OMNI IRAN NEWSLETTER # 17, May 21, 2012,
COMPILED BY DICK BENNETT FOR A CULTURE OF PEACE

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http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/

These newsletters offer information that enables us to examine morality and judgment of our leaders and their policies, of power.

STOP THE ATTACK ON IRAN. It presents no threat to the US. Threatening Iran violates the UN Charter. No peacemaking is as important as opposing and trying to prevent unjust war. Speak up, write, call, donate, don’t give up on reason and diplomacy; don’t let the fear/warmongers control us.

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NDAA update: war with Iran from Just Foreign Policy News May 18, 2012. The Conyers amendment stipulating that nothing in the NDAA authorizes the use of force against Iran passed by voice vote. This sets a good precedent for amending future anti-Iran measures to stipulate that they also do not authorize the use of force.

The U.S. and Iran are talking. Why is the New York Times peddling Iranophobia?
Just Foreign Policy info@justforeignpolicy.org via uark.edu
4-19-12   to jbennet

Dear Dick,
Tell the New York Times to investigate dubious and unsubstantiated claims about Islam in an article on Iran's leadership.

Take Action   At long last, the United States and Iran are engaged in serious talks about Iran's nuclear program. But instead of celebrating the fact that President Obama is keeping his campaign promise of diplomatic engagement with Iran, the New York Times has told its readers that Iran's Supreme Leader can't be trusted when he says Iran will never pursue a nuclear weapon. The reason? Because Iran's leaders are Shiites, and Shiites have a religious doctrine called "taqiyya," which allows them to lie. No scholar or analyst was cited by the New York Times in support of this argument, which should have been a red flag for Times editors in an article on the leadership of a country against which the United States has threatened war.

Will you join us in urging the New York Times's Public Editor to investigate why dubious and unsubstantiated claims about Islam are appearing in the paper as news analysis?
Last Saturday—the same day the United States and Iran were having "constructive and useful" discussions on Iran's nuclear program in Istanbul, according to EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton [1]—the New York Times published a piece titled, "Seeking Nuclear Insight in Fog of the Ayatollah’s Utterances," over the byline of James Risen. [2]

That piece contained the following paragraph:
“Complicating matters further, some analysts say that Ayatollah Khamenei’s denial of Iranian nuclear ambitions has to be seen as part of a Shiite historical concept called taqiyya, or religious dissembling. For centuries an oppressed minority within Islam, Shiites learned to conceal their sectarian identity to survive, and so there is a precedent for lying to protect the Shiite community.”

No "analyst" at all was specifically cited in support of this argument anywhere in the article. When the United States is threatening war against a country, it treads in the precincts of racist war propaganda for a news article about that country to essentially say, "Because of their religion, their leaders aren't like our leaders - they lie," without substantiating that claim at all or presenting balanced views of experts on the topic.

In his blog Informed Comment, Middle East scholar Juan Cole notes that taqiyya has been "widely misrepresented by Muslim-haters and does not apply in Khamenei’s case." [3] Cole explains that, historically, taqiyya was not a license to lie about anything, but permission to conceal one's religious identity in the face of life-threatening sectarian prejudice. He also notes that, in the twentieth century, the tide of Shiite legal opinion ran against taqiyya; and that Imam Khomeini, who led the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, demanded that taqiyya be abandoned. Cole concludes by saying that the taqiyya argument is "just some weird form of Islamophobia."

Risen's piece contained another spectacular misrepresentation. Referring to Ayatollah Khamenei's statements that Iran would never pursue nuclear weapons and his religious edicts against Iran having nuclear weapons, Risen wrote,
But those comments are not only at odds with some of Iran’s behavior but also with what Ayatollah Khamenei has said in the past. For evidence, analysts can point to remarks Ayatollah Khamenei made last year that it was a mistake for Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi of Libya to give up his nuclear weapons program.

Referring to Colonel Qaddafi, Ayatollah Khamenei said that “this gentleman wrapped up all his nuclear facilities, packed them on a ship and delivered them to the West and said, ‘Take them!’ ”
“Look where we are, and in what position they are now,” he added. But according to what the Times reports Khamenei actually said, he never said it was a mistake for Qaddafi to "give up his nuclear weapons program." Khamenei talked about "nuclear facilities."

As Juan Cole noted, What Khamenei said about Qaddafi does not imply that Khamenei wants a nuclear weapon for Iran. Qaddafi did not have a nuclear weapon. But having a nuclear program of some sort could function as a deterrent to foreign invasion... Nuclear latency or a nuclear breakout capability, where a country could quickly construct a nuclear warhead if it felt sufficiently threatened, is probably what Iran is actually trying for. Khamenei’s statement on Libya is perfectly in accord with the principle that nuclear latency can have deterrent effects.

Ask the New York Times to correct its reporting, and to report these issues fairly, accurately, and with balance in the future.

http://www.justforeignpolicy.org/act/nyt-iranophobia

Thank you for all you do to help bring about a more just foreign policy,
Robert Naiman, Chelsea Mozen, Sarah Burns and Megan Iorio
Just Foreign Policy

References:

Just Foreign Policy News, April 16, 2012
U.S., Iran agree to formal talks; 2) The US and five other major powers agreed Saturday to sit down with Iran in six weeks for formal talks aimed at ensuring that its nuclear program will not lead to nuclear weapons, McClatchy reports. The talks will take place May 23 in Baghdad. U.S. and European diplomats said the plan is to map out a step-by-step procedure to address concerns over Iran's expansion of its uranium stockpile. They stressed that any actions to ease international sanctions against Iran would be reciprocal and based on
concrete steps by Iran.

Catherine Ashton, the EU's chief foreign policy official and spokesman for the six powers, called the talks on Saturday, which ran for a good 12 hours, "constructive and useful."

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has demanded that the international community deny Iran the right to enrich uranium, but President Obama has refused to take that step, McClatchy notes. Turkish diplomats said any such demand is a non-starter, certain to scupper negotiations.

Russian deputy foreign minister Sergey Ryabkov told reporters last week that the six powers could not agree on what offer to bring to the talks on Saturday, McClatchy notes.

3) Writing at Informed Comment, Juan Cole dismisses two arguments given by analysts anonymously cited by James Risen in the New York Times for being skeptical about Supreme Leader Khamenei's fatwa against having or using nuclear weapons: that Khamenei criticized Qaddafii for giving up nuclear facilities, and that the Shiite doctrine of taqiyya allows Muslims to lie.

On the first, Cole notes that what Khamenei said about Qaddafii does not imply that Khamenei wants a nuclear weapon for Iran, since Khamenei merely referred to "nuclear facilities," and it is clear that having nuclear facilities can serve as a deterrent against Western military attack without having or pursuing a nuclear weapon.

On taqiyya, Cole notes that the doctrine is widely misrepresented by Muslim-haters as a blanket license for lying, when it is a circumscribed doctrine limited to self-defense against immediate threats to life and major property; and also that the doctrine is not embraced by leaders in modern Iran.

Iran

9) Both U.S. and Iranian leaders expressed satisfaction with the initial meeting Saturday of talks between Iran and the P5+1, McClatchy reports. But Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu is already criticizing the talks.

2) Agreement reached with Iran on formal nuclear talks in May
Roy Gutman, McClatchy Newspapers, April 16, 2012 06:11:38 AM
http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2012/04/14/145223/agreement-reached-with-iran-on.html

Istanbul – Opening a new chapter in their long, stormy relationship with Iran, the United States and five other major powers agreed
Saturday to sit down with the Tehran government in six weeks for formal talks aimed at ensuring that its nuclear program will not lead to nuclear weapons.

The talks will take place May 23 in Baghdad, Iraq, one of the few Middle East capitals where the government in power, dominated by Shiite Muslims like the regime in Tehran, has shown sympathy with Iran's Islamic regime.

U.S. and European diplomats said the plan is to map out a step-by-step procedure to address concerns over Iran's dramatic expansion of its uranium stockpile. They stressed that any actions to ease the ever-tightening international sanctions against Iran would be reciprocal and based on concrete steps by Iran.

Iran's chief negotiator, Saeed Jalili, took center stage after the day of talks, appearing at a post-conference press briefing under a banner headlined, in English, "Nuclear energy for all, nuclear weapons for none."

He referred to the banner - which also had the pictures of five Iranian nuclear scientists who were assassinated, presumably at Israeli behest - and also reaffirmed the fatwa or order by Ayatollah Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader, declaring possession of a nuclear weapon to be "a sin."

That part of the Iranian message appears to have been delivered.

Jalili said the representatives of the United States, Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia had welcomed Iran's offer to cooperate in resolving the nuclear issue and specifically noted Khameini's fatwa. A senior American official later also specifically noted to reporters that Jalili had spoken of the fatwa behind closed doors in the meeting with foreign officials.

A second part of the Iranian message was a reassertion of its rights, as a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, to enrich uranium for peaceful nuclear purposes - a right which the U.N. Security Council has demanded be suspended so long as there were questions about Iran's current enrichment program and its expansion of nuclear facilities deep underground.

The third part was Iran's desire to remove the international sanctions, which are now severely impairing Iran's ability to sell its oil and to conduct banking and trade transactions. [...]

"We set out with a very clear objective," said Lady Catherine Ashton, the European Union's chief foreign policy official and spokesman for the six powers at the table. "We had to know if Iran was serious."
She called the talks, which ran for a good 12 hours Saturday, "constructive and useful." An aide said that in comparison with their last meeting with Iran in January 2011, when "the Iranians did not want to engage," this time "we had a positive feeling."

Ashton said the talks will attempt "step by step" to restore international confidence" in Iran's "exclusively peaceful" intentions in its nuclear program, with a policy of reciprocity. She did not spell it out, but the implication was the international community will respond by lifting one or more sanctions if Iran can answer the questions satisfactorily and open all its facilities to regular inspection.

One part of the joint statement that Jalili emphasized was that the non-proliferation treaty forms a key basis for the discussion on Iran's nuclear program, and Iran has the right to develop peaceful civilian uses for nuclear energy. What it didn't reaffirm - because France, Israel and other countries oppose it - was Iran's right to enrich nuclear material.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has demanded that the international community deny Iran the right to enrich uranium, but President Barack Obama refused to take that additional step in recent talks in Washington. Turkish diplomats, who are in closer touch with top officials in neighboring Iran than any of the powers at the talks, said any such demand is a non-starter, certain to scupper negotiations.

The plan between now and May 23 is to map out a framework that includes steps by both sides. Deputies of the senior officials who took part in the Istanbul meeting, "will prepare a draft proposal to create a framework for further cooperation," Jalili told reporters. "After drafting the program, reciprocal cooperation will start. We will witness steps on both sides."

A senior U.S. official, who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity, said the Istanbul meeting showed that there is "a serious environment conducive for discussion." But the official stressed that no easing of sanctions will occur except in response to concrete steps by Iran. "We have no expectation today that we are lifting any sanctions," the official said. "Our dual track approach will continue," a reference to negotiations in parallel with the ratcheting up of sanctions. "Dialogue is not sufficient. We have to have concrete actions."

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talks will take place May 23 in Baghdad. U.S. and European diplomats said the plan is to map out a step-by-step procedure to address concerns over Iran's expansion of its uranium stockpile. They stressed that any actions to ease international sanctions against Iran would be reciprocal and based on concrete steps by Iran.

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Already, U.S. and Israel's Netanyahu are at odds over progress at Iran nuke talks

Sheera Frenkel - McClatchy Newspapers, April 16, 2012


Jerusalem - Just two days after representatives of the United States and other key world powers met in Istanbul with Iran to discuss its nuclear program, Israel is throwing cold water on the effort, with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu charging that Iran was being given a "freebie."

Both U.S. and Iranian leaders expressed satisfaction with the initial meeting Saturday of talks between Iran and the P5+1 - the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany. Both sides saw the agreement to meet again May 23 in Baghdad as a step forward after more than a year of no talks.

But Netanyahu was unimpressed. "My initial impression is that Iran has been given a freebie," Netanyahu said. "It has got five weeks to continue enrichment without any limitation, any inhibition."

President Barack Obama had defended the talks in comments to reporters Sunday in Cartagena, Colombia, where he was meeting with heads of state from Latin America. He called the talks "an opportunity for us to negotiate and see if Iran comes to the table in good faith."

"The notion that somehow we've given something away ... would indicate that Iran has gotten something," Obama said. "In fact, they've got some of the toughest sanctions that they're going to be facing coming up in just a few months if they don't take advantage of these talks. I hope they do."
A statement from Netanyahu's office said that the Israeli premier found the results of the talks unacceptable - arguing that Iran must immediately stop all uranium enrichment, remove enriched material from the country, and dismantle the nuclear facility in Qom.

1. **The March to War: Iran Preparing for US Air Attacks**

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   Sep 21, 2006 – If there were to be **war** between the **United States** and Iran, the

   **The March to War: Iran Preparing for US Air Attacks**

   **by Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya**

   **Global Research**, September 21, 2006

   Iran is bracing itself for an expected American-led air campaign. The latter is in the advanced stages of military planning.

   If there were to be war between the United States and Iran, the aerial campaign would unleash fierce combat. It would be fully interactive on multiple fronts. It would be a difficult battle involving active movement in the air from both sides.

   If war were to occur, the estimates of casualties envisaged by American and British war planners would be high.

   The expected wave of aerial attacks would resemble the tactics of the Israeli air-war against Lebanon and would follow the same template, but on a larger scale of execution.

   The U.S. government and the Pentagon had an active role in graphing, both militarily and politically, the template of confrontation in Lebanon. The Israeli siege against Lebanon is in many regards a dress rehearsal for a planned attack on Iran.¹

   A war against Iran is one that could also include military operations against Syria. Multiple theatres would engulf many of the neighbors of Iran and Syria, including Iraq and Israel/Palestine.

   It must also be noted that an attack on Iran would be of a scale which would dwarf the events in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Levant. A full blown war on Iran would not only swallow up and incorporate these other conflicts. It would engulf the entire Middle East and Central Asian region into an extensive confrontation.

   An American-led air campaign against Iran, if it were to be implemented, would be both similar and contrasting in its outline and intensity when compared to earlier Anglo-American sponsored confrontations.
The war would start with intense bombardment and attacks on Iran's infrastructure, but would be different in its scope of operations and intensity.

The characteristics of such a conflict would also be unpredictable because of Iran's capabilities to respond. And in all likelihood, Iran would launch its own potent attacks and extend the theatre of war by attacking U.S. and American-led troops in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Persian Gulf.

The United States must also take into account the fact that Iran unlike Afghanistan, Iraq, and Lebanon would be an opponent with the capability to resist the US sponsored attacks on the ground, but also on the sea and in the air.

Unlike the former opponents faced by the United States and its partners, Iran would be able to attack the military launch pads used by the United States. Iran would also be able to attack the U.S. supply and logistical hubs in the Persian Gulf. American ships carrying supplies, troops, and warplanes would be vulnerable to Iranian counter-attacks by way of Iranian missiles, warplanes, and naval forces. It is no mere coincidence that Iran has been demonstrating its military capabilities during the “Blow of Zolfaqar” war games conducted in late August.  

**Iranian Preparations for an American-led Air Campaign**

The United States has continually threatened to attack Iran. These threats are made under the pretext of halting the development of nuclear weapons in Iran. The development of nuclear weapons by Iran is something the IAEA and its inspectors have refuted as untrue, but the United States insists on continuing the charade as grounds for a military endgame with Iran.

The threat of an American-led attack against Iran with the heavy involvement of Israel and Britain, amongst others, has primed Iran to prepare itself for the anticipated moment. Over the years, this has led Iran to stride for self-sufficiency in producing its own advanced military hardware and the development of asymmetrical tactics to combat the United States.

Iranian defense planners have stated publicly that they have learned from the cases of neighbouring Afghanistan and Iraq. They are acutely aware of the U.S. military's heavy reliance on aerial strikes.

August 2006 saw the start of the virtually unprecedented events of the Blow of Zolfaqar war games throughout Iran and its border provinces. These were similar to those conducted in April 2006. The latter were also held during a period of tense confrontation between Iran and the United States.

April 2006 was a period that could have resulted in military conflict between both the United States and Iran. In April 2006, Iran had not only dismissed the deadline set on its nuclear program, but it announced in defiance to the United States that it had successfully enriched uranium for the first time.

Iran has taken the opportunity of the launching of both the April 2006 and Blow of Zolfaqar war games to display its preparedness and capability to engage in combat. Additionally, Iran has taken the occasion to fine tune its defenses and mobilize its military apparatus. This exhibition of Iranian military might is intended to deter America's intent to trigger another
During the war games, the Iranian military has adjusted and modified its air defense shield for maximum dexterity and efficiency in preparation, to stop incoming missiles and invading aircraft. The war games have been an opportunity for testing of Iranian capacity to wage war in the air.

The Iranian military has also reported the testing of laser-guided weaponry, advanced torpedoes, ballistic missiles, anti-ship missiles, bullets that pierce through bullet-proof vests, and electronic military hardware during the Blow of Zolfaqar war games. Surface-to-surface and ocean-to-surface missiles (submarine-to-surface missiles) in the Persian Gulf were also tested in late-August 2006. These included missiles that are invisible to radar and can use multiple warheads or carry multiple payloads to hit numerous targets simultaneously.

Iran has also tested a “2,000 pound guided-bomb with long-range capabilities.” This “2,000 pound bomb” is said to be a “special weapon developed for penetrating military, economic and strategic targets located deep underground or on the soil of the [impending] enemy.” In the case of war, this weapon could be directed against Anglo-American military infrastructure in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Persian Gulf. This guided bomb is an unmanned aircraft carrying an explosive warhead. Following the execution of the Blow of Zolfaqar war games, the Iranian Defense Minister stated that “Iran now joins the few countries that possess guided missile technology.”

Iran has also been manufacturing its own warplanes, submarines, attack helicopters, tanks, torpedoes, and missiles. This includes remote-controlled modified Maverick Missiles. Brigadier-General Amini, the Deputy Commander of the Air Branch (Air Force) of the Regular Forces, has highlighted that Iran has starting the development and manufacturing of new types of warplanes besides the “Lighting fighter jets” that have been showcased in Northern Iran.

To discourage the United States in its plans to attack Iran, the Iranian military has additionally been showcasing its abilities to dog fight in the air with its fighter jets. Iranian fighter and bomber jets have been progressively equipped with advanced software and hardware, developed in Iran or by way of technology transfers from China, the Russian Federation, and the republics of the former Soviet Union.

Iranian Commanders have also stated that Iran can track and hit warplanes without using conventional radar. Iran has also been showcasing its signal jamming devices and electronic military hardware, which it compares to NATO standards.

**Warnings to the United States To Stop Its War Plans**

In Iran military commanders and state officials have also directly warned the United States to halt its march towards war in the Middle East. An account of a statement by Major-General Salehi, commander of the Iranian Army, sums up the generic view of Iranian military officials and planners in the advent of another Middle Eastern war initiated by the United States; “Pointing to the joint maneuvers to be carried out by the U.S. army [meaning military] and some other countries in the regional waters in the coming days, the General said that the U.S. presence in the region [Middle East] is considered as a threat to the security of the regional countries, and further warned Washington that in case the U.S. dares to practice threats [by actually attacking], it will then have to face a defeat as bad as the one that the Zionists [Israel] had to sustain in Lebanon.”

The Iranian Defence Minister has said “that his ministry is now equipping the border units of the army with modern military tools and weapons in a bid to increase their military
capabilities," and "that any possible enemy invasion of Iran will receive a severe blow, adding that failures of alien troops [meaning U.S., British, Coalition, and NATO forces] in Iraq and Afghanistan have taught trans-regional powers extreme caution." Other examples of public warnings by Iranian military commanders directed at the United States and its partners include:

Acting Deputy Commander [Brigadier-General Ahmadi] of the Iranian Mobilized Forces (Basij), noting the intensification of the psychological operations and pressures against Iran, stressed that his troops are fully prepared to encounter “any stupid act by the enemies.” (September 9, 2006)

[Brigadier-General Mohammad Hejazi] advised the U.S. to relinquish the idea of invading Iran, stressing that as soon as the U.S. dares to make such a big mistake, it will lose its forged reputation due to its [the U.S. military’s] frequent and shocking defeats from the Iranian troops. (September 10, 2006)

[Commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, Major-General Safavi has warned that Revolutionary Guard] ground troops form a defensive force, but meantime warned that in case any foreign threats are posed to Iran, [assured that the] IRGC adopts an aggressive strategy and hits enemy targets in strategic depth. He also described the southwestern province of Khuzestan as the most strategic region of the country, saying, "Considering that Khuzestan is a border province located at our sensitive borders with Iraq where British and American occupying troops aim at devising cultural and security plots for Khuzestani people through their intelligence organizations and bodies, IRGC and Basij troops should maintain their preparedness at [the] highest levels possible in order to confront and defuse any such measures by the enemies." (September 13, 2006: Also See British Troops Mobilizing on the Iranian Border)

During the August war games, Iranian military commanders claimed, in a gesture directed towards the United States, Britain, and Israel, "that no air force of any power stationed in the Middle East is capable of confronting the Iranian military's ground forces." This might seem like a psychological tactic to influence morale on both sides and deter any possible aerial assaults against Iran. This statement cannot be easily overruled if a comprehensive analysis is made and studied. In this regard, one must look at Lebanon, where Hezbollah and the Lebanese Resistance were able to withstand Israeli air raids and overcome the Israeli military on the ground. The Lebanese Resistance is reported as being armed and trained by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. What would an Iranian defensive of a larger magnitude, with state resources and air capabilities, be like?

The anticipation of a conflict are also coming from Iraq. Iraqi leaders have been charging that the United States and Britain plan on attacking Iran from Iraqi territory. Government representatives of Anglo-American occupied Iraq have asked that Iraq not be turned into a theatre of war between the United States and Iran. “We do not want Iraq to become an arena where other states [i.e., the United States, Britain, and Iran] settle their accounts,” said the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih while visiting the Iranian capital, Tehran. This message looked as if it was mainly directed at the United States, as well as Iran.

**Iran Always a Military Objective for the United States**

Washington: “Anyone can go to Baghdad! Real Men go to Tehran!” According to Michel Chossudovsky (The Next Phase of the Middle East War, September, 2006), the war on Iran is another phase of a “military roadmap” which includes the invasions of Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) and the Anglo-American sponsored Israeli siege of Lebanon (2006) as earlier stages.
In May, 2003 after the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq in March 2003, the motto in Washington D.C. was
“Anyone can go to Baghdad! Real men go to Tehran!”
One should ask why "real" men would continue towards Tehran after the invasion of Iraq. This slogan demonstrates that Iran was an objective or a phase in a broader military operation. With that said, Washington would prefer some form of internal "non-violent" regime change in Iran leading to American control of the Iranian economy and oil resources rather than a high-risk and high cost military confrontation. The shape and nature of this conflict, however, is uncertain.

The possibility of conflict with Iran and a major aerial assault are widely known.

The United States has been planning to attack Iran for years. Colonel Sam Gardiner (Retired, U.S. Air Force) has stated that the campaign against Iran is one where “the issue is not whether the military option would be used, but who approved the start of operations already.”

The March to War with Iran and Syria

With time fleeting, the Iranian military is positioning itself in battle formations under the pretext of nationwide war games and other pretexts. Iran has been steadily strengthening its air defenses and air units in preparation for the possibility of strikes. Iranian and Syrian coordination is also intensifying with the passing of time.

An attack on Iran and Syria would be a combination of heavy air bombardment by the U.S. Air Force, including the U.S. Army’s air units. It would also include a ground offensive led by the U.S. Marines and Army from the American bases surrounding both Iran and Syria. The U.S. Navy and Coast Guard would predominately manage the theatre of war in the Persian Gulf, with a view to guaranteeing the unimpeded flow of oil through the strategic Straits of Hormuz.

The Israeli military would deal with military operations in the Levant. Both Israeli troops and Israeli public opinion are being prepared for the possibility of another Middle Eastern conflict. In this context, Israel would face the possibility of aerial assaults from Iran. Iran has threatened to retaliate if it is attacked, using its ballistic missiles.

British and Australian forces in southern Iraq would deploy with the strategic aim of occupying the Iranian province of Khuzestan and securing its oil. Khuzestan is where most of Iran’s oil fields are located. Meanwhile a naval build-up is developing in the Persian Gulf which also includes the U.S. Coast Guard and the Canadian Navy.

The United States and its partners meanwhile are continuing to marshal and siphon their forces into the Middle East and Afghanistan. Both the United States and Britain have promised troop reductions in Iraq, but are actually increasing their troop levels. It also seems that a muzzle is being placed on Lebanon to stop any attacks on Israel by the presence of troops from member states of NATO.

Syria also seems to be expecting a possible aerial campaign. A vessel sailing to Syria under the flag of Panama, the “Grigorio I,” has been reported to have been stopped off the coast of Cyprus transporting 18 truck-mounted mobile radar systems and three command vehicles for delivery to Syria. This equipment appears to be part of an air defence system.
In Iran, the Intelligence Minister has warned that “enemies are seeking to create instability in Iran through different measures, including assassinations, explosions and extensive insecurities” and that “his forces, in cooperation and coordination with other governmental bodies, have defused enemies’ plots in different Iranian provinces, including Tehran.”

Venezuela has also threatened to halt oil exports in the event of an Anglo-American aggression against Iran and Syria. Venezuela has gone on to caution that it will defend Iran “under threat of invasion from the United States.” This was a warning given to the United States by Venezuela during the Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in Cuba.

The United States has already started to target both Iran and Syria’s financial bodies and institutions in an act of economic warfare. Syria has in step with Iran taken “preventative steps” in early 2006 by switching from using the U.S. dollar to using the Euro for all its transactions. The head of the state-owned Syria Commercial Bank has said that such measures have been taken to protect Syria from American sanctions (economic warfare). Actions have been taken against the large, state-owned Bank Saderat of Iran by the United States. The Bank Saderat has been cut off from the U.S. financial system and its network(s). This is part of a deliberate objective to financially cut off Iran from the rest of the world. Three large Japanese banks, the Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ, Mizuho Corporate Bank and Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation have followed in step and will terminate business with Bank Saderat.

Notes
7 Iran completes military exercise by testing 2,000-pound bomb, Pravada; September 7, 2006. http://english.pravda.ru/news/world/07-09-2006/84317-weapons-0
9 Nasser Karimi, Iran deploys locally-manufactured warplane, Hindustan Times, September 6, 2006.
Maverick missiles are American made or developed air-to-surface missiles which are conventionally used to attack armoured units, warships, air defences, military transport and logistics units, and military depots.


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Iran says ready to combat electronic warfare, Iranmania, March 5, 2006.


Trans-regional powers mean non-Middle Eastern nations with substantial force in the Middle East (the region being talked about).

Defense Minister: Any Foreign Aggression Responded by Force; Fars News Agency; September 2, 2006.
http://english.farsnews.net/newstext.php?nn=8506110568


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Bombing Iran Is not the Answer
By Amitabh Pal, February 3, 2012

The atmosphere surrounding Iran is getting heated up.

Last Sunday's cover story in the New York Times Magazine has warmed the temperature further. Israeli writer Ronen Bergman concludes that Israel will attack Iran's nuclear facilities this year.

"I have come to believe that Israel will indeed strike Iran in 2012," he writes.

"We have an expression in Hebrew: ‘Hold me back,’ ” he adds in a web interview with the New York Times (akin to a DVD extra). “Like in a street fight: Hold me back so I don’t hit that other guy. Israel is trying to send a message like this to the United States and Europe: ‘Do something to Iran otherwise we will do it.’

Defense Secretary Leon Panetta affirms Bergman’s assessment, telling the Washington Post that he also thinks Israel will likely launch military action within the next some months.

For the sake of all of us, I hope Bergman and Panetta are wrong.

“Attacking Iran would not destroy Iran's nuclear capacity and its military installations,” prominent Canadian- Iranian dissident Professor Ramin Jahanbegloo told me a few months ago. “It will kill many innocent Iranians, who, for the most part, are against Iran's political ambitions in the Middle East.”

Plus, Iran is likely quite a bit further away from a bomb than is often thought.

Professor Jacques Hymans, the author of a forthcoming book on nuclear weapons, writes in the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists that much of the analysis of Iran's nuclear program is hyperbolic.

“The persistent tendency to overestimate Iran’s nuclear capacities reflects the broader conventional wisdom that today, more than six decades after Hiroshima, it just isn't that hard to build the bomb anymore,” Hymans states. “That belief, however, is fundamentally mistaken. Nuclear weapons are extraordinarily complicated technical instruments, and nuclear weapons projects require the full-hearted cooperation of thousands of scientific and technical workers for many years.”

And then there’s the obvious case of double standards, by which it’s OK for other countries to have hundreds of weapons, but not for Iran.

“Existing in a parallel universe to international law is an unspoken rationality index, according to which even those states that have already developed nuclear weapons outside the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (India, Israel, Pakistan) are allowed to keep them because they score higher on the index (marginally in the case of Pakistan),” writes Russ Wellen at Foreign Policy in Focus. “In other words, they're allies of the West.”

The “special” case of Iran is largely due to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s erratic views—particularly his millenarian belief in the coming of the Mahdi (messiah)—and his threats toward Israel. Now, Ahmadinejad is a bit nutty, and his pronouncements about Israel and the Holocaust are repulsive. But Ronald Reagan also had millenarian notions. In 1971, he proclaimed to a dinner
companion, “For the first time ever, everything is in place for the battle of Armageddon and the second coming of Christ.” In 1980, he told evangelist Jim Bakker on his television program, “We may be the generation that sees Armageddon.” We all got through having such a man’s finger on the nuclear button.

The best approach is to offer a grand bargain to Iran that includes a nuclear-free Middle East.

The Iranian regime has shown signs of toning down its belligerence, having recently cooperated with U.N. weapons inspectors. We need to build on that and chart a better course forward.

SEE PAL’S FOLLOW-UP, “DON’T BOMB IRAN,” The Progressive (June 2012). “Bombing Iran will lead only to death and destruction. There is a better way.”