

The Trump Administration “Panicked over Nothing”. Pompeo Exaggerated Claims. “Do They Think We are Stupid”

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The Trump administration’s overhyped claims of an increased Iranian threat [went over like a lead balloon](#) with allied officials this week:

A NATO military intelligence official who was briefed on Pompeo’s claims about increased Iranian aggression in the Middle East said the substance of the intelligence that the Americans briefed was utterly unconvincing—even insulting [bold mine-DL].

“Do they think that we are stupid?” asked the NATO official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Pompeo has a record of making false and exaggerated claims about Iran and its involvement in other conflicts, especially in Yemen, so he probably didn’t have much credibility among allies going into this. It isn’t surprising that his presentation of the latest administration spin didn’t go over well. Our treaty allies don’t share the administration’s Iran obsession and don’t want to be drawn in to a new conflict, so to convince them the evidence of new and unusual Iranian behavior would have to be very strong. At the same time, the Secretary of State has been so used to getting away with making outrageous false statements to Congress and the public for more than a year that he probably didn’t expect to encounter so much skepticism when he tried to pass off weak evidence as if it were solid proof of increased threats.

The information Pompeo provided predictably didn’t back up the administration’s alarmist statements and provocative behavior:

The NATO military intelligence official said Pompeo’s clumsy attempt to gin up support for the U.S.’s dealings with Iran fell on deaf ears.

“[The briefing] was a dog’s breakfast of things that happen every day, rumors, poorly-sourced things we suspect are [planted information], and of course, some pictures of boats that the Iranians have put some missiles on,” he said, referencing the photograph of an Iranian missile on a small boat in the Persian Gulf that was recently declassified, according to the New York Times, by U.S. intelligence agents who wanted to prove that Iran is indeed a threat. “Iranians have been putting missiles on boats in the Gulf since the 1980s. That’s what you do when you don’t have proper blue water navy.”

In short, there was no good reason for the panicked administration reaction this month, and it has shown how eager some administration officials are to seize on absolutely anything as an excuse to move towards conflict with Iran. The Trump administration's response over the last two weeks has been a bit like the cartoon where the giant elephant shrieks and jumps up on a chair when it spots a mouse on the floor. That doesn't bode well for how the administration will respond to an accidental collision or clash. This is why the U.S. and Iran should maintain regular lines of communication to avert potential misunderstandings and to make sure that our governments can calm things down before they get out of control.

Pompeo had no better luck during his recent trip to Iraq:

When asked if Pompeo and his staff accepted this analysis, the Iraqi official laughed.

"You Americans aren't always good listeners in the Middle East," he said. "We are telling them that the Iranians weren't behaving unusually and they ignored us."

The Trump administration has pursued a policy of relentless hostility towards Iran, and then they misread normal Iranian actions as a new threat, blew that threat out of proportion, and then massively overreacted.

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