

If the US attacks Iran....: George Bush's "Samson Option"

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Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [IRAN: THE NEXT WAR?](#)

The Samson Option is terminology used to explain Israel's intention to use its nuclear arsenal as an ultimate defense strategy if its leaders feel threatened enough to think they have no alternative. It comes from the biblical Samson said to have used his great strength to bring down the pillars of a Philistine temple, downing its roof and killing himself and thousands of Philistine tormentors. It's a strategy saying if you try killing me, we'll all die together, or put another way, we'll all go together when we go. Richard Wagner had his apocalyptic version in the last of his four operas of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* - *Gotterdammerung*, or *Twilight of the Gods* based on Norse mythology referring to a prophesied war of the Gods resulting in the end of the world.

The Bush Doctrine isn't that extreme, and it's not the intent of this essay to suggest its unintended consequences may turn out that way even though the threat it may be is real if they start firing off enough nukes like they're king-sized hand grenades. The Doctrine refers to the administration's foreign policy first aired by George Bush in his commencement speech to the West Point graduating class in June, 2002. It was later formalized in *The National Security Strategy* of September, 2002 and updated in more extreme form in early 2006 that makes for scary reading not recommended at bedtime. It mentions Iran in it 16 times stating: "We may face no greater challenge from a single country than from Iran" while failing to acknowledge what Pogo said about us on an Earth Day poster in 1970 and in a 1972 book titled - "We Have Met the Enemy and He Is Us."

The updated NSS details an "imperial grand strategy" with new language more belligerent than the original version that was intended to be a declaration of preemptive or preventive war against any country or force the administration claims threatens our national security. It followed from our *Nuclear Policy Review* of December, 2001 claiming a unilateral right to declare and wage future wars using first strike nuclear weapons that in enough numbers potentially can destroy all planetary life, save maybe some resilient roaches and bacteria. In still other national security documents, the administration intends being ready by maintaining total control over all land, surface and sub-surface sea, air, space, electromagnetic spectrum and information systems with enough overwhelming power to defeat any potential challengers using all weapons in the arsenal, including those nukes masquerading as king-sized grenades.

The doctrine got its baptism in Afghanistan right after the 9/11 attacks and before the 2002 NSS was released. It then played out in real time "shock and awe" force (without nukes) in Iraq that seemed to work like a charm until it didn't. That brings us to today and an administration feeling cornered by failure and needing to change the subject and get a victory in the face of major defeat or at least buy enough time to run out the clock on its

tenure so a new administration can take over and deal with the mess left over. It'll be king-sized if the audible war drums now beating are for real.

Enter Iran to play dual roles for the Bush administration plus the same one always center stage when strategic resources are at stake. It's the designated target to pull George Bush's Middle East fat out of the fire and fulfill our 28 year commitment to regime change in the country since its 1979 revolution ousted Shah Reza Pahlavi whom we installed to replace democratically elected prime minister Mohammed Mossadegh in 1953 in the CIA's first-ever go at regime change. Those events began and ended the same way - violently, but if George Bush proceeds as he's now threatening, they'll seem like tempest-in-teapot prologues to the main event ahead looking like full scale war large enough to engulf the whole region and entire Muslim world with it.

CIA's assessment is blunt. If the US attacks Iran, Southern Shia Iraq will light up like a candle and explode uncontrollably throughout the country. CIA ought to know and likely concluded big trouble won't just be in Iraq, Shia Islam and the Middle East. It may show up anywhere including a neighborhood near you but not to express reconciliation and friendship.

Washington's other motive is no mystery to anyone knowing why we attacked and now occupy Iraq. It had nothing to do with nonexistent weapons and everything to do with removing a leader unwilling to accept our imperial management rules whose country happens to have the fourth largest and easily accessible proven oil reserves in the world we want to control. The joke goes - how did our oil end up under his sand. The same is true for Iran and has since 1979. The country's leaders reject our rules, and it too has easily accessible oil reserves that are the world's third largest behind Saudi Arabia and Canada (including the country's heavy reserves). Further, both countries have vast untapped more of them adding to their allure and Washington's determination to control them alone to have veto power over who gets access.

If the US attacks Iran, all bets are off on what's to come. The echoes of Waterloo could turn George Bush's Middle East adventurism into his inadvertent Samson option by expanding the Iraq conflict to a regional one with impossible to predict consequences that won't be good for Western interests and especially US ones. It will inflame the region and produce a tsunami of Shia rage and solidarity enough to inflame and unite the whole Muslim world in fierce opposition to America, its culture and people. It may irrevocably transform the region making it unwelcome for decades or longer to anything Western that only arrives for what it can take and doesn't take no for an answer.

It's backlash may also affect the administration and its party as unintended fallout from an ill-conceived adventure gone sour and beyond repair. And it may have further unintended consequences as well - the painful blowback kind from angry people striking back in catastrophic payback ways far harsher than ever before. It could be a dirty bomb or two detonated in one more US cities or a nuclear reactor core meltdown from sabotage or attack releasing lethal radiation in amounts great enough to make downwind areas from it forever uninhabitable. Imagine a nightmarish vision of New York or Chicago (surrounded by 11 aging nuclear power plants) as ghost towns, their structures intact but unfit to be occupied.

There is a macabre bright side, however, once past the onslaught if it comes and its aftermath. In six years, the Bush administration achieved the near-impossible. It made the US a pariah state alienating the whole Muslim world and vast numbers more everywhere including growing numbers at home with George Bush's approval rating at numbers

approaching the lowest ever for a US president. Its policies of permanent war on the world, repression at home, entrenched corruption, worship of wealth and privilege, and indifference to human needs and the people he was elected to serve already destroyed any notion the country is a model democratic state or that Bush and his neocon fanatics should be governing it. Their imperial arrogance accelerated the country's fading global hegemony well advanced since the 1970s and likely irreversible. They buried the nation's influence and dominance in Iraq's smoldering sands and Afghanistan's rubble that are now both graveyards for US ambitions in those regions and beyond.

Attacking Iran will just make things far worse. It would be a fanatical "hail Mary" act of insanity that by one definition is repeating the same mistakes, expecting different results. It has no more chance of success than our misadventures in Iraq and Afghanistan. And if nuclear weapons are used, including so-called low-yield ones, it will be an appalling crime against humanity and catastrophic event potentially affecting millions in the region by radiation poisoning alone. If it happens, it will irreversibly weaken US influence and credibility everywhere accelerating our decline even faster toward second-class status and loss of world leadership already hanging by a thread. It could also be a potentially lethal blow to the benefits of "Western civilization" always arriving through the barrel of a gun and thuggish heel of a colonizer's boot with the US having the biggest barrels and largest shoe sizes.

Key US players know the risks and want our losses cut before it's too late to act. They want an end to war, not more of it in a strategically vital world region too important to lose while fearing it's likely too late. The National Intelligence Estimate supports them believing the war in Iraq is unwinnable, transforming the country into a pro-American state impossible, and the president's notion of victory illusory. George Bush ignores its assessment and presses on.

Reports by Seymour Hersh and others now say the administration wants to weaken the Bashar Assad-led Syrian government's alliance with Iran and further undermine Hezbollah's influence in Lebanon and the region by funding Sunni extremist groups with known ties to al-Qaeda in what's called a "redirection program." It's the brainchild of Dick Cheney/Elliott Abrams (of Iran-Contra notoriety)/Zalmay Khalilzad/Condi Rice/Saudi Prince Bandar bin Sultan/Israeli elements & Co. with CIA's hands are all over it covertly beyond Congress' reach. It includes a larger effort, with Saudi help, to fund and unleash Sunni extremist elements against Tehran at the same time Washington is preparing to include Iran and Syria in regional discussions on the situation in Iraq. It proves again duplicity and shameless hypocrisy are never in short supply in Washington. They're only topped by the neocon leadership's crazed strategy to make a hopeless Middle East debacle catastrophic.

The Concocted Myth of Iran's Threat

The ancient Persian empire became Iran on March 21, 1935. From that time till now, Iran obeyed international law, never occupied a foreign territory, and never threatened or attacked another state beyond occasional border skirmishes over unsettled disputes of the kinds other nations engage in that are far short of all out wars. It only had full-scale conflict defensively after Saddam Hussein launched a full-scale invasion in September, 1980 backed, equipped and financially aided by Washington that included supplying chemical and biological weapon precursors and crucial intelligence on Iranian field positions and force strength.

The conflict became known as the Iran-Iraq war. It lasted till August, 1988 over which time a million or more people died, countless numbers more were wounded and displaced, with America all the while inciting both sides to keep up the killing. It hoped to destroy both countries and then move in to pick up the pieces like it's been trying to do since in the Middle East and elsewhere with growing difficulty as not everyone likes our rules and some are even bold enough to renounce them.

Iran became a major US adversary after its 1979 revolution established the Islamic Republic in February, 1980. Since then, the two countries have had no diplomatic ties and relations between them have been frosty and uncertain at best with Washington only interested in normalization on its usual one-way dictated terms. They're the same kinds offered other developing states - we're "boss," surrender your sovereignty to ours, and accede to neoliberal market-based rules made in Washington that aren't negotiable. Iran refuses so it's public enemy number one topping the US target queue for regime change. Rule by extremist mullahs and reactors aren't the problems. They're just pretexts like all the phony intelligence about Iran destabilizing Iraq discussed below.

Despite a hopeless quagmire in Iraq, the Bush administration seems focused on further escalation notwithstanding the danger, near-impossible chance of success, and mounting opposition and anger to its agenda in the homeland. It's coming from the public on Iraq and even the Congress with some there getting twitchy enough to voice concern, though still far short of acting as they can and should with too many there twitching to fight, not quit. It's also heard in the highest ranks of power from both parties first circulated in the Jim Baker-led Iraq Study Group that reported its rumor-leaked findings December 6. It represented a clear rejection of Bush administration Iraq policies gone sour, a proposed rescue plan and effort to save his family name, and a scheme to restore US Middle East dominance, fast slipping away, and near past the point of no return by now from which there's likely none.

Despite its clout, its recommendations went unheeded, especially regarding engaging Iran and Syria to help bail Bush's Middle East fat out of its self-made fire. And nothing's changed in the wake of Washington's agreeing to include those countries' officials in initial and follow-up discussions on Iraq's security along with members of the Arab League, Organization of Islamic Unity, G 8 countries, and five permanent members of the Security Council.

The decision represents no softening of the US's position, and the administration likely will use the talks to repeat unproved claims Iranian elements support anti-American forces in Iraq, continue refusing broader diplomatic discussions unless Tehran stops enriching uranium which it won't nor should it be forced to or be punished for, and keep negotiating the way it always does - making ultimatums and accepting no compromise, meaning nothing will be resolved and tensions will only be further heightened. And if anyone doubts that's how things will unfold, the New York Times was front and center spelling it out. It reported any US discussions involving Iran and Syria won't be "from a position of weakness (so the administration intends) ratcheting up the confrontational talk (to show) the United States was in more of a driver's seat" and not planning to negotiate in good faith. No surprise.

The Bush administration's rejectionism has even deeper roots going back at least to a 2003 "grand bargain" offer from Iran - unreported, of course, in the corporate media. It was approved by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, former President Mohammad Khatami

and former Foreign Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi. Former Bush National Security Council official Flynt Leverett revealed it calling it a “serious proposal (he knew from multiple sources) went all the way up to former Secretary of State Colin Powell (who) ‘couldn’t sell it at the White House.’ ” It was part of a six year Bush administration pattern of rejecting all Iranian overtures with responses of ultimatums, threats and Washington-style bullying all framed to send the same message. Washington wants nothing less than regime change and may go to war for it.

Fast forward to today and the largely unreported testimony of former Carter administration National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee February 1. He highlighted it in an op ed piece in the Los Angeles Times February 11 calling “The war in Iraq...a historic strategic and moral calamity undertaken under false assumptions.... undermining America’s global legitimacy (and) tarnishing America’s moral credentials. (It’s) driven by Manichean impulses and imperial hubris, it is intensifying regional instability.” It’s too bad he ignored the most damning fact of all – the Iraq and Afghan wars are both acts of illegal aggression the Nuremberg Tribunal called “the supreme international crime” and Nazis convicted of it were hanged. Don’t expect a hint of that from a spear-carrying member of the empire in good standing.

Brzezinski did say the conflict is ominous for the national interest, and if the country stays bogged down in Iraq it’s on track for a “likely head-on conflict with Iran and much of the Islamic world.” He believes if it happens it will mean a “spreading and deepening (protracted) quagmire lasting 20 years or more and eventually ranging across Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan (causing) pervasive popular antagonism” and plunging the US into growing political isolation. He stated a “plausible scenario (for war with Iran) might be “some provocation in Iraq or a terrorist act (real or otherwise) blamed on Iran.”

Brzezinski represents powerful interests using him as their influential spokesman. They want an end to policies gone sour they see harming “the national interest” meaning their own. He and they want “a significant change in direction” with a strategy to “end the occupation of Iraq” with a serious US commitment to “shape a regional security dialogue that includes all Iraq’s neighbors including Iran and Syria and other major Muslim countries like Egypt and Pakistan.” He’s calling for an unambiguous “determination to leave Iraq in a reasonably short period of time,” and believes the US should “activate a credible and energetic effort (to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict without which) nationalist and fundamentalist passions (will eventually doom) any Arab regime (perceived supporting) US regional hegemony.” Brzezinski sounded alarmist about the Bush administration’s hostile intentions toward Iran, and his implications are clear. Washington’s agenda is ominous and threatening the national interest. He denounced the scheme and pressed Congress to engage Iran, not attack it. His message so far is unheeded.

Brzezinski’s influential voice was joined by Russian President Vladimir Putin’s addressing the international security conference in Munich February 10. He stunned listeners with his harsh frankness accusing the US of endangering the world pursuing policies aimed at making it “one single master (in a) unipolar world.” He went on saying “It has nothing in common with democracy (and the people) teaching us democracy (but) don’t want to learn it themselves.” He continued that US policy “overstepped its national borders in every way....in the economic, political and cultural policies it imposes on other nations.”

He claimed the US is responsible for “a greater and greater disdain for the principles of international law (and) no one can feel that international law is like a stone wall that will

protect them.” He also accused the US of stimulating “an arms race (in an environment where) peace is not so reliable.” He added “Unilateral actions have not resolved conflicts but have made them worse,” and force should only be used when authorized as international law requires by the UN Security Council. He sounded an alarm gone unheard in the West that “Today we are witnessing an almost uncontained hyper use of force – military force.... that is plunging the world into an abyss of permanent conflicts (and) Finding a political settlement....becomes impossible.” He further warned about the use of “space (or) high tech weapons” with implications of a new cold war, nuclear arms race and frightening possibility of devastating nuclear war that was unthinkable before the age of George Bush.

The Dominant Media React

As President of a major world power, Putin’s comments went out to the world getting broad coverage, if only for a day or so, while Brzezinski’s were largely and shamelessly ignored by the corrupted corporate media still carrying the administration’s water and trumpeting its phony claims like verifiable gospel. It happened on February 11 in the New York Times as reported by correspondent James Glanz. His column breathed the scantiest hints of skepticism that smacked of the same kind of Judith Miller-type journalism about WMDs helping take the country to war with Iraq in 2003. He said the US military showed “their first public evidence of the contentious assertion that Iran supplies Shiite extremist groups in Iraq with some of the most lethal weapons in the war....used to kill more than 170 Americans in the past three years” with only hints about its reliability or the source presenting it having none.

He cited senior defense officials in Baghdad February 11 displaying “an array of mortar shells and rocket-propelled grenades with visible serial numbers (claimed to be directly linked) to Iranian arms factories.” Without credible proof, they said “Iranian leaders had authorized smuggling those weapons into Iraq for use against Americans (basing their judgment) on general intelligence assessments (of the same kind used to justify attacking Iraq, meaning phony ones.) The specious Times report reeked of innuendos for what it lacked in hard proof about lethal weapons. They could have come from any source, manufactured anywhere, including by Pentagon contractors easily able to duplicate anything scattered around the country and on Iraqi streets for years after the Iranian conflict and now used by resistance fighters or anyone else who has them.

Typical Times saber rattling was at it again after Bush’s inept February 14 news conference trumpeting his claim Iran was sending weapons to Iraq to undermine security and kill Americans while never looking more pathetic and awkward doing it. In “Times talk,” reporters Stolberg and Santora stated “Mr. Bush’s remarks amounted to his most specific accusation to date that Iran was undermining security in Iraq....(and he) dismissed as ‘preposterous’ the contention by some skeptics that the United States was drawing unwarranted conclusions about Iran’s role.” They barely questioned the president’s nonsensical claim he’s certain “the (paramilitary) Quds Force, a part of the government, has provided these sophisticated I.E.D’s that have harmed our troops” that has as much credibility as those WMDs we had to fear along with that “mushroom shaped cloud” we couldn’t afford to wait to see before acting.

Facts On the Ground Trump the Propaganda

Revealed facts on the ground in Iraq belie all Pentagon and administration phony assertions along with their shameless daily echoing on the Times front pages. The military couldn’t

even get its evidence straight in presenting an 81mm mortar shell Iran doesn't make, and the ones shown the media had fake markings in English for a Farsi-speaking country. It's also inconceivable Shia Iran would be fighting Iraq's Shia government it's allied with and aids. The US has been fighting an anti-Iranian Sunni resistance largely in al-Anbar province and the most violent parts of Baghdad. It stretches credibility to imagine Iran is arming its enemy that denounces Iraq's dominant Shia puppet government as a US pawn.

That hardly deters Washington claiming further solid evidence Iranian agents are involved in what the State Department calls "networks" (meaning Iranians) working with individuals and groups in Iraq sent there by the Iranian government without a shred of evidence to prove it. Even General Peter Pace, US Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman, dismisses the claim as unproved and further said during a February trip to the Pacific region there is "zero" chance of a US war with Iran.

He may be echoing the kind of sentiment the London Times reported February 25 that "highly placed defence and intelligence sources (say) Some of America's most senior commanders are prepared to resign (in protest) if the White House orders a military strike against Iran." The paper calls this type of high-level internal dissent unprecedented signifying great distaste and misgivings in the Pentagon for an attack on Iran. That's a sentiment even its Joint Chiefs Chairman may share as well as the six retired generals (and likely others) who publicly denounced the Pentagon's handling of the Iraq war last spring and the administration's incompetence overall.

Nonetheless, preparations for war go on that veteran journalist Seymour Hersh again wrote about in late February in the New Yorker magazine. According to Hersh's informed sources: "The Pentagon is continuing intensive planning for a possible bombing attack on Iran....at the direction of the President. (It includes) a contingency plan...that can be implemented (in) 24 hours....The Iran planning group (is assigned) to identify targets in Iran that may be involved in supplying or aiding militants in Iraq (on top of its previous focus to destroy) Iran's nuclear facilities and possible regime change." Hersh's report supplements others, like one from BBC, saying the US military is planning an all out "shock and awe" blitzkrieg on the country's nuclear facilities, military and infrastructure that may come in the spring that's now just days away.

A clear sign of that possibility is the huge naval buildup in the Gulf and Eastern Mediterranean with two heavily equipped and armed carrier groups in theater and a reported third en route either to replace one there or add to it. The combined task force in place is a formidable assemblage of 50 or more warships with nuclear weapons, hundreds of planes and contingents of Marines and Navy personnel.

The buildup is part of former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's plan for preemptive nuclear war specifically targeting Iran and North Korea. Earlier, Dick Cheney originated the idea when he served as GHW Bush's Defense Secretary in the early 1990s. Rumsfeld picked up the scheme in 2004 as authorized by the 2002 National Security Strategy proclaiming an official doctrine of preemptive or preventive war for the first time. From it he approved a top secret "Interim Global Strike Alert Order" for military readiness against hostile countries that included the nuclear option. He drew on CONPLAN (contingency/concept plan) 8022 completed in November 2003 detailing a plan to preemptively strike targets anywhere in the world judged a national security threat including hardened structures using tactical so-called low-yield nuclear bunker busters with Iran the apparent first target of choice. The Omaha-based US Strategic Command (StratCom) would run any operation if undertaken as

it's the command center for the country's nuclear deterrent and oversees the military's nuclear arsenal.

All military branches have ready battle plans to implement against Iran under the name TIRANNT for Theater Iran Near Term. If an attack order comes, it can be launched from the assembled Naval task force in the region and/or by long-range US-based bombers and other warplanes and missiles strategically based in locations like Diego Garcia and elsewhere within striking distance of Iranian targets. It will be able to assault Iran round the clock for weeks against a claimed number of 1500 nuclear-related sites located at 18 main locations in the country. Also designated are thousands of strategic military and civilian targets including vital infrastructure, industrial sites, air, naval and ground force bases, missile facilities and always command-and-control centers with possible help from Israeli warplanes that might, in fact, initiate an attack with US forces then joining in to support their regional partner.

That kind of devious scheme could persuade Congress to go along never wanting to offend the Israeli Lobby that's been spoiling for a fight with Iran for years and now may get it horrifically with unimaginable consequences. They'll affect Israel and the US alike as well as spillover to unstable countries in the region like the Saudis, Egyptians, Jordanians and Lebanese and may be unsettling enough to unseat sitting rulers and governments replacing them with the kinds of fundamentalist regimes not likely to welcome US presence or influence in the region and intending to do something about it.

The Bush Roadmap to War with Iran

Reports circulated as early as last year and in 2005 that the Bush administration signed off on a "shock and awe" attack against Iran to destroy its perfectly legal commercial nuclear program that may involve using so-called "mini-nuke robust earth penetrator bunker-buster" weapons that won't be "mini" in their catastrophic effects if indeed used. These are powerful dangerous weapons. They can be made to any desired potency, would likely be from one-third to two-thirds as powerful as the Hiroshima bomb that destroyed an entire city, but could have far greater explosive capability that potentially will be catastrophic to the area struck and well beyond by radiation contamination alone.

Pentagon false and misleading reports about them claim they're "safe for civilians" because they penetrate the earth and explode underground. Test results prove otherwise showing when released from 40,000 feet a B61-11 nuclear earth-penetrator burrowed about 20 feet in the soil for a pre-explosion depth able to produce intense fallout over the area struck that's unremediable and would result in enough permanent surface contamination to be unsafe for human habitation. Nonetheless, weapons able to cause a nuclear holocaust are cleared for use real time along with conventional ones if a "shock and awe" attack is ordered against Iran or any other nation on the false and misleading pretext of protecting the national security only threatened by a rogue leadership at home willing to risk catastrophic mass destruction in pursuit of its insane and unachievable imperial aims.

Not surprisingly, we have an eager partner in Israel straining at the leash to fulfill its long-term agenda to attack Iran alone (possible but doubtful) or along with its US ally that keeps getting reinforced by bellicose statements by its high officials like the one reported February 13 by ultra-right wing Strategic Affairs Minister Avigdor Lieberman. He commented in a radio interview that if necessary "We will have to face the Iranians alone, because Israel cannot remain with its arms folded, waiting for Iran to develop non-conventional (nuclear)

weapons.” Officials like Lieberman, current Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert and former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu are dangerous men on the far right allied with others in government and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) all dripping war talk that must be taken seriously from a nation dedicated to conflict and never shy about striking the first all out aggressive blow.

The same theme comes from a report published February 11 that vice-president Cheney’s national security advisor, John Hannah (who replaced Lewis Libby just convicted of obstruction of justice, perjury and lying to the FBI), speaking for the Bush administration, considers 2007 “the year of Iran” saying a US attack is a real possibility. Hannah played a key role in the run-up to the Iraq war having written the first draft of Colin Powell’s infamous pre-war speech to the Security Council citing bogus evidence. He also played a lead role putting out phony pre-war intelligence from Iraqi exiles. Now he’s at the seat of power and must be taken seriously, especially since his boss barely disguises his aggressive posturing for war against the Iranian state he’s wanted for 15 years or more.

They’re both part of the high-level propaganda messaging similar to the lead-up to the Iraq war. It’s aim is instill fear to make the administration’s case that Iran poses serious threat enough to justify military action against it. It follows UN Resolutions 1696 in July demanding Iran suspend uranium enrichment by August 31, which it didn’t, and 1737 in December imposing limited sanctions on Iran for not abiding by what the Security Council demanded in July. A second deadline passed putting the Iranian matter back in the Security Council to consider new sanctions be imposed and ratcheting things closer to a US attack as further events unfold.

And so the beat goes on with US oil reserves being stockpiled, Iranian diplomats apprehended in Iraq, the Pentagon and Israeli forces scheming together, the US military buildup in the Gulf and Eastern Mediterranean continuing, US ground forces moved to the Iran-Iraq border, Patriot missiles strategically installed in Israel and neighboring Arab states, a “surge” of up to 50,000 additional troops planned, and a change of commanders on the ground in Iraq made replacing less hawkish ones with others supporting the Bush war strategy.

They’re part of the new Pentagon team under Defense Secretary Robert Gates who told the Senate Armed Services Committee the military needs to prepare for large-scale operations against countries like Russia, China, North Korea and Iran that reaffirms the administration’s commitment to its “long war” Dick Cheney said won’t end in our lifetime, but may end up shortening it. Clearly Iran is the next planned target, the dominant media echoes the threat, and Congress is just a talking-shop like always posturing as the gathering storm in the Gulf intensifies.

Published reports, citing credible sources, point to an attack on Iran by April by an administration on total expanded war footing with the president spoiling for a fight by goading Iran to react in response to his order to “seek out and destroy” (supposed) Iranian “networks” in Iraq. Bush minced no words in a radio interview saying “If Iran escalates its military action in Iraq (even though there’s none)....we will respond firmly.” Other officials joined the jingoistic chorus accusing Iran of involvement in sectarian violence practically signaling an upcoming attack that easily could follow a manufactured pretext if Iran fails to provide one on its own which it won’t. It’s never hard to do, and the infamous trumped up Gulf of Tonkin one in August, 1964 shows how easy it is to fool the public and get Congress to go along.

Iran could save us the trouble by responding to US provocations going on now for months by illegally flying unmanned aerial surveillance drones across its airspace and secretly placing special forces reconnaissance teams on the ground “to collect targeting data and to establish contact with anti-government ethnic minority groups” according to an earlier report by Seymour Hersh. So far, Iran hasn’t taken the bait even though it knows what’s happening and reportedly downed one or more intruding aircraft it has every legal right to do but is treading dangerously against an adversary looking for any pretext to pounce. It’s leaders also knew what Washington was up to after being made a charter member of Bush’s “Axis of Evil.” In that status, it’s blamed for the administration’s failure in Iraq with false claims of arming the resistance and inciting violence.

War on Iran may, in fact, have already started, and two bombings in Southeastern Iranian Zahedan bordering Pakistan and Afghanistan the week of February 12 may have been one of its volleys. Arrests were made and a video seized according to provincial police chief Brigadier General Mohammad Ghafari. From it he claims the “rebels (have an) attachment to opposition groups and some countries’ intelligence services such as America and Britain.” An unnamed Iranian official also told the Islamic Republic News Agency one of those arrested confessed he was trained by English speakers, and the attack was part of US plans to provoke internal unrest.

While none of this conclusively proves US involvement, there’s no secret Washington wants regime change, is actively stirring up internal ethnic and political opposition toward it, and reportedly is working with exiled Iranian leaders including the Mujahideen el-Khalq (MEK) Iranian opposition guerrilla cult the US State Department lists as a terrorist organization, but not apparently when it’s on our side.

Full-scale war on Iran may just be a concocted terrorist attack away from starting the “shock and awe.” There’s no secret what’s planned and none whatever that doing it will be another unprovoked, unwarranted act of preemptive illegal aggression only the US and Israel support. It’s also no secret Iran is no pushover. It’s no match for US and/or Israeli power, but it’s got powerful weapons one writer says are “unstoppable” like Russian-built SS-N-22 Sunburn Missiles and more advanced SS-NX-26 Yakhont anti-ship ones designed to sink a US carrier that’s a formidable weapon of war but not invulnerable. Iran also has Russian 29 Tor M-1 anti-missile systems and NATO-made Exocet and Chinese Silkworm anti-ship missiles that pack a punch and can sink our ships when launched from land, surface ships or submarines along with 300 or more warplanes, and a large ground force estimated at around 350,000.

US engaging Iran may now hinge on resolving the Washington power struggle between Bush administration neocons and more practical trilateralist types in the camp of Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jim Baker, and other powerful Washington figures including the president’s father. It’s also up to Congress to decide which side it’s on and whether it will act or watch from the sidelines and risk nuclear war and its fallout. It may not be long finding out how events will unfold. Just the kind and level of rhetorical noise will tell who’s winning with congressional inaction and media complicity so far giving the hawks a big advantage. Haven’t we seen this script before, and isn’t the likely ending clear, except this time the stakes are far greater and so is the risk to everyone on both sides.

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