

Cheney's Guns of August: A Timeline

by Jeffrey Steinberg

The chronology that follows provides a picture of the drumbeat for war against Iran, orchestrated by the same neo-con and Bush-Cheney Administration war party apparatus that lied America into the pre-emptive war against Iraq. Initially, leading neo-cons in and around the Bush Administration had thought that a “cakewalk” victory in Iraq in the Spring 2003 would lead, in rapid succession, to “regime change” in Syria and Iran. However, by October 2003, the rise of the insurgency in Iraq forced even the hardliners in the Administration to concede that war schemes against both Syria and Iran would have to be postponed. The drumbeat for war on Iran was resumed right after the November 2004 elections.

2002

Jan. 29: In his first State of the Union address following the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, President George W. Bush identifies Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as the “axis of evil,” clearly targeting those three countries for “regime change.”

Late 2002: Michael Ledeen and Morris Amitay cofound the Coalition for Democracy in Iran to promote regime change in Tehran. Among the other boosters, listed on the group’s website, are: Frank Gaffney, Jack Kemp, Joshua Muravchik, Danielle Pletka, and James Woolsey.

2003

April 30: The Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs sponsors a conference featuring a speech by Michael Ledeen, in which he declares, “It is time to focus on Iran, the mother of modern terrorism. . . . The time for diplomacy is at an end; it is time for a free Iran, free Syria, and free Lebanon.”

May 6: The American Enterprise Institute, the Foundation for the Defense of Democracy, and the Hudson Institute co-sponsor a forum, “The Future of Iran: Mullarchy, Democracy, and the War on Terror,” aggressively promoting regime change in Tehran. Among the speakers are: Michael Ledeen, Meyrav Wurmser, Morris Amitay, Reuel Marc Gerecht, and Ambassador Uri Lubrani, an advisor to the Israeli Ministry of Defense.

Oct 24: According to the Aug. 4, 2005 indictments of Larry Franklin, Steven Rosen, and Keith Weissman, all charged with passing classified U.S. documents to Israel,

Franklin told Israeli Embassy official Naor Ghilon that all work on an action plan targeting Iran had been suspended.

2004

Sept 27: *Newsweek* reveals that “the CIA and DIA have war-gamed the likely consequences of a U.S. pre-emptive strike on Iran’s nuclear facilities. No one liked the outcome. As an Air Force source tells it, ‘The war games were unsuccessful at preventing the conflict from escalating.’ Instead, administration hawks are pinning their hopes on regime change in Tehran—by covert means, preferably, but by force of arms if necessary.”

Nov. 17: En route to Chile, Secretary of State Colin Powell tells reporters that the U.S. has received new intelligence that Iran is working on modifying its Shahab III to launch nuclear warheads. It is subsequently revealed that a “walk-in” has provided the Bush Administration with thousands of pages of purported Iranian government documents, including designs of the new missiles and warheads. The walk-in is later identified as an associate of the Mujahideen-e-Khalq (MEK) political front group the National Council of Resistance of Iran. The NCRI held a press conference in Paris on the same day that Powell made his remarks to reporters, presenting the same allegations about Iran’s advanced secret missile and nuclear weapons program.

Nov. 19: *The New York Times* publishes a story by Steven Weisman, identifying Iran as a major foreign policy challenge for the second Bush Administration. Weisman writes, “While assembling a new national security team, President Bush is

For More Information

For useful reviews of the Bush-Cheney Administration’s record of lies, see:

“Iraq on the Record: The Bush Administration’s Public Statements on Iraq,” prepared for Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) See <http://democrats.reform.gov/IraqOnTheRecord>.

“Last Throes of Credibility—Five Years of Lies and Deception,” a 36-page document released by Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) on July 22, 2005, at www.johnconyers.com. A press release is available at www.house.gov/judiciary_democrats/news/releases.html.

W. Patrick Lang, “Drinking the Kool-Aid,” *Middle East Policy Council Journal*, Summer 2004. See www.mepc.org/public_asp/journal_Vol11/0406_lang.asp.

confronting what could become the biggest challenge of his second term: how to contain Iran's nuclear program and what some in the administration believe to be Tehran's support of violence in Israel and insurgents in Iraq."

2005

Jan 17: Seymour Hersh publishes an exposé in *The New Yorker*, revealing Bush Administration plans to launch missile and commando attacks against as many as three dozen suspected nuclear weapons research sites in Iran, as early as Summer 2005. Hersh writes that U.S. commando teams have been infiltrated into Iran since mid-2004, developing target data on the suspected nuclear sites.

Jan. 20: On the morning of the second Bush-Cheney inauguration, Vice President Cheney goes on the Don Imus Show on MSNBC, to accuse Iran of aggressively seeking nuclear weapons and supporting terrorism against Israel, warning that Israel could conduct pre-emptive bombing raids against Iran's nuclear facilities. Cheney tells Imus, "Given the fact that Iran has a stated policy that their objective is the destruction of Israel, the Israelis might well decide to act first, and let the rest of the world worry about cleaning up the diplomatic mess afterwards."

April 13: Iran Freedom Foundation runs TV ads in 16 states plus the District of Columbia, titled "An Atomic 9-11: When Evil Is Appeased," based on the new book *Atomic Iran: How the Terrorist Regime Bought the Bomb and American Politicians*, by Foundation head Jerome Corsi. The ads depict a nuclear bomb attack on New York City, and warn that if Iran obtains nuclear weapons, the regime will provide them to terrorist groups to detonate inside the United States, killing millions of people. "In the blink of an eye, the United States could be reduced to second-class economic status."

May 24: AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) holds its annual convention in Washington, D.C. highlighted by a speech by Defense Policy Board member Richard Perle, in which he calls for American military action against Iran, declaring, "If Iran is on the verge of a nuclear weapon, I think we will have no choice but to take decisive action." The other highlight of the AIPAC gathering is a multi-media display, "Iran's Path to the Bomb."

May 28: Geostrategy Direct, a consulting service headed by *Washington Times* reporter Bill Gertz, publishes a ludicrous report, claiming that North Korea and Pakistan have provided Iran with all the necessary components to immediately build several plutonium-based nuclear weapons, to be fitted on Iran's existing arsenal of Shihab III intermediate-range missiles.

June 24: In an interview with leading neo-con propaganda outlet Frontpagemag.com, Kenneth Timmerman, a propagandist for war on Iran, claims that Iran "has acquired nuclear weapons capability" and is also harboring Osama bin Laden inside Iranian territory, where he has met with

top regime officials as recently as March 2005.

June 27-29: *The Washington Times* publishes excerpts from Kenneth Timmerman's just-released book, *Countdown to Crissis: The Coming Nuclear Showdown With Iran*, which peddles a string of lies about Iran's protection of Osama bin Laden, its direct role in the 9/11 attacks, and its advanced quest for nuclear weapons. The excerpts are accompanied by a *Times* editorial, calling on Congress to ignore the findings of the U.S. intelligence community, especially the CIA, and take up Timmerman's dossier as a basis for policy action.

July 25: *The American Conservative*, dated Aug. 1, but released to the public a week earlier, publishes a short item by former U.S. intelligence official Philip Giraldi, which reads, in part: "In Washington it is hardly a secret that the same people in and around the administration who brought you Iraq are preparing to do the same for Iran. The Pentagon, acting under instructions from Vice President Dick Cheney's office, has tasked the United States Strategic Command (STRATCOM) with drawing up a contingency plan to be employed in response to another 9/11-type terrorist attack on the United States. The plan includes a large-scale air assault on Iran employing both conventional and tactical nuclear weapons."

July 28: In response to a question by *EIR* White House correspondent Bill Jones, Presidential spokesman Scott McClellan does not deny the Giraldi report about contingency plans to bomb Iran with conventional and nuclear weapons. Rather, he launches into an attack on the Iranian regime as a sponsor of international terrorism, and threatens UN sanctions if Iran does not abandon its nuclear reprocessing program. The Jones-McClellan exchange is featured prominently on CNN following the White House press briefing.

July 29: Frontpagemag.com sponsors a Symposium, "The Showdown," promoting a confrontation with Iran, in the wake of the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as President of the Islamic Republic. The participants, all raving neo-con promoters of regime change in Tehran, are: Patrick Clawson, Kenneth Timmerman, Daniel Pipes, and Walid Phares. They promote various U.S. military actions, ranging from covert support for Iranian opposition groups, to full-scale bombing attacks.

Aug. 2: Frontpagemag.com interviews Joseph Farah, editor of World Net Daily, who proclaims that the United States is facing an imminent "American Hiroshima," in the form of a dirty nuclear bomb attack by al-Qaeda. Farah cites right-wing Israeli propagandist Yosef Bodansky and Paul Williams, author of an upcoming book, *The al-Qaeda Connection*, as others who have drawn the same conclusion. Farah claims his sources told him that dirty bombs had already been smuggled into the United States through our "porous borders," with the help of criminal enterprises like the Central American MS-13 gang.