

Provoke an Attack on Iran? “Lets Bring it On... At the End of the Day... We Ought to Take ‘Em Out”

By [Prof Michel Chossudovsky](#)
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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)
Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)
In-depth Report: [IRAN: THE NEXT WAR?](#)

Is the Obama administration seeking to trigger a war pretext incident, a justification to wage an all out war on Iran?

Provoking a war and then blaming the enemy for carrying out an act of aggression is no longer part of a hidden agenda, a safely guarded secret as in the case of Pearl Harbor (1941) which was used by the FDR administration as a justification for America’s entry into the Second World War.

Similarly, the Gulf of Tonkin incident (1964) was part of a covert operation which served to trigger the adoption by the US Congress of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. The latter granted President Lyndon B. Johnson with the “legal justification” for deploying U.S. troops against North Vietnam.

See the statements of Hillary Clinton and former Secretary of State James Baker III in video above

(video: courtesy of Information Clearing House and [Live Leak](#))

Is the Obama administration seeking to trigger a war pretext incident, a justification to wage an all out war on Iran?

Pearl Harbor, the Gulf of Tonkin, the sinking of the Lusitania, the USS Maine have become talking points in Washington think tanks.

Covert procedures to trigger a war pretext incident are now part of the public domain. Patrick Clawson of the Washington Institute of Near East Studies points to the lessons of history, namely to various incidents in US military history used to justify a declaration of war:

“If the Iranians aren’t going to compromise, it would be best if somebody else started the war.”

Recent developments, including US-NATO war games and the deployment of a powerful naval armada in the Persian Gulf, “create conditions” which favor a Gulf of Tonkin type incident.

The Obama administration does not hide the underlying intent. Washington is calling for the implementation of acts of provocation directed against Iran, so that Iran would so to speak “fire the first shot”.

Former Secretary of State James Baker III states quite categorically: “we ought to take ‘em out [Iran]”. Hillary Clinton retorts: “Well, we’re working hard [on that]. We’re working hard.”

Baker concludes: “I say if anybody’s going to do it [take ‘em out], we ought to do it because we have the capability of doing it”.

Conversations on Diplomacy Moderated by Charlie Rose

June 21, 2012

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Secretary of State Former Secretary of State James A. Baker III

Benjamin Franklin Room, Washington, DC

Excerpt, See Transcript below

MR. ROSE: This question about Iran: My understanding of the Administration’s position on containment is that **dog will not hunt**. Right?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Yes.

MR. ROSE: Do you agree with that?

SECRETARY BAKER: I agree with that.

But at the end of the day, if we don’t get it done the way the Administration’s working on it now — which I totally agree with — then we ought to take them out.

MR. ROSE: Secretary Clinton. **(Laughter.)**

SECRETARY CLINTON: **Well, we’re working hard. We’re working hard.**

SECRETARY BAKER: **And that’s a Republican. I said at the end of the day. The end of the day may be next year. (Laughter.) It will be next year.**

MR. ROSE: I’m waiting.

SECRETARY CLINTON: **Yeah. Look, I think the President has been very clear on this. He has always said all options are on the table. And he means it. He addressed this when he spoke to it earlier in the year.**

TRANSCRIPT

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[included below is the relevant excerpt pertaining to Iran (emphasis added)]

MR. ROSE: I'm Charlie Rose. Thank you very much for coming this afternoon. This is, as many of you know, a second in a series of conversations with Secretary Clinton and previous secretaries of State. We hope that we will have a chance to do as many secretaries as we can here. And the point of this series is to look at foreign policy in the context of present challenges and options, but also historical lessons and experiences.

. . .

MR. ROSE: This question about Iran: My understanding of the Administration's position on containment is that dog will not hunt. Right?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Yes.

MR. ROSE: Do you agree with that?

SECRETARY BAKER: I agree with that.

MR. ROSE: Containment will not work.

SECRETARY BAKER: I agree with that. My personal position on that is this: We ought to try every possible avenue we can to see if we can get them to correct their desire and goal of acquiring a nuclear weapon, but we cannot let them acquire that weapon. **We are the only country in the world that can stop that.** The Israelis, in my opinion, do not have the capability of stopping it. They can delay it. There will also be many, many Israeli strike.

But at the end of the day, if we don't get it done the way the Administration's working on it now — which I totally agree with — then we ought to take them out.

MR. ROSE: Secretary Clinton. **(Laughter.)**

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SECRETARY CLINTON: **Yeah. Look, I think the President has been very clear on this. He has always said all options are on the table. And he means it. He addressed this when he spoke to it earlier in the year.**

MR. ROSE: Meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Yes. And also in public speeches that he's given. Look, I mean, I think Jim and I both would agree that everybody needs to know — most particularly the Iranians — that we are serious that they cannot be allowed to have a nuclear weapon. It's not only about Iran and about Iran's intentions, however once tries to discern them. It's about the arms race that would take place in the region with such unforeseen consequences. Because you name any country with the means, anywhere near Iran that is an Arab country, if Iran has a nuclear weapon — I can absolutely bet on it and know I will win — they will be in the market within hours. And that is going to create a cascade of difficult challenges for us and for Israel and friends and partners.

So this has such broad consequences. And that's why we've invested an enormous amount in trying to persuade Iran that if — as the Supreme Leader says and issued a fatwa about — it is un-Islamic to have a nuclear weapon, then act upon that edict and demonstrate clearly that Iran will not pursue a nuclear weapon. And we are pushing them in these negotiations to do just that.

MR. ROSE: But as you know, the question is not whether they will have a nuclear weapon, but whether they will have the capacity to quickly have a nuclear weapon.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, that is obviously the question, and that is why Jim said at the end of the day, maybe a year. I mean, these kinds of calculations are —

SECRETARY BAKER: It may be more than that.

SECRETARY CLINTON: It may be more than that. They are difficult to make. A lot of countries around the world have what's called breakout capacity.

MR. ROSE: Right.

SECRETARY CLINTON: They have stopped short of it. They have not pursued it. They have found it not to be in their interests or in the interests of regional stability.

MR. ROSE: But do you think that's what they mean and that's what they intend?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, that's what we're testing. That's what every meeting with them is about, to try to really probe and see what kinds of commitments we can get out of them. Now, at this point we don't have them, so I can't speak to what they might be if they are ever to be presented. But that's why we have to take this meeting by meeting and pursue it as hard as we can.

SECRETARY BAKER: And the problem is not so much the threat they would represent to us or to Israel or to our allies somewhere in the region. It's the proliferation problem, because it would really then be out of control. And that's the real thing you have to guard, and that's

why I would say at the end of the ...

... at some point you have to say that's simply not going to happen.

MR. ROSE: I think I heard that loud and clear. But you've also suggested that the United States should do it rather than Israel.

SECRETARY BAKER: Absolutely. And the reason I say that is if you look at what Martin Dempsey said not long ago, he said if Israel —

MR. ROSE: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of —

SECRETARY BAKER: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said if Israel hits the Iranian nuclear facilities, we're going to lose a lot of American lives in the region. Many people in the Israeli national security don't want to do that. They're having troubles now. The sanctions are not complete yet. We want to squeeze them down more. But they're having an effect. And the government is having some problems, and you don't want to lose all that.

SECRETARY CLINTON: In fact, I mean, what Jim is saying is a really important point, because we know that there is a vigorous debate going on within the leadership decision-making group in Iran. There are those who say look, these sanctions are really biting, we're not making the kind of economic progress we should be making, we don't give up that much by saying we're not going to do a nuclear weapon and having a verifiable regime to demonstrate that.

And then frankly, there are those who are saying the best thing that could happen to us is be attacked by somebody, just bring it on, because that would unify us, it would legitimize the regime. You feel sometimes when you side of the Iranian Government that we're not going to give anything up, and in fact we're going to provoke an attack because then we will be in power for as long as anyone can imagine.

SECRETARY BAKER: And Charlie, let me just explain why I said I don't think the Israelis can do it but we can. The reason I say that is the Israeli Government came to the prior administration, the Bush 43 Administration, and then they made the same request of this Administration. I don't know the answer to that for sure. The Secretary would. But whether they did or not, that's the reason **I say if anybody's going to do it, we ought to do it because we have the capability of doing it.**

SECRETARY CLINTON: And hopefully we won't get to that. (Laughter.) I mean, that would be, I think —

MR. ROSE: Because you believe there'll be a change of behavior or a change of regime?

SECRETARY CLINTON: No, there's — I'm not going to talk about a change of regime. I see no evidence of that. I think the Iranian people deserve better, but that's for them to try to determine.

MR. ROSE: ...

... Iran, and I want to move to some other issues. Looking back at the time of the protest over the election, do you wish you'd done more? Do you wish you'd been more public, more

supportive?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, look, at the time there was a very strong, consistent message coming from within Iran that anything we said would undermine the legitimacy of their opposition. Now —

MR. ROSE: This is from the opposition?

SECRETARY CLINTON: This is from the opposition coming out to us. And one can argue, were they right, were they not right, but at the time it seemed like they had some momentum, they did not want to look like they were acting on behalf of the ...

... line that the opposition didn't want us to cross. That was our assessment.

MR. ROSE: Let me move to Egypt and I'll come back to some of these other points. What's happening there today, and what is your understanding — and I'll begin with Secretary Baker and then come back — of what's the risk for the United States and what's the risk for the Middle East in terms of where the army is, where the people who created the Arab Spring is, and where the Muslim Brotherhood is?

SECRETARY BAKER: Well, I think the risks are quite large, because for some time we've been looking at Egypt as perhaps a textbook success case of how —

MR. ROSE: Of the Arab Spring?

SECRETARY BAKER: Of the Arab Spring. Yeah. Now, people say not an Arab Spring, it's also an Arab Winter, because of what's happening. And there's some, in my view, potential for that to happen.

It is not, as we sit here ...

... Egypt end up on top after all that's happening now — that would be a very destructive and destabilizing event.

MR. ROSE: That's not, by definition, what necessarily will happen if Morsi becomes the president.

SECRETARY BAKER: No. Not just — not Morsi, but there could be — we don't know who's going — and we don't know whether the president's going to have power or whether the military is going to keep the power.

MR. ROSE: Well, the military suggested it might very well keep it, haven't they?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I mean, Jim is right. We are concerned and we have expressed those concerns. We think that it is imperative that the military fulfill its promise to the Egyptian people to turn power over to the legitimate winner. We don't know yet who's ...

... furthermore, we think it's important that they reassert law and order over the Sinai, which is becoming a large, lawless area, and that they take seriously the internal threats from extremists and terrorists. So they have a lot ahead of them.

SECRETARY BAKER: Plus, the dissolution of the parliament.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Yeah.

SECRETARY BAKER: I mean, they've just come in and dissolved the elected parliament. How do you put that humpty dumpty back together?

MR. ROSE: But the impression — (laughter) — hard. The impression is that during the time of the revolution that was taking place that the lines between the American and the military was very good and very strong. And does that still exist?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, there certainly is a continuing effort to reach out. And in fact, I know that there are ongoing conversations between our military leaders and their counterparts in Egypt. But the message is the one that I just said. We ...

... said, "So are you going to form a political party? Are you going to be working on behalf of political change?" They said, "Oh no. We're revolutionaries. We don't do politics."

And I —

MR. ROSE: Exactly.

SECRETARY CLINTON: — I sat there and I thought that's how revolutions get totally derailed, taken over, undermined. And they now are expressing all kinds of disappointment at the choices they had and the results. But the energy that went in to creating this ...

... for the Egyptian people about what it's going to take to get the result of this hard-fought change that they've experienced.

MR. ROSE: That's true about every country, isn't it? Whether it's Libya —

SECRETARY CLINTON: It is. Absolutely.

MR. ROSE: — or Tunisia or Egypt or whatever happens in Syria.

SECRETARY BAKER: Absolutely. We do not know.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Absolutely.

MR. ROSE: We will not know how it shakes out and who the leaders that will come to power will be —

SECRETARY CLINTON: No.

MR. ROSE: — and what they're ambitions will be to play what role in the world scene.

SECRETARY CLINTON: That's right.

SECRETARY BAKER: That's correct.

SECRETARY CLINTON: In fact, Charlie, we have here what's called the A-100 class. These are our new, up and coming, rising Foreign Service officers who are here taking stock of Jim and me. (Laughter.) And probably a lot of the work that —

MR. ROSE: Those are the ones that look like teenagers?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Yeah. They do, don't they? (Laughter.) They do.

SECRETARY BAKER: They're the ones that are teenagers. (Laughter.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: Yeah. But a lot of the work that is going to have to happen — because this is a generational project. This is not something that's going to be done in a year or one American administration. This is a generational project. And preparing these young ...

... time.

MR. ROSE: I once read where you said it'll take 25 years before we will really know how this thing will shake out and the influence it'll have over the long term.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Right. But we shouldn't be surprised by that. I do think it's important, as Americans, that we kind of remember our own beginnings. And shaping our country did not happen overnight. We had a constitution written that didn't include me, didn't ...

... see the United States over the next decade or two play a role in the region? And how can it play a role that will be positive, leading to the kinds of governments that we would hope would be —

SECRETARY BAKER: Well, I would hope that the United States —

MR. ROSE: — new but different?

SECRETARY BAKER: — would continue to play a leadership role not just in that region but in the world as a whole because I believe that when the United States is involved abroad, we are involved for good. We don't look — ...

... versus military, I mean, some people — and the late Richard Holbrooke used to make this point; he worried that the military was shaping the world, especially in Afghanistan, and to the exclusion of diplomacy. Do you have some concerns about that?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I wouldn't say to the exclusion, but certainly —

MR. ROSE: An imbalance, perhaps.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I think that by most definitions, the power, the presence, the resources of the military are quite disproportionate to what we can field through the State Department and USAID. But what has happened in the last decade in Iraq and ...

... development experts who literally have been on the front lines in Afghanistan. So we're shaping an expeditionary diplomacy for the 21 st century that has to work hand-in-hand with the military.

SECRETARY BAKER: Your foreign policy has got to be supported strongly by the military, but it's got to have a diplomatic component, a very important diplomatic component. I've always said that diplomacy is best practiced with a ...

... thing: We're broke. We can't afford them anymore. We can't afford a lot of things. And the biggest threat facing this country today is not some threat from outside. It's not Iran. It's not nuclear weapons or anything else. It's our economic —

MR. ROSE: We've got to get our economic house in order.

SECRETARY BAKER: We'd better damn well get our economic house in order because the strength of our nation has always depended upon our economy. You can't be strong politically, militarily, or diplomatically if you're not strong economically.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, amen to that because — (laughter) — I've had to go around the world the last three and a half years reassuring many leaders, both in the governments and business sectors of a lot of countries, that the United States was ...

... oh, no. Then — (laughter) — had to hope that people were listening.

So yes, I mean, if we don't get our economic house in order — and obviously, there are perhaps some differences about how to do it. But when Secretary Baker was Secretary of the Treasury, when President Bush 41 were in office, when my husband was in office, we actually compromised. I know that some believe that's a word that has been banished from the Washington vocabulary, but I'm also spending ...

... parties have to come together and hammer out these compromises. And so, of course we've got to get back into the political work of rolling our sleeves up and solving these problems.

MR. ROSE: She's singing your hymn.

SECRETARY BAKER: I don't disagree with that at all. (Laughter.) No, you know that. No, siree.

MR. ROSE: Go ahead.

SECRETARY BAKER: On the other hand, I hate to tell you this, but based on my political experience and my public service experience, it ain't going to happen till after November. (Laughter.)

MR. ROSE: All right.

SECRETARY BAKER: Why haven't you asked us about Pakistan?

MR. ROSE: I'm coming to Pakistan. (Laughter.) As fast as I can.

SECRETARY BAKER: Well, you ask her. Ask her that. (Laughter.)

MR. ROSE: Let me ask, before I get to Pakistan, this point. She has said before that America cannot solve all the world's problems.

SECRETARY BAKER: Absolutely.

MR. ROSE: But no problem can be solved without American involvement. Do you share that?

SECRETARY BAKER: Well, I think — I said a minute ago I think America has to lead, because when we lead, we usually see good results. And we're a force for good when we're out there leading. ...

... American participation, but it's hard to think of one. (Laughter.) It really is.

MR. ROSE: All right. So how do you assess what the state of our relationship with Pakistan, before I come back to the Secretary?

SECRETARY BAKER: I think it's terrible. And I think it's really sad, because for the duration of the Cold War they were our ally, and India was the ally of the Soviet Union, and now all of that is changed. But the relationship is very problematic in my ...

... power and because it's really important that we not see nuclear conflagration in the subcontinent. And we don't want to see any more proliferation than we've seen from Pakistan.

MR. ROSE: A lot of bad people —

SECRETARY BAKER: But guess what? They've been a very problematic ally. They really have. And we need to —

MR. ROSE: You mean by things like ISI and their activities?

SECRETARY BAKER: Yeah. And the proliferation that took place under Khan and the fact the Obama — Osama was living there in Abbottabad for all that time. And don't tell me they didn't know that. And the fact that they've now thrown this doctor in ...

... who helped us find him. All of these — and they want to charge us \$ 5,000 per truck. I mean, come on —

MR. ROSE: I'll make this easy for you. What would a President Jim Baker do?

SECRETARY BAKER: I think I might do what I did when I was Secretary of State sitting in this office one floor down. The first month I was here, one of the assistant secretaries came in and said, "Mr. Secretary, you need to sign this." I said, "What is it?" He said, "It's a certification that Pakistan is not developing a nuclear weapon." I said, "Well, they are, aren't they?" And they said, "Yes." (Laughter.) And like the greenhorn I was, I signed it. (Laughter.)

And the next year, at the same week, same guy came in. "Mr. Secretary, you need to sign this." I said, "What is it?" "It's the certification required under the Pressler Amendment that Pakistan is not developing a nuclear weapon." I said, "Well, they are, aren't they?" He said, "Yes, they are." And I said, "Well, why do I have to sign it?" He said, "Because the White House wants it." And I said, "Well, you take it over to the White House and ...

... at some point we need to seriously think about doing that. We need to get their attention.

MR. ROSE: But I thought you just said you would not cut off their aid. Are you now saying that we —

SECRETARY BAKER: I said we need to maintain a relationship with them, but we need to get their attention. Okay? We shouldn't break the relationship right now and sever the relationship totally, but we need to get their attention. And I'm very sympathetic to the ...

... on the Hill who are saying wait a minute, we're funneling — we're broke, we're giving taxpayer money to this country which is not treating us right.

MR. ROSE: So there. (Laughter.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well —

SECRETARY BAKER: That's not fair to ask her that. (Laughter.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: No, look, I think that our relationship with Pakistan has been challenging for a long time. Some of it is of our own making. There's a lot of concern looking back. We did a great job in getting ...

... even mentioning the need to prevent nuclear proliferation or a nuclear incident that could occur because of the problems within their own system.

MR. ROSE: For the historical record, you believe they knew that Usama bin Ladin was there?

SECRETARY CLINTON: We have never been able to prove that anyone at the upper levels knew that. I said when I first went to Pakistan as Secretary in 2009 that I found it impossible to believe that somebody in their government ...

... believe that the civilian government knew anything. So whether — who was in what level of responsibility in the military or the ISI, whether they were active or retired, because we do know that there are links to retired members, we've never been able to close that loop.

SECRETARY BAKER: And at the very least, they ought to stop double-dealing us.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Yeah, at the very least. And —

MR. ROSE: And you ought to threaten them with removing aid in order to use that leverage to get them to stop?

SECRETARY BAKER: Well, I'm not sure we give them enough that that's going to make them stop. But they need to know that we're upset about this. They ought to stop double-dealing.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Yeah. And they should release Dr. Afridi.

SECRETARY BAKER: Absolutely, they ought to release him.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Which is something that is so unnecessary and gratuitous on their part. This man was an international terrorist. The Pakistanis for years claimed he was their enemy as well as ours. And my argument to them is that this man contributed to ending the al-Qaida leadership that was in their ...

... places. It just suggests that the role of Secretary of State in this country continues to be one in which you are just juggling a thousand balls all at the same time.

I want to thank Secretary Baker for coming up from Texas and sharing your ideas and your opinions with us, as we have done today.

SECRETARY BAKER: Thank you.

MR. ROSE: We hope that other Secretaries will be here, and to hear people at the top of American Government who've had important roles and to take advantage of their own experience, their history, and to funnel that through a consideration of the challenge that faces Secretary Clinton every day. So thank both of you for this time. (Applause.)

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