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**Gary Hart**[Bio](#)[BLOGGERS INDEX](#)[RSS](#)**The October Surprise** (152 comments)

09.23.2006

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It should come as no surprise if the Bush Administration undertakes a preemptive war against Iran sometime before the November election.

Were these more normal times, this would be a stunning possibility, quickly dismissed by thoughtful people as dangerous, unprovoked, and out of keeping with our national character. But we do not live in normal times.

And we do not have a government much concerned with our national character. If anything, our current Administration is out to remake our national character into something it has never been.

The steps will be these: Air Force tankers will be deployed to fuel B-2 bombers, Navy cruise missile ships will be positioned at strategic points in the northern Indian Ocean and perhaps the Persian Gulf, unmanned drones will collect target data, and commando teams will refine those data. The latter two steps are already being taken.

Then the president will speak on national television. He will say this: Iran is determined to develop nuclear

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weapons; if this happens, the entire region will go nuclear; our diplomatic efforts to prevent this have failed; Iran is offering a haven to known al Qaeda leaders; the fate of our ally Israel is at stake; Iran persists in supporting terrorism, including in Iraq; and sanctions will have no affect (and besides they are for sissies). He will not say: ...and besides, we need the oil.

Therefore, he will announce, our own national security and the security of the region requires us to act. "Tonight, I have ordered the elimination of all facilities in Iran that are dedicated to the production of weapons of mass destruction....." In the narrowest terms this includes perhaps two dozen targets.

But the authors of the war on Iraq have "regime change" in mind in Iran. According to Colonel Sam Gardiner (author of "The End of the 'Summer of Diplomacy': Assessing U.S. Military Options in Iran," The Century Foundation, 2006) to have any hope of success, such a policy would require attacking at least 400 targets, including the Revolutionary Guard. But even this presumes the Iranian people will respond to a massive U.S. attack on their country by overthrowing their government. Only an Administration inspired by pre-Enlightenment fantasy could believe a notion such as this.

Embracing this reverie requires believing in the Iranian Ahmed Chalabi, or perhaps even Mr. Chalabi himself since he has been working both sides of the street in both countries for some time.

It does not involve much imagination to understand the timing. The U.S. is poised to adopt a Congressional regime change of its own in November. A political strategy totally based on fear can offer few other options to prevent this. Besides, occupation by Democrats of even one house of Congress in January would make this scheme more difficult (one would certainly hope).

Further, time for super-power military conquest may be running short in the emerging age of fourth generation warfare. "...the age of Western military ascendancy is coming to an end." ("No Win," Andrew Bacevich, The Boston Globe, August 27, 2006).

The consequences? The sunny neoconservatives whose goal has been to become the neo-imperial Middle Eastern power all along will forecast few. But prudent leaders calculate all the risks, and they are historic.

These include: violent reaction throughout the Islamic world; a dramatic increase in jihadist attacks in European capitals and the U.S.; radicalization of Islamic youth behind a new generation of jihadist leaders; consolidation of support for Hamas, Hezbollah, al Qaeda, and a rapidly spreading malignant network; escalating expansion of anti-American sentiment throughout the world, including the democratic world; and the formation of WWII battle lines between the U.S. and the Arab and Islamic worlds.

In more rational times, including at the height of the Cold War, bizarre actions such as unilateral, unprovoked, preventive war are dismissed by thoughtful, seasoned, experienced men and women as mad. But those qualities do not characterize our current leadership.

For a divinely guided president who imagines himself to be a latter day Winston Churchill (albeit lacking the ability to formulate intelligent sentences), and who professedly does not care about public opinion at home or

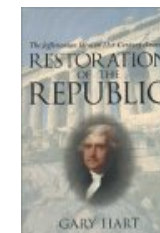
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THE COURAGE OF OUR
CONVICTIONS
A MANIFESTO FOR
DEMOCRATS

GARY HART ★★★

The Courage of Our Convictions: A Manifesto for Democrats

by Gary Hart



Restoration of the Republic: The Jeffersonian Ideal in 21st-Century America

by Gary Hart

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abroad, anything is possible, and dwindling days in power may be seen as making the most apocalyptic actions necessary.

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I think the "October surprise" is the lowering of gas prices. That or Karl Rove is teasing the pundits with the specter of war with Iran the way he tantalized them with disinformation about his imminent indictment for Plamegate. There is no conceivable benefit for either Exxon or Halliburton in the strategic bombing of Iran (the only feasible form of warfare we could engage in right now, with our personnel tied up in Iraq and Afghanistan) so it won't happen.

By: werbenjagermanjensen on September 23, 2006 at 01:08pm
Flag: [abusive]

Doesn't the Bush administration need a declaration of war from Congress?

By: poboy on September 23, 2006 at 01:12pm
Flag: [abusive]

Such personal attacks on the President are beneath you, sir.

I would also say that such a scenario as you envision is completely unlikely, even given the fear-mongering that the left likes to indulge in of late.

Although I am happy to acknowledge your political expertise far surpasses mine, and I would join many other

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Americans in their disgust as to how the President's Administration have handled things of late, I don't see why anyone needs to use this sort of unfounded fear mongering for political purposes.

With respect,

Michale.....

By: Michale on September 23, 2006 at 01:12pm

Flag: [abusive]

Its already happening (October surprise)! Has anyone seen the " Bin Laden dead " B.S. rolling around web / media / news.

Its so sad that the average" Yank " doesnt see that the wool is being pulled over their eyes. That wool being fear.

By: husaria on September 23, 2006 at 01:14pm

Flag: [abusive]

I'm not as worried about the Bushies striking Iran as I used to be. It was advanced Russian anti-tank missiles that allowed Hezbollah to kick Israel's ass during the recent Lebanon war, and Iran has lots of that equipment.

Of course, the Bushies do seem to live in a right-wing fantasy world, so there's really no telling what they might do.

By: Merlin7 on September 23, 2006 at 01:15pm

Flag: [abusive]

Then the president will speak on national television. He will say this: Iran is determined to develop nuclear weapons; if this happens, the entire region will go nuclear; our diplomatic efforts to prevent this have failed; Iran is offering a haven to known al Qaeda leaders; the fate of our ally Israel is at stake; Iran persists in supporting terrorism, including in Iraq;

This argument doesn't wash with me because it's happened in Pakistan already. Pakistan has nukes; India has gone nuclear; any diplomatic efforts (if there were any) to prevent this failed; the northwestern region of Pakistan is a haven to known al Qaeda leaders; the fate of our ally India is at stake; Pakistan persists in allowing terrorists to roam within its borders;

Didn't Bush just say the other day that in order for U.S. troops to enter a sovereign nation, they must be invited in? Iran is sovereign, is it not?

Bush is the biggest flip-flopper with his arguments--whichever one suits his current mood.

I know this is all about politics--readers please, our country desperately needs to hold our leaders accountable and the direction they are taking us. Vote Democratic in the coming election.

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- Tom

By: TomR on September 23, 2006 at 01:15pm

Flag: [abusive]

There is only one issue for Bush, Cheney and Rove. It is the coming November elections. If they lose the House or Senate they stand the risk of having their nefarious activities exposed. They can not stand the disinfectant of sunshine. That is why what you say seems so plausible.

Assimilated Press

Read "Media Heads Meet With Rove To Coordinate Campaign Strategy" at:

<http://assimilatedpress.blogspot.com/2006/09/media-heads-meet-with-...>

By: Virt on September 23, 2006 at 01:18pm

Flag: [abusive]

Gray, you are freakin' hilarious. Remember one of your previous columns when you said the "surprise" was going to be Bush announcing major troop withdrawals from Iraq? Make up your mind, son! Actually, here's what might be the October surprise: Maybe they'll let Hugo Chavez back into the country. He can take his hate-Bush tour across America and drive every independent voter away from the Democrats for the next 5 years.

By: Damail on September 23, 2006 at 01:19pm

Flag: [abusive]

The signs are all there aren't they? But I'm praying this is not going to happen. Hopefully, God will pass that along ...

By: chonchobar on September 23, 2006 at 01:19pm

Flag: [abusive]

Long ago in medical school, we'd look at pictures in our textbooks of massive tumors and unchecked infections and wonder, "What eventually drove these people to see a doctor? What was the final straw?"

This administration seems to wake up every Monday morning and say "If they thought what we did last week was heinously Constitution defiling and in-your-face treasonous, wait till they see what we do this week!"

This cancer on America was huge 4 years ago. What will finally motivate us to resect it before it kills us all?

By: HellerHighwater on September 23, 2006 at 01:22pm

Flag: [abusive]

I don't think Bush is going to bomb Iran before November. It would be seen as a gimmick by voters, just as any capture of Osama in October would be seen as a gimmick. Rove has something else under his sleeve unrelated to Iraq. Perhaps a Pakistani coup will happen that replaces Musharraf with a fanatical Muslim. Boogedy boogedy

boogedy BOO!

By: wookie on September 23, 2006 at 01:25pm

Flag: [abusive]

----- In more rational times, including at the height of the Cold War, bizarre actions such as unilateral, unprovoked, preventive war are dismissed by thoughtful, seasoned, experienced men and women as mad. But those qualities do not characterize our current leadership.

Thank you for your voice. This is a strong nation when we HONOR our diversity and RESPECT our differences of opinion.

The Republican party in power today exhibit NONE of these qualities.

Respect and honor are no longer needed in a world run on fear.

Watch out, Amercia, the next "commies" are "islamo-fascists".

We are MOST CERTAINLY in grave danger of slipping further into the ash heap of history.

Keep up the fight.

And do not run for office. Unless you fight back. Now THAT I would love to see.

Peace.

By: davidgetsinvolved on September 23, 2006 at 01:32pm

Flag: [abusive]

So...if you want perpetual war and constant scrounging up of new enemies, please vote Republican.

By: NegSpin on September 23, 2006 at 01:41pm

Flag: [abusive]

If Bush did something like that the election would turn into an election about impeachment.

By: Alvord on September 23, 2006 at 01:44pm

Flag: [abusive]

Given the events that have transpired over the last two weeks, combined with the drum-beats of late from the conservative press that are eerily similiar to the ones heard in late 2002 and early 2003, , I am more inclined to agree with your prediction than not. My last hope for a non-military resolution rests on the likelihood of Congressional members not wetting their pants and giving the administration carte-blanche authority as they did in 2003.

By: johnf on September 23, 2006 at 01:44pm

Flag: [abusive]

We have gone from the Amiable Dunce of Ronald Reagan to the Necessary Idiot of George W. Bush. In both cases, the political triumph was a president so stupid he would believe his own lies and tell them without guile, a president surrounded by deeply cynical men who work the fool on behalf of their own greed and lust for power. Yet now, this president and the men who surround him are dragging our country to its nadir.

The cynicism has become so perverse that these men think of this imminent apocalyptic war as a political tactic, an October surprise. Hundreds of thousands of people will die and the USA will become the pariah of the world in a Republican effort to retain control of Congress. What Bush believes his role to be is irrelevant -- Holy Warrior, protector of civilization, whatever, as long as he follows the prescription of the men who would destroy our Democracy and install themselves as a dictatorial class.

With the invasion of Iran we will make the world our enemy. Yet that is to be desired by the power mongers. Under siege, any destruction of liberty will be justified, and a sufficient percentage of the frightened, ignorant public has signaled its willingness to embrace this "compromise," including torture, which taps an ugly region of the American psyche that liberals fear to contemplate.

This new war, which will spiral quickly and make a draft unavoidable, will send vast numbers of the remaining thinking people in this country to the streets in protest. And then we will find out what the Patriot Act is really intended for.

By: TechPundit on September 23, 2006 at 01:45pm

Flag: [abusive]

It seems to me, that if what Gary Hart is suggesting here is already beyond the planning stage, then America has reached a stage our founding fathers never envisioned. That is a time when the military of the US, acting with conscience, which this whole administration does not have, stage a coup against this administration, and by force drive them from office. I see no other way to avoid our own total annihilation. Any neocon dumb enough to support this administration in this, is forgetting that Iran's ally is Communist China which has nuclear weapons at the ready that can reach our shores and only an idiot would think they would not use them if provoked. If this administration moves as Hart suggests, the Chinese will respond and that will be the end of civilization as we know it. These cretins in this administration want to see the advent of the second coming no matter at what expense. They don't deserve to remain a minute longer in power than the present one.

By: JohntheElder on September 23, 2006 at 01:45pm

Flag: [abusive]

"For a divinely guided president who imagines himself to be a latter day Winston Churchill (albeit lacking the ability to formulate intelligent sentences), and who professedly does not care about public opinion at home or abroad, anything is possible, and dwindling days in power may be seen as making the most apocalyptic actions necessary.
Gary Hart"

I couldn't agree more!

I wouldn't be surprised if they suspend the mid term elections under some obscure national security claim!

BushCo has erred in catastrophic ways (and thereby establishing a legacy of incompetence and failure) and will try to fix it ...

at any cost ... and that's frightening!

The GOP ... if it's the worst of all possible outcomes ... it's us!

By: CarlV on September 23, 2006 at 01:46pm

Flag: [abusive]

He's gonna get us all killed.

By: amiblueyoubet on September 23, 2006 at 01:46pm

Flag: [abusive]

The first rule when you're stuck in a hole is to stop digging.

But maybe DUHbya thinks he'll strike oil.

<http://newsprism.com...>

<http://prestoncoleman.com...>

By: civildisobedience on September 23, 2006 at 01:53pm

Flag: [abusive]

Senator Hart, I am proud to call you my former Senator, but prouder still of the valiant effort you have made here and elsewhere to expose the ongoing tragedy and farce which have resulted from the disastrous policies of our current Republican rulers. I agree with you that the "Decider" has likely already chosen to take this monstrous step and attack Iran, even though Iran poses no imminent threat to the United States, and our intelligence services have no convincing evidence that it has indeed embarked upon an effort to acquire nuclear weapons. I only hope that someone within the senior ranks of our military with your foresight, courage and wisdom will take the steps necessary to expose these illegal and immoral war plans to the world before they can be implemented.

By: StevenD on September 23, 2006 at 01:55pm

Flag: [abusive]

Gary,

Interesting article. However a real October surprise would be some kind of resolution of the Iran standoff we currently find ourselves in. With the price of oil dropping it would be crazy for team 43 to launch another front in the GWOT. While it is impossible to predict what cards Team 43 will play before 11/7, the current operations look like a bluff to create an incident, and to look strong for the true believers.

Our country needs to return to a balance of power between the executive and legislative branches of our government. The only way that this will happen is if the Democrats take control of one chamber, or a near tie is achieved in the midterms. It is time that the Democrats took the gloves off and started acting like the fate of our Republic is at stake in these midterm elections. Our once Great American dollar has lost nearly 50% of it's value against the EURO and Canadian Dollar since January of 2003. Why is the collapse of our currency not even mentioned by the Democrats?

The real October surprise would be if the Democrats found the courage to actually confront the culture of Corruption, Cronyism, and gross negligence in the administration of the GWOT.

Why not a 527 ad about the cost of a European or Canadian vacation 2003 vrs 2006? Why not ads, about the the amount of private contracting in the war on terror? Why not ad's about media consolidation in cable, broadcast and telecom? Why not ad's about the give away to big Pharma, by not allowing importation from Canada, our even bulk discounts, that are given to the VA and defense department? Why not ads about Felon Congressman Bob Ney's HAVA ACT that makes elections a hackers dream? Why not an ad demanding a return to a paper trail for elections?

Sadly Gary the real October surprise would be for the Democrats to quit living in Oz, get off the yellow brick road, find their Courage, Brains, and a Heart before 11/7.

J Marcus Campbell

By: Jmarcuscampbell on September 23, 2006 at 01:59pm

Flag: [abusive]

You must be joking. If there were concrete plans to invade Iran anytime in the next 3 months, the MSM would be full of leaks from disaffected Pentagon staffers. The run up to Iraq took 6 months, I think October gas at \$1.75 per gallon will accomplish the same thing, and that's where we're headed. \$1.75 gasoline--the real October surprise.

By: crybaby on September 23, 2006 at 02:04pm

Flag: [abusive]

"Only an Administration inspired by pre-enlightenment fantasy could believe such a notion..." yes, and somebody needs to tell this President that there's a difference between being middle aged and living in the Middle Ages!

By: jayne on September 23, 2006 at 02:16pm

Flag: [abusive]

sir

why should anyone be surprised about this - we have done it before so we are well versed - back in the 50's we did not like the government in iran so we helped to overthrow it and put in the shah and helped train his secret police -

then we wre kicked out again by someone who does not like us - so what has changede ???

By: curious43 on September 23, 2006 at 02:17pm

Flag: [abusive]

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