

Media Disinformation and the “Iranian Threat”

The great, international, demonic, truly frightening Iranian threat

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Theme: [Media Disinformation](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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

The United States is “facing a nuclear threat in Iran” — *article in Chicago Tribune and other major newspapers, May 26*

“the growing missile threat from North Korea and Iran” — article in the Washington Post and other major newspapers, May 26

“Iran’s threat transcends religion. Regardless of sectarian bent, Muslim communities need to oppose the attempts by Iran ... to extend Shia extremism and influence throughout the world.” — *op-ed article in Boston Globe, May 27*

“A Festering Evil. Doing nothing is not an option in handling the threat from Iran” — headline in Investor’s Business Daily, May 27, 2009

This is a very small sample from American newspapers covering but two days.

“Fifty-one percent of Israelis support an immediate Israeli strike on Iran’s nuclear sites” — BBC, May 24

After taking office, on Holocaust Memorial Day, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said: “We will not allow Holocaust-deniers [Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad] to carry out another holocaust.” — *Haaretz (Israel), May 14, 2009*

Like clinical paranoia, “the threat from Iran” is impervious to correction by rational argument.

Two new novels have just appeared, from major American publishers, thrillers based on Iran having a nuclear weapon and the dangers one can imagine that that portends — “Banquo’s Ghosts” by Rich Lowry & Keith Korman, and “The Increment” by David Ignatius. “Bomb, bomb, bomb. Let’s bomb Iran,” declares a CIA official in the latter book. The other book derides the very idea of “dialogue” with Iran while implicitly viewing torture as acceptable.¹

On May 12, in New York City, a debate was held on the proposition that “Diplomacy With Iran Is Going Nowhere” (English translation: “Should we bomb Iran?”). Arguing in the affirmative, were Liz Cheney, former State Department official (and daughter of a certain unindicted war criminal) and Dan Senor, formerly the top spokesman for Washington’s Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad. Their “opponents” were R. Nicholas Burns,

former undersecretary of state, and Kenneth Pollack, former National Security Council official and CIA analyst and author of “The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq”, a book that, unsurprisingly, did not have too long a shelf life.²

This is what “debate” on US foreign policy looks like in America in the first decade of the 21st century AD — four quintessential establishment figures. If such a “debate” had been held in the Soviet Union during the Cold War (“Detente With The United States Is Going Nowhere”), the American mainstream media would unanimously have had a jolly time making fun of it. The sponsor of the New York debate was the conservative Rosenkranz Foundation, but if a liberal (as opposed to a progressive or radical leftist) organization had been the sponsor, while there probably would have been a bit more of an ideological gap between the chosen pairs of speakers, it’s unlikely that any of the present-day myths concerning Iran would have been seriously challenged by either side. These myths include the following, all of which I’ve dealt with before in this report but inasmuch as they are repeated on a regular basis in the media and by administration representatives, I think that readers need to be reminded of the counter arguments.

- Iran has no right to nuclear weapons: Yet, there is no international law that says that the US, the UK, Russia, China, Israel, France, Pakistan, and India are entitled to nuclear weapons, but Iran is not. Iran has every reason to feel threatened. In any event, the US intelligence community’s National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) of December 2007, “Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities”, makes a point of saying in bold type and italics: “This NIE does not assume that Iran intends to acquire nuclear weapons.” The report goes on to state: “We judge with high confidence that in fall 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program .”
- Ahmadinejad is a Holocaust denier: I have yet to read of Ahmadinejad saying simply, clearly, unambiguously, and unequivocally that he thinks that what we know as the Holocaust never happened. He has instead commented about the peculiarity and injustice of a Holocaust which took place in Europe resulting in a state for the Jews in the Middle East instead of in Europe. Why are the Palestinians paying a price for a German crime? he asks. And he has questioned the figure of six million Jews killed by Nazi Germany, as have many other people of all political stripes.
- Ahmadinejad has called for violence against Israel: His 2005 remark re “wiping Israel off the map”, besides being a very questionable translation, has been seriously misinterpreted, as evidenced by the fact that the following year he declared: “The Zionist regime will be wiped out soon, the same way the Soviet Union was, and humanity will achieve freedom.”³ Obviously, he was not calling for any kind of violent attack upon Israel, for the dissolution of the Soviet Union took place peacefully.
- Iran has no right to provide arms to Hamas and Hezbollah: However, the United States, we are assured, has every right to do the same for Israel and Egypt.
- The fact that Obama says he’s willing to “talk” to some of the “enemies” like Iran more than the Bush administration did sounds good: But one doesn’t have to be too cynical to believe that it will not amount to more than a public relations gimmick. It’s only change of policy that counts. Why doesn’t Obama just state

that he would not attack Iran unless Iran first attacked the US or Israel or anyone else? Besides, the Bush administration met with Iran on several occasions.

The following should also be kept in mind: *The Washington Post*, March 5, 2009, reported: “A senior Israeli official in Washington” has asserted that “Iran would be unlikely to use its missiles in an attack [against Israel] because of the certainty of retaliation.” This was the very last sentence in the article and, according to an extensive Nexis search, did not appear in any other English-language media in the world.

In 2007, in a closed discussion, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said that in her opinion “Iranian nuclear weapons do not pose an existential threat to Israel.” She “also criticized the exaggerated use that [Israeli] Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is making of the issue of the Iranian bomb, claiming that he is attempting to rally the public around him by playing on its most basic fears.” This appeared in *Haaretz.com*, October 25, 2007 (print edition October 26), but not in any US media or in any other English-language world media except the *BBC* citing the Iranian Mehr English-language news agency, October 27.

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's Changeman!

In January 2006 I was invited to attend a book fair in Cuba, where one of my books, newly translated into Spanish, was being presented. All my expenses were to be paid by the Cuban government and I was very much looking forward to the visit. Only one problem — the government of the United States would not give me permission to go. My application to travel to Cuba had also been rejected in 1998 by the Clinton administration. (On that occasion I went anyhow and was extremely lucky to avoid being caught by the American Travel Police on the way back and being fined thousands of dollars.) I mention this because Obama supporters would have us believe — as they themselves believe — that their Changeman has been busy making lots of important changes, Cuba being only one example. But I still don't have the legal right to travel to Cuba.

The only real change made by the Obama administration in regard to Cuba is that Cuban-Americans with family on the island can travel there and send remittances without restrictions. The April 13 White House announcement listed several other provisions concerning telecommunications companies, but what this will actually mean in practice, if anything, is unknown, particularly as it affects Cuba's access to the Internet. American anti-Castroites have long blamed Cuban's deficient Internet access on the proverbial “communist suppression”, when the technical availability and prohibitive cost were to a large extent in the hands of American corporations. Microsoft, for example, bars Cuba from using its Messenger instant messaging service.⁴ And Google has long blocked Cuban access to many of its features.⁵ Venezuela and Cuba have been working on an underwater cable system that they hope will make them less reliant on the gringos.

The multifarious US economic embargo, which causes unending hardship and expense for the Cuban people, remains in place. Here is Changeman in a recent press conference:

Reporter: Thank you, Mr. President. You've heard from a lot of Latin America leaders here who want the U.S. to lift the embargo against Cuba. You've said that you think it's an important leverage to not lift it. But in 2004, you did support lifting the embargo. You said, it's failed to provide the source of raising standards of living, it's squeezed the innocent, and it's time for us to acknowledge that this particular policy has failed. I'm wondering, what

made you change your mind about the embargo?

The President: Well, 2004, that seems just eons ago. What was I doing in 2004?

Reporter: Running for Senate.

The President: Is it while — I was running for Senate. There you go.⁶

Yes, there you go; you shouldn't confuse campaign rhetoric with the real world and the real Changeman.

The case of the Cuban Five is another chance for Changeman to come to the rescue. This outrageous perversion of justice whereby Cubans were sent to the United States to try to learn of further terrorist attacks in Cuba planned by anti-Castroites in Florida and were themselves arrested by the FBI on information partly supplied to the US by the Cuban government as their contribution to the War On Terrorism.⁷

The Cuban Five have been in US prisons for more than 10 years. Around June 15 the Supreme Court is expected to issue a decision on whether or not they will hear the appeal of the Five. The Clinton administration arrested them. The Bush administration continued the awful, mindless, crimeless persecution for eight more years. But now comes the Changeman administration. Hooray! Oh, in late May, the Changeman administration filed a brief urging the Court to deny the Five a hearing, and on June 2, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told an Organization of American States meeting: "I want to emphasize the United States under President Obama is taking a completely new approach to our policy toward Cuba."⁸

Another opportunity for Changeman to come to the rescue also involves Cuba — closing the Guantanamo prison. But our hero is once again displaying a woeful lack of political courage and imagination. If there's good evidence that certain detainees are a danger to anyone, then try them in US civilian courts with full rights, a decent defense team, and excluding secret evidence and coerced confessions. If they're found guilty — and with an American jury sitting in judgment of "terrorists", this, in almost all cases, would be the verdict — then imprison them in one of America's maximum security prisons, which already houses about 355 men labeled as "terrorists".⁹ The new ones will not be any more of a danger in prison than the ones already there.

However, if they're found innocent, then declare them free men. It would be much easier then to find a country to accept them, including the United States. Until now, the world has been told repeatedly by Washington that these men are "the worst of the worst". Small wonder that no country or community wants them near. But if they've been tried and acquitted, this situation should change markedly.

So Mr. Obama, we're waiting for you to step into a phone booth.

It's part of America's ideology to pretend that it doesn't have any ideology.

Oh, a woman nominated to be a Supreme Court justice. A woman whose parents are from Puerto Rico. A Latina! A Latina Supreme Court justice! Oh, hooray for America!

Who cares? Clarence Thomas is a Supreme Court justice. He's black. He's as hopelessly reactionary as they come. No one should give a damn that Sonia Sotomayor is a woman with a Latin American background. All that counts is her politics. Her ideology. Her positions

on important social and political issues. Yes, I know, we're talking about the Law, the Majesty of the Law, judges who are scholars, impartial scholars, who study the fine points and the history of a law, experts on the Constitution of the United States, not swayed by today's partisan squabbles but take the long view, looking at precedent, considering what precedent may be set for the future.

Don't believe it. That may be true in the infrequent Supreme Court case where no ideological question at all is raised. Otherwise the judges are all biased human beings, appointed by a biased president, confirmed by biased members of the Senate.

Patrick Martin recently observed on the World Socialist Web Site: "For the past 12 years ... under two Democratic presidents and one Republican, the post of US Secretary of State has been occupied by, in succession, a white woman, a black man, a black woman, and a white woman."¹⁰ And they all loved the empire. When the empire called for it, they bombed, invaded, and killed; they overthrew, occupied, tortured, and lied; and swore allegiance to Israel and the corporations.

And now we have a black president. Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, or Stokely Carmichael he's not. His policies and his appointments have all fallen in that area that runs from ever so slightly to the left of center to clear conservative and imperialist on the right. He's more loath to being identified as, or collaborating with, progressives than with right-wingers. Team Obama sees the left as an eccentric old aunt who keeps showing up at family functions, making everyone uncomfortable and wishing she'd just go away.

America, and the world, have to grow up. Forget color. Forget ethnicity. Forget gender. Forget sexual orientation. Forget even the class the person comes from. Look at the class they serve. And understand that the person wouldn't be in the position they are, or be nominated for the position, if there was any serious question about their loyalty to the capitalist ethic or American world domination.

It also matters not whether the president is comically inarticulate or whether he speaks in complete grammatical sentences. Keep your eye on the policies.

Obama

To the numerous fans of Barack Obama, on the left, in the middle, on the right, and to the apolitical Obamaniacs, my advice is to read "Being There" by Jerzy Kosinski, or see the film version of the same name starring Peter Sellers.

Also read "The Emperor's New Clothes" by Hans Christian Andersen.

"Men go mad in herds, but only come to their senses one by one." — *Charles Mackay, 19th century Scottish journalist*

NOTES

1. *Washington Post*, May 26, 2009 book review [↵](#)
2. *Washington Post*, May 15, 2009 [↵](#)
3. *Associated Press*, December 12, 2006 [↵](#)

4. *Associated Press*, June 2, 2009 [↵](#)
5. [Does Google Censor Cuba?](#) [↵](#)
6. White House Press Office, April 19, 2009 [↵](#)
7. [Cuban Political Prisoners ... in the United States](#) [↵](#)
8. *Washington Post*, June 3, 2009. [↵](#)
9. [“There Are Already 355 Terrorists in American Prisons”](#), *Slate Magazine*, May 29, 2009 [↵](#)
10. [“The fundamental social division is class, not race or gender”](#), *World Socialist Web Site*, May 28, 2009 [↵](#)

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William Blum is the author of:

- *Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War 2*
- *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower*
- *West-Bloc Dissident: A Cold War Memoir*
- *Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire*

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