

CNN's Parade of Iran Hawks

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The interim agreement over Iran's nuclear energy program that was announced early Sunday morning was obviously a big deal on the talkshow circuit. But the debate over Iran in elite politics is extremely limited; Democrats are some of the most enthusiastic supporters of increasing sanctions, for instance. And that means you're bound to see very little debate on your TV screen.

CNN's Sunday show **State of the Nation** ([11/24/13](#)) was a perfect example. The show started off with host [Candy Crowley](#) interviewing Secretary of State John Kerry, who obviously supports the deal he just finished negotiating.

Next up was a pair of hawkish lawmakers who mostly agree on Iran sanctions—Republican Ed Royce of California and New York Democrat Eliot Engel. As Crowley said in her introduction: “You both have been quite skeptical of this deal before it was made. You remain skeptical now.”

Next Republican Rep. Mike Rogers joined the show to share his assessment of the deal: “We have just rewarded very bad and dangerous behavior.” Rogers added that Iran have made “no changes in the development of their nuclear weapon program. And I can tell that you with a high degree of certainty.” Naturally, no mention was made of the fact that there is [no certainty](#) that Iran even has a nuclear weapons program.

After that, **CNN** decided to hear from former Republican intelligence officials [Michael Hayden](#) and John Negroponte. The latter was a particularly ironic selection; much of the anti-Iran rhetoric on the show accused the country of being heavily involved in international terrorism; Negroponte, during the Reagan years, was a key actor in the US promotion of terrorism in Nicaragua (**Extra!**, [9-10/01](#)).

The show ended with conservative pundit/GOP consultant Alex Castellanos, the right-leaning A.B. Stoddard of **The Hill** (“sanctions have been successful”) and Bill Burton of the liberal Center for American Progress.

The problem with the show wasn't just the one-sided panels. Host Candy Crowley made two misleading statements about Iran and nuclear weapons. While interviewing Kerry she said that Iran

has been a bad actor in the region and elsewhere, not just because of its pursuit of a nuclear weapon, but because of its relationships there, how it backs Assad, a man that the US administration and many other countries don't think should be there.

Note the **CNN** definition of a “bad actor”: a nation that doesn’t support overthrowing the same governments Washington does.



This actual leopard has indicated as much ambition for nuclear weapons as Ayatollah Khamenei (cc photo: Jessica Shippee).

And when Negro Ponte made a comment about whether Iran’s supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, was shifting his stance (“It doesn’t tell you definitively whether the supreme leader-whether the leopard has changed his spots”), Crowley responded:

“Do you perceive the leopard, the ayatollah, ever giving up nuclear weapons ambitions?”

Again, there is no evidence that Iran is pursuing a nuclear weapon. And Khamenei has [for years denounced](#) nuclear weapons.

It’s bad enough that a show like **State of the Union** would line up so many hawks, but the host’s erroneous contributions to the discussion only made things worse.

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