

Bomb Iran Halfway Back to the Stone Age

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Global Research, May 14, 2019

[EricMargolis.com](#) 11 May 2019

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

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Is it just a coincidence that TV networks are re-running old 'Dirty Harry' films just as a powerful US Naval armada and Air Force B-52 bombers are headed for what could be a clash with Iran? Here we go again with the 'good guys' versus the 'bad guys,' and 'make my day.'

Maybe it's more bluffing? The current US military deployment was scheduled before the latest flare-up with Iran, but the bellicose threats of White House neocon crusaders like John Bolton and Mike Pompeo certainly create the impression that the US wants war.

Adding to the warlike excitement, President Trump just ordered seizure of a large North Korean bulk cargo ship. This was clearly a brazen act of war and violation of international law. More dangerous brinkmanship by administration war-mongers who increasingly appear besotted by power and hubris.

So much for the president who vowed to avoid foreign wars – and so much for the millions of anti-war voters who believed him.

Why does Trump let his two horsemen of the apocalypse get away with this?

I'm following this latest gunboat diplomacy with particular interest because I had the privilege in 1994 of going to sea on the very same aircraft carrier, "CVN-72 USS Abraham Lincoln" that is now reportedly steaming towards Iran's coast. With it are a nuclear submarine, a cruiser and a group of destroyers, all equipped with land-attack missiles.

As a former soldier and war correspondent, I was deeply impressed by the 'Lincoln' and her youthful crew. They were efficient, motivated and superbly well-organized. In our lifetime, no other navy will ever equal the skills of the US carrier fleet. The only real threat to America's huge carriers is the growing power and accuracy of Russian, Chinese and Indian heavy anti-ship missiles.

The Navy task force is backed up by B-52 nuclear-capable heavy bombers now stationed in Qatar, and US warplanes from other bases in the Gulf, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Turkey, Jordan, and Pakistan that effectively surround Iran. The carriers are just for show and threat.

Israel, which is eager to see the US attack Iran, has helpfully provided 'intelligence' allegedly showing that Iran is planning to attack certain US installations in the Mideast. Interestingly, Israel and its American supporters did the same thing in 2001 and 2003, pushing the US to attack its foe Iraq. Washington largely relied on Israeli intelligence about Iraq since its own resources were so weak – and senior Bush administration neocons kept touting the claims from Israel.

President Trump sees himself as an emperor besieged by Washington Lilliputians. There's nothing like a jolly little war to shut up all his critics and garner media support. Even better, the 'bad guys' in this case are 'Eye-ranian' Muslims. Trump's religious base would thrill at the prospect of pounding the Islamic Republic. During the Bush administration years, over 80% of so-called 'born again' Christians backed war against Iraq. What happened to 'turn the other cheek?'

This administration's neocons have made it their life's work to destroy Iran, which is considered Israel's only serious enemy and a champion of the Palestinian cause.

The Trump administration has largely fallen under the influence of Israel's hard right in foreign and military affairs. So Bolton and Pompeo are clearly trying to engineer an incident that would spark war.

Not full-scale war, but an excuse for the US and Israel to bomb Iran's nuclear facilities, key military sites and communications infrastructure as was done with Iraq. It won't be back all the way to the Stone Age, but half way, so that Iran's development is set back by a decade.

Israel will then use its control over the US Congress to keep Iran under a very tight embargo. The Pentagon's original plan to punish Iran called for some 2,300 air strikes on Day 1 alone.

Washington's hope, as usual, is that growing misery and hardship in Iran will provoke a revolt to oust the Islamic government, allowing the US to install the exiled Iranian royalists it has waiting in Southern California. This was the pattern in Cuba, Nicaragua, Iraq, Syria, Libya and now Venezuela. It's not diplomacy, just brute force.

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