamas “illegally seize control of Gaza” (and) continuously bombard Israeli civilians with rockets and mortars;”
- financing Iraqi “Shia militant groups (and) Afghan warlords (to) attack American and allied forces;”
- destabilizing the Middle East “by underwriting a massive rearmament campaign by Syria;” and
- seeking regional hegemony to undermine “vital American national security interests.”

While stopping short of overtly declaring war, it proposes Congress:

- prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons “through all appropriate economic, political and diplomatic means;”
- urges the President to impose sanctions on:

- (1) Iran's Central Bank and all others supporting proliferation and terrorist groups;
- (2) international banks that do business with proscribed Iranian banks;
- (3) energy companies with \$20 million or more investments in Iran's oil or natural gas sectors since the 1996 Iran Sanctions Act; and
- (4) all companies doing business with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard.

It further:

- demands that the President prohibit export of all refined oil products to Iran; impose "stringent inspection requirements" on everything entering and departing the country, including international movement of its officials;
- aims to deny foreign investors greater access to Iran's economy and give US companies preferential treatment if and when sanctions are lifted; and
- enlists regional support against Iran and makes clear that America will protect its "vital national security interests in the Middle East," implying by war if necessary.

#### Sanctions As A Form of War

Under the UN Charter's Article 41, the Security Council (SC) may impose economic sanctions to deter (as Article 39 states) "any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression." Specific measures "may include complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations." Prior to imposition, however, the SC should determine if they're warranted, "call upon the parties concerned to comply with such provisional measures," make appropriate recommendations, and decide which specific ones, if any, to use short of armed force.

Under appropriate circumstances, and if imposed responsibly, sanctions may be warranted and have greater impact than diplomatic protests or posturing. They're also hugely less problematic and costly than conflict. However, when irresponsibly used, for imperial gain, or as acts of vengeance or political punishment, they become siege warfare and should be judged accordingly. Most often, US pressure is for these purposes in violation of the UN Charter's intent and spirit. As a result, grievous harm is caused – nowhere more horrifically than in Iraq from 1990 – 2003 when around 1.5 million Iraqis died and millions more suffered tragically and needlessly.

In far less extreme form, a similar strategy is being used against Iran – with no justification whatever. Last March, after a year of deliberations, the Security Council approved SC 1803 – a third set of Iranian sanctions for refusing to suspend its legal right to enrich uranium as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty allows. It followed two earlier rounds in July 2006 (SC 1696) demanding that Iran suspend uranium enrichment by August 31. When it refused, SC 1737 passed in December imposing limited sanctions. SC 1747 then tightened them in March 2007. It imposed a ban on arms sales and expanded a freeze on Iranian assets.

New sanctions extend the earlier ones but not as harshly as Washington wanted. Still they restrict dual-use technologies and authorize cargo inspections to and from the country suspected of carrying prohibited equipment and materials. They also tighten the monitoring

of Iranian financial institutions and extend travel bans and asset freezes against persons and companies involved in Iran's nuclear program.

On August 5, AP reported that Germany and the SC's five permanent members (the so-called P5 + 1) "agreed yesterday to 'seek' new sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program after the country failed to meet a weekend deadline to respond to an offer" discussed below. Its source is US State Department spokesman Gonzalo Gallegos saying "we have no choice but to pursue further measures against Iran."

Now the good news. By mid to late June, HR 362 had 169 co-sponsors. More were being added, and by August 1, 252 were on board. For a time it looked sure to pass quickly. Then anti-war groups reacted - with a tsunami of emails, phone calls, letters and visits to congressional members and their staffs. In spite of heavy AIPAC pressure for the resolution it wrote, they suspended action until the bill's language is softened, so for now it's stalled in committee (but not halted), and Congress is on recess until September 7 after both parties hold their conventions.

### Talking Peace, Planning War

On July 16, the New York Times called Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs William Burns' presence at the July 19 Geneva talks "the most significant diplomatic contact with Iran since" the 1979 revolution. It followed a June meeting (attended by no US representative) at which Germany and the Security Council's five permanent members presented a package of "economic and diplomatic incentives" that failed to impress the Iranians. Predictably, neither did the July 19 meeting that ended in "deadlock" because America doesn't "negotiate." It demands.

In this case, the proposal offered a so-called "freeze-for-freeze" formula, with imprecise terms, under which Iran would stop enriching uranium in return for no additional sanctions for six weeks. At that point, formal negotiations would begin with no promises of concessions or compromise. Iran was given two weeks to reply. The US delegation said that Burns' appearance was a one-time event, and by so doing revealed its deceit. For its part, Iran rejects deadlines, and its IAEA representative, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, expressed "grave concern" over America's double standards on nuclear policy.

For the Bush administration, Iran's nuclear program isn't the issue. It's mere subterfuge for what's really at stake, but first a little background. Under Reza Shah Pahlevi, Iran undertook a nuclear program in 1957 and got a US research reactor in 1967. After the 1974 oil shock, and in spite of the country's vast oil reserves, he established the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran to use nuclear power generation for a modern energy infrastructure that would transform the entire Middle East's power needs. He also wanted to reduce Iran's dependence on oil, lessen its pressure to recycle petrodollars, and ally more closely with European companies through investments.

In the 1970s, W. Germany began Iran's Bushehr civilian reactor complex. In 1978, Iran had the world's fourth largest nuclear program, the largest in the developing world, and planned to build 20 new reactors by 1995. That year, it contracted with Russia to complete the Bushehr project, supply it with nuclear fuel, and transfer potentially dangerous technology, including a centrifuge plant for fissile material. Washington became alarmed. It got the Yeltsin government to back out, but Iran's efforts continued with Russia supplying nuclear fuel, and it still does.

Earlier in 2002, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI – the opposition parliament in exile) claimed the country was pursuing a secret nuclear weapons program – including a Natanz uranium enrichment facility and an Arak heavy water one. US – Iranian confrontation followed using Iran’s nuclear program as pretext. Here’s what’s really at issue:

- Iranian sovereignty;
- its independence from US control;
- its immense proved oil reserves – third or fourth largest in the world by most estimates; also its vast proved natural gas reserves – ranked second largest in the world after Russia;
- America’s resolve to control and have veto power over them;
- Big Oil’s desire to profit from them;
- Iran’s size and location in the strategically important Middle East; its chokehold over the Strait of Hormuz through which millions of barrels of oil flow daily – about 20% of world production of around 88 million barrels;
- its strategic ties to Russia and China on energy, other commercial, and weapons deals; both countries are Iran’s largest foreign investors; Iran has vital security ties with them as well;
- these relationships’ spillover for control of Eurasia and the Caspian region’s vast oil and gas reserves through two organizations – the Asian Security Grid and more important Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as a counterweight to an encroaching US-dominated NATO;
- its power and influence in a region the US and Israel want to dominate; and
- the immense power of the Israeli Lobby to influence US policy, including a possible war on Iran or minimally the harshest measures just short of one.

#### Congress On Board with the Israeli Lobby

At AIPAC’s June 2008 annual conference, most congressional members (over 300 attended), the leadership, and both parties’ presidential candidates expressed uncompromising support for Israel. They also backed harsh sanctions against Iran and even war if they prove ineffective.

For its part, AIPAC’s action agenda urged:

- stopping Iran’s nuclear program; getting Congress to pass HR 362 and the Senate’s equivalent SR 580; “calling on the administration to focus on the urgency of the Iranian threat and to impose tougher sanctions on Tehran;”
- urging the Senate to pass the Iran Counter-Proliferation Act of 2007 (S.970) – “to enhance United States diplomatic efforts with respect to Iran by imposing additional economic sanctions against Iran, and for other purposes;” on September 25, 2007, it passed the House overwhelmingly; the Senate Finance and Banking Committees passed key provisions of the Senate version in two Iran sanctions bills;

— supporting the Iran Sanctions Enabling Act of 2007 (HR 2347) that “authorize(s) State and local governments to direct divestiture from, and prevent investment in, companies with investments of \$20,000,000 or more in Iran’s energy sector;” and

— urging additional aid for Israel as the president requested, “support(ing) Israel’s quest for peace, (and) press(ing) the Arab states to do more to support Israeli-Palestinian talks.”

An earlier August 14, 2007 AIPAC “Issue Brief” is titled “Iran’s Support for Terrorism.” It claims that:

— “the radical regime in Iran has sponsored terrorism against the United States, Israel and the West for decades;”

— the State Department designates Iran “the world’s leading state sponsor of terror, noting its support for groups such as Hamas, ‘Hizballah’ and Islamic Jihad;”

— Tehran also sponsors the “insurgency in Iraq, supplied arms to the Taliban and hosted al-Qaeda terrorists;”

— it also “relentlessly pursu(es) nuclear weapons (and thus is) a particularly implacable and lethal regime;” and

— “only a sustained, unified international effort to isolate and sanction Iran is likely to convince it to give up these dangerous activities.”

The Bush administration agrees. So do most members of Congress, the leadership, and both parties’ presumptive presidential candidates in speeches at the June AIPAC conference. Obama oozed obeisance – “speaking from the heart as a true friend of Israel....when I visit with AIPAC, I am among friends. Good friends....who share my strong commitment (that) the bond between the United States and Israel is unbreakable today, tomorrow, and forever.” Though far less eloquent, McCain was equally supportive.

Obama assured attendees that he stands “by Israel in the face of all threats..speak(s) up when Israel’s security is at risk (and voices concern that) America’s recent foreign policy (hasn’t) made Israel more secure. Hamas now controls Gaza. Hizbollah has tightened its grip on southern Lebanon, and is flexing its muscles in Beirut. Because of the war in Iraq, Iran – which always posed a greater threat to Israel than Iraq – is emboldened and poses the greatest strategic challenge to the US and Israel in the Middle East in a generation....We must isolate Hamas....Syria continues its support for terror and meddling in Lebanon (and) pursu(es) weapons of mass destruction....There is no greater threat to Israel – or to the peace and stability of the region – than Iran. (It) supports violent extremists....pursues a nuclear capability....and threatens to wipe Israel off the map....my goal will be to eliminate this threat.”

AIPAC attendees loved it and his receptivity to attacking Iran. McCain’s comments no less plus his bad humor earlier in singing “bomb, bomb Iran” to the tune of a popular song on a May campaign stop. At AIPAC, he was just as supportive as Obama, wants increased military aid for Israel in FY 2009, and “foremost in (his mind) is the threat posed by the regime in Tehran....The Iranian President calls Israel a stinking corpse....it uses violence to undermine Israel in the Middle East peace process....(it supports) extremists in Iraq (killing) American soldiers....remains the world’s chief sponsor of terrorism....(and its) pursuit of nuclear weapons poses an unacceptable risk, a danger we cannot allow” with clear implications of

what he means and what he may do as president.

#### Christians United for Israel (CUFI) on the "Iranian Threat"

Along with the Israeli Lobby, Bush neocons, and most Washington officials, Christian extremists from organizations like CUFI cite the "Iranian threat" as a recurrent theme, the country's hostility to Israel and desire to "eliminate" the Jewish state, the danger it may do so if it acquires nuclear weapons, and the need to confront Iran preemptively - through sanctions, isolation and war if other measures fail.

Controversial Pastor and John McCain supporter John Hagee is its founder and national chairman, and his influence is considerable. He has 18,000 supporters in his San Antonio Cornerstone Church and far more through CUFI and his global television ministry. His ideology is chilling, and as the most powerful and influential American Christian Zionist, he's a man to be reckoned with. He calls Muslims "Islamic fascists," claims they're at war with western civilization, and believes preemptive countermeasures, including belligerent ones against Iran, are a proper defense.

As keynote speaker at AIPAC's 2007 conference, he called Iran "the most dangerous regime in the Middle East (characterized by its) cruel despotism (and) fanatic militancy. If this regime (acquires) nuclear weapons this would presage catastrophic consequences not only for my country, not only for the Middle East, but for all of mankind....The fact that Iran is building nuclear weapons is beyond question....and they may be the world's first 'undeterable' nuclear power....So the danger is clear and the question is what do we do about it...My message to you is....divest Iran," impose sanctions, isolate the country, and if these measures fail choose a "second course," the other two being "nothing" or "non-military action." From his rhetoric at AIPAC and fundamentalist preaching to his followers, it's clear which one Hagee prefers and may get if enough others in high places share his views.

Israeli Defense Minister and former Labor Prime Minister Ehud Barak may one of them. On July 30, he told top US officials that Israel won't rule out a military strike against Iraq, but there's still time to pursue diplomacy. Like other Israeli officials (past and present), he stressed Iran's global threat so that for Israel "no option would be removed from the table."

Israeli Deputy Defense Minister (and possible next Prime Minister) Shaul Mofaz stated similar views. In an August 1 speech to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (a pro-Israeli think tank), he called Iran an existential threat, recommended diplomacy first, then added "all options are on the table" to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons - "as soon as 2010" as some in Israel claim.

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni (and Mofaz rival for Prime Minister) may be one of them. On CNN August 3, she called for a fourth round of sanctions against Iran and urged the world community to support them. "Iran doesn't pay attention to talks," she said, and "time is of the essence." On the same day, US spokesperson for the US's UN mission, Richard Grenell, (in a Reuters report) voiced the same view in saying "Iran has not complied with the international community's demand to stop enriching uranium (so) the Security Council (has) no choice but to increase the sanctions...."

#### High Level US Opposition to War on Iran

Key Obama foreign policy advisor and former Carter administration National Security



Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, is one of them. In a Washington Post March 2008 op-ed, he called the Iraq war a “national tragedy, (demagogically justified), an economic catastrophe, a regional disaster, and a global boomerang for the United States.” Earlier in February 2007, in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he said it was “a historic, strategic, and moral calamity. Undertaken under false assumptions, it is undermining America’s global legitimacy....tarnishing (our) moral credentials (and) intensifying regional instability.”

He then laid out a “plausible scenario for a military collision with Iran (based on) Iraqi failure to meet the benchmarks, followed by accusations of Iranian responsibility for the failure, then by some provocation in Iraq or a terrorist act in the US blamed on Iran, culminating in a ‘defensive’ US military action” in response. This would plunge “a lonely America into a spreading and deepening quagmire eventually ranging across Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan.” Brzezinski’s remarks were an unmistakable warning that the Bush administration may try to stampede the country into a calamitous conflict it must avoid, and it’s up to Congress to stop it. He also practically called Bush neocons a cabal and warned Congress to be alert.

Later last September, Brzezinski repeated the same warning on CNN – that the Bush administration (Bush and Cheney mainly) is “hyp(ing) the atmosphere (and) “stampeding” the country to war with Iran. “When the president flatly asserts (Iran is) seeking nuclear weapons, he’s overstating the facts....we have very scant (supportive) evidence (and after the Iraq calamity he) should be very careful about the veracity of his public assertions.” Based on his own experience in Afghanistan in the 1980s, he’s also very leery about “running the (same) risk of unintentionally” falling into Russia’s trap – overreaching, paying “little regard for civilian casualties,” turning Afghans against us, and being defeated and forced out of the country.

Brzezinski supports a less confrontational occupation and had this to say about a McCain administration: “if his Secretary of State is Joe Lieberman and his Secretary of Defense is (Rudy) Giuliani, we will be moving towards the WW IV (counting the Cold War as WW III) that they have been both favoring and predicting....an appalling concept” he says must be avoided.

It will be if global intelligence company Stratfor founder and head George Friedman is right. In an August 4 Barrons interview (reported on Iran’s Press TV), he called Israeli war games and tough US talk geopolitical head-fake leading to an “amicable endgame in Iran.” Why? Because given today’s global economy, the alternative risks far outweigh potential benefits. Besides, Iran poses at most a “negligible nuclear threat” and nowhere near reason enough to go to war over.

Further, Iran has helped reduce sectarian violence in Iraq by reigning in Shia militias, and that’s a key reason for lower US casualties. Barrons noted that Stratfor has a record of making accurate assessments and gained a large client base as a result. Friedman believes the US and Israel are using psychological warfare to intimidate Iran to make it more accommodative to their policies. He also says a major attack would have grave repercussions for the global economy at a time when it’s most vulnerable. Iran’s potential retaliatory strength might cripple a sizable amount of world oil trade, cause prices to skyrocket, and exacerbate an already shaky situation at the worst time.

He says the Pentagon has war-gamed an attack, and believes it can make short work of

Iran's shore-based missile batteries and attack ships. De-mining operations would take much longer. In the meantime, oil prices could hit \$300 a barrel, shipping insurance and tanker lease rates would soar, and economic stability would collapse. In the near-term, it would be "cataclysmic to the global economy and stock market."

Up to now, two years of talks on Iran's nuclear program have been more "Kabuki theater" than a real effort at serious negotiation. In addition, Friedman says Iran is "decades away" from developing a credible nuclear weapons capacity even if it intends to pursue one. At best, in his judgment, it may be able to come up with a crude device like the North Koreans managed and apparently tested in 2006. No reason to go to war over if he's right and one among many more vital issues that influential American figures cite to oppose one.

#### Pentagon Crosscurrents on Iran

In late June, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman, Michael Mullen, visited Israel – his second trip there since his October 1 appointment, but this time with a clear (official US) message according to defense analyst and former Pentagon official Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). It was that "the US did not give the green light for an Israeli attack on Iran....George Bush made it clear to all parties that the first option is diplomacy," and no attack should be undertaken without White House approval. Mullen further suggested that US policy likely will remain unchanged under George Bush, and that future plans will be up to the next incumbent – a strong hint that cooler high-level Washington figures know the folly of a wider Middle East war and want no part of one.

Nonetheless, there's no assurance they'll win out, and analyst Michael Oren of the Shalem Centre told CBS News that Bush administration officials assured Israelis that Iran wouldn't be allowed to develop a nuclear weapons capacity with strong hints of an attack if one continues. Then on March 11, CENTCOM commander William Fallon was sacked following reports that he sharply disagreed with Bush administration Middle East policy. On April 24 Iraq commander, and noted super-hawk, David Petraeus was named to replace him, and following an easy Senate confirmation will take over in September.

In June 2007, another change of command occurred when George Bush replaced Joint Chiefs Chairman Peter Pace because of his public disagreement over policy. On February 17, 2006 at a National Press Club luncheon, he responded to a question: "It is the absolute responsibility of everybody in uniform to disobey an order that is either illegal or immoral." He later added that commanders should "not obey illegal and immoral orders to use weapons of mass destruction....They cannot commit crimes against humanity." Nor should they go along with wrong-headed illegal schemes of remaking the Middle East and other regions militarily, but until Admiral Mullen's comments to Israelis it looked like a compliant Pentagon team was in place to pursue it.

Whatever's ahead, it appears high-level opposition figures have surfaced with practical (past and present) trilateralists among them. Figures like Brzezinski, Jim Baker, Henry Kissinger, George Tenet, Paul Volker, Jimmy Carter, George Soros, David Rockefeller, many other top business executives, and even GHW Bush. Their concern over present policy is having an effect, but there's no certainty about which side will prevail. However, with Congress out until September, things are on hold, and time is fast running out on a lamer-than-lame duck administration, according to some.

Even The New York Times is sending mixed messages it will have to clarify in coming weeks.



In a June 10 editorial, it said: "If sanctions and incentives cannot be made to work, the voices for military action will only get louder. No matter what aides may be telling Mr. Bush and Mr. Olmert – or what they may be telling each other – an attack on Iran would be a disaster," implying it's wrong, won't work and will devastate the economy. Then on July 18, it then gave Israeli historian and apologist Benny Morris op-ed space for a vicious and Orwellian headlined diatribe: "Using Bombs to Stave Off War."

In it, he states "Israel will almost surely attack Iran's nuclear sites in the next four to seven months (conventionally)." Should that "assault fail to significantly harm or stall the Iranian program....a nuclear (attack) will most likely follow." The world has "only one option if it wishes to halt Iran's march toward nuclear weaponry: the military" one by "either the United States or Israel." But America is bogged down in two wars, and "the American public has little enthusiasm" for more.

"Which leaves only Israel – the country threatened almost daily with destruction by Iran's leaders....Iran's leaders would do well to rethink their gamble and suspend their nuclear program." Otherwise, an Israeli attack "will destroy their nuclear facilities (even though) this would mean thousands of Iranian casualties and international humiliation."

It's high time The New York Times (and other major media voices) took a stand. Is it opposed to further regional conflict, or in James Petras' words: is it for "the nuclear incineration of 70 million Iranians and the contamination of the better part of a billion people in the Middle East, Asia and Europe" plus an unimaginable amount of retaliatory fallout with the entire Muslim world against the West and Israel.

Yet a June 2008 Presidential Task Force on the Future of US-Israeli Relations statement calls for "Cooperation on the Iranian Nuclear Challenge" and to consider "coercive options" against it, including embargoing Iranian oil and "preventive military action." It was at the time Haaretz reported that Israel conducted large-scale exercises (focusing on long-range strikes) "that appeared to be a rehearsal for a potential bombing attack" on Iran. Statfor's George Friedman downplayed them, called them "psychological warfare" saber-rattling, not preparations for war, and why would Israel telegraph plans if that's what it has in mind. In 1981, it gave no hint it intended to bomb Iraq's Osirak reactor, and when it came it was a surprise.

#### Other Crosscurrents

For brief moments earlier, positive developments surfaced, only to be swept aside by a torrent of anti-Iranian hostility. The Baker Commission December 2006 report recommended engaging Iran and Syria "constructively" and called for a "New Diplomatic Offensive without preconditions," all for naught. Then last December the National Intelligence Assessment (representing the consensus of all 16 US spy agencies) concluded that Iran "halted" its nuclear weapons program in 2003, and it remains frozen, again without effect.

At the same time, battle plans are in place under code name TIRRAW for Theater Iran Near Term. And under a top secret "Interim Global Strike Alert Order" and CONPLAN (contingency/concept plan) 8022, Washington may preemptively strike targets anywhere in the world using so-called low-yield extremely powerful nuclear bunker buster weapons. Iran is the apparent first target of choice, and US Naval carrier strike groups are strategically positioned in the Persian Gulf and Mediterranean to proceed on command.

A recent May World Tribune report cited a second carrier group in the Gulf and secret (approved but not implemented) US naval and air plans for an Iran “counterstrike” in response to “escalating tensions that would peak with an Iranian-inspired insurgency strike against US” forces – that might easily be another Gulf of Tonkin-type incident. So the question remains, are we heading for war or is it just “head-fake” as George Friedman believes?

#### Sy Hersh On “Preparing the Battlefield”

On June 29 in the New Yorker magazine, Hersh reported more crosscurrents and added to what’s covered above. On the one hand, Congress will fund “a major escalation of covert operations against Iran,” according to his high-level sources. As much as \$400 million will go to minority Ahwazi Arab and Baluchi dissident groups, to “destabilize the country’s religious leadership,” aim for regime change, and gain intelligence on Iran’s “suspected nuclear-weapons program.”

The plan apparently involves stepped up covert CIA and Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) operations authorized by a highly classified Presidential Finding about which some congressional leaders have little knowledge and have voiced concern. By law, party leaders and ranking intelligence committee members must be briefed, but apparently it’s been done selectively.

On the other hand, Hersh says Pentagon military and civilian leaders are concerned about “Iran’s nuclear ambitions,” but disagree “whether a military strike is the right solution.” Some oppose one, want diplomacy instead, and apparently Robert Gates is one of them – a former Iraq Study Group member until he became Secretary of Defense in December 2006. In late 2007, he apparently warned the Democrat Senate caucus of grave consequences if the Bush administration preemptively attacked Iran – saying it would create “generations of jihadists, and our grandchildren will be battling (them) in America.”

Admiral Mullen also is “pushing back very hard” against an attack along with “at least ten senior flag and general officers, including combatant commanders” in charge of military operations around the world. One of them is Admiral Fallon who lost his CENTCOM job for opposing an attack even though he agrees on Iran’s possible threat.

#### Looking Ahead

More good news for what it’s worth. On August 2, tens of thousands across the US and Canada protested against a possible attack on Iran. On the bad side, unprecedented numbers, in vain, did as well ahead of the Iraq war, but this time influential Washington figures support them.

With Congress on recess, it’s too soon to know what’s ahead, but one thing’s for sure. Neocons still run things. Dick Cheney leads them, and he claims Iran intends to destroy Israel, is developing nuclear weapons, and is a “darkening cloud....right at the top of the list” of world trouble spots and needs to be addressed (along with Syria) as the next phase of “the road map to war.” With five months to go and heavy firepower to call on, he and George Bush have plenty of time left (as this writer said earlier) to incinerate Iran and end the republic if that’s what they have in mind. Better hope they don’t or that cooler heads win out for a different way.

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