



## The AIPAC Girl

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If George W. Bush launches a pre-emptive war on Iran, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi will bear full moral responsibility for that war.

For it was Pelosi who quietly agreed to strip out of the \$100 billion funding bill for Iraq a provision that would have required President Bush to seek congressional approval before launching any new war on Iran.

Pelosi's capitulation came in the Appropriations Committee.

What went down, and why?

"Conservative Democrats as well as lawmakers concerned about the possible impact on Israel had argued for the change in strategy," wrote The Associated Press' David Espo and Matthew Lead.

"Rep. Shelley Berkley, D-Nev., said in an interview there is a widespread fear in Israel about Iran, which ... has expressed unremitting hostility to the Jewish state.

"It would take away perhaps the most important tool the U.S. has when it comes to Iran," she said of the now-abandoned provision.

"I don't think it was a very wise idea to take things off the table if you're trying to get people to modify their behavior and normalize in a civilized way," said Gary Ackerman of New York."

According to John Nichols of The Nation, Pelosi's decision to strip the provision barring Bush from attacking Iran without Congress' approval "sends the worst possible signal to the White House."

"The speaker has erred dangerously and dramatically," writes Nichols. Her "disastrous misstep could haunt her and the Congress for years to come."

Nichols does not exaggerate.

If Bush now launches war on Iran, he can credibly say Congress and the Democrats gave him a green light. For Pelosi, by removing a provision saying Bush does not have the authority, de facto concedes he does have the authority.

Bush and Cheney need now not worry about Congress.

They have been flashed the go sign for war on Iran.

Pelosi & Co. thus aborted a bipartisan effort to ensure that if we do go to war again, we do it the constitutional way, and we do it together.

Nothing in the provision would have prevented Bush, as commander in chief, from responding to an Iranian attack or engaging in hot pursuit of an enemy found in Iraq. Nor would the provision have prevented Bush from threatening Iran. It would simply have required him to come to Congress -- before launching all-out war.

Now Pelosi has, in effect, ceded Bush carte blanche to take out Iran's nuclear facilities. It's all up to him and Cheney.

For this the nation elected a Democratic Congress?

Why did Pelosi capitulate? Answer: She was "under pressure from some conservative members of her caucus, and from lobbyists associated with neoconservative groups that want war with Iran and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)," writes Nichols.

The Washington Times agrees as to who bully-ragged Nancy into scuttling any requirement that Bush come to the Hill before unleashing the B-2s on Arak, Natanz and Bushehr:

"Last week, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi received a smattering of boos when she bad-mouthed the war effort during a speech to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, and the Democratic leadership, responding to concerns from pro-Israel lawmakers, was forced to strip from a military appropriations measure a provision meant to weaken President Bush's ability to respond to threats from Iran."

This episode, wherein liberal Democrats scuttled a bipartisan effort to require Bush to abide by the Constitution before taking us into a third war in the Middle East, speaks volumes about who has the whip hand on Capitol Hill, when it comes to the Middle East.

Pelosi gets booed by the Israeli lobby, then runs back to the Hill and gives Bush a blank check for war on Iran, because that is what the lobby demands. A real candidate for Profiles in Courage.

As for the presidential candidates, it is hard to find a single one willing to stand up and say: If Bush plans to take us into another war in the Mideast, he must first come to Congress for authorization. And if he goes to war without authorization, that will be impeachable.

All retreat into the "all-options-are-on-the-table" mantra, which is another way of saying, "It's Bush's call."

The corruption of both parties is astonishing. Republicans used to be the party of the Constitution: "No more undeclared wars! No more presidential wars!"

Democrats used to be the party of the people. The people don't want this war. They don't want another. The Jewish community voted 88 percent for Democrats in November, and 77 percent oppose Iraq.

So says Gallup. Yet, just because the Israeli lobby jerked her chain, the leader of the Peoples' House has decided she and her party will leave the next war up to Bush.

Sam Rayburn must be turning over in his grave.

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