

Collision Course With Iran

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President Bush has claimed the Iranian government is supplying deadly weapons to fighters in Iraq and that those weapons are being used to kill US troops in Iraq. This sounds horrific and frightening—and that is the point. The Administration is preparing for a military strike against Iran. The justification chosen by the Administration is the one circumstance in which a President could bypass Congress and still wage a military conflict.

The intelligence backing up these assertions is questionable. The sources were anonymous. Since the briefing, the Administration has backed away from the assertion made by Pentagon briefers the day before that Tehran was behind these weapons transfers. No new evidence has been presented. But the President, the Defense Secretary and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff all repeat the questionable assertions.

The newly claimed grievance with Iran could be used to satisfy section 2(c) of the [1973 War Powers Resolution](#), which states that the President can introduce armed forces into a conflict or a national emergency created by an attack upon the armed forces. The President seems to have laid the groundwork for an attack on Iran while avoiding Congressional approval.

This Administration has set a collision course with Iran. Time and again, it has refused to enter into direct diplomatic talks with Iran.

- After the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, the Iranian government signaled to the Administration a willingness to cooperate with the United States, including cooperation with the overthrow of the Taliban in Afghanistan. But in January 2002, President Bush labeled Iran a member of the “axis of evil” in his State of the Union address.

- In early 2003, Iran offered to enter into dialogue with the United States regarding several outstanding US-Iran issues, including full transparency of all nuclear facilities; the cessation of support of Palestinian opposition groups; transformation of Hezbollah into a political organization; coordination of counterterrorism efforts; cooperation with political stabilization in Iraq; and the acceptance of the Arab League “Beirut Declaration”—a comprehensive peace, including the establishment of normal relations with Israel. The United States did not respond to this “grand bargain” offered by Iran.

- Also in 2003, the United States refused to join France, Britain and Germany (the EU-3) in a diplomatic effort to curb Iran’s nuclear program.

- In November 2005, the US Ambassador to Iraq received permission to begin a diplomatic dialogue with Iran on the issue of Iraqi stability. The Iranians accepted the offer; however, no talks materialized.

- On May 8, 2006, the Administration said it would support a renewed diplomatic overture by the EU-3. At the same time, the Administration ignored a letter from President Ahmadinejad to President Bush.
- On May 31, 2006, the Administration said it would join the EU-3 talks but would not negotiate with Iran until Iran agreed, ahead of the talks, to abide by US demands.
- On November 29, 2006, President Ahmadinejad sent an open letter to the American people. The Bush Administration refused to respond.
- The White House is now selectively leaking intelligence to set the stage for a military attack on Iran.

With Democrats in charge of the House and Senate, the President might have trouble starting another war. In light of the vote by the House of Representatives to disapprove of the President's escalation in Iraq and the mounting opposition to the war in Iraq, the President's new assertions about Iran hold the key to an attempt to bypass Congressional approval for another military conflict.

There are additional reasons to believe the President is setting us on a path to another war. In his primetime address to the nation last month, the President ordered a second battle group led by the aircraft carrier USS John Stennis to the Gulf. The Administration has armed Iran's Arab neighbors with Patriot missiles, sent minesweepers to the Persian Gulf and ordered an increase in the national strategic oil reserve to guard against potential oil embargoes.

It was not long ago when Iran was portrayed as a nuclear threat. But the news of a diplomatic breakthrough with North Korea changed what the Administration could say about Iran. For North Korea really possesses nuclear weapons, while Iran is five to ten years away from the ability to produce the fissile material to have even one nuclear bomb. Yet the United States was able to use diplomacy with North Korea. Obviously, diplomacy could be applied to the Iran situation as well. Instead, the Administration is escalating tensions with Iran, laying the groundwork for an attack and attempting to make a case to bypass Congressional authorization.

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