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Easter Surprise: Attack on Iran, New 9/11... or Worse

"There's an old saying in Tennessee - I know it's in Texas, probably in Tennessee - that says, fool me once, shame on - shame on you. Fool me - you can't get fooled again." - George W. Bush, September 2002

"This notion that the United States is getting ready to attack Iran is simply ridiculous... Having said that, all options are on the table." George W. Bush, February 2005

The Bush administration continues moving closer to a nuclear attack on Iran, and we ignore the obvious buildup at our peril.

Russian media is sounding alarms. In February, ultra-nationalist leader Vladimir Shirinovsky warned that the US would launch a strike against Tehran at the end of this month. Then last week, the Russian News and Information Agency Novosti (RIA-Novosti) quoted military experts predicting the US will attack Iran on April 6th, Good Friday. According to RIA-Novosti, the imminent assault will target Iranian air and naval defense capabilities, armed forces headquarters as well as key economic assets and administration headquarters. Massive air strikes will be deployed, possibly tactical nuclear weapons as well, and the Bush administration will attempt to exploit the resulting chaos and political unrest by installing a pro-US government.

Sound familiar? It's Iraq Déjà vu all over again, and we know how well that war has gone.

Seymour Hersh has published numerous articles in *The New Yorker* detailing the Bush administration's plans to invade Iran. His latest, "[The Redirection](#)," discusses US participation in Iran-based clandestine operations, the kidnapping of hundreds of Iranians (including many "humanitarian and aid workers") by US forces and the shocking revelation that an Iran-Contra-type scandal has been run out of Vice President Dick Cheney's office with some of the illicit funds going to groups "sympathetic to al-Qaeda."

"The Redirection" also reports that the Pentagon has been planning to bomb Iran for a year and that a recently-established group connected to the Joint Chiefs of Staff is formulating a assault strategy to be implemented "upon orders from the President, within twenty-four hours." Hersh notes that current capabilities "allow for an attack order this spring," possibly when four US aircraft-carrier battle groups are scheduled to be in the Persian Gulf simultaneously.

Meanwhile, the Democratic Congress busies itself with non-binding, timid resolutions on Iraq and recently altered a military-funding bill to make it easier for Bush to invade Iran. As Rep. Shelley Berkley (D-NV) explained, language demanding that Bush seek congressional approval before attacking Iran "[would take away perhaps the most important negotiating tool](#) that the U.S. has when it comes to Iran."

Such sheer ignorance and blind denial would be laughable if it weren't marching us into Armageddon.

But with this Administration (and this Congress, apparently) diplomacy be damned.

It's now widely known that Iran had broached peace talks with the US in 2003 - Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice admitted as much in 2006 when she said, "what the Iranians wanted earlier was to be one-on-one with the United States." Yet the White House rejected Tehran's overture outright and Rice has since developed selective amnesia, later saying of the Iranian proposal, [I don't remember seeing any such thing.](#) "

For its part, the UN Security Council recently tightened sanctions aimed at pressuring Iran to cease uranium enrichment, and in response, Iran announced it would cooperate less with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

It's worth noting that Iran is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and says that its program falls under the legally permitted right to "peacefully use nuclear technology." In contrast, Israel has neither signed nor ratified the NPT and the US would breach the Treaty by conducting a nuclear attack against Iran.

Besides, the Bush administration's message to its enemies has been very clear: if you possess WMD you're safe, and if you don't, you're fair game. Iraq had no nuclear weapons and was invaded, Iran doesn't as well and risks attack, yet that other "Axis of Evil" country, North Korea, reportedly does have nuclear weapons and is left alone. When considering that India and Pakistan (and presumably Israel) developed secret nuclear weapons programs yet remain on good terms with Washington, the case for war becomes even more tenuous.

What consequences would arise from a US attack on Iran? Retaliation, for one. Tehran promised a "crushing response" to any US or Israeli assault, and while the country - ironically - doesn't possess nuclear weapons to scare off attackers, it does have other options. Iran boasts a standing army estimated at 450,000 personnel, as well as long-range missiles that could hit Israel and possibly even Europe. In addition, much of the world's oil supply is transported through the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow stretch of water which Iran borders to the north. In

1997, Iran's deputy foreign minister warned that the country might close off that shipping route if ever threatened, and it wouldn't be difficult. Just a few missiles or gunboats could bring down vessels and block the Strait, thereby threatening the global oil supply and shooting the price of crude oil to over \$100 a barrel, with untold negative consequences for the world economy.

An attack on Iran would also inflame tensions in the Middle East, and could tip the scales towards a new geopolitical balance, one in which the US finds itself shut out by Russia, China, Iran, Muslim countries and the many others Bush has managed to alienate during his period in office.

The most horrific impact of a US assault on Iran, of course, would be the potentially catastrophic number of casualties. The Oxford Research Group predicted that up to 10,000 people would die if the US bombed Iran's nuclear sites, and that an attack on the Bushehr nuclear reactor could send a radioactive cloud over the Gulf. If the US uses nuclear weapons, such as earth-penetrating "bunker buster" bombs, radioactive fallout would become even more disastrous.

The devastating implications of a US strike on Iran are clear. And that begs the question: how could the US public be convinced to enter another potentially ugly and protracted war?

Former CIA Officer Philip Giraldi chillingly noted that the Pentagon's plans to attack Iran were drawn up "to be employed in response to another 9/11-type terrorist attack on the United States." Writing in *The American Conservative* in August 2005, Giraldi added, "The plan includes a large-scale air assault on Iran employing both conventional and tactical nuclear weapons. Within Iran there are more than 450 major strategic targets, including numerous suspected nuclear-weapons-program development sites ... As in the case of Iraq, the response is not conditional on Iran actually being involved in the act of terrorism directed against the United States."

Chew on that one a minute. The Pentagon's plan would be in response to a terrorist attack on the US, *but not contingent upon Iran actually having been responsible*. How outlandish is this scenario: another 9/11 hits the US, the administration says it has secret information implicating Iran, the US population demands retribution and bombs start dropping on Tehran.

While even contemplating another 9/11 brings shudders, it's worth noting that last year, Congress quietly approved provisions making it easier for the President to declare federal martial law after a domestic terrorist incident. And recall that in late 2003, General Tommy Franks openly speculated on how a new 9/11 could lead to a military form of government: "a terrorist, massive, casualty-producing event somewhere in the Western world - it may be in the United States of America - that causes our population to question our own Constitution and to begin to militarize our country in order to avoid a repeat of another mass, casualty-producing event. Which in fact, then begins to unravel the fabric of our Constitution."

Meanwhile, Iran conducted war games in the Persian Gulf last week and just yesterday, the US Navy began its largest maneuvers in the region since the 2003 Iraq invasion, complete with over 100 US warplanes and 10,000 personnel.

The clock is ticking, and there's far too much at stake.

If you're from the US, contact your Senators today and ask them to support the Webb amendment prohibiting the Administration from attacking Iran without congressional approval. Tell them to support the Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Sen. Kit Bond (R-Mo.) bill making it harder for Bush to declare martial law and take over the National Guard, and while you're at it, tell your Senators to only fund troop withdrawal and to bring the troops home. Thank those Congress members who voted against more war funding.

We could be looking at WWII. The time for positive action is now.

Note: *Originally published: March 28, 2007*

