

TARGETTING IRAN: The Dogs of War are off the Leash

Israel to the US: 'We'll Give You the War, You Give Us the Cannon Fodder'

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In meeting rooms in London, Tel Aviv and Washington the dice have been thrown: snake eyes.

Flashback, 1963: When John F. Kennedy decided *not* to escalate the soon-to-be disastrous Vietnam war and issued National Security Action Memorandum 263 ([NSAM 263](#)), he signed his death warrant.

Scarcely six weeks after vowing to pull all American forces out of South Vietnam by 1965, Kennedy was dead, the target of an ["executive action"](#) orchestrated by the CIA, a coup d'état on behalf of America's corporatist masters—the military-industrial cabal of hardline cold warriors who stood to lose billions if Kennedy lived.

That sweet little deal to "win" the war in Southeast Asia cost some two million Vietnamese lives, 58,000 dead Americans and precipitated an economic crisis which dealt a death blow to post-World War II prosperity and launched the United States on its inexorable glide path towards becoming a *failed state*.

Flash forward to 2012: We have Barack Obama in the White House; a fraudster who promised "hope and change" and instead led his wilfully blind constituents into embracing the third term of a George W. Bush administration.

Comparing Obama with Kennedy one can only conclude: *They don't make bourgeois politicians like they used to!*

Following on from a decades-long drive to transform the Gulf into an "American lake" (under provisions of the so-called "Carter Doctrine," another "peace loving" Democrat), the coming war with Iran is a transparent scheme to ensure U.S. hegemony over the vast petroleum resources of Central Asia and the Middle East—to the detriment of their geopolitical rivals.

U.S. and NATO naval forces on high alert threaten the free flow of oil in the Persian Gulf, the life's blood of the global capitalist economy.

A war will lead to an oil price spike as Iranian, but perhaps also Saudi and GCC oil is removed in one fell swoop from the market, thereby setting-off a chain reaction that will exacerbate the West's economic decline—to the benefit of financial jackals waiting in the wings who will gobble up what remains of America and Europe's publicly-owned assets at fire sale prices in a desperate move to stave off the crisis.

Currently, Iran is ringed with military bases. American, British and Israeli submarines equipped with nuclear cruise missiles keep silent watch. Aircraft carrier battle groups carry out provocative maneuvers. U.S. and Israeli drones routinely overfly Iranian territory. Scientists are murdered in orchestrated terror attacks. Defense installations are bombed.

Economic sanctions, universally recognized as a *prelude to war*, strangle the Iranian people and their economy, all in the quixotic hope of inducing (coercing) “regime change” in Tehran.

The U.S. media, reprising their role during the run-up to the 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq, are chock-a-block with [scare stories](#) that Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) are preparing to carry out terrorist attacks in Europe and the United States.

Indeed, the Shiite regime “may have” given “new freedoms” to Sunni Salafist extremists, including members of the “management council” of the Afghan-Arab database of disposable Western intelligence assets also known as “Al Qaeda” detained in Iran and “may have provided some material aid to the terrorist group,” if an account published last week by [The Wall Street Journal](#) can be believed, which of course it can’t.

Meanwhile, the CIA and Mossad recruit, train and then unleash Salafist terrorists such as Jundallah or Saddam Hussein’s former henchmen, the cultic Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK) for terror ops, just as they did in Libya when former Al Qaeda “emir,” the MI6 asset Abdelhakim Belhaj was appointed chief of Tripoli’s Revolutionary Military Council.

And what “evidence” did U.S. officials offer for these dastardly Iranian plots to murder us all in our beds? Why the now-discredited FBI fable which had a failed Texas used-car dealer, Manssor Arbabsiar, and a still-unnamed DEA snitch posing as or actually a member of the notorious Zetas narcotrafficking cartel, plotting to murder the Saudi ambassador by blowing up a tony Georgetown restaurant, that’s what!

Former CIA chief Leon Panetta, who replaced Robert Gates, also a former CIA chief, now helms the Defense Department.

Corporate media in Europe and America report that Panetta and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey, have tried to “cool” the Israeli’s ardor for a preemptive strike and deny that the U.S. is preparing for war.

This too, is a carefully contrived disinformation campaign.

In a syndicated column for [The Washington Post](#), war hawk David Ignatius wrote Thursday that “Panetta believes there is a strong likelihood that Israel will strike Iran in April, May or June—before Iran enters what Israelis described as a ‘zone of immunity’ to commence building a nuclear bomb.”

According to Ignatius, “the administration appears to favor staying out of the conflict unless Iran hits U.S. assets, which would trigger a strong U.S. response,” and that Washington’s alleged disapproval of an Israeli first strike “might open a breach like the one in 1956, when President Dwight Eisenhower condemned an Israeli-European attack on the Suez Canal.”

Ignatius’ unnamed “senior administration official,” since identified as Panetta, “caution that Tehran shouldn’t misunderstand: The United States has a 60-year commitment to Israeli security, and if Israel’s population centers were hit, the United States could feel obligated to

come to Israel's defense."

In other words, should America's "stationary aircraft carrier in the Middle East" launch a sneak-attack on Iran, hitting their civilian nuclear and defense installations, thereby inflicting "collateral damage," i.e., the wanton slaughter of innocent Iranian citizens, if Tehran has the temerity to defend itself and strike back, the full military might of the imperialist godfather will be brought to bear.

[Inter Press Service](#) reported Wednesday that JCS Chairman Dempsey, "told Israeli leaders Jan. 20 that the United States would not participate in a war against Iran begun by Israel without prior agreement from Washington, according to accounts from well-placed senior military officers."

According to journalist Gareth Porter, "Dempsey's warning, conveyed to both Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak, represents the strongest move yet by President Barack Obama to deter an Israeli attack and ensure that the United States is not caught up in a regional conflagration with Iran."

Claiming that "Obama still appears reluctant to break publicly and explicitly with Israel over its threat of military aggression against Iran, even in the absence of evidence Iran has decided to build a nuclear weapon," Porter alleges that "the message carried by Dempsey was the first explicit statement to the Netanyahu government that the United States would not defend Israel if it attacked Iran unilaterally."

Holding onto the thinnest of reeds, Porter writes that Panetta "had given a clear hint" of the U.S. position "in an interview on 'Face the Nation' Jan. 8 that the Obama administration would not help defend Israel in a war against Iran that Israel had initiated."

When asked by CBS host Bob Schieffer, who pressed the issue of a unilateral Israeli attack, Panetta said, "If the Israelis made that decision, we would have to be prepared to protect our forces in that situation. And that's what we'd be concerned about."

What are we to make of these claims?

If their purpose was to force Israel to rethink their attack plans, it clearly isn't working. If however, Panetta's remarks were meant to disarm domestic opponents of U.S. war plans, then mission accomplished!

"Speaking at the Herzliya Interdisciplinary Center's annual conference," [The Christian Science Monitor](#) reported that "Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak compared the current standoff with Iran to the 'fateful' period before the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, when Israel launched a preemptive strike against Egypt."

"The temperature is rising in Israel," Iran analyst Meir Javedanfar told the *Monitor*. "He says that if the defense minister sees the current period as similar to the run-up to the [1967] Six-Day War, 'that gives credibility to those who think Israel is going to launch an attack'."

In a follow-up piece published Saturday by [IPS](#), Porter now suggests that Panetta's leak to Ignatius "had a different objective," namely that the "White House was taking advantage of the current crisis atmosphere over that Israeli threat and even seeking to make it more urgent in order to put pressure on Iran to make diplomatic concessions to the United States

and its allies on its nuclear programme in the coming months.”

Indeed, the “Panetta leak makes it less likely that either Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu or Iranian strategists will take seriously Obama’s effort to keep the United States out of a war initiated by an Israeli attack.”

Moreover, Panetta’s leak to *The Washington Post* “seriously undercut the message carried to the Israelis by Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, last month that the United States would not come to Israel’s defence if it launched a unilateral attack on Iran.”

Although there is trepidation amongst military planners in Tel Aviv and Washington should Israeli officials opt for a preemptive attack on Iran—and a retaliatory counterstrike by the Islamic Republic would have devastating effects on both Israel’s civilian population and U.S./NATO military forces in the Persian Gulf and beyond—should such disastrous orders be given, it is a certainty that Washington would follow suit.

This in fact, is what the Israeli leadership is banking on and, contrary to *sanctioned leaks* to media conduits like Ignatius, is fully in keeping with Washington’s strategy of employing Israel as a cats’ paw to “drag” the United States into a war with Iran.

As the [World Socialist Web Site](#) points out, “any differences between the US and Israel are purely tactical.”

“Washington could of course use its considerable influence to veto an attack by Israel, which is heavily dependent on the US, diplomatically, economically and militarily,” leftist critic Peter Symonds writes.

Ignatius’ column however, “makes no mention of this possibility. In effect, the Obama administration appears to be giving Israel a tacit green light for an illegal, unprovoked attack on Iran, and threatening its own military action if Iran retaliates.”

Indeed, the right-wing Israeli publication [Debkafile](#) reported Saturday that while Panetta “has been outspoken about a possible Israeli offensive against Iran taking place as of April ... no US source is leveling on the far more extensive American, Saudi, British, French and Gulf states’ preparations going forward for an offensive against the Islamic Republic.”

Accordingly, *Debkafile’s* “military sources” (read high-placed intelligence and military officials favoring an attack) “report a steady flow of many thousands of US troops for some weeks to two strategic islands within reach of Iran, Oman’s Masirah just south of the Strait of Hormuz and Socotra, between Yemen and the Horn of Africa.”

Debkafile also noted that “the Saudis this week wound up their own intensive preparations for war. Large forces are now deployed around Saudi oil fields, pipelines and export facilities in the eastern provinces opposite the Persian Gulf, backed by anti-missile Patriot PAC-3 batteries. American, British and French fighter-bombers have been landing at Saudi air bases to safeguard the capital, Riyadh.”

And with the Pentagon speeding-up arms sales to repressive Gulf monarchies and Saudi royals (with tens of billions in profits flowing into the coffers of American and European death merchants), the stage is now set for a bloody military confrontation.

On the so-called diplomatic front, as “useful idiots” and “accessories before the fact” in the drive towards war, the shameful part played by the International Atomic Energy Agency must be underscored.

Despite, or more likely *because* Iran’s top leadership have expressed their willingness to reopen stalled talks over their civilian nuclear program and have taken steps to do so, the United States and NATO are stepping-up their propaganda offensive, with the IAEA playing a leading role.

Indeed, [The New York Times](#) reported Sunday that “American and European officials said Friday that a mission by international nuclear inspectors to Tehran this week had failed to address their key concerns, indicating that Iran’s leaders believe they can resist pressure to open up the nation’s nuclear program.”

Times’ stenographers Robert F. Worth and David E. Sanger averred that an unnamed “senior American official described the session between the agency and Iranian nuclear officials as ‘foot-dragging at best and a disaster at worst’.”

Why is the onus solely placed on Iranian negotiators?

Because “members of the I.A.E.A. delegation were told that they could not have access to Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, an academic who is widely believed to be in charge of important elements of the suspected weaponization program, and that they could not visit a military site where the agency’s report suggested key experiments on weapons technology might have been carried out.”

What Worth and Sanger fail to mention in their report is that Iranian officials asserted that before Roshan’s murder he “had talked to IAEA inspectors, a fact which ‘indicates that these UN agencies may have played a role in leaking information on Iran’s nuclear facilities and scientists’,” [Russia Today](#) reported at the time.

Protesting the killing before the UN Security Council last month, Iranian deputy UN ambassador Eshagh Al Habib said there was “‘high suspicion’ that, in order to prepare the murder, terrorist circles used intelligence obtained from UN bodies.”

According to the deputy ambassador’s charge, “this included interviews with Iranian nuclear scientists carried out by the International Atomic Energy Agency and the sanction list of the Security Council,” *RT* disclosed.

Sound far-fetched, the product of Iranian “conspiracy theories”? Better think again!

As former UNSCOM Iraq weapons’ inspector Scott Ritter revealed in his 2005 book, [Iraq Confidential](#), “The issue of uncovering incriminating documentation suddenly took on a higher priority, and the CIA, supported by activist elements within the Department of State, pushed for more direct involvement in the operations of UNSCOM and the IAEA. For the first time, the darkest warriors in the CIA’s covert army, the Operations Planning Cell (OPC), were getting actively involved in preparing intelligence for UNSCOM’s use.”

According to Ritter, “The secret warriors of the CIA were accustomed to plying their trade in the shadows, far away from prying eyes. UNSCOM inspections, however, were carried out in full view of the Iraqi government, representing the antithesis of covert action. The existence of the OPC, as with any CIA affiliation with UNSCOM, was a carefully guarded secret.

Officially, therefore, all OPC personnel were presented to UNSCOM as State Department 'experts'."

In light of past practices by the CIA, or for that matter the IAEA itself, Iranian fears that their scientists are being set-up for liquidation are fully justified.

Indeed, the "cautious" U.S. Secretary of Defense, former CIA chief Leon Panetta, speaking at the Ramstein Air Base in Germany on Friday, echoed Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak's claim that Israel would need to "consider taking action" should nuclear inspections and sanctions fail.

"My view is that right now the most important thing is to keep the international community unified in keeping that pressure on, to try to convince Iran that they shouldn't develop a nuclear weapon, that they should join the international family of nations and that they should operate by the rules that we all operate by," Panetta asserted. "But I have to tell you, if they don't, we have all options on the table, and we'll be prepared to respond if we have to."

One of those "options," passed by the U.S. Senate Banking Committee on Friday were demands made to the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications, or SWIFT.

"The new Senate package," [Reuters](#) reported, "seeks to target foreign banks that handle transactions for Iran's national oil and tanker companies, and for the first time, extends the reach of Iran-related sanctions to foreign subsidiaries of U.S. companies."

The new legislation would target SWIFT with wide-ranging penalties if they failed to exclude sanctioned Iranian banks from the international system.

The bill now goes to the full Senate "where the likelihood of passage is considered strong," [The New York Times](#) reported.

With the Orwellian title, the "Iran Sanctions, Accountability and Human Rights Act" Banking Committee Chairman Tim Johnson (D-SD) said that "Iran can end its suppression of its own people, come clean on its nuclear program, suspend enrichment and stop supporting terrorist activities around the globe. Or it can continue to face sustained, intensifying multilateral economic and diplomatic pressure deepening its international isolation."

Now if only Senator Johnson offered similar demands on America's Israeli allies who possess upwards of 200 nuclear weapons, refuse to join the international nonproliferation regime and carry out worldwide terrorist attacks with impunity, perhaps then diplomacy would operate on a level playing field!

SWIFT officials were quick to cave to U.S. pressure. "SWIFT fully understands and appreciates the gravity of the situation," [Reuters](#) disclosed.

In its statement, "SWIFT said it is working with officials and central banks to find 'the right multilateral legal framework' to 'expedite' a response to the issues."

"This is a complex situation, and SWIFT needs to ensure that it takes into consideration the implications to the functioning of the broader global financial payments system, as well as the continued flow of humanitarian payments to the Iranian people," the organization said.

Needless to say, a boycott of Iranian financial institutions by SWIFT would be catastrophic to Iran's economy, a provocation fully intended as a step towards war.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* noted, "if Israel does attack Iran, it will not simply be 'a surgical strike' that destroys Iran's key nuclear facilities. Any Iranian retaliation will be used by the US as a pretext for a massive air war aimed at destroying the country's military and infrastructure. As a result, any conflict carries a real danger of becoming a regional war that could embroil the major powers."

Despite the evident madness of countenancing an Iran attack, political calculations by capitalist elites during a critical election year in the United States, with "conservative" and "liberal" factions angling for advantage by currying favor with the powerful Zionist and U.S. defense lobbies, Israel's unambiguous message to the White House is: "We'll give you the war, you give us the cannon fodder."

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