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## Bush Is Hiding the Ball on Iran


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Saturday, 03 February 2007

By Robert Parry

George W. Bush is again guiding the nation toward a preemptive war – this time with Iran – without allowing anything like a full debate of the underlying facts, probable consequences of the conflict or peaceful alternatives.

Bush is following the same course he chose in the run-up to war in Iraq: he insists that war is “a last resort” yet puts in motion the engines of war; he times the release of alarming intelligence reports for maximum political effect; he brushes aside doubts and warnings; he then presents war as unavoidable or a *fait accompli*.

Despite the painful lessons from the Iraq War disaster – including more than 3,000 U.S. soldiers dead and Iraq torn apart by sectarian civil war – the key institutions of Washington, particularly the Congress and the press, are playing similar roles, too.

The capital again is possessed of an air of unreality as the clock ticks down to a likely military showdown with Iran.

Though the documentary record is now clear that Bush set his sights on war in Iraq a year or so before the actual invasion, the President is still believed when he insists now that he wants a diplomatic solution with Iran.

Democratic congressional leaders politely accepted Bush’s new war council – from Defense Secretary Robert Gates to the new regional commander Adm. William Fallon – while the only harsh questioning came from pro-war Republican Sen. John McCain to the departing general for Iraq, George Casey, for not making Bush’s Iraq scheme work.

Meanwhile, the Senate has tied itself up for more than three weeks quibbling about the wording of a non-binding resolution of disapproval about Bush’s troop escalation in Iraq. The Senate is finally expected to begin debate next week on compromise language that limits criticism to the narrow issue of the Iraq troop “surge.”

Washington’s drift on the Iraq resolution rolls on with almost no one pointing at the gathering speed of Bush’s confrontation with Iran.

Congress and the major U.S. news media appear to be taking Bush at his word that he is not planning to bomb Iran, although he has dispatched two aircraft carrier strike groups to the region, deployed Patriot

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anti-missile missile batteries, has British mine sweepers in place, and accuses Iranian agents of helping to kill American troops in Iraq.

This wishful disbelief around Washington that a wider war is looming remains steadfast even as Israeli officials call Iran's nuclear program an "existential threat" and reportedly train their pilots for bombing runs against Iran's heavily fortified nuclear facilities.

Yet, instead of front-page stories about the dangers of an expanded war in the Middle East or an examination of alternative strategies that might be tried, the major U.S. newspapers act as if nothing is happening.

### **Predictive War**

The underlying problem appears to be a continued unwillingness to challenge Bush's five-year-old strategy of "preemptive" – or one might say "predictive" – war that he first enunciated in the wake of the 9/11 attacks.

Bush has never budged from his claim that U.S. military intervention is justified anywhere in the world when a hostile state is developing the potential for weapons of mass destruction that conceivably could fall into the hands of a terrorist group that might use them against American targets.

That was the fundamental rationalization for invading Iraq, even though Bush and his aides found that to sell the idea to the American people they had to exaggerate Iraq's WMD capabilities and invent connections between the secular dictatorship of Saddam Hussein and the Islamic fundamentalist terrorists in al-Qaeda. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[How Neocon Favorites Duped U.S.](#)"]

Bush has put together a similar sales package for Iran. By applying broad definitions of "terrorism" to Iranian-supported Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Palestinian territories, Bush has defined Iran as a state sponsor of "terrorism." Iran's development of nuclear technology has met the other requirement for a WMD scare.

So, the question about an attack on Iran shouldn't be as much if as when, at least if one follows the neoconservative logic of the Bush administration.

Though Iran appears to be years away from having the capability to build a nuclear bomb and although neither Hezbollah nor Hamas has sponsored acts of terrorism inside the United States, Bush and his top aides want to counter this potential threat now.

And, despite Bush's slump in the polls and the Republican defeat in the November elections, the White House is encountering surprisingly few obstacles.

Indeed, some leading Democrats and prominent TV pundits still try to talk as tough – or even tougher than Bush – about Iran.

For instance, former Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina, supposedly one of the more liberal Democratic presidential candidates, spoke via satellite to a security conference in Herzliya, Israel, in January telling senior Israeli government officials that he shared their view that Iran was the world's preeminent threat.

"At the top of these threats is Iran," Edwards said. "Iran threatens the security of Israel and the entire world. Let me be clear: Under no circumstances can Iran be allowed to have nuclear weapons. ...

"We have muddled along for far too long. To ensure that Iran never gets nuclear weapons, we need to keep ALL options on the table, Let me reiterate – ALL options must remain on the table."

Edwards even chided Bush for not being aggressive enough in confronting Iran.

"To a large extent, the U.S. abdicated its responsibility to the Europeans. This was a mistake," Edwards said in a [speech](#) that contained not a single critical word about Israel for its treatment of Palestinians, its settlements on occupied territory or its own large and sophisticated nuclear arsenal.

### **Typical of Democrats**

In many ways, Edwards's speech was typical of how leading Democrats pander to Israel for political gain. But the failure of Democrats – and other elements of the American Establishment – to maintain the traditional U.S. posture as "honest broker" actually portends greater dangers for Israel and other nations in the Middle East.

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If the region continues to go up in flames and even larger numbers of Muslims die, Israel will find it harder to protect itself against an eventual attack by someone with an unconventional weapon that could inflict mass casualties.

The endless pursuit of security through “preemptive” war is almost surely a fool’s errand. Indeed, it could speed, not retard, terrorists getting their hands on a nuclear bomb.

For instance, the precarious Pakistani government of dictator Pervez Musharraf already possesses a nuclear bomb and elements of the Pakistani intelligence service are believed to be sympathetic to al-Qaeda and other radical movements. A wider U.S. war against another Muslim state could tip control of Pakistan to the extremists.

Already, an epidemic of anti-Americanism is infecting populations across the Middle East and around the globe. If counterinsurgency – which is what the “war on terror” ultimately is – requires winning hearts and minds, then Bush is doing the opposite.

A bombing campaign against Iran is certain to stir up even more fury and further isolate the United States. Plus, virtually no military analyst believes a bombing campaign – short of using nuclear weapons – can inflict long-term damage on Iran’s dug-in facilities.

Yet, Edwards and other Democrats, with their hard-line rhetoric, have lowered the bar for Bush to start a war with Iran, much as Edwards and other top Democrats eased his route into Iraq by voting for a resolution on the use of force. (Edwards has since apologized for that Iraq War vote.)

### **Winds of War**

More and more signs point to Bush’s determination to strike at Iran sooner rather than later – and to do so with massive force.

As author Craig Unger noted in a new article in Vanity Fair, the ominous rumble of war has been reverberating across the political landscape for almost a year now.

Last April, in the New Yorker, investigative reporter Seymour Hersh described the Bush administration’s preliminary planning for bombing Iran. In September, Time magazine said a U.S. bombing campaign could strike as many as 1,500 targets in Iran.

More recently, former CIA officer Philip Giraldi said, “I’ve heard from sources at the Pentagon that their impression is that the White House has made a decision that war is going to happen.”

Unger reported that Bush also has turned to the U.S. Strategic Command (StratCom) to draw up plans for the bombing campaign against Iran. StratCom oversees nuclear weapons, missile defense, and protection against weapons of mass destruction.













“Shifting to StratCom indicates that they are talking about a really punishing air-force and naval air attack [on Iran],” said retired Col. W. Patrick Lang, a former analyst for the Defense Intelligence Agency. [[Vanity Fair, March 2007](#)]

My own military and intelligence sources have painted a similar picture of an expected American air campaign against Iran, which may involve the Israelis as the initiators of the attack to make the U.S. attack appear more defensive and to nail down more Democratic and media support. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“Iran Clock Is Ticking.”](#)]

Though the Israeli government of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is expected to join in or at least support the attack on Iran, the war ultimately might damage Israeli interests by cutting off opportunities to defuse regional tensions.

Some Middle East analysts believe Israel would be better served in the long term by tamping down the fiery rhetoric and working in more collaborative ways with the Muslim world, including returning land captured during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

The United States also could reestablish its credentials as a peacemaker if it openly cooperated in such an endeavor. If, for instance, the United States redeployed its forces from Iraq, some could be sent to Israel, both to remain in the region if needed for a quick return to Iraq and to reassure Israelis about the American commitment to their security. U.S. troops also could assist in the peaceful withdrawal of settlers from the Golan Heights and West Bank.

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The image of U.S. troops assisting Israel remove settlers would be graphic evidence to the Muslim world that both Washington and Tel Aviv were serious about a commitment to a new era. The removal of the settlers could coincide with peace negotiations with Syria, the Palestinians and Lebanon.

Israel also could move to engage Iran with a positive commercial relationship, possibly including technological help in building Iranian oil refineries. Business ties would give Israel some positive leverage to discourage Iran from building a nuclear device or at least the chances would be better than just bombing.

Israel also might initiate a conference on nuclear disarmament that would seek to make the Near East a nuclear-free zone with India, Pakistan and Israel phasing out their nuclear arsenals while securing international guarantees about Iran's nuclear program.

Eventually, other smaller nuclear powers, such as the United Kingdom and France, might relinquish their nuclear bombs, and the major nuclear powers – the United States, Russia and China – might agree to reduce their stockpiles.

As unlikely as a Middle East peace initiative might be at this time, it should be an alternative that is part of a pre-war debate.

### **Peace Guidelines**

Some other guidelines that would help a peace initiative:

--The U.S. press and politicians should cool the rhetoric about "terrorism" and start using the word more precisely and less ideologically. The definition should apply to intentional violence against civilians to achieve a political goal.

Plus, the word should be applied evenhandedly, not as a propaganda weapon. When the word is hurled against any militant group that's unpopular with Washington or that has attacked U.S. soldiers, it becomes not only a way to incite irrational hatred, but an impediment to rational policy. Also, overusing the word serves the interests of actual terrorists such as al-Qaeda by lumping them together with, say, Iraqi insurgents.

--Recognize another harsh truth, that virtually no ethnic group, race, religion or nation has clean hands when it comes to "terrorism." Historians can point to a long record of Americans employing terror tactics going back to the origins of the country and continuing through recent atrocities and indiscriminate killings committed against Iraqi civilians.

It's also true that some Jewish extremists used terrorism against British administrators and Palestinians to advance the founding of Israel. Some of these extremists, such as Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir, later rose to positions of prominence, including the post of prime minister. So, avoid selective outrage.

--The United States must recognize that the best way to help Israel is not always to do what the Israeli government and its influential backers demand. One of the greatest contributions to Israeli security was the Sinai peace deal with Egypt that President Jimmy Carter hammered out in the late 1970s, often over the angry objections of Prime Minister Begin and Israeli hardliners.

On the other hand, the yoking of U.S. and Israeli positions during George W. Bush's administration has caused damage to Israeli security interests, including a stunning military-diplomatic misadventure in Lebanon in summer 2006 and a disturbing rise in Islamic extremism across the region.

Overall, the goal of a more peaceful way forward would be to wind down the tensions and the hatreds, rather than ratcheting them up.

Granted, the prospects for such a peace initiative do not seem bright. It is especially hard to envision President Bush capping his tough talk in favor of peace talks, or the Democrats and the national news media shaking off their opportunism and timidity.

In a healthy democracy, however, all chances for peace would be openly debated and tried out before a decision was made to wage war.

[For more on this topic, see Consortiumnews.com's "[Logic of a Wider Mideast War.](#)"]

**Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press**

and Newsweek. His latest book, *Secrecy & Privilege: Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq*, can be ordered at [secrecyandprivilege.com](http://secrecyandprivilege.com). It's also available at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com), as is his 1999 book, *Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press & 'Project Truth*

## Comments (15)



### Arvy: Let's call it what it is.

Another term for Bush's "preemptive war" is war of aggression -- the "supreme crime" under international law. America may consider itself immune to any and all forces of justice in the world, but evil deeds have a way of catching up with their perpetrators in the end and there is much to answer for already.



1

February 03, 2007

### A Voice Apart: Does anyone think that humans can ever be civilized?

I find myself in a position now of believing that no matter how technologically advanced, highly educated, and creative humans can be, we may never be able to restrain from violence against each other. As a pacifist, this is incredibly demoralizing. On the other hand, possibly Arvy is right and karma will get those blood lusting warmongers presently terrorising the world. Maybe the Hague will have a field day prosecuting all those blood (and oil) thirsty agents of war.



2

February 03, 2007

### a guest: It is fatefull

The turks or the Muslims say "Kismet"

A Hellenic verse says: If the fate is guiding you, and you may protest and try to change the course, even then it is the fate which makes you do that.

I am not a pessimist but this how some people think.



3

February 03, 2007

### GPMB: TIME FOR A REVOLUTION; THEY WON'T LISTEN, SO WE NEED TO FORCE BUSH AND CHENEY OUT OF OFFICE

Yes, the war criminals infesting the White House--Bush and Cheney--will bomb Iran. The propaganda campaign has been underway for several years. But instead of the bombastic lies and non-stop press coverage that sold the Iraqi war, this time its a "soft sell". It's like being in a darkened theater and hearing someone whisper in your ear, "The building is on fire". Although your senses tell you that you can't see any flames; smell any smoke or feel any heat, the voice is insistent and again whispers, "The building is on fire." We need to rise up as a nation and overthrow the psychopathic Bush from the reins of power, then turn him over to the International Court of Justice in the Netherlands to stand trial for his numerous war crimes.



4

February 03, 2007

### Dante: greed and power

It's almost 4 am in California, and soon will be 24 hours that I'm awake. Just came back from a friend's living room where 5 of us talked for about 6 hours, about the same subject, The WARS, the future wars, the present wars, the past wars. It seems that our history as humans



is defined by wars and conflict.

I see mostly the greed of those bastards and though a believer in Karma I'm even doubtful now, too many years have gone by and nothing has happened to them, things have gotten worse for everyone that has had the misfortune to own or have something they want.

Their families are happily enjoying their power and money jetting here and there, partying, buying more possessions etc.

This country's economy is kept almost stable artificially, though the disparities between rich and poor are more evident by the day. I wouldn't put it past them that the reason congress is twidling its thumbs and dragging its feet is because they fear a total economic collapse if they stop Bush in his warring tracks. If this happens, again, we will be the losers and the poorer among us will starve or freeze or suffer dehydration, while the murderous greedy bastards continue living their lives in oppulence and unconcerned over the misery and pain they've created.

5

February 03, 2007

**Dante: Guest**

I've heard Hindus say "The outcome will be the same" meaning we can roll over, fight, agonize, wring our hands, pull our hairs and nothing will change because the outcome has been already dictated by the actions that took place.

My mother's conclusion was always the same "Si Dios lo quiere" If God wants it to be. I hope God wants what we all here want.



6

February 03, 2007

**DetainThis: Lies about Iran and Ahmadinejad are all too easily smashed**

<http://blog.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=blog.view&friendID=53109762&blogID=222490533&Mytoken=172D2FED-34F1-4C59-B8601C406795F32963833857>



7

February 03, 2007

**kla: Dante - they are happyily...**

- Their families are happily enjoying their power and money jetting here and there,
- partying, buying more possessions etc.



Really. Most of these people are miserable. Is this the maximum human existence. Very subjective. Give me a New Mexico sunset, keep you jet.

Need a little inspiration:

Tim Ryan's Webb site. (Speeches).

<http://timryan.house.gov/HoR/OH17/Hidden Content/Floor Speeches.htm>

"Congressman Tim Ryan speaks out post 911 reaction....."

8

February 03, 2007

**kla: tim ryan link**

<http://timryan.house.gov/HoR/OH17/Hidden Content/Floor Speeches.htm>

9



February 03, 2007

**a guest: STOP EMPOWERING BUSH AND CHENEY**

There are two options to dealing with this potential threat. 1) Wring our hands and accept it as an accomplished fact, which only greases the wheels of devastation for the warmongers, or 2) Set our collective intention that this will not happen, that we are going to stop this! Positive thinking 101. I have set my intention. Will you please set yours instead of feeding Bush's and Cheney's intention with your fatalism. You are not helpless onlookers. I will keep repeating this until it catches on.



10

February 03, 2007

**Arvy: Well, some of us are nearly so.**

You are not helpless onlookers.



This empire doesn't grant voting rights to its subjects in other lands -- not that the choice between Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee would mean much if it did.

11

February 03, 2007

**Dante: KLA**

Normal human beings feel like that, a sunset, nature, etc., the others are constantly involved in a fruitless pursuit of happiness, but their base needs are met, they're not hungry or homeless, or out of a job mostly because they never held one or had the need to work. To me happiness is being in the midst of nature, looking at Mt Diablo at sunset, seeing my dogs run after that elusive squirrel, talking the night away with good friends. I also don't need to jet anywhere.



12

February 03, 2007

**USAn: ...**

"As a pacifist, this is incredibly demoralizing."



The whole idea of pacifism was twofold:

1. Passive, quiet resistance to the oppressor, even to the point of death, thereby deflecting the dehumanization back on the dehumanizer.
2. The publicity of such events, via the media around the world, leading to mass revulsion, totally removing any moral ground the oppressor can stand on.

But none of this would work today. We have a mass media completely obedient to the dictates of

capitalist power, and the US has a population that is desensitized to violence and no broad moral principles that I can discern. I knew this was underway back in the 1980's when viewing the movie Gandhi; during the scene when the Indians are, one-by one being brutally beaten, by the British salt-works guards, I was crying - while many in the theater were, inexplicably to me at the time, laughing.

And, at any rate, the media would completely ignore the nonviolent action, so the few who would be morally repulsed never hear about it. There could be a thousand Gandhis in Palestine, and Israel could kill them all, and that would be that.

I once deeply believed in nonviolence and Satyagraha like a religion, now I realize that it was just another tactic that the powerful have effectively neutralized.

13

February 03, 2007

**kla: Dante - work usw.**

Work, for the lucky ones, is one of their true gifts, so fulfilling.



Happiness for the fat cats? They are pissed because they were not born a Roberto Alagna, or such. So winged tipped shoes and a life of phoniness. Really ugly McMansion (vicarious me). No taste whatsoever. Kiss butt, lackeys, all around.

My guess is that the Bush life is wall to wall chemicals, sleeping pill that would take down a horse. How else to get a look like that and hair graying by the day.

Note of interest, off topics: I used to jog past pre-governor Bush's house, early in the morning. Only had one lonely SS troop, car in the driveway. SS=Schutzstaffel. He might have been in re-hab then.

14

February 03, 2007

**a guest: ...**

Dear Dante



Those Fat Cats want the whole world. Governments come and go. They buy them, corrupt them or impeach them. They die but the empire they created goes on. Their offspring may be psychopath or mad. They have the money so they run the world.

The only way to save the world we people must rebel and make a law. We must put a limit that how much a person can own and how much can

leave as inheritance.

Please do some research on how they run the world. The evil they do and their plan for the future.

15

February 03, 2007

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