

Is Desperate Cheney Scheming Nuclear Sneak Attack on Iran?

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Senior U.S. military and intelligence sources canvassed by *EIR* do not rule out the possibility of a White House-ordered “Global Strike” unprovoked sneak attack against sites inside Iran before the Nov. 7 midterm U.S. elections. In fact, a number of particularly well-placed military and intelligence professionals identified the period from Oct. 4-18 as a possible window for just such a pre-election “preventive strike.”

Operational plans for such an attack have been recently updated, and could be activated with virtually no lead time, utilizing long-range strategic bombers and missiles, and carrier-based fighter jets, already in or near the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf region, according to one senior U.S. diplomat. “The military did the planning, but they hated it. Expect mass resignations at the flag level, if the orders come down to launch,” the source warned.

What’s more, in the aftermath of Israel’s failed “shock and awe” bombing campaign in the recent Lebanon war, do not rule out the U.S. use of nuclear “bunker busters” in an attack on hardened sites inside Iran, according to several of the sources.

Hezbollah fighters waited out the initial weeks-long Israeli bombing campaign, inside air-conditioned reinforced underground bunkers, and then emerged to launch a barrage of over 4,000 rocket and missile attacks against Israeli targets. The psychological impact of the rain of missiles on the northern half of Israel eventually drove the government of Ehud Olmert to deploy “boots on the ground” inside Lebanon’s treacherous southern region, leading to a second disastrous Israeli military debacle, at the hands of trained and seasoned Hezbollah partisan fighters.

While military professionals noted the Hezbollah victory as a turning point in the politico-military situation in the extended Southwest Asian and Persian Gulf region, fanatics in the Bush-Cheney White House have been reportedly driven

into an even more desperate flight-forward commitment to near-term military action against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

So-called Iranian “nuclear weapons sites” are far more heavily reinforced and could withstand any conventional bombing attacks, according to military specialists. Therefore, the nuclear bunker-buster option cannot be ruled out, despite an intensive “generals revolt” last Spring, which temporarily forced the White House to remove the use of tactical nuclear weapons from the contingency plans.

Public Warnings

While the establishment mass media has conducted a top-down coverup of the White House plans for a sneak attack on Iran, a number of think-tank journals and Internet-based news services have sounded the warning:

- On Sept. 23, former U.S. Sen. Gary Hart (D-Colo.), who headed a late-1990s Congressionally sponsored commission on the U.S. vulnerability to a terrorist attack, warned that the Bush White House was planning “The October Surprise,” in the form of a bombing of Iran. Writing on Huffington Blog, Senator Hart bluntly warned, “It should come as no surprise if the Bush Administration undertakes a preemptive war against Iran sometime before the November election. Were these more normal times, this would be a stunning possibility, quickly dismissed by thoughtful people as dangerous, unprovoked, and out of keeping with our national character. But we do not live in normal times. And we do not have a government much concerned with our national character. If anything, our current Administration is out to remake our national character into something it has never been.”

Senator Hart summarized the “Global Strike” war plan: “Air Force tankers will be deployed to fuel B-2 bombers, Navy cruise missile ships will be positioned at strategic points in the northern Indian Ocean and perhaps the Persian Gulf,



DoD/R.D. Ward

The bipartisan Senate surrender on Dick Cheney's beloved "torture bill" makes a flight forward into a sneak attack against Iran even more likely than it was before.

unmanned drones will collect target data, and commando teams will refine those data. The latter two steps are already being taken."

Indeed, U.S. military sources have confirmed that special reconnaissance units have been on the ground inside Iran since the Summer of 2004, planting sensors and recruiting intelligence assets, to prepare the battle field for a U.S. air campaign.

- On Sept. 26, conservative syndicated columnist Paul Craig Roberts wrote "Why Bush Will Nuke Iran," declaring that "the neoconservative Bush administration will attack Iran with tactical nuclear weapons, because it is the only way the neocons believe they can rescue their goal of U.S. (and Israel) hegemony in the Middle East."

- Several weeks before the Hart and Roberts warnings, The Century Foundation posted a 28-page analysis, "The End of the 'Summer of Diplomacy': Assessing U.S. Military Options on Iran," by Col. Sam Gardiner (USAF-ret.), a respected retired Air Force strategist and war-planner. The document detailed the Bush White House's fractured logic, leading to a military assault on Iran, aimed at regime change, not the delay or destruction of the Islamic Republic's purported secret nuclear weapons program. In plain language, Colonel Gardiner spelled out why an attack by the United States on Iran would occur sooner, not later:

"Waiting makes it harder. The history of warfare is dominated by attackers who concluded that it was better to attack early than to wait. One source of the momentum in Washington for a strike on Iran's nuclear program is the strategic observation that if such an attack is in fact inevitable, then it is better done sooner than later."

Colonel Gardiner documented that the order of battle for Phase I of war on Iran would require virtually no lead time to

put military assets in place. Rather, he spelled out a propaganda buildup as the key indicator of imminent attack: "The most significant indications will come from strategic influence efforts to establish domestic political support. The round of presidential speeches on terrorism is a beginning, but I expect more. An emerging theme for the final marketing push seems to be that Iran threatens Israel's existence. We can expect the number of administration references to Iran to significantly increase, and will see three themes—the nuclear program, terrorism, and the threat to Israel's existence." Gardiner added the warning that the Bush Administration would likely strike without seeking Congressional approval, concluding, ominously: "The window for a strike on Iran stands open."

- Months before the Gardiner report, *The National Interest*, the journal of the Nixon Center, published a detailed analysis by Col. W. Patrick Lang (USA-ret.) and Larry C. Johnson—two Middle East specialists with decades of military and intelligence experience—"Contemplating the Ifs," debunking the notion that the United States or Israel has any viable military option for confronting Iran. Taking a very dispassioned approach, the two reported: "Friends in the intelligence community tell us that civilian officials at the Department of Defense have been pushing aggressively for almost two years to 'do something violent' in Iran. but before we embark on another military operation, we must reckon the costs; we must ensure that we are willing to pay those costs; and we should ensure that neoconservative enthusiasts would not be tempted to say—if venturing into Iran becomes a misadventure—that it was impossible to foresee negative consequences. There are a lot of bad things that could happen if we launch a pre-emptive war with Iran. Before we act, we must thoroughly consider what our viable military options are."

Lang and Johnson dismissed, out of hand, a conventional ground invasion; disputed the viability of commando and air raids; blew off any "mirage" of a possible Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear sites; and then detailed Iran's asymmetrical counter-capabilities, concluding, "In the end, it may become necessary to confront Iran militarily over its emergent nuclear power status, but the costs would be so high that all diplomatic resources should be exhausted before such measures are adopted."

Voices in the Congressional Wilderness

The pathetic bipartisan surrender to the Bush-Cheney White House over the status of "enemy combatants," will only serve to send Dick Cheney and the ever-more-mad President George W. Bush into a flight forward into sneak attack war on Iran (see *Editorial*). A relative handful of Members of Congress from both parties have stood up against the tide of capitulation by both the Democratic and Republican leadership.

On Sept. 29, Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) filed a resolution in the House, giving the Bush White House 14 days to turn over policy documents relating to Iran, including intelli-

gence on Iran's nuclear energy program and "Iran's capability to threaten the United States with nuclear weapons"; any decision documents "to remove the ruling regime from power in Iran"; details of any "covert action being conducted by any United States Armed Forces in Iran"; details concerning "creation of a new office in the Department of Defense similar in scope, function, or mandate to the former Office of Special Plans"; any "Prepare to Deploy" orders by the United States Navy on the waters near Iran; and any National Intelligence Estimates or any other intelligence documents on the consequences, including economic consequences, of a U.S. attack on Iran.

The same day, Rep. Wayne T. Gilchrest (R-Md.) and 19 other House Republicans and Democrats wrote to President Bush, urging him to open direct dialogue with Iran "as soon as possible," noting that "more than 25 years of isolating Iran has moved us farther from, not closer to, achieving these goals."

Documentation

Congressmen, Military Experts Speak Out

The following reflect the concern of certain Members of Congress from both political parties, and qualified military experts, about the danger of an imminent Bush Administration attack on Iran.

Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) introduced the following resolution into the Congress on Sept. 28, and inserted the full text of an article by Col. Sam Gardiner (USAF, ret.) into the *Congressional Record*.

Requesting the President to provide to the House of Representatives certain documents in his possession relating to United States policy toward Iran.

Resolved, That the President is requested to provide to the House of Representatives, not later than 14 days after the date of the adoption of this resolution, all documents in the possession of the President relating to—

(1) the intelligence on Iran's nuclear energy program and Iran's capability to threaten the United States with nuclear weapons;

(2) any decision to remove the ruling regime from power in Iran, by means of United States military strikes, internal or external dissident groups and individuals, and by any other means;

(3) covert action (as defined in section 503 of the National Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 413b)) being conducted by

any United States Armed Forces in Iran, and training by United States Armed Forces of any group or organization for the conduct of operations hostile to the current regime of Iran, including the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK) and any individuals ever associated with MEK, and the Iranian Party of Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK) and any individuals ever associated with PJAK;

(4) creation of a new office in the Department of Defense similar in scope, function, or mandate to the former Office of Special Plans;

(5) "Prepare to Deploy" orders by the United States Navy to the waters near Iran; and

(6) all National Intelligence Estimates or any other intelligence community analysis regarding the consequences of attacking Iran, including the likelihood of increased prices of gasoline and oil and the economic impact to the United States of such increased gasoline and oil prices, the likelihood of increased attacks on United States troops in Iraq, and the growth of anti-American sentiment in the Islamic world.

The following release was issued by Maryland Republican Congressman Wayne Gilchrest on Sept. 29, under the headline "Gilchrest Asks the President To Open a Dialogue with Iran."

U.S. Rep. Wayne T. Gilchrest (R-Maryland-1st) is leading an effort in Congress to ask President Bush to begin talks with Iran as soon as possible in hopes of averting another conflict in the Middle East.

In a letter sent to the President Friday, signed by 19 bipartisan members of the House, Gilchrest and his colleagues suggested that the last 26 years of a "no negotiation" policy has not yielded any positive results. By opening a dialogue with Tehran, the President can begin to try to solve this nuclear impasse diplomatically.

"If we hope to convince the American people, our allies, and the international community that we are committed to resolving this matter diplomatically, the U.S. must open up direct diplomatic channels with Tehran," the letter stated.

The letter also suggested that while talks with Iran's President may not be productive, there are other leaders and groups in Iran that would be receptive to such outreach.

"We remind you that decision-making power under Iran's government is diffuse. Although we are all familiar with the inflammatory rhetoric of President Ahmadinejad, there are certainly other significant government bodies in Iran that have demonstrated moderation and an eagerness for dialogue. We believe that such bodies should be sought out for engagement."

"There are seldom occasions in history where a great country should fear dialogue with a potential adversary. on the contrary, dialogue is needed to explain clearly the compelling nature of America's objectives in the Middle East. More than 25 years of isolating Iran has moved us farther from, not closer to, achieving these goals. No one can dispute that the U.S. has