

The Real Aim of Israel's Bomb Iran Campaign

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[Reuel Marc Gerecht's screed](#) justifying an Israeli bombing attack on Iran coincides with the opening the new Israel lobby campaign marked by the introduction of [House resolution 1553](#) expressing full support for such an Israeli attack.

What is important to understand about this campaign is that the aim of Gerecht and of the right-wing government of Benjamin Netanyahu is to support an attack by Israel so that the United States can be drawn into a direct, full-scale war with Iran.

That has long been the Israeli strategy for Iran, because Israel cannot fight a war with Iran without full U.S. involvement. Israel needs to know that the United States will finish the war that Israel wants to start.

Gerecht openly expresses the hope that any Iranian response to the Israeli attack would trigger full-scale U.S. war against Iran. "If Khamenei has a death-wish, he'll let the Revolutionary Guards mine the strait, the entrance to the Persian Gulf," writes Gerecht. "It might be the only thing that would push President Obama to strike Iran militarily...."

Gerecht suggest that the same logic would apply to any Iranian "terrorism against the United States after an Israeli strike," by which he really means any attack on a U.S. target in the Middle East. Gerecht writes that Obama might be "obliged" to threaten major retaliation "immediately after an Israeli surprise attack."

That's the key sentence in this very long Gerecht argument. Obama is not going to be "obliged" to joint an Israeli aggression against Iran unless he feels that domestic political pressures to do so are too strong to resist. That's why the Israelis are determined to line up a strong majority in Congress and public opinion for war to foreclose Obama's options.

In the absence of confidence that Obama would be ready to come into the war fully behind Israel, there cannot be an Israeli strike.

Gerecht's argument for war relies on a [fanciful nightmare scenario](#) of Iran doling out nuclear weapons to Islamic extremists all over the Middle East. But the real concern of the Israelis and their lobbyists, as Gerecht's past writing has explicitly stated, is to destroy Iran's Islamic regime in a paroxysm of U.S. military violence.

Gerecht first revealed this Israeli-neocon fantasy as early as 2000, before the Iranian nuclear program was even taken seriously, in an essay for a book published by the Project for a New American Century. Gerecht argued that, if Iran could be caught in a "terrorist act," the U.S. Navy should "retaliate with fury". The purpose of such a military response, he wrote, should be to "strike with truly devastating effect against the ruling mullahs and the

repressive institutions that maintain them.”

And lest anyone fail to understand what he meant by that, Gerecht was more explicit: “That is, no cruise missiles at midnight to minimize the body count. The clerics will almost certainly strike back unless Washington uses overwhelming, paralyzing force.”

In 2006-07, the Israeli war party had reason to believe that it could hijack U.S. policy long enough to get the war it wanted, because it had placed one of its most militant agents, David Wurmser, in a strategic position to influence that policy.

We now know that Wurmser, formerly a close adviser to Benjamin Netanyahu and during that period Vice President Dick Cheney’s main adviser on the Middle East, urged a policy of overwhelming U.S. military force against Iran. After leaving the administration in 2007, Wurmser [revealed](#) that he had advocated a U.S. war on Iran, not to set back the nuclear program but to achieve regime change.

“Only if what we do is placed in the framework of a fundamental assault on the survival of the regime will it have a pick-up among ordinary Iranians,” Wurmser told *The Telegraph*. The U.S. attack was not to be limited to nuclear targets but was to be quite thorough and massively destructive. “If we start shooting, we must be prepared to fire the last shot. Don’t shoot a bear if you’re not going to kill it.”

Of course, that kind of war could not be launched out of the blue. It would have required a casus belli to justify a limited initial attack that would then allow a rapid escalation of U.S. military force. In 2007, Cheney acted on Wurmser’s advice and tried to get Bush to provoke a war with Iran over Iraq, but it was [foiled by the Pentagon](#).

As Wurmser was beginning to whisper that advice in Cheney’s ear in 2006, Gerecht was making [the same argument](#) in *The Weekly Standard*:

Bombing the nuclear facilities once would mean we were declaring war on the clerical regime. We shouldn’t have any illusions about that. We could not stand idly by and watch the mullahs build other sites. If the ruling mullahs were to go forward with rebuilding what they’d lost—and it would be surprising to discover the clerical regime knuckling after an initial bombing run—we’d have to strike until they stopped. And if we had any doubt about where their new facilities were (and it’s a good bet the clerical regime would try to bury new sites deep under heavily populated areas), and we were reasonably suspicious they were building again, we’d have to consider, at a minimum, using special-operations forces to penetrate suspected sites.

The idea of waging a U.S. war of destruction against Iran is obvious lunacy, which is why U.S. military leaders have strongly resisted it both during the Bush and Obama administrations. But Gerecht makes it clear that Israel believes it can use its control of Congress to pound Obama into submission. Democrats in Congress, [he boasts](#), “are mentally in a different galaxy than they were under President Bush.” Even though Israel has increasingly been regarded around the world as a rogue state after its Gaza atrocities and the commando killings of unarmed civilians on board the Mavi Marmara, its grip on the U.S. Congress [appears as strong as ever](#).

Moreover, [polling data](#) for 2010 show that a majority of Americans have already been manipulated into supporting war against Iran – in large part because more than two-thirds of

those polled have gotten the impression that Iran already has nuclear weapons. The Israelis are apparently hoping to exploit that advantage. "If the Israelis bomb now, American public opinion will probably be with them," writes Gerecht. "Perhaps decisively so."

Netanyahu must be feeling good about the prospects for pressuring Barack Obama to join an Israeli war of aggression against Iran. It was Netanyahu, after all, who [declared in 2001](#), "I know what America is. America is a thing you can move very easily, move it in the right direction. They won't get in the way."

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