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STOP THE ATTACK ON IRAN

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Posted: 21 Feb 2012

"An Israeli attack on Iran would create a disaster."
- Zbigniew Brzezinski

"The entire lake will become a killing field’ the Gulf will run red with American blood." - Military specialist Mark Gaffney.

Bombing Iran could be the final nail in the coffin of America, a decaying and morally bankrupt superpower where torture has been normalized and where the President is now free to kill anyone he chooses, anywhere in the world, who he happens to suspect is a terrorist.

Right now, Iran appears to be the object of universal detestation [in the US], at least among those who control the mainstream media and who are anxious to persuade the easily duped masses that Iran is a major threat to civilization.

Iran is perfectly capable of shutting down the Strait of Hormuz if it wishes, doing immense damage to the US navy in the process. It possesses a vast array of anti-ship weapons called Sunburn missiles, which it has procured from Russia and China over the last decade. These are state-of-the-art weapons developed by the Russians as a low-cost challenge to the expensive, tech-heavy weaponry of the US. Specifically, they are designed to sink ships, including America’s titanic aircraft carriers.

The imminent conflict, which now belongs in the high probability spectrum, is a conflict into which Russia and China cannot fail to be drawn. Their interests are inextricably linked with those of Iran. You could say that Iran is their semi-independent protectorate and ally.

If Iran were attacked and if Russia and China stood by and did nothing, they would lose face forever. They would be signaling to the world that they are weaklings, only too ready to cower at the feet of the American superbully. Indeed, they would then be next on America’s
Russia has a new 100-ton monster of a ballistic missile in the pipeline. It is aptly named Satan. And it will be used to devastating effect against America if America gets too big for its boots and gets overly aggressive.

Chinese Major General Zhang Zhaozhong recently stated that if America or Israel attacked Iran, China will not hesitate to protect Iran even with a third world war.

A few points need to be clarified.

The US Navy is an efficient and professional organization, at the cutting edge of modern warfare, but the Strait of Hormuz is not the kind of environment in which the American navy would be invulnerable.

The Iranians can be expected to have a field day in the narrow confines of the Persian Gulf, virtually drawing American ships into a series of ambushes.

If one samples the technical literature on various military websites, one finds there is a lively debate going on about American ship defense systems. Nobody claims that any such system offers full protection against ship missile strikes. Right now, most ships remain vulnerable to such strikes, including American leviathan aircraft carriers.

These impressive Nimitz-class aircraft carriers each come with a full complement of 7 supporting ships, 70 or more assorted aircraft, and up to 6000 marines on board. In a 2004 article, military specialist Mark Gaffney, author of Dimona: The Third Temple? (1989), opines: The US Navy's largest ships, the massive carriers, have now become floating death traps. In the Gulf's shallow and confined waters evasive maneuvers will be difficult, at best, and escape impossible. The Gulf will run red with American blood.

As for oil tankers, these are even more vulnerable than aircraft carriers. If attacked, these will sink easily, clogging up vital sea lanes and doing immense environmental damage to the entire Persian
It is of interest to note that the US is busy working on a new generation of laser defense to counter the sophisticated anti-ship missiles possessed by Iran. However, these are still in process of development. This gives Iran a relative advantage if it is attacked now rather than later. Ironically, the longer America and Israel delay in attacking Iran, the better their chances of successfully countering the retaliatory measures they can expect from Iran.

Both America and Israel are unfortunately just not ready to wage the type of warfare they prefer to wage and at which they so excel: shooting fish in a barrel.

Unlike Iraq, which the warmonger neoconservatives told us would be a cakewalk easily conquered in six weeks’ Iran is unlikely to offer its American and Israeli antagonists easy opportunities to indulge in their fish-in-a-barrel fantasies.

Our courageous remote control warriors, hunched over their keyboards far from the din of battle, may be able to rain down death and destruction on innocent civilians in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, meanwhile salving their consciences by calling their victims terrorists, but there is nothing they can do with their drones to stop Iran’s deadly missiles from blowing up American aircraft carriers or sinking oil tankers in the Persian Gulf.

The Sunburn is perhaps the most lethal anti-ship missile in the world (see also here), designed to fly as low as nine feet above groundwater level and at more than 1,500 miles per hour. The missile uses a jerky pop-up maneuver for its terminal approach. This enables it in effect to dodge, or jump out of the way, of the Phalanx and other anti-missile defense systems: in short, to hit its target bang-on without being intercepted en route.

Given their low cost, these ship missiles are perfectly suited for close quarter naval conflict in the pond like environment of the Persian Gulf.

The Sunburn is versatile and easy to use. It can be fired from practically any platform, including the back of a flatbed truck. It has a 100-mile range, which is all that is necessary in the narrow
Persian Gulf, with its 40-mile width round the Strait of Hormuz.

Fired from shore, the Sunburn will punch a room-sized hole through any ship in the Strait of Hormuz in a fraction of a second.

These missiles therefore present a serious threat to the US Navy. Their power to inflict horrendous damage on hostile intruders simply cannot be exaggerated.

Developed by the Russians, and made fully available to China and Iran, the SS-N-22 Sunburn, a supersonic anti-ship missile, has been described as "the most lethal missile in the world today." (See also here for other anti-ship missiles designed, built, or operated by Iran. See here for a discussion of anti-ship missiles and US capability to defend against them.)

Compared to the Exocet, the Sunburn is a much larger and faster missile. It possesses a far greater range. Its guidance system is spot-on. The Sunburn can deliver a 200-kiloton nuclear payload (a 750-pound conventional warhead) within a range of 100 miles, more than twice the range of the Exocet. It seems the missile was specifically designed to defeat the US Aegis radar defense system.

The Sunburn's astonishing accuracy was demonstrated recently in a live test staged at sea by the Chinese and observed by US spy planes. Not only did the Sunburn missile destroy the dummy target ship, it scored a perfect bull's eye. It succeeded in hitting the crosshairs of a large "X" mounted on the ship's bridge.

Unlike America’s drones, the Sunburn is not in the business of creating 'collateral damage.' It does not kill innocent civilians by the score. It kills only the enemy.

In a 2004 article, Mark Gaffney writes:

US ships in the Gulf will already have come within range of the Sunburn missiles and the even more advanced SS-NX-26 Yakhont missiles, also Russian-made (speed: Mach 2.9; range: 180 miles) deployed by the Iranians along the Gulf's northern shore. Every US ship will be exposed and vulnerable. When the Iranians spring the trap, the entire lake will become a killing field.

The Sunburn payload hit, with its 750-pound conventional warhead, is apparently insufficient to sink an aircraft carrier, but it is enough to sink most other ships and their crews. So it is generally opined in the technical literature.
No conclusive studies, however, have been carried out to determine the effect of a swarm of missiles attacking an aircraft carrier simultaneously. Perhaps there is no need for such a study. Common sense will tell you that a swarm of killer bees is much more dangerous than a single bee. One bee you can easily swat; a swarm of bees you cannot.

An astute observer of the military situation has offered this comment:

Aegis and RAM systems do not stop Sunburn missiles. Those systems were designed to stop subsonic not supersonic anti-ship cruise missiles. Even then they were unsuccessful in stopping an Iraqi (subsonic) Exocet when it struck the American warship Stark during the Iran-Iraq war.

Supersonic anti-ship cruise missiles travel faster than a rifle bullet and it would take no more than three of them to sink an aircraft carrier. In fact, any surface ship is a floating coffin.

If anyone out there knows of a technology that can stop a rifle bullet in full flight, please let me know what it is.

You don’t have to be Hannibal preparing for the Battle of Cannae, military observer Russ Winter writes, ‘Àuto see that the Strait is a potential shooting gallery.

The Strait of Hormuz is in fact an ideal ambush location for large and cumbersome ships that offer such easy targets you would have to be blind to miss them.

Without a doubt, the Iranians have marked out every firing spot along the Persian Gulf coast. Locating these hiding holes with low-flying attack helicopters will not be easy. Helicopters can be shot down.

Equally impressive is Iran’s missile range: 1500 miles and growing.
Hostile Bahrain and Qatar can easily be hit by the longer-range versions of the Sunburn or Onyx. So can the Saudi oilfields.

Indeed Israel itself, though further away, could suddenly find itself under a shower of deadly missiles, not only from distant Iran, but from Hezbollah just across the Lebanese border.

'This is going to be the Big One, says Justin Raimondo, 'a war that will make the invasion of Iraq look like a dress rehearsal for Armageddon.

It is commonly acknowledged that Israel cannot go it alone in fighting Iran. To wage a successful war against Iran, Israel needs American help. Israel would naturally prefer America to do its dirty work for it.

Should Israel act alone, it would face the extraordinary problem of needing to refuel its bombers en route to targets about 1,000 miles away and refueling them again on the way back.

It has been suggested that the United States should provide Israel with three KC-135 refueling tankers. Some of these Israeli supporters in America claim they do not themselves advocate an Israeli attack on Iran, but they are kindly disposed to Israel and wish to see it supplied with tankers that would extend the effective range of Israeli aircraft and improve Israeli credibility.  (See here)

Israel has of course achieved a modest success in destroying the nuclear facilities of two other relatively primitive countries in the region: Iraq and Syria. These two past Israeli successes are not overly impressive. As achievements, they are small beer. That is, compared to the massive challenges Israel would have to face in Iran.

When Israel destroyed Iraq’s Osirak nuclear reactor in June 1981, it was one ground-level building it destroyed. That simple operation required 14 Israeli aircraft. Israel's other success, demolishing a partially constructed Syrian facility in September 2007, involved targeting a rudimentary warehouse-like structure built on a single floor an exceptionally easy ground-level target.

The potential targets in Iran are not only far more numerous: they are widely dispersed and buried deep underground. Many of them are probably secret facilities whose very existence is unknown.

There is the fuel-enrichment plant at Natanz, a collection of below-ground facilities used to produce enriched uranium. Then there is the newer Fordow fuel-enrichment plant near Qom, built into the side of a mountain and buried deep underground under several layers of
reinforced concrete. It is generally acknowledged that to crack open Fordow, and destroy its alleged nuclear weaponry, would be a task beyond Israel’s modest capacity. At a pinch, America could do it, maybe; but certainly not Israel acting on its own.

There are two other Iranian nuclear sites Israel would need to attack: the heavy-water reactor at Arak and the yellowcake-conversion plant at Isfahan.

There are three possible routes to Iran: north over Turkey, south over Saudi Arabia, or a central route across Jordan and Iraq. The US, having officially withdrawn from Iraq in December, is no longer under obligation to defend Iraqi skies from Israeli planes. The Iraqis themselves are of course unable to do so. (See here.)

The recent Robb-Wald Report tells us that Israel has enough GBU-28 bunker-busting bombs to severely damage, though likely not completely destroy, Iran’s known underground nuclear sites in a single well-executed operation.

Perhaps even this is no more than wishful thinking. Note the loaded phrase: ‘known underground nuclear sites.’ Best not to mention the unknown ones.

To achieve victory in Iran, Israel would be stretched to the limit. It would have to deploy several B-2 stealth and B-52 bombers, fighter-bombers and helicopters, along with ship-launched cruise missiles. It would not only need to take out Iran’s underground nuclear facilities’impossible task’ but it would have to destroy Iran communications systems, air defense and missile sites, Revolutionary Guard Corps living quarters, munitions storage depots, airfields, and ship and port facilities not to mention missile boats, minelayers and midget submarines.

Given that Israel, for all its vaunted might, was unable to defeat valiant little Hezbollah in 2006, the chances of it stealing an easy victory from Iran would seem to belong in the realms of fantasy.

Not all Americans are in favor of aiding and abetting Israel in yet another rampage of wanton destruction—not after the crimes of Gaza which have left an indelible stain on Israel’s already dubious reputation.

Destroying Iran’s infrastructure may make sense to some callous Americans, but to many others it would seem a cruel and vicious enterprise. To poison a population of 74 million people, most of them women and children, with tons of depleted uranium, while putting thousands of other innocents into wheelchairs, is not an achievement likely to bring honor or prestige to Israel.
Not all of us have forgotten the lessons of history. We are cognizant of the fact that Iran has not started a war for 300 years. That it simply wishes to be left alone. And that it is Israel, rather than Iran, that seems to suffer from a serious pathological problem collective madness with more than enough blood on its hands.

Speaking on behalf of Israel’s countless critics, one political pundit writes:

The US cannot eradicate the Iran regime. It cannot bring Iran under its control, that is, not without creating a disaster for itself and the entire world. Doing that entails huge costs and risks to the US, all the countries in that region, and the many other countries that would be affected by it, including Russia, China, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Right now, Obama must stop Israel from attacking Iran. (Emphasis in original). He must do so in the strongest ways available to him, like denying airspace to Israel for refueling its bombers. The US [should] prevent Israel from flying over Iraq and refueling.

Sound advice, it seems to me. Why support Israel? Cui bono? Iran has much more to offer America than Israel does.

Iran has oil in abundance, Israel has none. Iran does not hold America’s political class to ransom. Iran does not try to browbeat successive American administrations into putting Iranian interests before American ones. Iran’s dual citizens do not spy on America or sell American military secrets to Russia and China. There are no Iranian Rosenbergs or Jonathan Pollards. Iran does not coerce Americans into fighting and dying for it in foreign wars. Iran does not expect $3 billion a year in handouts, and even more in loan guarantees that never get repaid.

Iran would be a far greater asset to America than Israel could ever be. Israel is a liability and a burden.

More fool America for cuddling up to a ‘friend’ who has stabbed it in the back in the past: the Lavon affair, the USS Liberty incident, the Jonathan Pollard betrayal and is more than likely to stab it in the back again at some time in the foreseeable future.

Dump Israel. That’s my advice. Before Israel sets the world on fire, taking America with it.

Obama has in recent months begun to make it clear to Israel that the United States would not get involved in a war started by Benjamin Netanyahu without preliminary US approval.
Indeed, on January 20, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Martin Dempsey, informed Netanyahu that the US would not defend Israel if it launched an attack on Iran that had not been coordinated in advance with the US.

In May 2008, Netanyahu’s predecessor, Ehud Olmert, had requested the approval of George W Bush for an air attack on Iran. To his credit, Bush had refused to countenance any such move.

Netanyahu has since defied the US administration by refusing to assure Washington that he would consult them before making a decision to attack Iran.

Other US officials have apparently made it clear to Netanyahu that the US, unless fully consulted, would refuse to come to Israel's aid in the event of Israel declaring war on Iran unilaterally.

If Israel did that, it would be on its own.

It would be a mistake for Israel to assume that America is under obligation to protect it from the consequences of its own folly. (For more details, see here.)

Writing in the Huffington Post, political commentator MJ Rosenberg advances the audacious theory that Israel has no wish to go to war right now, but is more interested in flexing its muscles and playing cat-and-mouse games with America. It wants to show everyone that Israel is now the Cat and America the Mouse: Netanyahu and his camp followers do not really want a war now. They just want it understood that they can dictate whether there is one or not. And when. In other words, they want to show who is boss.

It's time for a showdown. The capital of America needs to be moved back to Washington. Tel Aviv is too far away.

When Zbigniew Brzezinski says, 'An Israeli attack on Iran would create a disaster’, he must be taken seriously.

An old hand, and an expert on Russia, Brzezinski is the acclaimed author of The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives. One cannot help wondering what Brzezinski thinks of the controversial statement ¬Ýmade by Leonid Ivashov, former member of
the Russian Joint Chiefs of Staff, which aired on Russia Today TV on February 1, 2012:

Russia does not want any military operations to be waged against Iran or Syria. These two countries are allies, and both are considered guaranteed partners of Russia. A strike against Syria or Iran is an indirect strike against Russia and its interests.

Later he adds, significantly, striking a chord with people like me who believe that America is now a crypto-fascist state masquerading as a democracy:

Everybody should acknowledge that Fascism is making great strides on our planet. What they did in Libya is nearly identical to what Hitler and his armies did against Poland and then Russia. Today, therefore, Russia is defending the entire world from Fascism.

No need to ask who the New Fascists are.

Just turn on your television sets and you will see their smiling faces, telling you how much they love and cherish you ’Äì as long as you vote for them ’Äì and as long as you die for them in foreign wars for the aggrandizement of Israel.

It certainly needs to be asked: How much longer will America continue to fight Israel's wars? What hold does Israel have over America? Is America prepared to sustain immense damage to its vital interests on behalf of an unstable and insolent ally that remains, if numerous polls are to be believed, the world's most hated nation?

There are some indications that not all American operatives, especially in the armed forces and the CIA, are overly impressed with Israel's increasingly irresponsible behavior. A significant rift in the friendship appears to be developing, a rift that will hopefully grow in time as America finally comes to its senses.

Relations could once again reach rockbottom, as when former US Secretary of State James Baker uttered his infamous remark about Israel's Jewish American supporters: "Fuck the Jews, they don't even vote for us."

Former Centcom chief and retired Gen. Joe Hoar recently complained of a certain shady Israeli operation involving the terrorist group Jundullah, in which Mossad thugs had the impudence to masquerade as CIA agents: 'ÄìIsrael is playing with fire. It gets us involved in their covert war, whether we want to be involved or not."
Israel's Covert War against Iran

The tension between longsuffering Iran and an insufferable Israel, goading it to frenzy, is now at fever pitch.

Here is part of an interview between journalist Eleanor Hall and Iran specialist Geneive Abdo who is director of the Iran program at the National Security Network in Washington. I have compressed drastically in the interests of economy, but the full version can be read here:

ELEANOR HALL: Iran's leadership says it's sheer lies that it's behind the [recent] attacks [on Iranian embassies in India and elsewhere] and that the Israelis have planted the bombs themselves to discredit Iran?

GENEIVE ABDO: Well I think that's entirely possible. I mean, if you consider what the Israelis did for many years in Lebanon and other parts of the Middle East, that theory is not so farfetched.

ELEANOR HALL: How incendiary is the relationship between Iran and Israel right now? Are we looking at an Israeli strike on Iranian nuclear facilities?

GENEIVE ABDO: I think it's certainly a decision Israel is taking very seriously.

ELEANOR HALL: So how dangerous do you think the situation is right now?

GENEIVE ABDO: I think it's very dangerous. Far more dangerous than any escalation tension we've seen in 30 years.

ELEANOR HALL: So, how dangerous could it become if the Israelis do strike?

GENEIVE ABDO: It's an extremely dangerous situation. The Iranians will not take this lightly, and they will use all the resources at their disposal to attack. They will cause chaos in the region, because their whole survival is on the line. You know, they could launch attacks on Latin America. They've even said that they would
launch attacks on American soil. They will send missiles to Tel Aviv. If you consider what the Israelis have done in Lebanon I don't think that gives us much hope.

If Israel decides to launch an all-out attack on Iran, we can be sure of one thing: the towers of Tel Aviv will come toppling down. Not necessarily now, but one day in the distant future, when it is decided that vengeance is a dish best served cold.

The nuclear complex at Dimona could well be destroyed if not now, later on, in the fullness of time making Israel an uninhabitable wasteland.

Given its miniscule size, Israel could be destroyed in a single day, if not by Iran, then almost certainly by Russia or China.

Only a week ago, Alireza Forghani, head of the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei’s strategic team, was quoted as saying: It would only take nine minutes to wipe out Israel.

No one seriously expects to see the annihilation of Israel right now, but Israel will have to take the consequences of its actions one day.

Israel will reap what it sows as Armageddon approaches.

The clock is ticking.

*Dr Lasha Darkmoon (email her) is an academic with higher degrees in Classics. She is also a poet and translator. Her articles can be sampled here* [http://www.theoccidentalobserver.net/author/lashadarkmoon/](http://www.theoccidentalobserver.net/author/lashadarkmoon/) , her poems here. (From Tom B)


The *Associated Press* reported in December, 2011 that the US reached a deal to sell $3.48 billion worth of missiles and related technology to the United Arab Emirates, a federation of seven monarchies, as part of a massive
buildup of military technology
among Mideast nations near I ran. T he
deal included 96 missiles, along with
supporting technology and training
support that will bolster the nation’s
missile defense capacity. A contract
with Lockheed Martin to produce the
highly sophisticated Terminal High
Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD,
weapon system for the U.A.E. was a
key part of the weapons sale. Wishing
to surround I ran, the US has been
building up missile defenses of its
allies, including a $1.7 billion deal to
upgrade Saudi Arabia’s Patriot missiles
and the sale of 209 Patriot missiles
to K uwait, valued at about $900 million.
T he Obama administration also
announced in late 2011 the sale of $30 billion worth of F-15SA
fighter jets to Saudi Arabia.

The Anti-Empire Report  February 3rd, 2012
by William Blum  www.killinghope.org

The Lord High Almighty Pooh-Bah of threats. The Grand
Ayatollah of nuclear menace.

As we all know only too well, the United States and Israel would hate to see Iran possessing
nuclear weapons. Being "the only nuclear power in the Middle East" is a great card for Israel
to have in its hand. But — in the real, non-propaganda world — is USrael actually fearful of an
attack from a nuclear-armed Iran? In case you've forgotten ...

In 2007, in a closed discussion, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said that in her opinion
"Iranian nuclear weapons do not pose an existential threat to Israel." She "also criticized the
exaggerated use that [Israeli] Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is making of the issue of the Iranian
bomb, claiming that he is attempting to rally the public around him by playing on its most
basic fears." ¹

2009: "A senior Israeli official in Washington" asserted that "Iran would be unlikely to use its
missiles in an attack [against Israel] because of the certainty of retaliation." ²
In 2010 the *Sunday Times* of London (January 10) reported that Brigadier-General Uzi Eilam, war hero, pillar of the Israeli defense establishment, and former director-general of Israel's Atomic Energy Commission, "believes it will probably take Iran seven years to make nuclear weapons."

Early last month, US Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta told a television audience: "Are they [Iran] trying to develop a nuclear weapon? No, but we know that they're trying to develop a nuclear capability." 3

A week later we could read in the *New York Times* (January 15) that "three leading Israeli security experts — the Mossad chief, Tamir Pardo, a former Mossad chief, Efraim Halevy, and a former military chief of staff, Dan Halutz — all recently declared that a nuclear Iran would not pose an existential threat to Israel."

Then, a few days afterward, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, in an interview with Israeli Army Radio (January 18), had this exchange:

**Question:** Is it Israel's judgment that Iran has not yet decided to turn its nuclear potential into weapons of mass destruction?

**Barak:** People ask whether Iran is determined to break out from the control [inspection] regime right now ... in an attempt to obtain nuclear weapons or an operable installation as quickly as possible. Apparently that is not the case.

Lastly, we have the US Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, in a report to Congress: "We do not know, however, if Iran will eventually decide to build nuclear weapons. ... There are "certain things [the Iranians] have not done" that would be necessary to build a warhead. 4

Admissions like the above — and there are others — are never put into headlines by the American mass media; indeed, only very lightly reported at all; and sometimes distorted — On the Public Broadcasting System (PBS News Hour, January 9), the non-commercial network much beloved by American liberals, the Panetta quote above was reported as: "But we know that they're trying to develop a nuclear capability, and that's what concerns us."

Flagrantly omitted were the preceding words: "Are they trying to develop a nuclear weapon? No ..." 5
One of Israel's leading military historians, Martin van Creveld, was interviewed by *Playboy* magazine in June 2007:

**Playboy:** Can the World live with a nuclear Iran?

**Van Creveld:** The U.S. has lived with a nuclear Soviet Union and a nuclear China, so why not a nuclear Iran? I've researched how the U.S. opposed nuclear proliferation in the past, and each time a country was about to proliferate, the U.S. expressed its opposition in terms of why this other country was very dangerous and didn't deserve to have nuclear weapons. Americans believe they're the only people who deserve to have nuclear weapons, because they are good and democratic and they like Mother and apple pie and the flag. But Americans are the only ones who have used them. ... We are in no danger at all of having an Iranian nuclear weapon dropped on us. We cannot say so too openly, however, because we have a history of using any threat in order to get weapons ... thanks to the Iranian threat, we are getting weapons from the U.S. and Germany."

And throughout these years, regularly, Israeli and American officials have been assuring us that Iran is World Nuclear Threat Number One, that we can't relax our guard against them, that there should be no limit to the ultra-tough sanctions we impose upon the Iranian people and their government. Repeated murder and attempted murder of Iraqi nuclear scientists, sabotage of Iranian nuclear equipment with computer viruses, the sale of faulty parts and raw materials, unexplained plane crashes, explosions at Iranian facilities ... Who can be behind this but USrael? How do we know? It's called "plain common sense". Or do you think it was Costa Rica? Or perhaps South Africa? Or maybe Thailand?

Defense Secretary Panetta recently commented on one of the assassinations of an Iranian scientist. He put it succinctly: "That's not what the United States does." 6

Does anyone know Leon Panetta's email address? I'd like to send him my list of United States assassination plots. More than 50 foreign leaders were targeted over the years, many successfully. 7

Not long ago, Iraq and Iran were regarded by USrael as the most significant threats to Israeli Middle-East hegemony. Thus was born the myth of Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the United States proceeded to turn Iraq into a basket case. That left Iran, and thus was born the myth of the Iranian Nuclear Threat. As it began to sink in that Iran was not really that
much of a nuclear threat, or that this "threat" was becoming too difficult to sell to the rest of the world, USrael decided that, at a minimum, it wanted regime change. The next step may be to block Iran's lifeline — oil sales using the Strait of Hormuz. Ergo, the recent US and EU naval buildup near the Persian Gulf, an act of war trying to goad Iran into firing the first shot. If Iran tries to counter this blockade it could be the signal for another US Basket Case, the fourth in a decade, with the devastated people of Libya and Afghanistan, along with Iraq, currently enjoying America's unique gift of freedom and democracy.

On January 11, the *Washington Post* reported: "In addition to influencing Iranian leaders directly, [a US intelligence official] says another option here is that [sanctions] will create hate and discontent at the street level so that the Iranian leaders realize that they need to change their ways."

How utterly charming, these tactics and goals for the 21st century by the leader of "The Free World". (Is that expression still used?)

The neo-conservative thinking (and Barack Obama can be regarded as often being a fellow traveler of such) is even more charming than that. Listen to Danielle Pletka, vice president for foreign and defense policy studies at America's most prominent neo-con think tank, American Enterprise Institute:

The biggest problem for the United States is not Iran getting a nuclear weapon and testing it, it's Iran getting a nuclear weapon and not using it. Because the second that they have one and they don't do anything bad, all of the naysayers are going to come back and say, "See, we told you Iran is a responsible power. We told you Iran wasn't getting nuclear weapons in order to use them immediately." ... And they will eventually define Iran with nuclear weapons as not a problem. 8

What are we to make of that and all the other quotations above? I think it gets back to my opening statement: Being "the only nuclear power in the Middle East" is a great card for Israel to have in its hand. Is USrael willing to go to war to hold on to that card?

**Please tell me again ... What is the war in Afghanistan about?**

With the US war in Iraq supposedly having reached a good conclusion (or halfway decent ... or better than nothing ... or let's get the hell out of here while some of us are still in one piece and there are some Iraqis we haven't yet killed), the best and the brightest in our government
and media turn their thoughts to what to do about Afghanistan. It appears that no one seems to remember, if they ever knew, that Afghanistan was not really about 9-11 or fighting terrorists (except the many the US has created by its invasion and occupation), but was about pipelines.

President Obama declared in August 2009: "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."  

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 "plotting to attack America" in 2001 was devised in Germany and Spain and the United States more than in Afghanistan. Why hasn't the United States bombed those countries?

Indeed, what actually was 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.

The only "necessity" that drew the United States to Afghanistan was the desire to establish a military presence in this land that is next door to the Caspian Sea region of Central Asia — which reportedly contains the second largest proven reserves of petroleum and natural gas in the world — and build oil and gas pipelines from that region running through Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is well situated for oil and gas pipelines to serve much of south Asia, pipelines that can bypass those not-yet Washington clients, Iran and Russia. If only the Taliban would not attack the lines. Here's Richard Boucher, US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, in 2007: "One of our goals is to stabilize Afghanistan, so it can become a conduit and a hub between South and Central Asia so that energy can flow to the south."  

Since the 1980s all kinds of pipelines have been planned for the area, only to be delayed or canceled by one military, financial or political problem or another. For example, the so-called
TAPI pipeline (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) had strong support from Washington, which was eager to block a competing pipeline that would bring gas to Pakistan and India from Iran. TAPI goes back to the late 1990s, when the Taliban government held talks with the California-based oil company Unocal Corporation. These talks were conducted with the full knowledge of the Clinton administration, and were undeterred by the extreme repression of Taliban society. Taliban officials even made trips to the United States for discussions. Testifying before the House Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific on February 12, 1998, Unocal representative John Maresca discussed the importance of the pipeline project and the increasing difficulties in dealing with the Taliban:

The region's total oil reserves may well reach more than 60 billion barrels of oil. Some estimates are as high as 200 billion barrels ... From the outset, we have made it clear that construction of the pipeline we have proposed across Afghanistan could not begin until a recognized government is in place that has the confidence of governments, leaders, and our company.

When those talks stalled in July, 2001 the Bush administration threatened the Taliban with military reprisals if the government did not go along with American demands. The talks finally broke down for good the following month, a month before 9-11.

The United States has been serious indeed about the Caspian Sea and Persian Gulf oil and gas areas. Through one war or another beginning with the Gulf War of 1990-1, the US has managed to establish military bases in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan.

The war against the Taliban can't be "won" short of killing everyone in Afghanistan. The United States may well try again to negotiate some form of pipeline security with the Taliban, then get out, and declare "victory". Barack Obama can surely deliver an eloquent victory speech from his teleprompter. It might even include the words "freedom" and "democracy", but certainly not "pipeline".

Love me, love me, love me, I'm a Liberal (Thank you, Phil Ochs. We miss you.)

Angela Davis, star of the 1960s, like most members of the Communist Party, was/is no more radical than the average American liberal. Here she is recently addressing Occupy Wall Street: "When I said that we need a third party, a radical party, I was projecting toward the
future. We cannot allow a Republican to take office. ... Don't we remember what it was like when Bush was president?"  

Yes, Angela, we remember that time well. How can we forget it since Bush, by all important standards, is still in the White House? Waging perpetual war, relentless surveillance of the citizenry, kissing the corporate ass, police brutality? ... What's changed? Except for the worse. Where's our single-payer national health insurance? Nothing even close. Where's our affordable university education? Still the most backward in the "developed" world. Where's our legalized marijuana — I mean really legalized? If you think that's changed, you must be stoned. Where's our abortion on demand? What does your guy Barack think about that? Are the indispensable labor unions being rescued from oblivion? Ha! The ultra-important minimum wage? Inflation adjusted, equal to the mid-1950s.

Has the American threat to the environment and the world environmental movement ceased? Tell that to a dedicated activist-internationalist. Has the 50-year-old embargo against Cuba finally ended? It has not, and I can still not go there legally. The police-state War on Terror at home? Scarcely a month goes by without the FBI entrapping some young "terrorists". Are more Banksters and Wall Street Society-Screwers (except for the harmless insider-traders) being imprisoned? Name one. The really tough regulations of the financial area so badly needed? Keep waiting. How about executives of the BP Oil Spill Company being arrested? Or war criminals, mass murderers, and torturers with names like ... Oh, I don't know, let's see ... maybe like Cheney or Bush or Rumsfeld or Wolfowitz or someone with a crazy name like Condoleezza? All walking completely free, all celebrated.

"A major decline of progressive America occurred during the Clinton years as many liberals and their organizations accepted the presence of a Democratic president as an adequate substitute for the things liberals once believed in. Liberalism and a social democratic spirit painfully grown over the previous 60 years withered during the Clinton administration." — *Sam Smith*  

"A change of Presidents is like a change of advertising campaigns for a soft drink; the product itself still tastes the same, but it now has a new 'image'." — *Richard K. Moore*  

**Volunteer help needed on e-books**

If you have some expertise on the putting together of an e-book, including footnotes, my publisher, Common Courage, would like to communicate with you. Contact Greg Bates at
gbates@commoncouragepress.com Thanks.

Notes

1. Haaretz.com (Israel), October 25, 2007; print edition October 26
2. Washington Post, March 5, 2009
3. "Face the Nation", CBS, January 8, 2012; see video
5. "PBS's Dishonest Iran Edit", FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting), January 10, 2012
6. Reuters, January 12, 2012
8. Video of Pletka making these remarks
9. Talk given by the president at Veterans of Foreign Wars convention, August 17, 2009
11. See, for example, the December 17, 1997 article in the British newspaper, The Telegraph, "Oil barons court Taliban in Texas". For further discussion of the TAPI pipeline and related issues, see this article by international petroleum engineer John Foster.
13. Sam Smith was a longtime publisher and journalist in Washington, DC, now living in Maine. Subscribe to his marvelous newsletter, the Progressive Review.

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

TRITA PARSI: THE CASE FOR DIPLOMACY

Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the United

Have the diplomatic efforts of the Obama administration toward Iran failed? Was the Bush administration's emphasis on military intervention, refusal to negotiate, and pursuit of regime change a better approach? How can the United States best address the ongoing turmoil in Tehran? This book provides a definitive and comprehensive analysis of the Obama administration's early diplomatic outreach to Iran and discusses the best way to move toward more positive relations between the two discordant states.

Trita Parsi, a Middle East foreign policy expert with extensive Capitol Hill and United Nations experience, interviewed 70 high-ranking officials from the U.S., Iran, Europe, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Brazil—including the top American and Iranian negotiators—for this book. Parsi uncovers the previously unknown story of American and Iranian negotiations during Obama's early years as president, the calculations behind the two nations' dealings, and the real reasons for their current stalemate. Contrary to prevailing opinion, Parsi contends that diplomacy has not been fully tried. For various reasons, Obama's diplomacy ended up being a single roll of the dice. It had to work either immediately—or not at all. Persistence and perseverance are keys to any negotiation. Neither Iran nor the U.S. had them in 2009.

Trita Parsi is president of the National Iranian American Council and a former Public Policy Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. In 2010 he received the Grawemeyer Award for Ideas Improving World Order, and he is frequently consulted by Western and Asian governments on foreign policy matters. He lives in McLean, VA.

See her essay in The Nation (Feb. 27, 2012), “War Fever Over Iran.” “…we are closer to war than we were in the last years of the Bush administration.” Obama, lacking “political courage,” caved to Congress and Israel.
Robert Parry | New Weasel Word on Iran Nukes

Consortium News, RSN, Feb. 16, 2012

Parry writes: "The Times and most other major U.S. news outlets have refused to alter their boilerplate on Iran's nuclear ambitions (beyond slipping in the word 'capability'), even as a consensus has emerged among the intelligence agencies of the United States - and Israel - that Iran has NOT made a decision to build a nuclear weapon."

READ MORE  http://www.readersupportednews.org/opinion2/289-134/10009-new-weasel-word-on-iran-nukes

STOP US AND ISRAELI THREATENING.  CHOOSE DIPLOMACY.