

US Threats against Iran: War Plans and Pretexts in Place

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There is a real possibility that the U.S. may launch a military attack on Iran. Yet far, far too many people are either unaware of—or in denial about—this very grave situation which could lead to the deaths of literally tens of thousands of Iranians and an escalation of the war across the Middle East.

The BBC recently reported that U.S. Central Command officials have already chosen an extensive list of targets for missile and bomb attacks inside Iran. The list includes nuclear plants at Natanz, Isfahan, Arak and Bushehr, but also targets most of Iran's military infrastructure including air bases, naval bases, missile facilities and command-and-control centers.

The BBC also reports that two “triggers”—or pretexts—for a U.S. attack have also been chosen. One, any confirmation that Iran is developing a nuclear weapon, and second, a “high-casualty” attack on U.S. forces in Iraq that could be blamed on Iran.

This report comes when a second aircraft carrier group has arrived in the Persian Gulf, along with an array of cruisers, destroyers and submarines. And there are reports that a third carrier group may soon be dispatched. U.S. and British naval minesweepers are also reportedly being deployed to the Gulf, pointing to concern that a U.S. attack could prompt Iran to retaliate by blocking oil routes.

The U.S. may also be stepping up covert operations inside Iran aimed at destabilizing the Iranian regime, an effort which Seymour Hersh reported was underway last year. Iran recently accused the U.S. of being involved in an attack in eastern Iran which killed 11 members of Iran's Revolutionary Guard.

Vice President Cheney, while in Australia, repeated that “all options” (i.e. military force including nuclear weapons) remained on the table and that the U.S. must not allow Iran to obtain nuclear weapons.

Lies as Pretexts

The Bush regime is creating public opinion around pretexts for launching an attack on Iran very soon. On Democracy Now, Col. Sam Gardiner explained that confirmation that Iran had a nuclear weapon could come very quickly. He says: “We have to remember that the President has said Iran can't be allowed to have a nuclear weapon,” and then points out that Bush has added the phrase: “or the knowledge to produce nuclear weapons.” Gardiner then says: “That's a very important follow-on statement, consistent with what Israel has said. The way that is generally interpreted is that if Iran can put together 3,000 centrifuges for

enrichment, they then will have the capability or the knowledge to produce a nuclear weapon. That event, according to the head of the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] yesterday, could occur within the next six months.”

The U.S. press is also making a huge issue of a new IAEA report confirming what Iran has been telling the world openly—that it has not stopped its nuclear enrichment program (which in and of itself is not a violation of the nuclear nonproliferation treaty—only a violation of the demands of the major imperialist powers), while ignoring a suggestion from Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad that Iran would close its nuclear facilities if the West did likewise (which the White House dismissed).

The pretext of a “high casualty” attack is equally ominous, as it comes on the heels of a U.S. briefing claiming there is evidence Iran was providing weapons that were being used to kill U.S. soldiers in Iraq. And the briefing was so hyped that General Peter Pace, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had to distance himself from the claim that these arms shipments were being directed by the highest levels of the Iranian government.

The notion that the Bush regime would engineer a deliberate lie/pretext for war is hardly far-fetched. In his book *Lawless World*, British lawyer Philippe Sands reported that shortly before the outbreak of the 2003 Iraq war, Bush suggested to British Prime Minister Tony Blair that they could paint the UN insignia on a U.S. U-2 spy plane, fly it over Iraq, and hope that Hussein would shoot it down, giving them an excuse to launch the war.

One reason that so many are ignorant of—or in denial about—the danger of war on Iran is silence of the Democrats and the bourgeois media. While blatant war preparations are going on in front of the whole world—and the Democrats claim to be responding to the people’s anger about the Iraq war—they’re saying little if anything about Bush’s moves toward war on Iran, EXCEPT to get behind the threats on Iran. Hillary Clinton told a pro-Israel audience that Iran must not be allowed to have nukes and “no option can be taken off the table.” Presidential candidate John Edwards told a similar audience: “At the top of these threats is Iran.... To ensure that Iran never gets nuclear weapons, we need to keep all options on the table. Let me reiterate—all options.”

Meanwhile the media is censoring news of U.S. war preparations. The BBC report has not been covered in any national newspaper or TV news coverage. Typically, ABC News reported (2/22) on Iran’s “defiance” of the UN over its ongoing enrichment program, but reported nothing of U.S. military preparations for war. And the New York Times has been helping to drum up public opinion against Iran. Recently their top military correspondent, Michael Gordon, ran a report based on “unidentified sources,” mouthing Bush’s claim that Iran is behind a new style of roadside bombs.

Imperialist Interests and Necessity

Some people think “Bush wouldn’t be ‘stupid’ enough to do this.” Or they see the conflict as just about oil—so why attack Iran and disrupt oil supplies or drive up prices? Or that it’s just about Bush and Israel’s hatred of Iran’s anti-semitism, and why would they risk war over that? And why bomb Iran if it’s 10 years away from obtaining nuclear weapons as even U.S. intelligence estimates admit? Others argue the U.S. is too overwhelmed in Iraq to launch an attack on Iran.

But all of these views fail to grasp the real logic and necessity—from an imperialist

viewpoint-for war on Iran-and how the whole situation in the Middle East, including the war in Iraq, is increasing that necessity.

Overthrowing the Islamic Republic of Iran has been a U.S. strategic objective since Bush labeled Iran a member of the “axis of evil” in 2002. It’s considered a key component of the Bush post-9/11 global strategy of radically reshaping the world, beginning in the Middle East-Central Asian region, in order to solidify the U.S. as the world’s sole imperialist superpower, an unchallenged and unchallengeable empire. In particular, regime change in Iran is viewed as crucial to striking a decisive blow against anti-U.S. Islamic fundamentalism, which has emerged as the main obstacle to U.S. designs in the Middle East.

This is why Bush’s 2006 National Security Strategy refers to Iran 16 times and states: “We may face no greater challenge from a single country than from Iran.” This is also why British military sources told the New Statesman that “the U.S. military switched its whole focus to Iran” as soon as Saddam Hussein was overthrown. This is why the Bush regime has created a State Department Office of Iranian Affairs and an Iranian Directorate inside the Pentagon in much the same way it created special “intelligence” groups to cook up pretexts for war on Iraq.

The invasion of Iraq was designed-in part-to pave the way for weakening, and perhaps toppling, Iran’s government. Instead, it removed one of Iran’s main enemies in Saddam Hussein (after another of Iran’s adversaries, the Taliban in Afghanistan, was also driven from power by the U.S.). The U.S. has been forced to rely on Iraq’s pro-Iranian Shia parties to try to rule and stabilize the country. Overall, the U.S.’s quagmire in Iraq has weakened U.S. influence, fueled the spread of Islamist trends, and bolstered Iran’s regional influence. This is an expression of what Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, identified as “a cauldron of contradictions” set off by U.S. actions in the wake of September 11, 2001 that has “a lot of potential for things to go in many different directions and even to get out of their control.” (See: “The New Situation and the Great Challenges,” Revolution #36, February 26, 2006, posted at revcom.us)

The situation in the Middle East is unacceptable to the U.S. imperialists and the Bush Regime has resolved on a course to become even more aggressive in reversing all this-with the escalation of the war in Iraq and now the serious threats against Iran. And meanwhile, the Democrats have offered, at most, “symbolic” opposition to the sending of more troops to Iraq and no significant opposition at all-and in some cases significant support-to the real threats to launch a U.S. military attack against Iran.

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