

# So Please Tell Me Again: What's the War About?

By [William Blum](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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When facts are inconvenient, when international law, human rights and history get in the way, when war crimes can't easily be justified or explained away, when logic doesn't help much, the current crop of American political leaders turns to what is now the old reliable: 9/11. We have to fight in Afghanistan because ... somehow ... it's tied into what happened on September 11, 2001. Here's Vice-President Joe Biden: "We know that it was from the space that joins Afghanistan and Pakistan that the attacks of 9/11 occurred." 1

Here's Sen. Lindsay Graham (R-SC): "This is the place [Afghanistan] we were attacked from 9/11." 2

Rep. Mike Pence, the third-ranking House Republican, asserted that the revelations in the Wikileaks documents do not change his view of the Afghan conflict, nor does he expect a shift in public opinion. "Back home in Indiana, people still remember where the attacks on 9/11 came from." 3

Here's President Obama a year ago: "But we must never forget this is not a war of choice. This is a war of necessity. Those who attacked America on 9/11 are plotting to do so again. If left unchecked, the Taliban insurgency will mean an even larger safe haven from which al Qaeda would plot to kill more Americans." 4

And here is the president, two days after the release of the Wikileaks documents, referring to Afghanistan and Pakistan as "the region from which the 9/11 attacks were waged and other attacks against the United States and our friends and allies have been planned". 5

Never mind that out of the tens of thousands of people the United States and its NATO front have killed in Afghanistan not one has been identified as having had anything to do with the events of September 11, 2001.

Never mind that the "plot to kill Americans" in 2001 was devised in Germany and Spain and the United States more than in Afghanistan. Why hasn't Washington bombed those countries?

Indeed, what actually is needed to plot to buy airline tickets and take flying lessons in the United States? A room with some chairs? What does "an even larger safe haven" mean? A larger room with more chairs? Perhaps a blackboard? Terrorists intent upon attacking the United States can meet almost anywhere, with Afghanistan probably being one of the worst places for them, given the American occupation.

There are many people in Afghanistan and Pakistan — the ones still living — who deeply resent the US presence there and the drones that fly overhead and drop bombs on their houses, their wedding parties, their funerals, their life. As in Iraq, the American "war on

terrorism” in Afghanistan regularly, routinely, and conspicuously creates numerous new anti-American terrorists.

The only “war of necessity” that draws the United States to Afghanistan is the need for protected oil and gas pipelines from the Caspian Sea area, the establishment of military bases in this country that is surrounded by the oil-rich Caspian Sea and Persian Gulf regions, and making it easier to watch and pressure next-door Iran. What more could any respectable imperialist nation desire? Oh, did I mention that the military-industrial-security-intelligence complex and its shareholders will be further enriched?

But the war against the Taliban can’t be won. Except perhaps by killing everyone in Afghanistan. The United States should negotiate the pipelines with the Taliban, as the Clinton administration tried to do, without success, then get out, and declare “victory”. Barack Obama can surely deliver an eloquent victory speech.

## USrael and Iran

If and when the United States and Israel bomb Iran (marking the sixth country so blessed by Barack Obama) and this sad old world has a new daily horror show to look at on their TV sets, and we then discover that Iran was not actually building nuclear weapons after all, the American mainstream media and the benighted American mind will ask: “Why didn’t they tell us that? Did they want us to bomb them?”

The same questions were asked about Iraq following the discovery that Saddam Hussein didn’t in fact have any weapons of mass destruction. However, in actuality, before the US invasion Iraqi officials had stated clearly on repeated occasions that they had no such weapons. I’m reminded of this by the recent news report about Hans Blix, former chief United Nations weapons inspector, who led a doomed hunt for WMD in Iraq. Last week he told the British inquiry into the March 2003 invasion that those who were “100 percent certain there were weapons of mass destruction” in Iraq turned out to have “less than zero percent knowledge” of where the purported hidden caches might be. He testified that he had warned British Prime Minister Tony Blair in a February 2003 meeting — as well as US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in separate talks — that Hussein might have no weapons of mass destruction. 6

In August 2002, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz told American newscaster Dan Rather on CBS: “We do not possess any nuclear or biological or chemical weapons.” 7

In December, Aziz stated to Ted Koppel on ABC: “The fact is that we don’t have weapons of mass destruction. We don’t have chemical, biological, or nuclear weaponry.” 8

Hussein himself told Rather in February 2003: “These missiles have been destroyed. There are no missiles that are contrary to the prescription of the United Nations [as to range] in Iraq. They are no longer there.” 9

Moreover, Gen. Hussein Kamel, former head of Iraq’s secret weapons program, and a son-in-law of Saddam Hussein, told the UN in 1995 that Iraq had destroyed its banned missiles and chemical and biological weapons soon after the Persian Gulf War. 10

There are yet other examples of Iraqi officials telling the world that the WMD were non-existent.

If you don't already have serious doubts about the mainstream media's devotion to questioning the premises and rationales underlying American foreign policy, consider this: Despite the two revelations on Dan Rather's CBS programs, and the other revelations noted above, in January 2008 we find CBS reporter Scott Pelley interviewing FBI agent George Piro, who had interviewed Saddam Hussein before he was executed:

PELLEY: And what did he tell you about how his weapons of mass destruction had been destroyed?

PIRO: He told me that most of the WMD had been destroyed by the U.N. inspectors in the '90s, and those that hadn't been destroyed by the inspectors were unilaterally destroyed by Iraq.

PELLEY: He had ordered them destroyed?

PIRO: Yes.

PELLEY: So why keep the secret? Why put your nation at risk? Why put your own life at risk to maintain this charade? 11

Would it have mattered if the Bush administration had fully believed Iraq when it said it had no WMD? Probably not. There is ample evidence that Bush knew this to be the case, as did Tony Blair. Saddam Hussein did not sufficiently appreciate just how psychopathic his two adversaries were. Bush was determined to vanquish Iraq, for the sake of Israel, for control of oil, and for expanding the empire, though it hasn't all worked out as the empire expected; for some odd reason, it seems that the Iraqi people resented being bombed, invaded, occupied, and tortured.

The result of Bush's Iraqi policy can be summed up by saying that it would be difficult to cite many other historical examples of one nation destroying another so completely, crushing and perverting virtually every aspect of their society and humanity.

Now Israel presses Washington relentlessly to do the same to Iran — not that the US necessarily needs much prodding — primarily because Israel is determined to remain the only nuclear power in the Middle East; this despite Iran telling the United States and the world many times that it is not building nuclear weapons. But if Iran is in fact building nuclear weapons, we have to ask: Is there some 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? If the United States had known that the Japanese had deliverable atomic bombs, would Hiroshima and Nagasaki have been destroyed? Does USrael believe that there is not already enough horror and suffering in the news?

In what could be part of the preparation for an attack on Iran, 47 members of the House of Representatives recently put forth a [non-binding resolution](#) declaring Iran to be "an immediate and existential threat to the State of Israel". To illustrate this threat, the resolution quoted Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on several occasions avowing sentiments like: "God willing, with the force of God behind it, we shall soon experience a world without the United States and Zionism" ... calling for "this occupying regime [Israel] to be wiped off the map" ... "Like it or not, the Zionist regime is heading toward annihilation" ... "I must announce that the Zionist regime, with a 60-year record of genocide, plunder, invasion, and betrayal is about to die and will soon be erased from the geographical scene"

... “Today, the time for the fall of the satanic power of the United States has come, and the countdown to the annihilation of the emperor of power and wealth has started”.

Pretty damning stuff, isn't it? N'est-ce pas? Nicht wahr? But there's a lot less here than meets the eye. Notice that it doesn't quote Ahmadinejad in a single specific, explicit threat of an Iranian attack upon Israel or the United States. No mention or indication that “I” or “We” or “Iran” is going to do any of this, carry out any act of violence. And I would say that that's because it's not what he meant. In another quote, which the resolution fails to cite, the Iranian president in December 2006 said: “The Zionist regime will be wiped out soon, the same way the Soviet Union was, and humanity will achieve freedom.”<sup>12</sup> Obviously, the man is not calling for any kind of violent attack upon Israel, for the dissolution of the Soviet Union took place very peacefully. Furthermore, in June 2006, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, stated: “We have no problem with the world. We are not a threat whatsoever to the world, and the world knows it. We will never start a war. We have no intention of going to war with any state.”<sup>13</sup> Why didn't the authors of the congressional resolution quote that one?

I think that one can derive a better understanding of the Iranian president's statements by seeing them as metaphor, as bragging, as wishful thinking, as well as poor translation (for example: “wiped off the map”<sup>14</sup>), coming from a man foolish enough to publicly claim that there are no gays in Iran.

But more significantly, the resolution offers no reason why Iran actually would attack Israel or the United States. What reason would Iran have to use nuclear weapons against either country other than an irresistible desire for mass national suicide? Indeed, the very same question could have — and should have — been asked before the invasion of Iraq. Of the many lies surrounding that invasion, the biggest one of all was that if, in fact, Saddam Hussein had had those weapons of mass destruction the invasion would have been justified.

With all the lies exposed about the American Iraqi misadventure, I and many others had allowed ourselves the luxury, the hidden pleasure, of believing that the United States government and media had learned a lesson which would last for some time. They'd been caught and exposed. But it's the same all over again with the lies about Iran and Ahmadinejad. (No, he's not even a Holocaust denier.)

In any event, Israel probably doesn't believe its own propaganda. In March of last year, the Washington Post 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.”<sup>15</sup> 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.

And earlier this year we could read in the Sunday Times of London: “Brigadier-General Uzi Eilam, 75, a war hero and pillar of the [Israeli] defence establishment, believes it will probably take Iran seven years to make nuclear weapons. The views expressed by the former director-general of Israel's Atomic Energy Commission contradict the assessment of Israel's defence establishment and put him at odds with political leaders.”<sup>16</sup>

If any country in this world is a threat to use nuclear weapons with remarkably little regard for the consequences it's Israel. Martin van Creveld, an Israeli professor of military history, and loyal Israeli citizen, remarked in 2002: “We have the capability to take the world down with us. And I can assure you that this will happen before Israel goes under.”<sup>17</sup> Think of the

closing scene of “Dr. Strangelove”. That’s Israel sitting astride the speeding nuclear missile waving the cowboy hat.

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She played Mozart’s Piano Concerto in D Minor.

And accompanied the one and only Aretha Franklin.

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At the home of the Philadelphia Orchestra.

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But what did the audience care?

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And we all know that the show must go on.

So let’s hear it, folks ... Let’s have a real all-American hand ... Let’s hear it for our own darling virtuoso ... Miss Condoleezza Rice!

*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*

Portions of the books can be read, and signed copies purchased, at [www.killinghope.org](http://www.killinghope.org)

Notes

1. State Department Documents and Publications, March 10, 2009

2. Face the Nation, CBS, July 4, 2010
3. Washington Post, July 27, 2010
4. Talk given by the president at Veterans of Foreign Wars convention, August 17, 2009
5. White House press release of Obama's remarks of July 27, 2010
6. Associated Press, July 28, 2010
7. CBS Evening News, August 20, 2002
8. ABC Nightline, December 4, 2002
9. "60 Minutes II", February 26, 2003
10. Washington Post, March 1, 2003
11. "60 Minutes", January 27, 2008. See also: Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting [FAIR] Action Alert, February 1, 2008
12. Associated Press, December 12, 2006
13. Letter to the Washington Post from M.A. Mohammadi, Press Officer, Iranian Mission to the United Nations, June 12, 2006
14. See Anti-Empire Report, October 1, 2008, second part
15. Washington Post, March 5, 2009
16. Sunday Times (London), January 10, 2010
17. Originally in the Dutch weekly magazine, Elsevier, April 27, 2002, pages 52-3; picked up in many other international publications

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