

Guardian at the Gates: Surging Toward War With Iran

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If you have any doubt that the Bush Administration is planning a military strike against Iran, then check out the lead story in today's Guardian: [Iran's secret plan for summer offensive to force US out of Iraq](#). The story, which is based entirely — entirely — on the unchallenged statements of three anonymous "American officials," not only alleges that Iran is "already committing daily acts of war against US and British forces" — including the increasing mortar attacks on the Green Zone — but also asserts that Tehran has entered into an active military alliance with al-Qaeda. Together, this new axis of evil will launch a "nationwide, Iranian-orchestrated summer offensive" aimed at undermining the scheduled September progress report from U.S. General David Petraeus on the vaunted "surge." Oh, and to top it all off, the same officials told the Guardian's stenographer, Simon Tisdall, that Iran has now also allied itself with its long-time enemy, the Taliban, and are helping kill Americans in Afghanistan as well.

To reiterate: the claim now from "top Bush officials" is that Iran has entered into an alliance with al Qaeda and is "committing daily acts of war" against American forces. As a *casus belli*, this beats the hell out of an "imminent threat" from undiscovered WMD, the entirely specious charge used by the Bush Faction to gull the nation into aggressive war with Iraq. In fact, at the time of that invasion, no Iraqi had killed an American in the 12 years since the first Gulf War; but here, we have the Bushists claiming that Iranians are killing Americans right this very minute — every single day.

The clincher is the new charge that the Iranians are now actively allied with al Qaeda. It is by now a well-worn modus operandi of the Bush Terror Warriors simply to declare that anyone they don't like — anyone who is a candidate for [what Bush calls "the path of action"](#) — is an ally of al Qaeda. This is what was done in the last Terror War "regime change" aggression, [in Somalia](#). And of course, this is what was done in the build-up to the Iraq invasion. At every turn, Bush explicitly equated the conflict with Saddam with the "war on terror," i.e., the fight against al Qaeda. "There is no difference," he said, over and over. Dick Cheney made the connection even more plainly, citing massaged intelligence and vaporous lies to tie Saddam to bin Laden. The message got through to the soldiers; as late as 2006, a majority of U.S. soldiers serving in Iraq [believed that Saddam was connected to 9/11](#), and considered the invasion as "payback."

So now we have Iran being tied directly to al Qaeda — in the middle of a shooting war in which Americans are indeed being killed every day, in a land of seething chaos and anarchy where the Iranians indeed have close and well-armed allies (ironically, these are the same sectarian parties which Bush himself has empowered and is now allied with), and where

groups calling themselves “al Qaeda” are indeed killing people. You wouldn’t need a “Curveball” or some forged Nigerian documents to gin up a nominally plausible provocation for war in such a scenario; you could do it any time you like. Many observers keep looking at the U.S. naval build-up in the Persian Gulf as a likely flashpoint — and it’s obvious that the Bushists are bellying around the Gulf like drunks at a bar, spoiling for a fight — but it’s on the ground, in the murk and blood and rape of Iraq, that the pretext is likely to arise.

Of course, the charges that Shiite Iran has joined forces with its deadly Sunni extremist foes, al Qaeda and the Taliban, are utterly ludicrous. [As Juan Coles notes](#) in his quick but effective demolition of “this silly article by poor Simon Tisdall,” the new U.S. scenario would mean that the Iranians are now bombing their own allies who are in charge of the Green Zone, much of Baghdad and much of Basra and the south as well:

[The story] claims that the Iranian Revolutionary Guards are shelling the Green Zone. The parliament building that was hit today by such shelling is dominated by the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council and its paramilitary, the Badr Organization. Who trained Badr? The Iranian Revolutionary Guards. And they are trying to hit their own guys — why? By the way, the US has 16,000 suspected insurgents in custody. Tisdall should ask how many of them are Iranian. (Hint: close to none. What, do they just run faster than the others?) The article even traffics in the ridiculous assertion that Iran is backing hyper-Sunni, Shiite-killing Taliban in Afghanistan. Why not just cut to the quick and openly say that Supreme Jurisprudent Ali Khamenei is in reality . . . Satan! It really is discouraging that Tisdall didn’t report instead on what crazy things the US military spokesmen in Iraq told him. US military spokesmen have been trying to push implausible articles about Shiite Iran supporting Sunni insurgents for a couple of years now, and with virtually the sole exception of the New York Times, no one in the journalistic community has taken these wild charges seriously. But The Guardian?

Yes, the Guardian. Cole is rightly dismissive of “this silly article,” but its silliness, its credulous stupidity, doesn’t mean it can’t have serious and sinister ramifications. Just as the New York Times was used to “launder” the Bushists’ warmongering propaganda on Iraq into “straight news” — from the leader of the “liberal media,” no less! — so too the Guardian makes an ideal patsy for fomenting war fever against Iran. On Iraq, Bush and Cheney solemnly cited the scary stories their own minions had planted in the Times, now they can refer to the stories in Guardian as proof of the reality of Iran’s “acts of war” against the United States. In fact, the Guardian’s reputation as a left-wing, even “socialist” paper makes it even more effective in this regard. You can see Cheney now, sitting down with that “useful” talking head, Tim Russert, and intoning gravely, “Look, Tim, it’s not just me, not just the Administration saying this. It’s even in radical, foreign papers like the Guardian — which, as you know, holds no love for this administration. Why, the Guardian reported today that Iran has been....”

Looking at the story on-line — as Cole did, presumably, and as will the vast majority of American readers — does not convey the lurid setting that the Guardian’s print edition gives to the story. From every newsstand in Britain, you can see the large, double-decked banner headlines screaming of Iran’s plans for a summer offensive — with no quote marks, no qualifications, just a bald statement of fact. The headlines stream across the page underneath a full-length picture of a smoldering Bradley armored car that has just been destroyed by a roadside bomb. (Supplied — or even planted! — by those dastardly Iranians, no doubt.) In terms of its visuals, and the unsubtle message conveyed to passers-by and casual readers by the headlines and photo, the Guardian piece is a far more garish and effective piece of propaganda than any pre-Iraq War story that appeared in the staid New

York Times.

So we should not be surprised to see the Guardian story blowing back across the water to be milked by the Administration and its many outside agitators for another act of aggression. But beyond its utility as a bloody shirt, the story is also important for the insight it provides on how the Bushists are laying the groundwork for the attack on Iran — and how far along they are in the warmongering campaign. If we have already gotten to the “al Qaeda alliance” stage — the hottest of hot buttons, and one that will give ample cover to the many Democrats eager to show how bristlingly butch they are despite their lukewarm opposition to the “mishandled” Iraq war — then the first laments of Iranian children being torn to shreds by falling bombs cannot be too far off.

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