

**Considering a war with Iran:
A discussion paper on WMD in the
Middle East**

Dr Dan Plesch and Martin Butcher
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Dr Plesch is Director of the School of Oriental and African Studies' Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy. Martin Butcher is an international consultant on security politics. This paper presents the views of the authors and not of CISD/SOAS. The School of Oriental and African Studies cannot accept responsibility for direct or indirect consequences resulting from this communication.

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Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & INTRODUCTION	5
US NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGIES AND IRAN	12
US NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGIES AND IRAN	12
US PREPARATIONS TO DESTROY THE IRANIAN STATE AS A REGIONAL POWER	13
STRATEGIC COMMAND GLOBAL STRIKE	13
THEATRE OPERATIONS	18
DESTABILISING THE IRANIAN STATE, TOWARDS A FEDERAL IRAN? ..	32
STRATEGIC COMMAND: GLOBAL STRIKE WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS	39
HOW LIKELY IS AN ATTACK? THE US POLITICAL CONTEXT	52
THE ISRAELI MILITARY AND POLITICAL DIMENSION.....	57
IRAN POLICY IN LONDON: WOULD BROWN ATTACK?	61
HOW MIGHT IRAN RESPOND TO ATTACK:	65
AND HOW COULD THIS AFFECT THE GULF STATES AND COMBATANTS	65
CONCLUSION.....	70

Executive Summary & Introduction

There is considerable international discussion that the confrontation between Iran and the international community over its nuclear programme may change in character into a major war between Iran and either US or Israel or both in conjunction with allies such as the United Kingdom.

This study uses open source analysis to outline what the military option might involve if it were picked up off the table and put into action. The study demonstrates that an attack can be massive and launched with surprise rather than merely a contingency plan needing months if not years of preparation.

The study considers the potential for US and allied war on Iran and the attitude of key states. **The study concludes that the US has made military preparations to destroy Iran's WMD, nuclear energy, regime, armed forces, state apparatus and economic infrastructure within days if not hours of President George W. Bush giving the order. The US is not publicising the scale of these preparations to deter Iran, tending to make confrontation more likely. The US retains the option of avoiding war, but using its forces as part of an overall strategy of shaping Iran's actions.**

- Any attack is likely to be on a massive multi-front scale but avoiding a ground invasion. Attacks focused on WMD facilities would leave Iran too many retaliatory options, leave President Bush open to the charge of using too little force and leave the regime intact.
- US bombers and long range missiles are ready today to destroy 10,000 targets in Iran in a few hours.
- US ground, air and marine forces already in the Gulf, Iraq, and Afghanistan can devastate Iranian forces, the regime and the state at short notice.
- Some form of low level US and possibly UK military action as well as armed popular resistance appear underway inside the Iranian provinces or ethnic areas of the Azeri, Balujistan, Kurdistan and Khuzestan. Iran was unable to prevent sabotage of its offshore-to-shore crude oil pipelines in 2005.
- Nuclear weapons are ready, but most unlikely, to be used by the US, the UK and Israel. The human, political and environmental effects would be devastating, while their military value is limited.
- Israel is determined to prevent Iran acquiring nuclear weapons yet has the conventional military capability only to wound Iran's WMD programmes.
- The attitude of the UK is uncertain, with the Brown government and public opinion opposed psychologically to more war, yet, were Brown to support an attack he would probably carry a vote in Parliament. The UK is adamant that Iran must not acquire the bomb.
- Short and long term human, political and economic consequences of any war require innovative approaches to prevent the crisis becoming war.

This study does not address Iran's nuclear energy programmes or Iran's relations with other states. It focuses on the shape that a 'military option' might take if it is put into action.

US military, if not political, readiness for a war using minimum ground forces indicates that the current seeming inaction surrounding Iran is misleading. The United States retains the ability – despite difficulties in Iraq – to undertake major military operations against Iran. Whether the political will exists to follow such a course of action is known only to a few senior figures in the Bush administration.

General Wesley Clark claims that he became aware of the Bush Administration's instructions concerning the overthrow of the Iranian regime in September 2001. He states that he was told this in the Pentagon by a serving General holding the order in his hand.¹

“He picked up a piece of paper. And he said, “I just got this down from upstairs” -- meaning the Secretary of Defense’s office -- “today.” And he said, “This is a memo that describes how we’re going to take out seven countries in five years, starting with Iraq, and then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and, finishing off, Iran.”

In various forms, regime change or change of orientation favouring the US has occurred in Iraq, Lebanon, Libya and Somalia in the ensuing six years.

Seymour Hersh's [articles](#) claim that President Bush ordered war against Iran shortly after the President's re-election in 2004. His claim that Bush is determined not to leave Iran to a future president and that he has support from leading Democrats is born out by numerous conversations in Washington. As a senior staffer to Senator Kerry put it: "why should people object if we carry out disarmament militarily?"

There have been reports since 2003 that war with Iran is either underway or in preparation. Pat Buchanan in [American Conservative](#) argued like Hersh that vice-president Cheney prepared a war plan for Iran including the use of nuclear weapons by summer 2005. Scott Ritter claimed that President Bush ordered that the US be ready to attack Iran at any point [after](#) June 2005 and Newsweek [reported](#) that the administration was considering options for regime change. [Atlantic Monthly](#) concluded after conducting a wargame that attacking Iran was too risky. The [powerpoint slides](#) from that game provide a glimpse into the world of war planning. Their analysis assumes a large ground invasion, clearly not a favoured option of either Don Rumsfeld or the American public. The eminent investigative writer, James Bamford, has [described](#) a neoconservative push for regime change.

“We're now at the point where we are essentially on alert,” Lieutenant General Bruce Carlson, commander of the 8th Air Force, the heart of Strategic Command, said. “We have the capacity to plan and execute global strikes in half a day or less.”

Under the command of Marine General James [Cartwright](#), US Global Strike planning has the potential to destroy over 10,000 targets in Iran in one mission with "smart" conventional weapons. That number assumes only 100 strategic bombers with 100 bombs each. The actual number of planes/bombs and missiles is far larger. US government [documents](#) obtained by Hans Kristensen and analysed by William [Arkin](#) has described the development of this Global Strike capability.

Awaiting his orders, George Bush has more than 200 strategic [bombers](#) (B52-B1-B2-F117A) and US Navy Tomahawk cruise missiles. One B2 bomber dropped 80, 500lb bombs on separate targets in 22 seconds in a [test](#) flight. Using half the total force, 10,000 targets could be attacked almost simultaneously. This strike power alone is sufficient to destroy all major Iranian political, military, economic and transport capabilities.

Such a strike would take "shock and awe" to a new level and leave Iran with few if any conventional military capabilities to block the straights of Hormuz or provide conventional military support to insurgents in Iraq. If this was not enough, the [latest](#) generation of [smart bombs](#), the [Small Diameter Bomb](#), now in the US Air Force arsenal [quadruples](#) the number of weapons all US warplanes can carry.

Placing forces on high alert does not mean that the US will use them. However, in an atmosphere of mounting crisis, great care must be taken as events move forward.

Conventional Wisdom concerning any US attack on Iran:

a) Any attack will be limited to suspect Weapons of Mass Destruction sites and associated defences.

b) Iran will then have options to retaliate that include:

- interference with the Straits of Hormuz and oil flows, destruction of Gulf oil industry infrastructure;

- fire missiles at Gulf States, Iraq bases and Israel;

- insurrection in Iraq;

- attacks by Hizbollah and Hamas on Israel;

- insurrection in Afghanistan;

- use of sleeper cells to carry out attacks in the Gulf, Europe and the US; and

- destabilisation of Gulf states with large Shi'a populations.

c) This analysis is not convincing for the following reasons:

- Elementary military strategy requires the prevention of anticipated enemy counter-attacks. Iranian Air Force, Navy, Surface to Surface Missile and Air Defence systems would not be left intact. Although one option may be to leave regular Iranian armed forces intact and attack to destroy the regime including Revolutionary Guard, Basij and religious police. In this way regime change might be encouraged.

- President Bush will not again lay himself open to the charge of using too little force.

- US policy is regime change by political means and prevention of nuclear weapons acquisition by all means. The only logic for restraint once war begins will be continued pressure on Iran to acquiesce to US demands through intra-war deterrence.

- Long term prevention of Iranian WMD programmes may require regime change and the reduction of Iran to a weak or failed state, since all assumptions concerning attacks on WMD sites alone conclude that Iran would merely be held back a few years.

- US military preparations and current operations against Iran indicate a full-spectrum approach to Iran rather than one confined to WMD sites alone.

Isn't war unthinkable?

"There's a strong sense in the upper echelons of the White House that Iran is going to surface relatively quickly as a major issue - in the country and the world - in a very acute way," said NBC TV's Tim Russert after meeting the President in January 2007.²

The political context as seen from inside the White House is that we are in a war as serious as the Second World War. John Bolton exemplified this outlook when he compared US problems in Iraq with the fighting with Japan after Pearl Harbour.

There are eight arguments currently in circulation that deny the idea of a looming war. How do they stand up?

First, is it likely that Iran will “do a Libya” – open all its facilities to United Nations inspectors, and surrender any illicit weapons along with its missile programmes? Such a policy would command little support amongst the Iranian public, let alone within the political-religious leadership. While the United States refuses to offer any form of security guarantee to Iran, and indeed is actively engaged in attempts to undermine Iranian authorities, this possibility seems extremely remote. The refusal of the White House to consider an Iranian offer to join the Arab League Beirut Declaration and consider recognition of Israel indicates that at least at that time that the White House was not even prepared to accept such an opening from Iran.

Second, will the European Union succeed in brokering a compromise in which Iran fully satisfies the International Atomic Energy Agency's inspectors, the United States and Israel? Privately and not so privately, senior US officials – such as vice-president Dick Cheney, newly appointed undersecretary of state Robert S Joseph, and onetime United Nations ambassador John Bolton – deride the EU's efforts as futile.

Third, are the military obstacles too great to permit a successful US attack on Iran? This may turn out to be the case. However for Washington – and indeed for Israel – this conclusion is literally unthinkable. The military strategy adopted under President Bush's father, continued under President Clinton and accelerated under the current administration, is based on the idea that the US should have “full spectrum dominance” of all aspects of warfare and be so far ahead that, in the words of the current national security strategy, any state will be “dissuaded” from even trying to compete. An attack on Iran would have to take into consideration a number of risks. But from the perspective of those considering a military option, Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons merely makes all of these problems harder – and in that sense provides an additional argument for pre-emptive action. Perhaps more importantly, none of the arguments made about the consequences of an attack on Iraq – whether or not they proved true – influenced the decision to go to war; some, such as the need to provide enough troops to prevent the outbreak of disorder, were simply ignored.

Fourth, it is sometimes claimed that the US does not have enough troops to attack Iran. But the US Army is engaged in a reorganisation to provide more frontline forces from headquarters and training units, and in any case US Air Force and Navy offensive forces are available for the task of attacking Iran, as they have little role in fighting the insurgency.

Army overstretch from long-term deployments in Iraq is a significant problem, but providing forces for a short duration war (following the pattern of the initial invasion of Iraq) would be much less of a problem. Iran has little ability for conventional

military attack outside its own territory, allowing the US considerable scope to sit back and await internal developments after the type of attacks described in this paper.

As John Pike of the indispensable globalsecurity.org puts it: “they think that they can just blow up what they want to blow up and let the ant-heap sort itself out afterwards.”

Fifth, it is argued that the Iranians may have hidden their activities in inaccessible parts of their huge country. This is likely to be the case – though whether these are banned WMD programmes or permitted activities is an open question. However, as Seymour Hersh writes in the [New Yorker](http://www.newyorker.com), special forces have long been in Iran preparing the target list. He may be wrong on the detail, but as we discuss below there is considerable evidence of US action inside Iran. An aerial attack would not involve a ground invasion and would leave the Iranians to pick up the pieces. Even a limited duration ground incursion from Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Iraq and onto the Iranian coast could cause significant damage to the government, rendering any reconstruction of nuclear activities much more difficult.

Sixth, could the Iranians cause immense trouble with Iraq’s *Shi’a* community and through Hezbollah with Israel? Perhaps, but how much stronger would Iran’s hand be if it was believed to have nuclear weapons? Moreover, the Iraqi *Shi’a* did not collectively defect to Tehran’s side during the Iran-Iraq war, and may be more concerned to develop their own interests than to be drawn into a new war. The present US pressure on Syria in [Lebanon](http://www.lebanon.com) is partly related to Syria’s alleged involvement with the Iraq insurgency, but it can also be seen as isolating Hezbollah and clearing the way for action against it, prior to or in conjunction with an attack on Iran.

Iran’s military has considerable experience drawn from the long war with Iraq in the 1980s. It has, no doubt, closely watched US military tactics around its borders. It certainly retains some options to launch counter-missile attacks on Israel, as well as at the US navy and US bases along the Persian Gulf – from Kuwait to Bahrain and the straits of Hormuz. At the same time, the US armed forces have been [preparing](#) for this contingency for many years and it would be hard to be the military commander telling President Bush that Iran is just not “doable”. As the former counter-terror official Richard Clarke has [written](#), a second-world-war-style advance by US armies to Tehran from the Gulf coast is not possible, but this is not part of the planning anyway.

Seventh, wouldn’t a war with Iran cost too much and risk plunging the US into recession? US conservatives are quick to point out that as a percentage of gross domestic product, US military spending is barely half the Reagan-era peak of 6.5% of GDP; and of course, military spending is the one Keynesian tool of economic policy that conservatives permit themselves. However, as an analysis by ING indicates, there would be significant economic costs to a war, including oil at the \$85 per barrel level, and further damage to an already weakened dollar.

Eighth, would US public opinion and US politicians prevent the war? There are few who would come to the defence of what is widely seen as a fanatical religious state that repeatedly calls for the end of the state of Israel. Both Hilary Clinton and Barak Obama are prepared to attack Iran if necessary, the Congress recently refused to insist on being consulted before any attack on Iran. The only consistent opposition comes from members of past administrations, such as Jimmy Carter’s national Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who earlier this year [described an attack on](#)

[Iran as 'unilateral war' and 'impeachable'](#), not to mention counter to US interests and the establishment of security in the region.

A low intensity war already exists, nuclear weapons use is under active consideration but most unlikely as militarily ineffective and political disastrous, major conventional strikes become “the moderate option”. The US has the power and apparent plans to implement its 2002-2006 National Security Strategy and National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction; use Full Spectrum Dominance to conduct Shock and Awe and Escalation Dominance, minimising Iranian retaliatory capability and rendering Israeli action superfluous except to contain or eliminate Hizbollah and Hamas.

US National Security Strategies and Iran

The Bush administration's strategy for dealing with Iran is firmly based in the vision for US National Security that the administration has elaborated since 2002. On the launch of the administration's first National Security Strategy in 2002, President Bush said that: "The gravest danger our Nation faces lies at the crossroads of radicalism and technology. Our enemies have openly declared that they are seeking weapons of mass destruction, and evidence indicates that they are doing so with determination. The United States will not allow these efforts to succeed. ...History will judge harshly those who saw this coming danger but failed to act. In the new world we have entered, the only path to peace and security is the path of action." [President Bush, The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, September 17, 2002]

The updated version of that strategy, released in 2006, gives guidance both at a general level, and specifically on Iran:

US National Security Strategy 2006

...We may face no greater challenge from a single country than from Iran. For almost 20 years, the Iranian regime hid many of its key nuclear efforts from the international community. Yet the regime continues to claim that it does not seek to develop nuclear weapons. The Iranian regime's true intentions are clearly revealed by the regime's refusal to negotiate in good faith; its refusal to come into compliance with its international obligations by providing the IAEA access to nuclear sites and resolving troubling questions; and the aggressive statements of its President calling for Israel to "be wiped off the face of the earth." The United States has joined with our EU partners and Russia to pressure Iran to meet its international obligations and provide objective guarantees that its nuclear program is only for peaceful purposes. This diplomatic effort must succeed if confrontation is to be avoided.

As important as are these nuclear issues, the United States has broader concerns regarding Iran. The Iranian regime sponsors terrorism; threatens Israel; seeks to thwart Middle East peace; disrupts democracy in Iraq; and denies the aspirations of its people for freedom. The nuclear issue and our other concerns can ultimately be resolved only if the Iranian regime makes the strategic decision to change these policies, open up its political system, and afford freedom to its people. This is the ultimate goal of U.S. policy. In the interim, we will continue to take all necessary measures to protect our national and economic security against the adverse effects of their bad conduct. The problems lie with the illicit behaviour and dangerous ambition of the Iranian regime, not the legitimate aspirations and interests of the Iranian people. Our strategy is to block the threats posed by the regime while expanding our engagement and outreach to the people the regime is oppressing.

...If necessary, however, under long-standing principles of self defense, we do not rule out the use of force before attacks occur, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy's attack. When the consequences of an attack with WMD are potentially so devastating, we cannot afford to stand idly by as grave dangers materialize. This is the principle and logic of pre-emption. The place of pre-emption in our national security strategy remains the same. We will always proceed deliberately, weighing the consequences of our actions. The reasons for our actions will be clear, the force measured, and the cause just.

This view is reinforced by the US National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD):

We will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes and terrorists to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons. We must accord the highest priority to the protection of the United States, our forces, and our friends and allies from the existing and growing WMD threat. (emphasis added)

*To prevent, dissuade or deny adversaries or potential adversaries from possessing or proliferating WMD, U.S. Armed Forces **will be prepared to conduct offensive operations.*** (emphasis added)

The military must also support interdiction efforts, security cooperation, and nonproliferation efforts. In addition, we will take actions to assure allies and partners that they do not need to possess WMD.

This specific goal mandates an all-out effort to prevent even the possibility that Iran might hold nuclear weapons, as their possession would constrain US freedom of action in a vital region of the globe.

US preparations to destroy the Iranian state as a regional power

Summary

With the introduction of Global Strike capability under US STRATCOM, the United States has a capacity to wage war across the globe from the continental United States. This includes an ability to hit up to 10,000 aim points almost simultaneously in a conventional strike. Conventional, special operations and nuclear forces are all integrated in Global Strike.

There are a number of elements that would make up a major assault on Iran. These include strategic level attacks from US STRATCOM's Global Strike capabilities, down to theatre-based elements. This report draws together and analyzes all these elements.

STRATEGIC COMMAND Global Strike

US STRATCOM's command and control capabilities previously were focused primarily on the nuclear mission. Now STRATCOM is responsible for a full range of missions in combating nuclear and other WMD threats, including intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, integrated missile defence, space, network operations, combating weapons of mass destruction, and Global Strike. STRATCOM is aiming to enable the seamless delivery of tailored effects, anywhere and anytime, across the globe. The mechanism includes networking with all other combatant commands and their components, as well as with the Defense Department and other government agencies.

The US has strategic forces prepared to launch massive strikes on Iran with hours of the order being given. Although there is clear evidence that nuclear weapons use is being given serious political consideration, actual use is unlikely given the lack of effectiveness of nuclear weapons against concealed and buried targets and the

negative political consequences of such use. The aim of the new Triad and the Global Strike capability developed under the Bush administration is stated to be making nuclear weapons use less likely.

We first analyze the conventional options available under Global Strike. While conventional and nuclear elements are integrated in war planning, the authors believe that separate examination of conventional capabilities is necessary, both to emphasize the full extent of those capabilities for strategic missions – and to reduce the concentration on nuclear aspects of Global Strike.

Global Conventional Strike

[Requirements for Prompt Global Strike](#) , a US Air Force briefing from 2001 states that "US forces overseas have been reduced significantly, while rapid power projection based in the continental United States has become the predominant military strategy."³ To enable effective joint warfighting across the globe, USSTRATCOM has developed a [capabilities based approach](#) to its work, allowing it to choose from a range of conventional and nuclear military options to carry out its mission to deny any adversary the ability to use WMD against the US or its allies.

As early as September 2004, *The Times* (Shreveport, LA) reported that departing 8th Air Force commander at Barksdale AFB, Air Force Lt. Gen. Bruce Carlson saying that 8th Air Force is now *“essentially on alert ... to plan and execute Global Strikes”* on behalf of STRATCOM. *“In half a day or less, it has to come up with the means and methods to do that, with surveillance and intelligence before the mission and reconnaissance after to determine the success of the operation.”*⁴

In December 2005, STRATCOM said a new Joint Functional Component Command for Space and Global Strike met requirements necessary to declare an initial operational capability. The requirements were met, it said, “following a rigorous test of integrated planning and operational execution capabilities during Exercise Global Lightning.” This was announced in a USSTRATCOM press release.

Professor Tony [Cordesman](#) believes that the US

“could use conventional strikes to cripple Iran’s ability to function as a nation in a matter of days with attacks limited to several hundred aim points.”

However, global strike capabilities go far beyond this. Under the command of Marine General James [Cartwright](#), US Global Strike planning has the potential to destroy over 10,000 targets in one mission with "smart" conventional weapons. This capability provides the backbone of US military capability against Iran. US government [documents](#) obtained by Hans Kristensen and analysed by William [Arkin](#) has described the development of this Global Strike capability.

Exercises

The 2005 Global Lightning exercise (an annual exercise) tested U.S. strategic warfare capabilities, including CONPLAN 8022 global strike mission, which includes options for strikes, nuclear or conventional, against weapons of mass destruction facilities anywhere in the world.

The Global Lightning exercises employ command and control personnel, controlling forces that can range from long-range bombers, nuclear and conventional submarines

or land-based ballistic missiles down to special forces teams. The new command was created August 9th 2005, in an attempt to integrate broad elements of U.S. military power into global strike plans and operations.

Awaiting his Global Strike orders, George Bush has more than 200 strategic [bombers](#) (B52-B1-B2-F117A); as well as thousands of US Navy Tomahawk cruise missiles. The Tomahawks are now programmable with multiple targets and the ability to be retargeted in flight up to the last moment. This greatly increases their flexibility and, with immediate bomb damage assessment, is likely to increase substantially the number of targets that can be hit by the Navy.

New types of bombs

The US B-2A carries a new earth penetrating conventional weapon, the Massive Ordnance penetrator. The MOP is a 30,000lb bomb carrying 6,000lbs of explosives and capable of penetrating up to 60 meters [200 feet] through 5,000 psi reinforced concrete.⁵ This puts at risk even the most hardened facilities such as Natanz and increases the flexibility of STRATCOM's conventional strike options.⁶ This weapon is in the final testing stage and could be fitted to the B2 bomber in late 2007 or early 2008.⁷

In recent years, hugely increased funding for military technology has taken "smart bombs" to a new level. New "bunker-busting" conventional bombs weigh only 250lb. According to Boeing, the GBU-39 small-diameter bomb "quadruples" the firepower of US warplanes, compared to those in use even as recently as 2003. A single stealth or B-52 bomber can now attack between 150 and 300 individual points to within a metre of accuracy using the global positioning system.⁸ One B2 bomber dropped 80 500lb bombs on separate targets in 22 seconds in a [test](#) flight. Using just half the available force, 10,000 targets could be attacked almost simultaneously. This strike power alone is sufficient to damage Iranian political, military, economic and transport capabilities. Such a strike would take "shock and awe" to a new level and leave Iran with few if any conventional military capabilities to block the straights of Hormuz or provide conventional military support to insurgents in Iraq.

The US air force can hit the last-known position of Iranian military units, political leaders and supposed sites of weapons of mass destruction. One can be sure that, if war comes, George Bush will not want to stand accused of using too little force and allowing Iran to fight back. "Global Strike" means that, without any obvious signal, what was done to Serbia and Lebanon can be done overnight to the whole of Iran. We, and probably the Iranians, would not know about it until after the bombs fell. Forces that hide will suffer the fate of Saddam's armies, once their positions are known.

ATTACKING KEY WMD AND OTHER TARGETS

A 'minimalist' scenario for attacks would see only a few key nuclear facilities destroyed. This scenario is barely credible, except as a last resort by Israel, since it would leave Iran too many options; its central government intact, the power of the Revolutionary Guards and the Basij untouched; and Iran's ability to influence events in the region undiminished. However, such a 'minimalist' scenario would possibly delay the Iranian nuclear program by a number of years.

These attacks would be on sites concerned with production of HEU and Plutonium. Targets would include Arak, Natanz, Isfahan, and possibly Bushehr. If such a raid were successful, this would have the effect of destroying known Iranian stocks of

Uranium hexafluoride (UF₆), feed stock for the enrichment facility at Natanz, and the material that is used to produce HEU; the Natanz uranium enrichment facility and the currently unfinished heavy water reactor at Arak, which would be used to produce plutonium, and the heavy Water production plant to produce fuel for the reactor. An attack on Bushehr would destroy a civilian facility which could be used, once operational, to produce HEU for a military program, if Iran was able to divert material from the reactor or its waste.

Of these facilities, Natanz and Arak are in relatively isolated areas, while the Isfahan facility is in a lightly populated area, but still less than ten miles from the heart of this ancient city. The Bushehr reactor, as yet unfinished, sits 20 miles south of the city of Bushehr itself. This city contains significant air force and navy bases and facilities, as well as air defences.

Conventional attacks on Arak and Natanz would likely have little effect on the civilian population. Conventional strikes on Isfahan would carry a small risk of civilian casualties. Such a strike on Bushehr, however, would carry a significant risk of harm to the civilian population, either from stray bombs falling in populated areas, or from air combat above Bushehr and the surrounding area.

It is likely that the United States would select a much more wide-ranging set of attacks on Iran, since they have strategic interests in destroying Iranian military power that go far beyond preventing Iranian acquisition of the bomb. The United States could not achieve these wider objectives through this scenario, which renders it extremely unlikely.

Attacking a Wider Range of Nuclear Facilities

A broader scenario might see attacks on a wider range of nuclear facilities, yet stopping short of massive attacks against Iranian military infrastructure in general, again we consider this scenario unlikely. In this scenario, the president would order attacks on many or all of the 23 or more known nuclear sites in Iran. Strikes may also be ordered against other research sites at universities across Iran, linked to the nuclear program.

The advantage of such an operation would be that it would likely cause much more severe damage than the limited attacks to the nuclear program. However, there would still be no guarantee that all uranium enrichment facilities were destroyed, or indeed that all nuclear sites were hit. Because many of the sites to be hit are inside cities, on campuses, close to residential zones or in industrial areas, the risks of civilian casualties would also be greater in this scenario.

This scenario would add to potential risks, without dramatically increasing the likelihood of delaying the Iranian program. Israel would be very unlikely to carry out a mission of this magnitude, and examining US doctrine for air war and counterproliferation leads inexorably to the conclusion that the United States would see no benefit in the restraint of this middle scale option. This view is reinforced by the war-planning and military capabilities available to the United States, and the wider objectives the US is pursuing in the region.

Air Attacks on Wider Military and Government Targets

Once an air assault on Iran began, it might include a huge range of targets from the outset under the Shock and Awe approach or reach out to more and more targets in a policy known as Escalation Dominance or in other language, 'mission creep'. This

would lead to an ever increasing target set, moving from nuclear and other WMD facilities, through strikes on conventional military targets to reduce threats to US forces in theatre, to the destruction of leadership targets in order to degrade the government's ability to strike back at the US forces and allies.⁹

US Air Force doctrine for conducting and bombing campaign requires attack on air defences, as well as command and communications faculties, to reduce the risk to forces carrying out the core mission of destruction of nuclear facilities.

There would be provision for assaults to prevent Iran striking back in any significant manner. These would involve US forces in Iraq and Iran, protection for the Straits of Hormuz and oil facilities in the Gulf States, disruption of Revolutionary Guard and other elite forces most loyal to the current government.¹⁰

[A recent analysis](#) by Anthony Cordesman of CSIS , a senior figure in the Washington DC national security scene, demonstrates in bullet point form how US options could move from simple targeting of WMD 'chokepoints' to a massive attack on WMD, other military and civilian infrastructure this is included as an endnote.¹¹

In short, once a war begins, given the doctrinal and political framework within which the US military operates, the attacks would inevitably escalate. Given requirements to neutralize Iranian abilities to resist in US military doctrine, and policy interests to prevent Iran acting as a major regional power in Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel and the Gulf to constrain US freedom of action, the obvious course of action is to plan for a series of attacks by the full range of US forces available from the beginning. This study expands on these considerations of a large scale air and missile attack to include analysis of US Army, Marine Corps and Special Operations Command Forces and political and intelligence operations.

This wider form of air attack would be the most likely to delay the Iranian nuclear program for a sufficiently long period of time to meet the administration's current counterproliferation goals. It would also be consistent with the possible goal of employing military action is to overthrow the current Iranian government, since it would severely degrade the capability of the Iranian military (in particular revolutionary guards units and other ultra-loyalists) to keep armed opposition and separatist movements under control. It would also achieve the US objective of neutralizing Iran as a power in the region for many years to come.

However, it is the option that contains the greatest risk of increased global tension and hatred of the United States. The US would have few, if any allies for such a mission beyond Israel (and possibly the UK). Once undertaken, the imperatives for success would be enormous.

SPECIAL FORCES ROLE IN COUNTERPROLIFERATION IN IRAN

Special Operations Forces of the United States play a key role in counterproliferation missions including operations discussed under the "Scud Hunt" section below. For such purposes, they come under the command of USSTRATCOM which has full authority over anti-WMD missions.

In the case of an attack on Iran, the reality of Special Force Operations could be to add helicopter-carried troops to search and destroy with demolition engineering suspect WMD facilities in conjunction with air and missile bombardments. A parallel

role discussed below would be to assist internal uprising in Iran before, during and after a major conventional attack.

The need for more than Air Force bombs to destroy the best protected bunkers can be illustrated by this picture of the intact lower floors of Saddam Hussein's bunker in Baghdad which was subject to heavy US air attack.

The importance of this mission for Special Forces has grown since 9/11, but already in the late 1990s, counterproliferation was listed in DoD documents as the primary mission of special forces:

*SOF's inherent capabilities and international activities places them in an ideal position to foster international cooperation needed to stem or prevent NBC smuggling and terrorism, while still pursuing the means to detect, deter, neutralize or effectively destroy WMD and related infrastructure, if necessary. This mission continues to grow in its significance for SOF and our nation.*¹²



Special forces can play a unique role in the fight against the proliferation and use of nuclear and other WMD. The flexibility of placing special forces units into such missions is said to be one of their most valuable characteristics. DoD has described their use:

*SOF direct action capabilities contribute to deterrence and destruction options by providing a precision strike capability against weapons, storage facilities, and command and control nodes. SOF special reconnaissance capabilities can contribute to the defense against WMD threats by providing real-time intelligence unavailable from other sources.*¹³

In Iran, SOCOM may already be being used to carry out intelligence missions (as described elsewhere in this report), and could, in the event of open hostilities, be used to attack facilities around the country.

A major advantage of Global Strike lies in the ability to carry out a wide scale operation without the need for numerous early preparations or deployment of forces into the region to be attacked. It is reasonable to posit that forces stationed in the Gulf region will also be used during an attack, both to allow extra waves of attacks while global strike forces rearm, and to disrupt Iranian forces as they attempt to retaliate.

Theatre Operations

Summary

American military operations for a major conventional war with Iran could be implemented any day. They extend far beyond targeting suspect WMD facilities and

will enable President Bush to destroy Iran's military, political and economic infrastructure overnight using conventional weapons.

Iran has a weak air force and anti aircraft capability, almost all of it is 20-30 years old and it lacks modern integrated communications. Not only will these forces be rapidly destroyed by US air power, but Iranian ground and air forces will have to fight without protection from air attack.

British military sources stated on condition of anonymity, that "the US military switched its whole focus to Iran" from March 2003. It continued this focus even though it had infantry bogged down in fighting the insurgency in Iraq.

Day-to-day war plans

On the shelf, the United States has several contingency plans for waging war with Iran. These exist on levels from a major war plan (Conplan 1025), down to regional plans for more limited attacks on Iran.

Conplan 1025 is a major war plan for a response to aggression by Iran. It includes a variety of options for smaller scenario wars, for example in the Straits of Hormuz, around the Caspian Sea, or elsewhere. Implementation of this option is a massive undertaking, comparable to or larger than the first Gulf War. This large and unwieldy option is unlikely to be pursued, and would indeed be unnecessary with modern US capabilities.

As Bill Arkin writes “.. [b]eyond the generic major Iran war plan .. there are various contingencies directly associated with the Iraq war plan and U.S. presence in Iraq. For instance, to mount limited cross border attacks to eliminate terrorist "support infrastructure," that is, Iranian capabilities and infrastructure that are supporting the development and shipment of IEDs and other ordnance being used in Iraq.”¹⁴

A major attack, although on a more limited basis than invasion and occupation of Iran, could be undertaken under Conplan 8022, the Global Strike option, created specifically to counter the use or threat of use of WMD against US forces or allies.

Conplan 8022 could be put into effect together with regional operational plans for limited war with Iran, such as [Oplan 1002-04](#), for an attack on the western province of Kuzhistan),¹⁵ or Oplan 1019 which deals with [preventing Iran from closing the Straits of Hormuz](#), and therefore keeping open oil lanes vital to the US economy.

The existence of these plans is neither surprising, nor a declaration of war. It does mean that the US military has the ability to implement a Presidential order to go to war against Iran quickly, should such an order come. We analyze the possible elements of an attack against Iran in this report.

From day-to-day to ready today

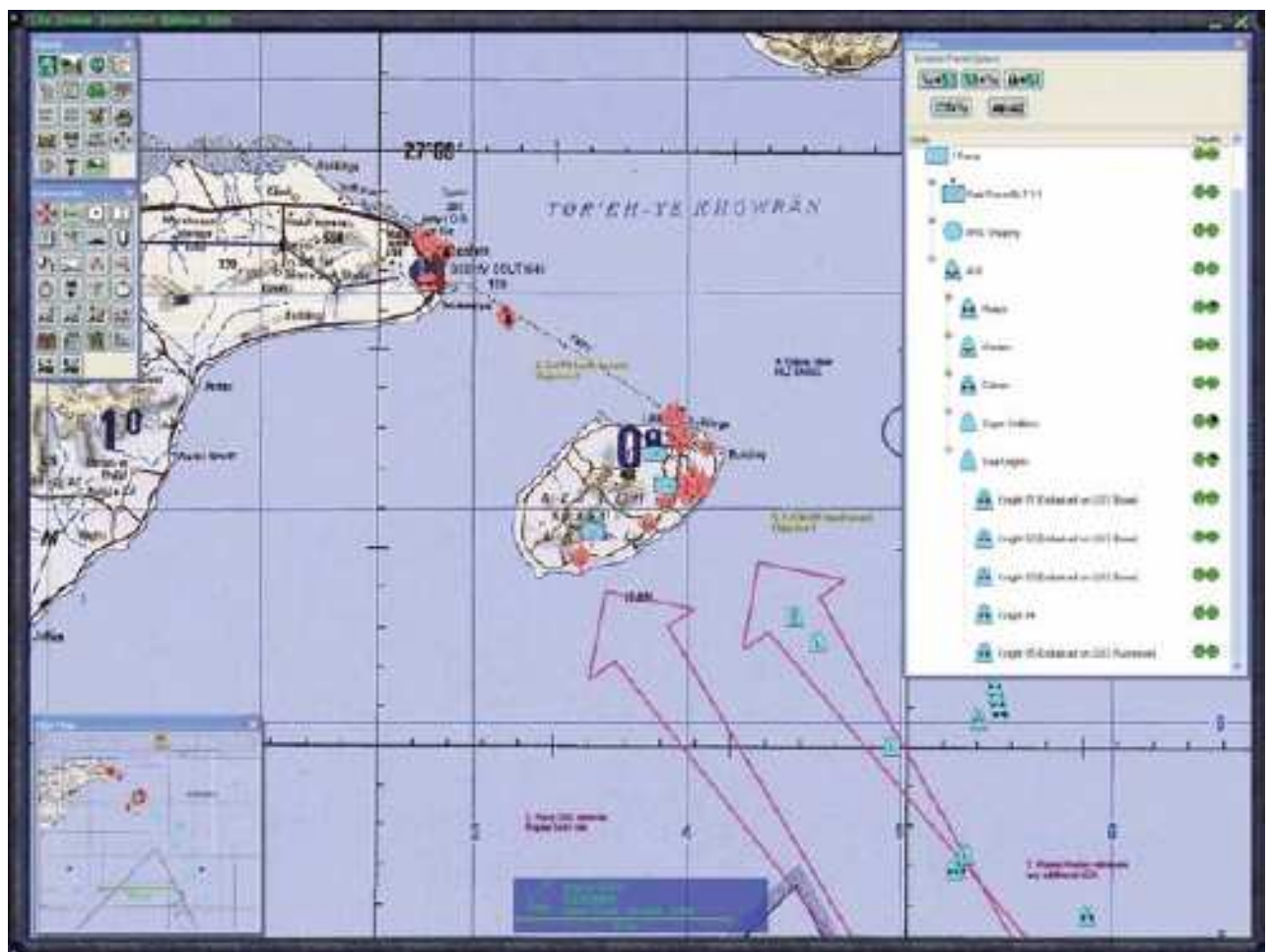
The US army, navy, air force and marines have all prepared battle plans and spent four years building bases and training. Admiral Fallon, the new head of US Central Command, has inherited computerised plans under the name TIRANNT (Theatre Iran Near Term). The Bush administration has made much of sending three aircraft carriers to the Gulf. But it is a small part of the preparations.

A pre-9/11 CENTCOM training manual called for using 500 F15 and F16 warplanes in a new Gulf War. Easily that number can be placed on airbases all around Iran along with helicopter forces. The whole of Iran is within 30 minutes flying time from some

US base or carrier, even with restricted use of bases amongst its allies on the Arabian peninsula.

Post 9/11, the US [Navy](#) can put six carriers into battle at a month's notice. Carriers in the region could quickly be joined by others in standby in the Atlantic and Pacific but not noticed by the media. Each carrier force includes hundreds of cruise missiles aboard surface ships and submarines. As of July 2007 these included 3 Carrier Strike Forces, the Reagan, Nimitz and Enterprise each including a marine aircraft carrier.

The Marines are not all tied down fighting in Iraq. Several Marine forces are assembling in the Gulf, each with its own aircraft carrier. These carrier forces can each conduct a version of the D-Day landings. They come with landing craft, tanks, jump-jets, thousands of troops and hundreds more cruise missiles. Their task is to destroy Iranian forces able to attack oil tankers and to secure oilfields and installations. They have trained for this mission since the Iranian revolution of 1979 as is indicated in this battle map of Hormuz illustrating an advert for combat training software.



The marine carriers are the spearhead of highly flexible Marine Expeditionary Forces of up to 50,000 troops with their own tanks, air force and 30 days supplies on board. They include Maritime PrePositioning Forces.

Maritime Prepositioning Force¹⁶

“Sixteen MSC prepositioning ships are especially configured to transport supplies for the U.S. Marine Corps. Known as the Maritime Prepositioning Force, the ships were built or modified beginning in the mid-1980s and are forward-deployed to the western Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. The ships



contain nearly everything the Marines need for initial military operations -- from tanks and ammunition to food and water and from fuel to spare parts and engine oil.

The ships are organized into three squadrons: [MPS Squadron One](#), usually located in the Mediterranean Sea and eastern Atlantic; [MPS Squadron Two](#), usually located at Diego Garcia; and [MPS Squadron Three](#), normally in the Guam/Saipan area. In addition to Marine Corps designated ships, MPS squadron staffs also oversee all other

prepositioning ships in their geographic operating areas.”

“The Scud Hunt”: suppressing Iranian missile capabilities

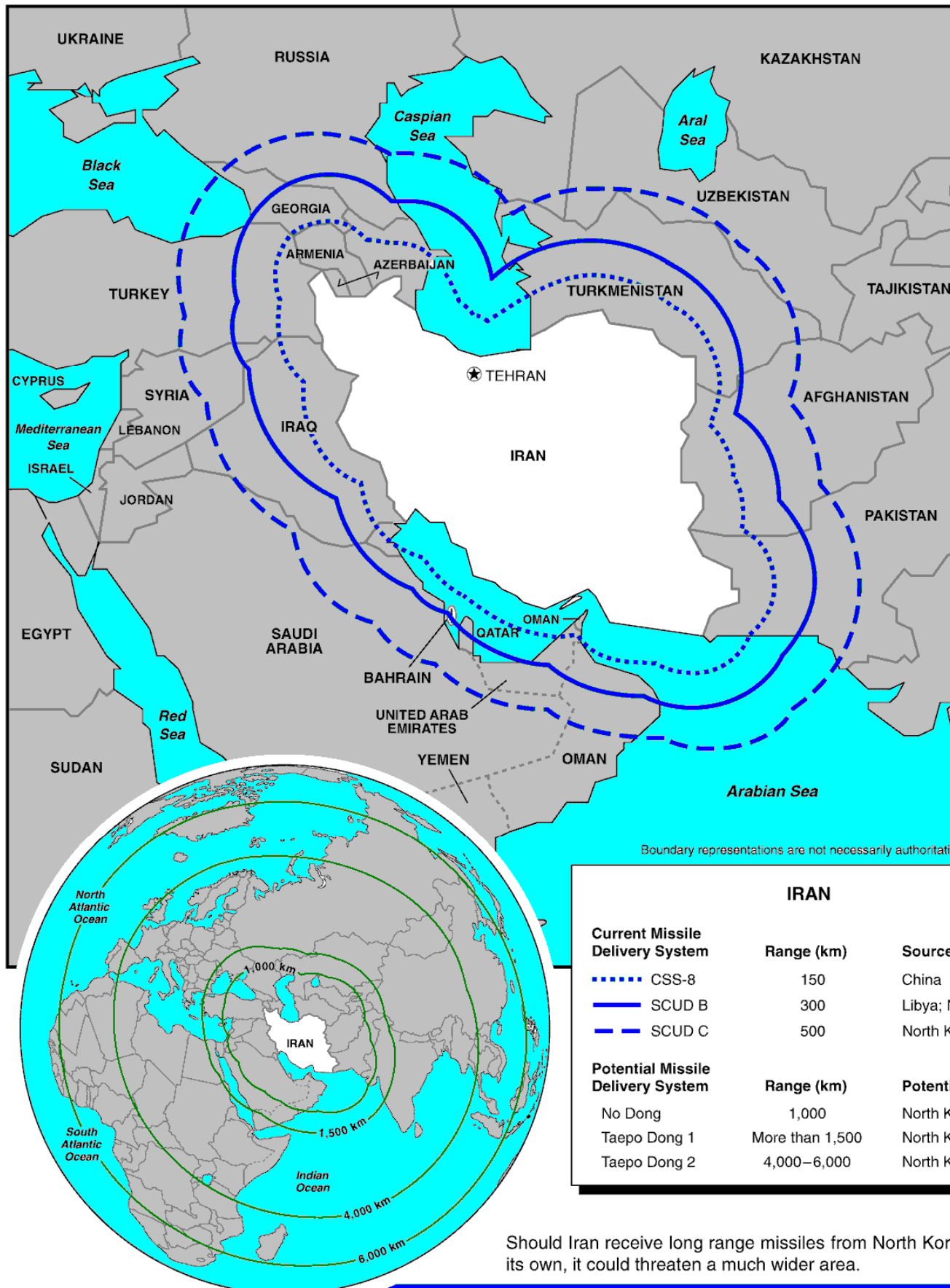
The US effort to defeat Saddam Hussein’s missile threat in the 1991 came to be known as the Scud Hunt. An assessment of Iranian missile capabilities reveals an ability to attack targets along its borders and to some states on the Southern Gulf coast. US efforts to defeat the threat include efforts to attack missiles before they can be launched and in flight.

The effort to attack launchers is shared across the US military and would involve attacks on many suspect but not actual sites. Defence against missile attack is conducted by missile and aircraft attacking launch sites and aircraft attempting to shoot down missiles immediately after launch in the short “boost phase” before they gain full speed but after a strong infra-re-heat signal can be detected from rocket motors. The Navy Aegis system and the US Army’s Patriot systems are designed to destroy missiles in flight. Their effectiveness against ballistic missiles is disputed.

It is important to note that the impact of Iranian conventional missile attacks may be compared to those by Saddam Hussein in the 1991 Gulf war and by both Iran and Iraq in their decade long war in the 1980s in the so-called War of the Cities”. The use of missiles, even when equipped with chemical warheads did not have a decisive effect on the outcome of the war. It is important not to confuse Iranian ability to attack certain targets with the ability to affect the outcome of the battle. Indeed even the loss of a US air craft carrier could be as likely to inflame US opinion as to cause a withdrawal if Americans feel sufficiently threatened.¹⁷

Overview <u>Range Charts</u> Source: globalsecurity.org						
Designation	Stages	Propellant	Range	IOC	Inventory	Alternate Name
<u>Mushak-120</u>	1	<u>solid</u>	130 km	?		Iran-130, Nazeat 10
<u>Mushak-160</u>	1	<u>solid</u>	160 km			Fateh-110 / NP-110
<u>Mushak-200</u>	1	<u>solid</u>	200 km			Zelzal-2
<u>Shahab-1</u>	1	liquid	300 km	1995	50-300	Scud-B
<u>Shahab-2</u>	1	liquid	500 km		50-150	Scud-C
<u>Shahab-3</u>	1	liquid	1,300 km	2002	25-100	Zelzal-3
<u>Shahab-4</u>	2	liquid	2,000 km		0	
<u>IRIS</u>	1	liquid / <u>solid</u>	3000 km	2005		Shahab 3D
<u>X-55 LACM</u>	1	jet engine	3,000 km	2001	12	
<u>Shahab-5</u>	3	liquid	5,500 km		0	
<u>Shahab-6</u>	3	liquid	10,000 km		0	

Estimated Ranges of Current and Potential Iranian Ballistic Missiles



The “Littoral War”- Hormuz and Khuzestan

“We had a discussion in policy planning about actually mounting an operation to take the oilfields in the Middle East, internationalize them, put them under some sort of U.N. trusteeship and administer the revenues and the oil accordingly. That’s how serious we thought about it.” Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, Chief of Staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell.¹⁸

The standard contingency planning in Oplan 1002-4 for an invasion of Khuzestan has had more than theoretical consideration. That even the supposedly liberal realist part of the administration of George W, Bush had these discussions points to the routine consideration at the political level as well as in contingency planning for military action to secure Middle East oil. Such a coastal, or in modern military parlance, ‘littoral’ war would form a major part of any war with Iran.

At least since the “tanker war” of the 1980s, the US, its allies and Iran have watched each other extremely closely with a view to future potential combat.

Iranian capability

The Iranian navy is very small and vulnerable. There are three areas to examine. Shore to ship missiles, speed boat swarms and human torpedoes. Numerous studies of Iranian naval strategy emphasise anti ship missiles and “swarms” of missile firing speed-boats.¹⁹ Nevertheless the asymmetric threat from small boats is formidable. Every night many hundred small boats pass between Iran and its neighbours on the Southern shores of the Gulf. Wargaming has shown what can happen if Iran chooses to ‘redcell’, or strike first in wargame jargon:

On the second day of the battle he put a fleet of small boats up against the aircraft carrier battle group to track the ships. Then without warning, he bombarded them in an hour-long fusillade of cruise missiles. At the end of the surprise attack, sixteen ships lay on the bottom. Had the 'game' been real instead of just a 'game' twenty thousand servicemen and women would have been killed before their own army had fired a shot. 'As the commander, I'm sitting there and I realize the First Team had said that they were going to adopt a policy of preemption' Van Riper says, ' So I struck first. We had done all the calculations on how many cruise missiles their ships could handle, so we simply launched more than that, from many different directions, from offshore and onshore, from air, from sea. We probably got half of their ships. We picked the ones we wanted. The aircraft carrier, the biggest cruisers. There were six amphibious ships. We knocked out five of them.’²⁰

Shore to ship missiles

Iran deploys several forms of imported and domestic ship to ship and shore to ship missiles. These are detailed in such works as the Military Balance of the International Institute for Strategic Studies. Writing that emphasises the threat posed by these weapons rarely discusses the effectiveness of US and allied defences.

In 1991 a Seadart missile fired from the HMS *Gloucester* destroyed an incoming Silkworm anti-ship missile fired from one of Iraq's shore-based missile launchers.²¹

The Silkworm is a Chinese missile sold also to Iran, the British Sea Dart is a 35 year old system. It is reasonable to assume that current continuously upgraded and modern US and allied naval Aegis, Phalanx and Sea Sparrow anti-missile systems will be quite to very effective against Iranian anti-ship missiles.

Mines

Iran has a significant ability to mine the Gulf and the US is somewhat reliant on allied navies for anti-mine operations. Pre-emption of Iranian launch of mines will be a high priority for US forces in the region.

Speed boat swarms

These are much featured in TV footage of Iranian Revolutionary Guard units and played a significant part in the “Tanker War”. Since then US Navy ships have added small calibre rapid firing cannon and canister air burst shells to the main guns, providing a capability comparable to the effect of grape shot on cavalry horses a century ago.

Human torpedoes are hard to detect but also slow and hard to use against moving ships. They can be considered a significant if decisive threat.

US Navy and Marines have one main mission and other potential missions in any war with Iran along the Gulf. The first is to if possible pre-empt and otherwise defeat Iranian attempts to interfere with oil production and shipping in the Gulf, other missions may include seizure of Iranian oil assets, destruction of military, political and infrastructure targets and support for anti-regime elements inside Iran.

The US would likely have to reduce the Marine presence in Al Anbar to support large scale Marine operations in the Northern and Southern Gulf.

US Marines are organised to operate in units that can expand from 2,000 men in Marine Expeditionary Unit aboard a group of ships forming an Expeditionary Strike Force to a full Marine Expeditionary Force of 50,000 troops using far more equipment, supplies and landing craft already at sea or based in locations such as Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. These Marine forces are equipped to be self-sufficient for 30 days and include tanks, helicopters and Harrier jump jet warplanes.

In mid 2007 the US had some 40 warships operating off the Iranian coast. These included aircraft carriers, marine aircraft carriers, cruisers, destroyers, frigates and submarines. Aside from the carrier born aircraft and helicopters the other vessels carry many hundreds of Tomahawk and Harpoon missiles.

The Gulf area of operations can broadly be separated into two: the area around the Straits of Hormuz and the oil-rich coastal waters off Khuzestan in the northern Gulf, including Bushehr and, to the South, Bandar Kangan.

HORMUZ²²

Simple statements that Iran could block the straits conceal the reality that this is a broad and deep waterway. Studies conducted by the US Marines indicate that a Marine Division of more than 20,000 men would be required for a ground invasion of the northern coast of the straits. This size of force would be required to execute the operations depicted in the following typical diagrams from US military exercises. The location and enemy situation for the scenario was built upon the Straits of Hormuz scenario used by both the Marine Corps Command and Staff College and Amphibious Warfare School.

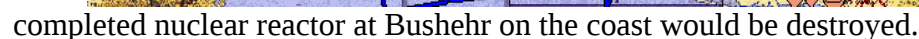
As part of a general assault on Iran, a combined Carrier/Marine Strike Group would be able to attack more than 1,000 targets at long range using 70 F18, Harrier AV8 and other aircraft along with many Tomahawk and Harpoon ship to shore missiles. Naval gunfire, marine attack helicopters, tanks and artillery would also be available for the close in fight.

The occupation of Iranian Islands would be an attractive proposition militarily and politically to the United States. Such operations would limit long-term Iranian ability to interfere in the area and provide US bases in the area from which to control the seas.

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THE IRAQ-IRAN BORDER

Summary

US Army units now in Iraq have the ability to destroy hundreds of military, political and economic infrastructure targets hundreds of kilometers from the Iraqi border. The ability to carry out the prompt elimination and demoralization of Iranian Army, Pasdaran, Basij, police and religious units raises the prospect that the Iranian regime in Tehran would soon face an inability to control its Western provinces, so that oppressed regional ethnic groups, especially in Kurdish Iran would find greater freedom of manoeuvre. The fate that befell the Iraqi armed forces in 1991 and 2003 could be visited upon Iran, but without the use of invading tank forces. Only concealed forces that took no action could be expected to survive long.

IRANIAN AND US CAPABILITIES

The Iranian Army and Revolutionary Guard units have remained concentrated along the Iran-Iraq border since the end of the war with Iraq. These ground force have strong defensive positions reliant on the mountainous terrain. However, these forces are vulnerable to US air and missile attack in known stationary positions and while US airborne target acquisition radars and missile systems designed to defeat Soviet tanks in Germany and refined in operations in the 1991 Gulf War, the NATO Kosovo campaign and in ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan are now very capable. Any significant concentration of military vehicles would be rapidly destroyed.

In the provinces of Southern Iraq conditions are radically different, the Iraqi population is Shiva, partially sympathetic to Iran, the terrain becomes flat desert and flood plains the US forces are not present in strength. The British who had occupied the area are minimising their presence to Basra airport.

A key assessment in any war with Iran concerns Basra province and the Kuwait border. It is likely that Iran and its sympathizers could take control of population centres and interrupt oil supplies, if it was in their interest to do so. However it is unlikely that they could make any sustained effort against Kuwait or interrupt supply lines north from Kuwait to central Iraq. US firepower is simply too great for any Iranian conventional force.

Facing the dozen or more Iranian army divisions and Revolutionary Guard Units, the US Army has extremely powerful and virtually unused missile units already in Iraq that can attack targets up to 300 km inside Iran without warning.

The US Army's mobile Multiple Launch Rocket System basic system can fire 1,400 cluster munitions at targets 300 kilometres every fifteen minutes and 8,000 cluster munitions every fifteen minutes to 32km. Its guided weapons version can deliver a 12 "70 kilometre sniper shot" in the same period of time. This GMLRS XM30 rocket has a GPS (Global Positioning System) and inertial guidance package. The system can also fire two Army Tactical Missile System Block IA missile extends the range to more than 300km by reducing the sub-munition payload and adding GPS guidance.



Thus, these highly accurate ballistic missiles can attack targets up to 300 km inside Iran. Well known locations such as the nuclear research facility at Arak and the Northern city of Tabriz are within easy range of US Army ballistic missiles now in Iraq. It is hard to imagine that any US attack on Iran would not make use of these forces. US Marine units have less powerful equipment and are mostly operating in Western Iraq (Anbar) away from the Iranian border.

US Army aviation includes the Apache attack helicopters, whose pilots have now acquired considerable fighting experience in Iraq and Afghanistan. Helicopters have proved vulnerable to insurgent small arms fire, however they have a formidable capability to destroy enemy vehicles and bases from outside the range of the defenders weapons.

The US Air Force has established major air bases on the site of former Iraqi air force bases including Baghdad, Balad, Kirkuk and Tallil. US war planes carry out few missions against the insurgents and, since the initial march on Baghdad in 2003 have engaged in little fighting. The US keeps secret the deployment of US tactical air power in the region. However, a number of facts are clear. First, the US Air Force now has an “expeditionary” structure with the equipment to move the support services for combat air bases thousands of miles in a short period of time. The relevant combat aircraft include F16 and F15 ground attack fighters able to reach their target inside Iran in around 30 minutes flying time. It is reasonable to assume that Iranian intelligence would observe major increases in the stationing of these aircraft in Iraq and that either sufficient forces are retained in Iraq over time, or they would have to be flown in after the initial attacks if surprise were not to be lost.

Second, the capability of the F16 and F15 fighters has increased since 2003. First, the entire service has improved in capabilities by being engaged in real fighting rather than exercises. Second, new technologies have been added that make it easier for pilots to interact with ground forces and add to the lethality of the weapons they carry. In particular the 110 kilogram GBU 39 Small Diameter Bomb is said by Boeing to quadruple the combat power of US war planes because planes can carry so many of these weapons, 12 on an F15. This weapon can penetrate 2 metres of concrete before exploding and has an accuracy of less than one metre. This makes all but the deepest buried bunkers and military installations vulnerable to a weapon no larger than that carried a century ago by bi-planes of the European colonial forces.

The Caspian Front

The UK joined with the United States in preparing invasion scenarios for a war with Iran. British officers joined US personnel at Fort Belvoir near Washington DC in 2004, for the Hotspur 2004 exercise.

This exercise was part of the planning under the TIRANNT or ‘theater Iran near term’ initiative, led by the US Central Command. This exercise was reported in [the Guardian](#), and also in the [Washington Post](#) in 2006.

The exercise focused on the Caspian Sea region, vital for oil and gas supplies. The UK contributed a brigade-sized formation to a US-led force for exercise purposes. According to the UK Ministry of Defence, the exercise was the main focus of UK-US military planning cooperation in 2004. This operation was also significant in that it

involved significant exercising of joint war fighting capabilities, bringing together expeditionary units of the army, marines, navy and air force. [Defense News](#) covered this exercise at the time.

The country targeted in the exercise was, according to the Guardian, named Korona, but maps of the Caspian Sea region with actual borders were used. Scott Ritter, the former marines intelligence officer and Iraq arms inspector, has been talking about a pending or possible invasion of Iran for several years. His point about the Caspian is:

And if you go to the School of Advanced Military Studies in Fort Leavenworth, Kan., as I have several times, you'll see the maps on the wall clearly indicate an American interest in pushing forces into Azerbaijan. Why? It neighbors Iran. Why is that important? The shortest route to Tehran is down the Caspian Sea coast, [where] the Army is planning an incursion right now.²⁵

This demonstrates the importance of the US-UK Hotspur Exercise. Hotspur was part of a series of exercises and planning processes under TIRANNT, all of which is feeding into contingency planning for a possible war with Iran in the near to medium term (Hotspur was set in 2015).

Ritter has also [described increasing contacts between US Special Forces and Azerbaijani forces](#), and a gradual build-up of logistics and infrastructure in Azerbaijan, actions which would allow the use to exploit links between Azeris in Azerbaijan and Iran in the event of a Hotspur-style assault. These contacts are also described [by other specialists](#), link although not well covered in the general media.

Radio Free Europe has described US engagement in Azerbaijan thus:

Despite reports predicting a "new" U.S. military engagement in Azerbaijan, in reality, there has been a significant American military mission there for at least three years, comprised of two components. The first component was the creation of the "Caspian Guard," an initiative involving both Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan focusing on maritime and border security in the Caspian Sea. The Caspian Guard initiative incorporates defensive mission areas, including the surveillance of Caspian airspace, borders, and shipping. It encourages greater coordination and cooperation in counter-proliferation efforts by Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. This effort was further bolstered by a \$20 million program launched in July 2004 and implemented by the U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency to train the Azerbaijan Maritime Border Guard. Additional training and combined exercises were also provided by U.S. Navy SEALs to Azerbaijan's 41st Special Warfare Naval Unit in June 2004.

*The second component was the establishment of several "Cooperative Security Locations," tactical facilities with pre-positioned stock that provide contingency access but, unlike a traditional base, have little or no permanent U.S. military presence. These locations are designed to increase the mobility of U.S. military forces and, most importantly, facilitate **counter-proliferation missions** along Azerbaijan's southern border with Iran and northern borders with Georgia and Daghestan. (emphasis added)*

In line with the U.S. military need to project military power rapidly, the U.S. presence in Azerbaijan may be further expanded from the existing Cooperative Security Locations to Forward Operating Sites, host-country "warm sites" endowed with a limited military presence and capable of hosting rotational

*forces. These forward operating sites can also serve as centers for bilateral and regional training.*²⁶

The reference to counter proliferation missions might refer to smuggling, its most obvious meaning is to refer to the main proliferator in the region, Iran itself. The increased US involvement in the country is important, since [Azerbaijan has ruled out participation in an invasion of Iran](#), but has pointedly not ruled out the US using Azerbaijani territory for such an undertaking. Azerbaijan's parliament has ruled against foreign bases in their country, but these facilities are not called bases, a term interpreted to mean permanent foreign presence. Azerbaijan needs US assistance in its ongoing dispute with Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as with development of oil and gas resources, and as a bulwark against Russian pressure in the region.

Afghanistan

The United States has also been increasing its military infrastructure on Iran's eastern border in Afghanistan. Asia Times reported in 2005 that:

*The United States is beefing up its military presence in Afghanistan, at the same time encircling Iran. Washington will set up nine new bases in Afghanistan in the provinces of Helmand, Herat, Nimrouz, Balkh, Khost and Paktia.*²⁷

The most significant of these for operations in Iran is Herat. The US Army Corps of Engineers began construction of a base for a brigade sized force in 2005, this facility is now operational. The Corps of Engineers (USACE) constructed some 71 structures including barracks, administration and support facilities. The base has its own airfield and US forces state that, despite being only 45 miles from Iran, its main purpose is to train Afghan National Army units. The base was described in 2005 by Asia Times as:

*Construction work has already begun on the NATO base in Herat, under the surveillance of Italian troops stationed there as part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force contingent of peacekeepers in the country. Currently, about 8,000 of these soldiers from 36 countries serve in Kabul and nine provinces north of the capital. The new base in Herat is expected to be big enough for about 10,000 troops, will feature a military airbase, and will act as NATO's headquarters in the country. There are also about 18,000 US troops in Afghanistan.*²⁸

This base gives the United States a staging post close to Iran. Using the Herat base, the US Air Force could disrupt Iranian air defences easily, and dominate the skies of eastern Iran as well as sending in helicopter born Airborne and Special Forces Units.

Destabilising the Iranian state, Towards a Federal Iran?

Understandably, open source information on the nature of special forces operations is both hard to come by, and notoriously unreliable. However, there is enough 'chatter' in the media concerning ongoing hidden warfare between Iran, the US, UK, Israel and Iraq, for us to be sure that some operations are underway. Michael Ledeen of the American Enterprise Institute organised an event in 2005 supporting the idea that Iran should be federalised. Unrealistic today, such an idea gives encouragement to those in Iranian legitimately resisting repression and prepares the ground for a model of post-war Iran to sell to the US elite and Iranians alike.

Seymour [Hersh](#) has indicated on several occasions in the New Yorker that US special forces operations are taking place inside Iran. The [Financial Times](#) reports that the US Marine Corps has completed a study of the potential interaction of Iran's regional populations with possible military interventions. As the [Guardian](#) reports the internal unrest in provinces including Balujistan provides more opportunities for the US. There are bombings against government targets in several Iranian provinces in recent years and of brutal Iranian repression of political dissidents and those breaching the Sharia.

One strategy for regime change in Iran involves both support for democracy and the development of a new federal Iran. Condoleeza Rice has just added another \$75 million to the existing propaganda effort that includes satellite TV aimed at Iran. The movements in Iran may feel torn between wanting assistance to resist regime repression and accepting outside help that jeopardises their safety now and at best may offer the chaos of Iraq as a post-war environment.

Azeri Iran

In the northern Azerbaijani region of Iran, Amnesty International and EU parliamentarians have been [trying](#) to reduce Tehran's repression of the local community. The following report on the Azeri region of northern Iran from 2006 is instructive and discusses meetings between representatives of Iranian minorities and the Bush Administration:

Unrest among Iranian Azeris began in late May, when protests over an official newspaper's caricature of Azerbaijan as a cockroach led to the deaths of 24 people and the arrests of hundreds of activists demanding an expansion of Azeri cultural rights.

On June 30, an attempt to hold rally at Bazz (Babek) Castle in northwestern Iran to commemorate the birthday of the Azeri national hero, Babek, who organized resistance against Arab invaders in the 9th century, prompted a new wave of arrests in a number of Iranian cities.

On the eve of the march, Amnesty International issued a special report which urged the Iranian government to allow the rally participants to assemble freely, and demanded the release of event organizers who had been arrested earlier. The same was demanded by 19 European parliament members on July 22 who urged the Iranian government to disclose where the prisoners are being held, and to allow them unrestricted access to their families, attorneys of their choice, interpreters and medical treatment.

Saleh Kamrani, a lawyer and human rights activist, is one of the hundreds of ethnic Azeris arrested after the May protests. Kamrani was charged with actions against the Iranian state. Kamrani's wife, Mina, states that her husband has not been allowed to meet with his lawyer since his arrest, and reports that bond for Kamrani has been set at \$50,000, an amount Mina Kamrani described as 10 times the usual rate.

Mohtaram Mohammadi, the wife of another prisoner -- Hasan Rashidi, director of the Azerbaijan House in the northern Iranian city of Tabriz, who was arrested the day after the Bazz rally -- told EurasiaNet that her husband has been charged with

working for foreign intelligence. "He was just demanding his rights," she said. Iranian Azeris, who comprise roughly 25 percent of Iran's population of almost 69 million people.

Reflecting the increased US interest in interethnic issues inside Iran, US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns and Deputy National Security Advisor Elliott Abrams met July 21 with US-based representatives of Iranian minority ethnic groups. The ways in which Iran's different ethnic groups view Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's nuclear policies was of particular interest to both officials, stated Rahim Shahbazi, the deputy chairman of the World Azerbaijanis Congress (WAC), and one of the participants in the meeting.

Amid an overview of conditions for ethnic Azeris in Iran, Shahbazi said that he had expressed the concern to Burns and Abrams that weapons of mass destruction, once acquired, could be used against groups perceived as opposed to the Ahmadinejad administration. "Dictators tend to use their weapons of mass destruction against the internal opposition first," he stated. "That is what happened in Iraq, when Saddam [Hussein] used chemical weapons against the Shi'ah opposition."

US officials have not yet provided an account of what was discussed during the meeting.

The Iranian government is keen to draw connections between Azeri activists and the US and Israel, members of Iran's Azeri community say. An April 10 report in The New Yorker magazine by investigative journalist Seymour Hersh – which indicated that Washington has been working with ethnic Azeris in Iran to undermine the Islamic Republic -- reportedly raised a furor in Tehran.

Representatives of the Azeri opposition both inside Iran and in exile, however, deny Tehran's allegation of financial dealings involving ethnic Azeris and the United States or Israel.

Mahmudali Chehreganli, a former professor at Tabriz University and the leader of The National Awakening Movement of Southern Azerbaijan (SANAM), who received political asylum in the United States in 2003, told EurasiaNet that the Azeri movement "gets zero investment from the outside." Chehreganli declined to speak about meetings he has reportedly had with officials in the State Department and Pentagon since 2003.

Other Azeri activists echo Chehreganli's denial of US or Israeli support. Said Naimi, head of the Azerbaijan Defense Committee based in Tabriz, told EurasiaNet that Azerbaijani human rights activists and non-governmental organizations are the only places where his group seeks outside support.

In an apparent effort to appease local Azeri grievances, President Ahmadinejad toured ethnic Azeri cities in July, promising to allocate state funds for various road and factory projects. At a demonstration in Tabriz, Ahmadinejad quoted from Azeri-language poems and praised the region of Azerbaijan as a pearl of Iran.

One Azeri journalist based in Iran, Said Mughanli, reported that state employees and

villagers were coerced into attending Ahmadinejad's appearances. In addition, dozens of people were reportedly detained before Ahmadinejad's appearances, and released afterwards, he said.

According to Chehreganli, more resistance to Tehran can be expected. After the relatively moderate policies of former President Mohammad Khatami, patience is running thin with the more strident Ahmadinejad, he claimed.

"The [Azeri] nation better understands its rights now. For the first time in the history of Tabriz, the city market was closed during the protest actions. For the first time in the history of this city, vendors left their business for a political protest," he said. "This, I think is a good indicator of the readiness of Azeris to take serious steps to change their lives for the better."

Kurdistan

A variety of reports support Hersh's claims with respect to the use of [Special Ops in Kurdistan](#). Unrest in Iranian Kurdistan has turned into a low level conventional war with the use of artillery whichn summer 2005 included the following fighting:

Two Iraqi Kurdish villagers were killed and three others wounded in a cross-border Iranian artillery and rocket attack on villages in the autonomous northern region of Iraqi Kurdistan on Friday, border patrol sources said Saturday.

The sources told dpa that on Friday the town of Qandil, near the Iran-Iraq border, was the target of Iranian artillery fire for the third consecutive day.

The sources added that Iraq's Kurdish villages of Kotsoi and Kani Shinka were hit with Iranian Katyusha rockets on Friday morning.

Iranian artillery later pounded the Kurdish villages of Sina Mokka, Qarnaqa, Sourdi, Kani Khatoun, and Kanya Rahsh, resulting in the deaths of two Kurds and the wounding of three others, the sources said.

The sources also said that the Iranian artillery barrage also set fire to several plots of agricultural land and killed livestock in the villages.

Iran has targeted several Kurdish villages near the Iraqi border, especially in the mountainous Qandil region, on the suspicion that anti-Iranian Kurdish fighters belonging to the Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PEJAK), have been conducting cross-border raids into Iran from Iraqi Kurdistan.

Iran has been targeting PEJAK fighters and their bases in Iraqi Kurdistan, while the Turkish army has been targeting the fighters and bases of the anti-Turkish Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) near the same region in Iraq.²⁹

According to Voice of America and wire services in 2006:

Iraqi Kurdish officials say the Iranian military has shelled an area inside northern Iraq during fighting between Iranian forces and Kurdish rebels.

Spokesman for Iraqi Kurdistan security forces Jabbar Yawer confirmed Thursday's artillery attack in the Peshdar region.

In recent months, Iran's Revolutionary Guard forces have clashed with Kurdish insurgents in northwestern Iran. The rebels are believed to be linked to Turkey's

separatist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which is the target of a large-scale operation in southeast Turkey.

The government of Iraq's Kurdish region has come under pressure from Turkey and the United States to deal with Turkish Kurd guerillas who launch attacks into Turkey from bases in northern Iraq.

The PKK has been fighting for autonomy in Turkey's mainly Kurdish southeast since 1984. The violence has killed more than 30,000 people.

The U.S., Turkey and the European Union classify the PKK as a terrorist group.

In Baluchistan in South East Iran, the murder of 21 officials was blamed by the government on Britain in a [Guardian](#) report.

Khuzestan

Iranian oil production was halted by bombings, terrorist attacks, according to reports from 2005.³⁰ There is continuing state repression and non-state violence including bombings in the oil-rich Khuzestan or to use an older name - [Arabistan](#). Iranian repression in Khuzestan is [said by some local Ahwazis](#) to amount to ethnic cleansing. Iran has specifically charged Britain with carrying out bomb attacks in this ethnically diverse and oil rich region of Khuzestan. A 2005 [report](#) stated that, 'The blasts, which injured 86 people, are the third series of bombings to hit Iran's southwest province of Khuzestan, the country's largest oil producing region, since June.'

Iran accused U.K. agents of involvement in two bomb blasts that killed four people in the country's main oil region yesterday, just 10 days after Britain blamed the Islamic republic for stirring up attacks against its troops in Iraq.

The blasts, which injured 86 people, are the third series of bombings to hit Iran's southwest province of Khuzestan, the country's largest oil producing region, since June. The British Embassy in Iran rejected the Iranian accusations. No group has so far claimed responsibility for yesterday's bombs.

"Most probably those involved in the explosion were British agents who were involved in the previous incidents in Ahvaz and Khuzestan," Deputy Interior Minister Mohammad Hossein Mousapour told state-run Mehr news agency today.

Diplomatic tension between Tehran and London has been mounting since U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair said Oct. 6 there is evidence tying Iran to bombings in neighboring Iraq in the first public accusation that the Shiite Muslim country is supporting militants in Iraq. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is meeting Blair in London today to discuss Iran's nuclear program and find ways to prevent it from acquiring nuclear weapons.

"There has been speculation in the past about alleged British involvement in Khuzestan. We reject these allegations," the British Embassy in Iran said today in a statement. "Any linkage between the British Government and these terrorist outrages is completely without foundation."

Ethnic Unrest

The embassy expressed its "revulsion at and condemnation of the terrorist attacks," said the statement, which was posted on the Embassy's Web site.

Hours after Iran accused the U.K. of involvement in the bombings, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw stepped up pressure on Iran over its involvement in Iraq. The U.K. has evidence that "clearly links" Iran with improvised explosive devices used in southern Iraq against British troops, Agence France Presse reported, citing comments made by Straw to reporters in London. Iran has rejected the British accusations. Iran holds the world's second-largest oil reserves and is the second-largest producer in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

Khuzestan has witnessed unrest in recent months that the government attributes to ethnic Arab separatists. Iran's ethnic Arabs, the majority in Ahvaz, make up 3 percent of the country's population. In early September, a series of bomb blasts in Khuzestan halted crude transfers from onshore wells. In June, one week before the country's presidential election, six people died after a series of explosions in Ahvaz. At least another five died in ethnic clashes in April amid riots sparked by alleged plans to change the area's ethnic makeup.

Bomb blasts in Ahwaz City, Iran³¹

Ahvaz City witnessed multiple bomb attacks this morning, just two months after the Iranian government launched a bloody crack-down on Ahwazi Arab protestors in Iran's Khuzestan province.

At least eight people were killed and dozens injured after massive bombs exploded in carefully targetted areas of Ahvaz City, Khuzestan's provincial capital: opposite the governor general's office, in front of the province's housing and urban development department and outside the house of the provincial chief of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB).

The attacks were co-ordinated to go off at around 6.00am GMT. No group has claimed responsibility. Ali Aqamohammadi, the official spokesman for Iran's Spreme Council on National Security and Khuzestan's Governor, blamed the attacks on the separatist Ahwazi Arab Peoples Democratic Popular Front (ADPF). The ADPF, which claimed it was involved in the April demonstrations, denies any involvement. Its London-based spokesman Mahmoud Ahmad told Al-Jazeera TV: "We have no idea who has done this." The group is not known to be heavily armed and has not previously used explosives.

The armed opposition group Mujahideen-e-Khalq (MEK), also known as the MKO and the People's Mujahideen of Iran (PMOI), has also denied responsibility for the attacks, which were followed by a bomb blast in Tehran. Most of the MEK's combatants are being held in US custody at Camp Ashraf, the group's former headquarters in Iraq. The government's Iranian Labour News Agency (ILNA) has put the blame on the Brigades of Revolutionary Martyrs of Al-Ahwaz, an unknown "terrorist" group. There are suspicions that the bombs were planted by hard-liners within the regime itself to stir up religious extremism within the population and influence the results of the election.

The April riots were sparked by the publication of a letter written by the then Vice-President Ali Abtahi which outlined plans to reduce the number of Arabs in Khuzestan from three-quarters to around a third of the total population, while eliminating Arab cultural heritage and placenames in the province. [The letter can be downloaded here.](#)

Before the bomb attacks, local Ahwazi Arab leaders urged the government to give Khuzestan's largest ethnic group a fair share of the province's oil wealth and the right to political representation. In May, Jasem Shadidzadeh Al-Tamimi, a former member of parliament and the Secretary General of the Islamic Wefagh Party, a legal group representing Iranian Arabs, wrote an open letter to President Khatami. He asked him to "do your utmost in lowering the 'wall of mistrust' between the proud Iranian ethnicities, so that the 'infected wounds' of the Arab people of Ahwaz may heal." He stated that the government was denying Ahwazi Arabs peaceful, democratic means for protest.

Nasser Ban-Assad, spokesman for the British Ahwazi Friendship Society (BAFS), said: "I would not be surprised if an element of the Ahwazi Arab population decided to use violent means, but the attacks are not going to help the situation in Khuzestan. We fear that today's wave of attacks will invite retaliation on the Arab population of Khuzestan by the regime. Government forces have already killed 160 Arab civilians over the past two months and hundreds more are being detained, including intellectuals and tribal leaders. There is evidence of torture and the arbitrary use of state violence on innocent civilians.

"We are calling on Ahwazi Arabs to take up non-violent direct action against the regime and to boycott the forthcoming presidential elections. The call for civil disobedience is being broadcasted by the Al-Ahwaz TV station on the Assyrian satellite channel. We are also calling on Western governments, politicians and non-governmental organisations to highlight the plight of the Ahwazis and call for an end to their persecution and poverty."

Without making any claim that they are engaged with the US or UK, it is worth noting several new political movements for regional autonomy. These include a [new movement in Iranian Kurdistan](#) and the [National Council of Resistance of Iran](#). In addition the Mujahedeen-e Khalq (MEK) supported by pro-regime change groups in Washington such as the [Iran Policy Committee](#) as being the one group with the ability to challenge the regime in Tehran despite or perhaps because of its reputation as fanatical and brutal in equal measure.

In February 2005 groups from around Iran came together to found the Congress of Iranian Nationalities for a Federal Iran. Later in the year the Neo-Conservative hub, the American Enterprise Institute presented the case for Federal Iran in October 2005. [AEI - Events](#) led by Michael Ledeen a strong supporter of regime change in Tehran and confidant of Karl Rove, a close advisor to the US President.

Strategic Command: Global Strike with nuclear weapons

Summary

There are persistent reports that the US Administration is planning for the use of nuclear weapons as part of war planning for an attack on Iran. In early 2007, the UK *Sunday Times* reported that the Israeli air force was preparing for strikes on Iran, possibly nuclear.

US National Security Strategies, nuclear use doctrines and war plans, all allow commanders to ask the President for authority to use nuclear weapons. This is the case even if neither the US or its allies have been attacked by nuclear or other WMD. In 1991, then Defence Secretary Dick Cheney forced then General Colin Powell to prepare nuclear strike plans against Iran. Current US policy and staff instruction manuals allow for the use of nuclear weapons to achieve objectives during a military mission if conventional forces cannot achieve the desired ends, and if the ends are integral to national security. We detail a number of possible nuclear use scenarios that accord with US security strategy, and with military doctrine.

Planning for nuclear war

Under US strategic warfare planning, STRATCOM, the command responsible for Global Strike, has integrated nuclear and conventional weapons in its war planning. Hans Kristensen has described this process:

*The most prominent example of this is Global Strike, a new mission assigned to Strategic Command (STRATCOM) in January 2003 in Change 2 to the Unified Command Plan. The directive identifies Global Strike as "a capability to deliver rapid, extended range, precision kinetic (nuclear and conventional) and non-kinetic (elements of space and information operations) effects in support of theater and national objectives."*⁷

Also known as CONPLAN (Contingency Plan) 8022, Global Strike envisions using nuclear (and conventional) forces to strike, preemptively if necessary, targets anywhere on the globe in a crisis. CONPLAN 8022 complements other nuclear strike plans (OPLAN 8044, formerly SIOP) and regional plans, but is distinct from them by its focus on prompt responses to crises and destruction of time-urgent targets that are not covered in the other deliberate plans.

CONPLAN 8022 is focused on strikes against "rogue" states (e.g., North Korea, Iran, and Syria) and nonstate actors. The belief of the Bush administration that the threat from these adversaries is imminent prompted Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in spring of 2004 to issue an "Alert Order" that directed the Pentagon to activate CONPLAN 8022. In response, the Air Force and Navy drew up strike sorties and attack profiles for their operational nuclear forces to be ready to strike on short notice if ordered to do so by the president. "Global Strike operations will normally be executed within compressed timelines (from seconds to days)... from the continental United States and forward bases," according to the JCS Global Strike Joint Integrating Concept (JIC)³²

Both the *Washington Post* and Seymour Hersh in the *New Yorker* speculated about the possible use of nuclear weapons against targets in Natanz and Isfahan. As did Philip Giraldi in the *American Conservative*:

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. Within Iran there are more than 450 major strategic targets, including numerous suspected nuclear-weapons-program development sites. Many of the targets are hardened or are deep underground and could not be taken out by conventional weapons, hence the nuclear option. 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. Several senior Air Force officers involved in the planning are reportedly appalled at the implications of what they are doing--that Iran is being set up for an unprovoked nuclear attack--but no one is prepared to damage his career by posing any objections.³³

An attack on Iranian nuclear facilities would come under the policy and military doctrine of counterproliferation. First launched under the Clinton administration in 2003, counterproliferation was a primarily military policy intended to support diplomatic and political non-proliferation efforts. The Bush Administration has expanded the importance of counterproliferation, as their primary vehicle for preventing or rolling back the spread of nuclear weapons to America's enemies.³⁴ This doctrine assumes that proliferation is inevitable, and that military means are needed to prevent what President Bush has called "the world's most dangerous people" from obtaining "the world's most dangerous weapons". From the 2002 Nuclear Posture Review, through the National Security Strategies of 2002 and 2006, via the National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and the Joint Doctrine to Combat WMD, the administration has consistently stressed military solutions over diplomatic solutions for fighting the spread of nuclear weapons. At all times the administration has left open the door for the use of nuclear weapons to prevent other countries, like Iran, from building their own nuclear weapons.

Would the administration ever sanction the use of nuclear weapons in an attack on Iran? Many observers believe that this option is unlikely, and yet the administration has prepared policy that allows for the use of nuclear weapons for exactly this kind of mission.

Indeed, after the 1991 Gulf War, Colin Powell recounted how he was ordered by then-Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney to prepare plans to use nuclear weapons against the Iraqi army. He did so, but he and General Butler, then head of Strategic Command, later burned the plans to prevent their use. Butler confirmed Powell's account in conversation with the author. Numerous nuclear weapons were required to attack Iraq's Army and both Powell and Butler were so opposed to the idea that they had to be given direct orders by Cheney. Nevertheless, neither resigned their posts and both men prepared the plans.

In the case of Iran, experts close to the US military have told the authors that the Pentagon was ordered to draw up attack plans that would give 80% confidence that Iran's nuclear facilities were destroyed after 5 days of strikes. For the facilities at Natanz (and maybe the tunnel complex at Isfahan where uranium enrichment feedstock is stored), it is thought likely that that this level of confidence could only be achieved with the use of nuclear weapons or by occupying the sites with special forces troops. It is therefore relevant to explore the likelihood of the use of nuclear weapons.

Strict guidelines on the situations the military consider to warrant the use of nuclear weapons are outlined in the Joint Chiefs of Staff's *Doctrine for Joint Theater Nuclear Operations*. According to this doctrine, employment suitability is determined by the following:

- Relative Effectiveness
- Nuclear Collateral Damage
- Enemy Responses
- Advance Planning
- Execution Planning to Deconflict [reduce] Friendly Casualties
- Other Considerations

In military doctrine, the use of nuclear weapons is warranted only if they offer a clear and substantial advantage over the use of conventional weapons. Advanced planning in such a situation is critical, as the decision to use nuclear weapons is one with significant repercussions. The effectiveness of nuclear weapons must be such that they are the only option for striking a particular target. Commanders and their staff must consider deploying nuclear weapons in such a fashion as to minimize civilian casualties and must take into consideration the responses of enemy forces related to such an attack. Could this apply to targets in Iran? The policy and military doctrine of the United States are quite clear. The *National Strategy To Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction (NSCWMD)*, the paper which sets military doctrine that would govern the strikes on Iran, sets the tone from its opening paragraphs:

*The gravest danger our Nation faces lies at the crossroads of radicalism and technology. Our enemies have openly declared that they are seeking weapons of mass destruction, and evidence indicates that they are doing so with determination. The United States will not allow these efforts to succeed. ...History will judge harshly those who saw this coming danger but failed to act. In the new world we have entered, the only path to peace and security is the path of action.*³⁵

This paragraph could have been tailor-written for Iran. Ironically, since the *National Strategy to Combat WMD* is critical of some states for the willingness to use nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and the administration is strongly critical of Iran's nuclear program, US strategy and doctrine also countenances the use of nuclear weapons by the United States for counterproliferation missions, stating that:

*We know from experience that we cannot always be successful in preventing and containing the proliferation of WMD to hostile states and terrorists. Therefore, U.S. military and appropriate civilian agencies must possess the full range of operational capabilities to counter the threat and use of WMD by states and terrorists against the United States, our military forces, and friends and allies.*³⁶

Clearly, applied to the current situation, this means that the United States would be prepared to use nuclear weapons against Iran if conventional forces are not adequate to the task of preventing Iran gaining a nuclear capacity. Pentagon nuclear use doctrine says that:

*Enemy combat forces and facilities that may be **likely targets** for nuclear strikes include WMD and their delivery systems; ground combat units, air defense facilities, naval installations, combat vessels, nonstate actors, and underground facilities.* (Original emphasis)³⁷

“[U]nderground facilities” is a category that could include the uranium enrichment plant at Natanz, as well as the tunnel complex at Isfahan. Military commanders are not constrained to wait to be attacked with NBC weapons before retaliating. Rather, they are told that active as well as passive defense measures should be taken against this possibility and:

*Operations must be planned and executed to **destroy or eliminate enemy WMD delivery systems and supporting infrastructure before they can strike friendly forces.*** (Emphasis added)³⁸

Such a strike could be with conventional weapons if the commander in theater had full confidence that the facility to be destroyed was vulnerable to conventional attack. However, as the above quote from the Joint Chiefs’ *Doctrine on Theater Nuclear Operations* shows, the United States is prepared for a nuclear first strike in theater warfare. Grounds on which nuclear weapons can be used are elaborated in US nuclear use doctrine. The latest version of this doctrine, in *JP 3-12 Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations* dates from 2005.

(1) Geographic combatant commanders may request Presidential approval for use of nuclear weapons for a variety of conditions. Examples include:

(e) For rapid and favorable war termination on US terms.

(f) To ensure success of US and multinational operations.

(g) To demonstrate US intent and capability to use nuclear weapons to deter adversary use of WMD.

(h) To respond to adversary-supplied WMD use by surrogates against US and multinational forces or civilian populations.

*(2) Use of nuclear weapons within a theater requires that nuclear and conventional plans be integrated to the greatest extent possible and that careful consideration be given to the potential impact of nuclear effects on friendly forces.*³⁹

These conditions can clearly be applied to the case of Iran. The war plans dealing with Iran that exist and are described elsewhere in this paper are therefore likely to contain elements for the use of conventional and nuclear forces:

*The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in coordination with CDRUSSTRATCOM, and appropriate supporting combatant commanders, initiates crisis action planning procedures contained in CJCSI 3110.04B, Nuclear Supplement to Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan for FY05 (U), and the appropriate CDRUSSTRATCOM support plans. Geographic combatant commander OPLANs and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Emergency Action Procedures provide additional guidance. **Nuclear operations planning is integrated into theater plans to ensure conventional campaign plans are complemented by nuclear weapons employment.*** (Emphasis added)⁴⁰

The general officer leading the attack will work with the Commander of CENTCOM to request nuclear weapons for use on selected targets that meet certain criteria, as described in the doctrine paper:

*The geographic combatant commander continually monitors theater events and recommends (nominates) targets supporting theater strategy, based on military objectives that support the national security strategy.*⁴¹

In the case of Iran, doubts over the vulnerability of Natanz and Isfahan to conventional attack could lead to their being selected as potential nuclear targets. Indeed Seymour Hersh reported in 2006 that “One of the military’s initial option plans, as presented to the White House by the Pentagon this winter, calls for the use of a bunker-buster tactical nuclear weapon, such as the B61-11, against underground nuclear sites.”⁴² At the same time, Bill Arkin, with 20 years experience looking at pentagon war planning, reported that “Bush directed the U.S. Strategic Command to draw up a global strike war plan for an attack against Iranian weapons of mass destruction. All of this will ultimately feed into a new war plan for “major combat operations” against Iran that military sources confirm now exists in draft form.”⁴³ It is probable that every effort would first be made to ensure all WMD targets’ destruction with conventional bombs, and with thermobaric weapons. However, the possibility remains that these two facilities could be the subject of nuclear attack. There is also a risk that wider nuclear strikes could be considered, if the combatant commander felt that they were necessary to achieve the mission objectives.

A nuclear strike on Iran

Any nuclear attack on Iran is unlikely and hard to conceive, still less the use of nuclear weapons by the nations in what the British call the “special relationship”. Nevertheless were the US to use nuclear weapons it might well seek UK participation for the same reasons it does on other occasions. And in British strategic policy approved by Parliament is a similar rationale for using nuclear weapons even when Britain itself is not under attack that we have discussed in the US context.

After 9/11 the British government added a ‘New Chapter’ to the Strategic Defence Review extended the role of nuclear weapons further to include “states of concern” and “terrorist organisations”:

*The UK's nuclear weapons have a continuing use as a means of deterring major strategic military threats, and they have a continuing role in guaranteeing the ultimate security of the UK. But we also want it to be clear, particularly to the leaders of states of concern and terrorist organisations, that all our forces play a part in deterrence, and that we have a broad range of responses available.*⁴⁴

The sub-strategic Trident, and the commitment to use it to threaten terrorists and so-called rogue states, places UK policy in step with US policy. Rogers recalls a conversation in the mid 1990s with what he described as “a serving British Admiral” in which the admiral cited as an example (of the use of sub-strategic Trident) a future confrontation with a nuclear-armed state in the Middle East, believing it to be eminently practicable to use a Trident missile with a single warhead to fire a low-yield demonstration shot or, if necessary, use a combination of missiles and warheads in a pre-emptive strike against opponent’s nuclear facilities.

Unfortunately, it is also necessary to consider that the UK and US governments have recently given active consideration to using nuclear weapons at the time of the attack on Iraq. A few weeks before the war started, Geoff Hoon, the British Defence Secretary told the BBC that “we have always made it clear that we would reserve the right to use nuclear weapons in conditions of extreme self-defence. Saddam can be absolutely confident that in the right conditions we would be willing to use nuclear weapons”.⁴⁵

William Arkin, wrote about US nuclear war planning for Iraq in January of 2003, that “at the U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM) in Omaha and inside planning cells of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, target lists are being scrutinized, options are being pondered and procedures are being tested to give nuclear armaments a role in the new US doctrine of "pre-emption." According to multiple sources close to the process, the current planning focuses on two possible roles for nuclear weapons: attacking Iraqi facilities located so deep underground that they might be impervious to conventional explosives and thwarting Iraq's use of Weapons of Mass Destruction. The current nuclear planning, revealed in interviews with military officers and described in documents reviewed by the Los Angeles Times, is being carried out at STRATCOM's Omaha headquarters, among small teams in Washington and at Vice President Dick Cheney's "undisclosed location" in Pennsylvania.”⁴⁶

At the present time, Western concern over nuclear proliferation is focused on Iran. Former British Defense Secretary, Geoff Hoon, explained that he could see the possibility of a nuclear war with Iran around 2020.

The Mail on Sunday⁴⁷ reported that the then Defense Secretary said “...when our friends in Iran have perfected an intercontinental, ballistic missile with a nuclear warhead, we'll have a vote. See how many people say I've got to press the button to stop the missiles coming in. I think I might win that one.”

The following scenario of an American-British nuclear strike on Iran is intended as an illustration of what might be involved and is not intended to indicate that such an event is likely. A future nuclear war might involve other states entirely or, we hope, never happen at all.

The case study scenario made for this analysis estimates that more than two million people would be killed in a short time by an attack on eleven of Iran's suspected WMD facilities using weapons smaller than the Hiroshima bomb. The scenario applies Anglo-American policy and Pentagon software on the use of nuclear weapons to a practical case where similar plans almost certainly exist in secret. British Conservative support for such an option to remain on the table requires, in itself, an examination of what might be involved.

The study had the assistance of associates of the Harvard Medical School to use computer software used by the US Government Defense Threat Reduction Agency to calculate the effects on the population of Iran of these attacks and possible nuclear fallout resulting from the explosions. These results are calculated with an exactitude that is only designed to illustrate what might happen rather than to predict what will happen. Actual events would occur more or less severely depending on circumstances. For example, it is impossible to calculate the weather exactly, so the

fallout born by the wind cannot itself be modeled exactly. Nevertheless, these models are the best available public information and are used by the US government.

Attacks on sites in the mountains are estimated to kill thousands, those in the cities; millions. Such are the considerations of planning nuclear war.

In the case of Iran, many public sources of information such as the Federation of American Scientists and the Monterrey Institute for International Studies list dozens of locations where Iran is supposed to have bases and facilities for nuclear, chemical, biological and missile research and development as well as many more military missiles sites, not to mention military Headquarters.

Consequently the target list of eleven locations in Iran selected for this report represents a rather limited list. This report assumes that each site is attacked with three weapons - in reality the consideration of redundancy of overlapping or cross targeting of weapons could well produce a logic of several more weapons per target.⁴⁸

The scenario in this report assumes that all of the weapons are 10 kilotons, ten thousand tons of TNT. This is 1/10th of the size of the standard Trident W-76 warhead and smaller than the Hiroshima bomb. As nuclear weapons go a 10 kiloton weapon is very small. The Natural Resources Defense Council details the explosive power of the nuclear weapons in the US arsenal⁴⁹

Of the 33 nuclear weapons in this study's scenario, it is assumed that 3 are British Trident sub-strategic warheads on the basis that the UK would contribute some 10% of a US/UK strike force.

It is possible to argue that this scenario is unrealistic, and that too many targets have been attacked, or indeed too few. That the weapons used are too many or too few and too large or too small; that more British weapons would be used or less. These are important arguments to have.

It is possible to argue that the mere discussion of options itself is a deterrent or an incitement to other countries to get nuclear weapons before they are attacked.

It is not responsible to argue that they will never be used and that there is no need for public debate. The weapons exist. The military personnel trained in their use exist. The political policy describing their possible use exists. What is lacking is a public discussion amongst those who support present policies of the realities of putting these policies into practice.

Conclusion

All too often, supporters of present nuclear weapons and policies argue two contradictory positions. First they argue that the whole panoply of weapons and policy is essential and then they deny as outrageous any suggestion that they might be used. If it is indeed the case that the weapons cannot be used in the manner for which military personnel are trained to use them, then the supporters of these policies have sacrificed the proven and effective strategy of arms control and deterrence for a dangerous bluff.

The point of producing a nuclear war scenario for this report is to try to glimpse the reality that would be entailed if Anglo-American policy on using nuclear weapons for fighting were put into action.

The data produced using the US Department of Defense software of the results of this attack on Iran indicate that over two million people would be killed in a short time, at

least as many severely injured and that radioactive fallout would affect large areas of Iran.⁵⁰

Attacks on some Iranian facilities far from centres of population would kill two or three thousand people in the short-term; other attacks on facilities in cities immediately kill hundreds of thousands.

It is also certain that radiation from these explosions would reach the upper atmosphere and be carried across much of the earth. In the early 1960s public concern over detected concentrations of radioactivity in cows milk produced the public pressure that led to a US, UK, Russian ban on explosive testing in the atmosphere. In 1986 after the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear reactor radiation reached large parts of Europe.

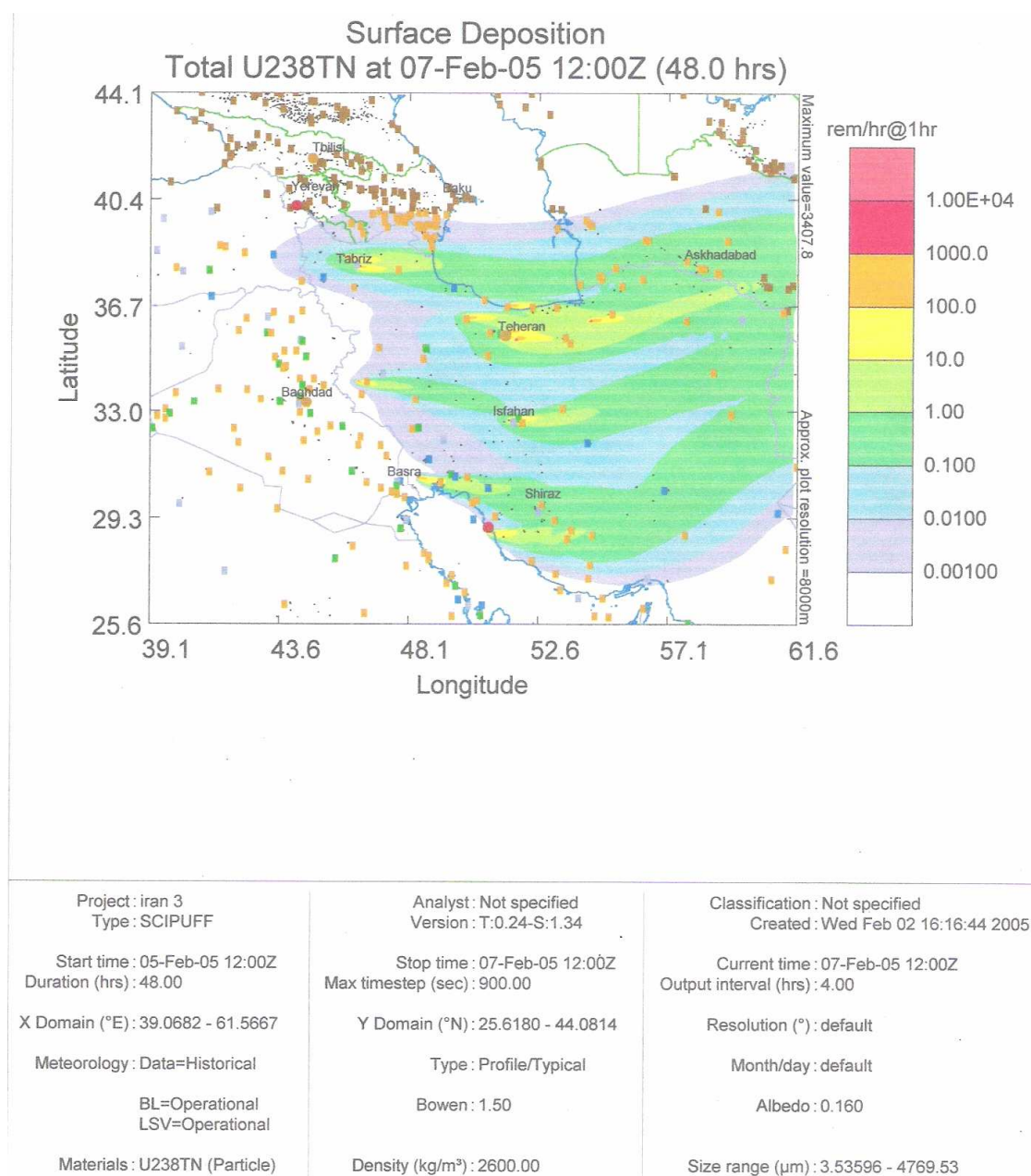
Hypothetical targets in Iran and prompt deaths using US DoD methodology for attacks of 3x10kt ground burst weapon per location

NB These targets are less than half of the Suspected WMD facilities discussed in the open literature and do not include any Iranian conventional military forces, national command centres or industrial sites.

Location	Estimated prompt deaths	Type of facility Sources - www.fas.org ; www.globalsecurity.org www.miis.edu	Human habitation
Bonab	2,000	Atomic Energy Research Centre	Nearby city
Bushehr	6,000	Nuclear Reactor under construction	Nearby port-city
Chalus	69,000	Possible underground nuclear weapons development facility	North lies the coastal town of Chalus
Damghan	70,000	Possible biological and chemical facility	Ancient Islamic city. Centre of pistachio production
Darkhovin	2,000	Suspected underground nuclear weapons facility	Abadan and Basra are in the vicinity
Esfahann	572,000	The primary location of the Iranian nuclear program; missile assembly and production plant; chemical weapons production.	Industrial and University city
Lavizan	331,000	Missiles	City
Parchin	15,000	Suspected Chemical	30 miles SW of

		weapons. Defence industries base	Tehran
Qazvin	255,000	Suspected chemical weapons facilities	“Silk Road” city W of Tehran
Tabriz	899,000	Reported chemical weapons and missile facilities	City
Tehran	597,000	Nuclear Research Centre	City
Total	2816000		

Surface fallout 48 hrs after a nuclear attack on Iran



Attacks of these types may still seem far-fetched, so it is worth concluding the discussion of Firing Trident with this extract from the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Joint Doctrine for Theatre Nuclear Operations.

Figure 3 Extract from a Pentagon manual on planning nuclear war

Command Responsibilities and Staff Procedures

over the enemy. Proper joint operation planning increases the commander's flexibility and facilitates the package approval and release process.

5. Peacetime Planning

Given an operation plan within an area of responsibility and/or joint operations area and a threat, it is advantageous to plan as many potential operations as possible in peacetime. The objective is to **provide plans for nuclear operations that are ready to be used immediately should the need arise and yet are flexible enough to accommodate the dynamic environment that could develop as a conflict matures.** Joint force commanders normally delegate authority for execution planning, coordination, and deconfliction to a commander possessing sufficient command and control infrastructure, adequate facilities, and joint planning expertise. Component commanders, including potential JFACCs, should develop and evaluate plans for employment to include airspace and frequency deconfliction and communications planning.

6. Support Coordination

a. **Nuclear support** is coordinated through geographic combatant commander and/or subordinate joint force commander channels. US Air Force or Navy delivery systems can provide nuclear support to Army or Marine Corps operations. Coordination with the Air Force component is made through the Air Force air operations center (AOC) by the collocated Army battlefield coordination element. Coordination with the Navy and Marine Corps components is made through the naval and amphibious liaison element. Coordination with special operations forces (SOF) can be made through the special operations liaison element.

b. When preparing nuclear support plans, USSTRATCOM will coordinate with supporting Service components and the geographic combatant commander to **prevent fratricide and ensure unity of effort.** USSTRATCOM planners require input from Service experts to ensure that appropriate weapon yields, delivery methods, and safe delivery routing are selected. **Targeting**

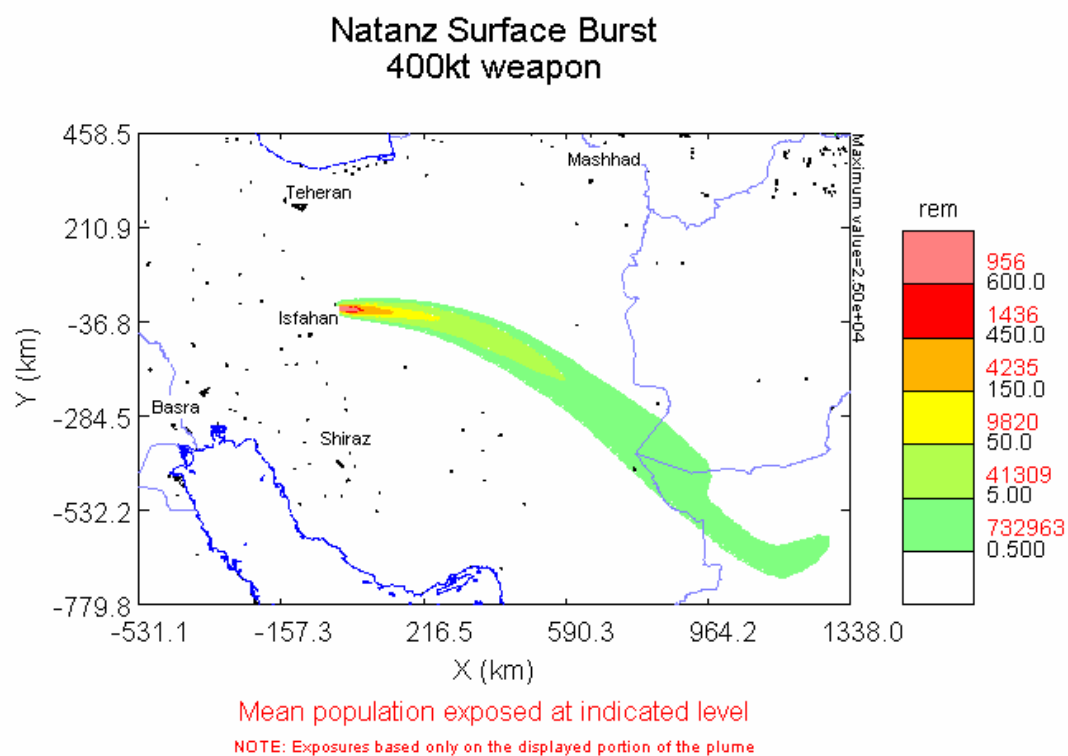


Theater nuclear support delivered by US Air Force and Navy systems is thoroughly coordinated among USSTRATCOM, the Services, and the geographic combatant commander to ensure unity of effort.

Effects of nuclear strike on Natanz

It may well be that, to fulfil mission requirements, it would only be necessary to use nuclear weapons against Natanz, or at most Natanz and Isfahan. These limited nuclear strike options would still have important consequences for Iran and the wider region.

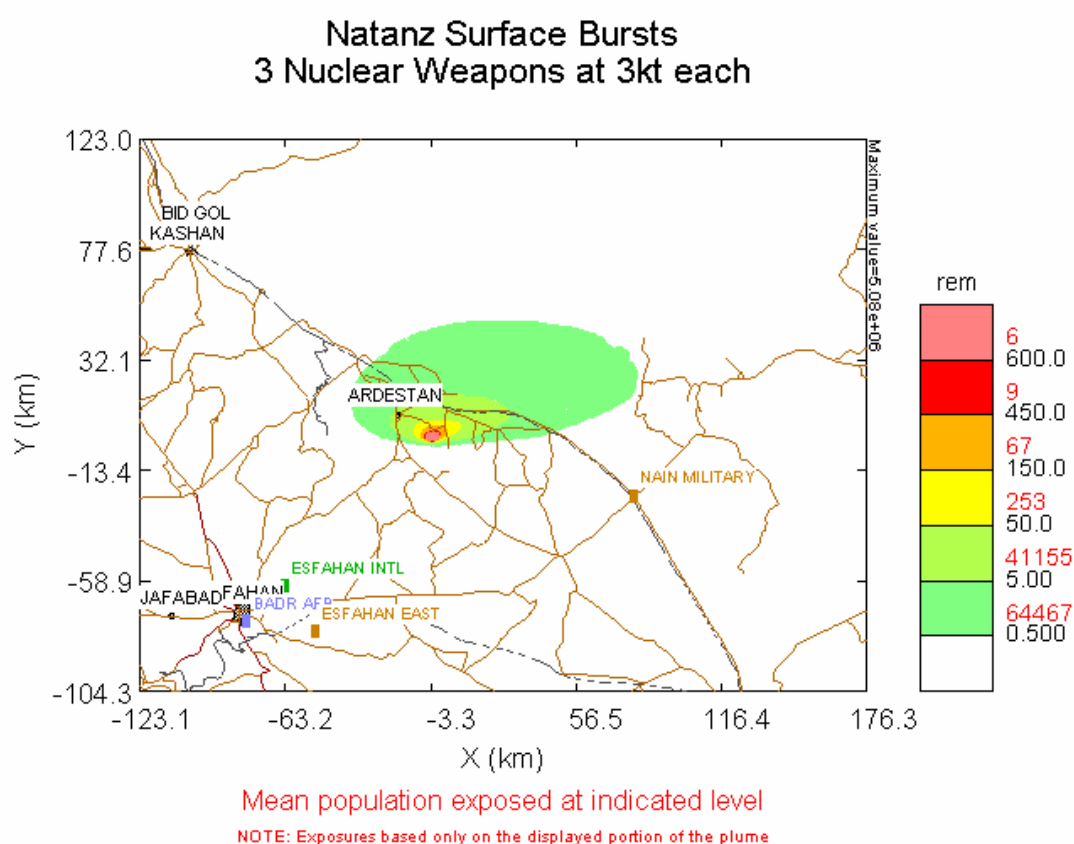
If the use of a very low yield nuclear weapon or weapons proves inadequate to destroy a target such as Natanz, then the President may decide to order the use of a larger bomb were he to determine that the destruction of the target is essential to success of the mission. The likely bomb would be the only nuclear earth-penetrating weapon in the arsenal, the B61-11. It is believed that the nuclear yield of this variant of the B61 is on the order of 400kt. In the scenario shown below, a single 400kt nuclear bomb is detonated on the surface at Natanz. The ensuing radioactive fallout would kill on the order of 10,000 people, with 40,000 receiving a dose of radiation that would mean they needed decontamination and almost 750,000 living in the area which would be affected by fallout.



A second possible scenario for the nuclear destruction of Natanz assumes the use of three 3 kiloton bombs on the underground uranium enrichment hall at Natanz (three bombs are assumed to allow for assured destruction). A tactical nuclear attack on

Natanz by Israel, as described by the *Sunday Times* would likely have little effect on the civilian population. Modelling using Defense Department Hazard Prediction and Assessment Capability (HPAC) software, shows that casualties would be few, even from radioactive fallout if the weapons used were in the 1-3 kiloton range. However, as warhead yield increased, the threat to nearby civilian populations, and eventually to the city of Isfahan itself would grow. Even with low yield warheads, a substantial population would be exposed to nuclear fallout. (This is discussed further below).

This option is least unlikely for an attack by Israel, which lacks the capacity to carry out a broader range of attacks. This action carries the same political and military risks of Iranian retaliation as larger attack scenarios, but the operation would do the least to disrupt or delay the Iranian program.⁵¹



The Bush administration would have to make some very difficult calculations in deciding whether or not to use nuclear weapons against Iran, especially in the absence of an immediate threat of use of WMD by Iran against US targets or Israel. The widespread use of nuclear weapons is likely to bring such opprobrium that only a truly significant threat of destruction of an Israeli city or a threat of similar magnitude could possibly be used to justify it. However, there are undoubtedly those inside the administration who would argue that limited nuclear use for the destruction of Natanz

would be much more feasible as destruction would be limited to the target area, there would be few civilian casualties, and the fear of fallout would do much to disrupt Iran in the attack's aftermath.

How likely is an Attack? The US Political Context

The administration has steadfastly refused to remove the military option from the table, and has continued to prepare to go to war. Congress rejected a proposal to require the President to consult it before going to war with Iran.

Given the Iranian need for security guarantees of safety from the United States as part of a solution to both this crisis, and the overall state of US-Iranian relations, the refusal to recognise Iran or to take war off the table removes a key part of the bargain necessary to defuse the situation. That, however, is administration policy, as repeatedly and consistently restated by administration spokespeople:

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

January 30, 2007: "Going to the [UN] Security Council is not the end of diplomacy [with Iran]. It is just diplomacy in a different, more robust context. But, the president of the United States doesn't take his options off the table and, frankly, I don't think people should want the president of the United States to take his options off the table,"

May 8, 2007: "The American president will not abandon the military option and I believe that we do not want him to do so," Rice said in an interview with Al Arabiya television, part of which was broadcast on Tuesday.⁵²

July 6, 2007: "Well, the president's never going to take his options off the table and frankly no one should want the American president to take his options off the table."⁵³

Vice President Dick Cheney

February 25, 2007: "all options are still on the table"⁵⁴

Some supporters of President Bush have taken a harder line, for example former UN Ambassador John Bolton told an audience of MPs in the House of Commons that: "They must know everything is on the table and they must understand what that means. We can hit different points along the line. You only have to take out one part of their nuclear operation to take the whole thing down."⁵⁵ Bolton has taken on the public role of spokesman for the "neo-con" wing of the administration's supporters since he left office after failing to be confirmed by the US Senate. In amore recent speech he elaborated on his thinking:

"The current approach of the Europeans and the Americans is not just doomed to failure, but dangerous," he said. "Dealing with [the Iranians] just gives them what they want, which is more time... "We have fiddled away four years, in which Europe tried to persuade Iran to give up voluntarily," he complained. "Iran in those four years mastered uranium conversion from solid to gas and now enrichment to weapons grade... We lost four years to feckless European

diplomacy and our options are very limited.” Bolton said flatly that “diplomacy and sanctions have failed... [So] we have to look at: 1, overthrowing the regime and getting in a new one that won’t pursue nuclear weapons; 2, a last-resort use of force.” However, he added a caution as to the viability of the first of those remaining options: While “the regime is more susceptible to overthrow from within than people think,” he said, such a process “may take more time than we have.”⁵⁶

Other neo-conservative allies of the administration led by the influential pressure group, the American Enterprise Institute, have developed a strategy for regime change in Iran that does not involve a ground invasion. As with Iraq, weapons of mass destruction will provide the rationale for military action, though it won't be limited to attacks on a few weapons factories and the wider goal of overthrowing the regime is more important.⁵⁷

This harder line from some administration supporters reflects a debate that is going on inside the White House, as reported in the [New York Times](#). It is said that Vice President Cheney believes that the spring of 2008 will be the timeframe for a decision on whether or not to attack Iran, while Secretary of State Rice has come to believe that diplomacy is the only route to prevent Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons. Other observers have put it more starkly, for example, the Steve Clemons [Washington Note](#) blog (highly regarded by political observers in Washington DC) says that Cheney is engaged in a strategy of ‘insubordination’ on Iran, to tie the President’s hands as the President ‘cannot be trusted’ on the issue. This is also reflected in ongoing struggles between Cheney and Rice that has been reported in the American media;

*And **Michael Hirsh and Mark Hosenball** write in Newsweek: "A Newsweek investigation shows that Cheney's national-security team has been actively challenging Rice's Iran strategy in recent months. 'We hear a completely different story coming out of Cheney's office, even now, than what we hear from Rice on Iran,' says a Western diplomat whose embassy has close dealings with the White House. Officials from the veep's office have been openly dismissive of the nuclear negotiations in think-tank meetings with Middle East analysts in Washington, according to a high-level administration official who asked for anonymity because of his position. Since Tehran has defied two U.N. resolutions calling for a suspension of its uranium-enrichment program, 'there's a certain amount of schadenfreude among the hard-liners,' says a European diplomat who's involved in the talks but would not comment for the record. And Newsweek has learned that the veep's team seems eager to build a case that Iran is targeting Americans not just in Iraq but along the border of its other neighbor, Afghanistan.*

"In the last few weeks, Cheney's staff have unexpectedly become more active participants in an interagency group that steers policy on Afghanistan, according to an official familiar with the internal deliberations. During weekly meetings of the committee, known as the Afghanistan Interagency Operating Group, Cheney staffers have been intensely interested in a single issue: recent intelligence reports alleging that Iran is supplying weapons to Afghanistan's resurgent Islamist militia, the Taliban, according to two administration officials who asked for anonymity when discussing internal meetings. . . .⁵⁸

Republican Guard support for the insurgency in Iraq, notably the supply of sophisticated Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) is linked to a potential US attack on Iran. Time Magazine recently quoted an administration official as saying "An Administration official told me it's not even a consideration. "IRGC IED's are a casus belli for this Administration. There will be an attack on Iran."⁵⁹

Iran as an Election Issue in the United States

This debate is bleeding over into the 2008 Presidential election, with evidence mounting that despite the public unpopularity of the war in Iraq, Iran is emerging as an issue over which Presidential candidates in both major American parties can show their strong national security *bona fides*.

Republican candidates for president in 2008 have spoken of the need to take military action to prevent Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons. They even support the use of nuclear weapons, if necessary, to enforce Iran's non-nuclear weapons status.

At the Republican debate last night, almost all the candidates said that they would not rule out a nuclear attack on Iran as a means to prevent it from getting its own nuclear weapons..."We have to come to our senses about this issue of war and pre-emption," he said. The audience applauded, but he didn't get much support from his fellow candidates... Rep. Duncan Hunter of California was the starkest: "I would authorize the use of tactical nuclear weapons if there was no other way to preempt those particular centrifuges," he said. Former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani said he believed that the job "could be done with conventional weapons," but he added that "you can't rule out anything and you shouldn't take any option off the table." Former Virginia Gov. Jim Gilmore also left "all options are on the table" with regard to Iranian nuclear weapons. Said former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney: "I wouldn't take any options off the table." After the debate, former Sen. Fred Thompson of Tennessee, who did not participate, added his name to the list of candidates who would consider a preemptive attack against Iran. Only Rep. Ron Paul of Texas, the "Dennis the Menace" of his party, said he opposed a nuclear strike on moral grounds and because he believed Iran "has done no harm to us directly and is no threat to our national security."⁶⁰

It must not be supposed that only republican candidates for the Presidency have taken a hard line on Iran, a quick survey of Democrat candidates shows similar opinions:

*To ensure Iran never gets nuclear weapons, we need to keep ALL options on the table. **Let me reiterate – ALL options must remain on the table.**"*

- Former Senator John Edwards (D-NC)

"...we should take no option, including military action, off the table."

- Senator Barack Obama (D-IL)

"...as I've also said for a long time, no option can be taken off the table."

- Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY)

Are Democrats simply being careless with their language or are they also willing to consider using nuclear weapons against Iran?⁶¹

The debate on how to deal with Iran is thus occurring in a political context in the US that is hard for those in Europe or the Middle East to understand. A context that may seem to some to be divorced from reality, but with the US ability to project military power across the globe, the reality of Washington DC is one that matters perhaps above all else.

The US has recently ratcheted up the rhetoric against Iran, recently accusing Tehran of complicity in killing Americans in Iraq. As the Guardian reported on July 3 "The US yesterday publicly accused Iran of intervening in the Iraq conflict, claiming that its Revolutionary Guard played a role in an attack that killed five Americans and was using Lebanese militants to train Iraqi insurgents. The allegations marked a significant escalation as previous similar claims have been made mostly off the record." The claims coincide with increasingly heated rhetoric in Washington.

Iran in Congress

Last month, Joseph Lieberman, a former presidential candidate now an independent senator, called for air strikes on Iran in retaliation for its alleged role in Iraq. "I think we've got to be prepared to take aggressive military action against the Iranians to stop them from killing Americans in Iraq," the Connecticut senator said. "And to me, that would include a strike over the border into Iran, where we have good evidence that they have a base at which they are training these people coming back into Iraq to kill our soldiers."⁶²

The Democrat-controlled Congress has also taken legislative action to increase pressure over Iran on President George W. Bush, passing a bill through a key House committee that would force the President to sanction oil and gas companies doing business with Iran.

Other provisions in the legislation, building on existing law, would require that sanctioned companies at a minimum be barred from doing business with the U.S. government and affect subsidiaries and principal executive officers as well as parent firms. It would re-impose a total ban on Iranian imports, reversing a "goodwill gesture" by former President Bill Clinton that allowed in carpets and certain other products. It would also prohibit the export of civil aviation equipment to Iran, which would make it hard for the administration to fulfil its commitment to incentives offered by the United States, Britain, France and Germany last year as an inducement to halt enrichment. The bill would also require the president to determine whether the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps should be designated a foreign terrorist organization. It also would eliminate some tax breaks for companies investing in Iran, decrease U.S. contributions to the World Bank if the bank invests in Iran and bar a nuclear cooperation agreement with Russia if Moscow continues to assist Tehran's nuclear program.

This legislation would remove flexibility and discretion from the President's power. He can currently exempt companies from the sanctions if he chooses. The legislation was drafted by Rep. Tom Lantos, chair of the House International Relations Committee, and is supported by other prominent House Democrats including Rep. Gary Ackerman. The bill was approved 37 to 1 by the House of Representatives International Relations Committee.

Lantos accused the Bush administration of "abusing its waiver authority" by never sanctioning any foreign oil company that has invested in Iran. "By now every single

European leader fully understands, and acknowledges, that Iran is hell-bent on acquiring nuclear weapons," he added. "It is time for Europe to cease investing in Iran's energy industry, and our legislation will facilitate that result." Foreign investment in Iran equals money for terrorism and attacks on Americans," Democrat Gary Ackerman said. "Investment in Iran's petroleum sector enables that country to pursue nuclear weapons, to arm insurgents fighting American troops, and to underwrite Hezbollah and Hamas," he said.⁶³

Senator Gordon Smith (R-OR) and Senator Barrack Obama (D-IL) have both introduced similar legislation in the Senate. Senator Smith's legislation has been introduced as an amendment to the Defense Authorization bill, and will be voted on as part of consideration as that bill. Senator Obama's bill has been introduced as freestanding legislation, but this has yet to be considered by Committee. Introducing his legislation, Obama accused Tehran of using lucrative energy revenues "to build its nuclear program and to fund terrorist groups that export its militaristic and radical ideology to Iraq and throughout the Middle East." "Pressuring companies to cut their financial ties with Iran is critical to ensuring that sanctions have their intended result."⁶⁴

Other US Aspects

The regime in Tehran has already complained of US- and UK-inspired terror attacks in several Iranian regions where the population opposes the ayatollahs' fanatical policies. Such reports corroborate the American journalist Seymour Hersh's claim that the US military is already engaged in a low-level war with Iran. The fighting is most intense in the Kurdish north where Iran has been firing artillery into Iraq. The US and Iran are already engaged in a low-level proxy war across the Iran-Iraq border that we detail above. And, once again, the neo-cons at the American Enterprise Institute have a plan for a peaceful settlement: this time it is for a federal Iran. Officially, Michael Ledeen, the AEI plan's sponsor, has been ostracised by the White House. However, two years ago, the Congress of Iranian Nationalities for a Federal Iran had its inaugural meeting in London.

We should not underestimate the Bush administration's ability to convince itself that an "Iran of the regions" will emerge from a post-rubble Iran. So, do not be in the least surprised if the United States attacks Iran. Timing is an open question, but it is hard to find convincing arguments that war will be avoided, or at least ones that are convincing in Washington.

In the aftermath, the US will support regime change, hoping to replace the ayatollahs with an Iran of the regions. The US and British governments now support a coalition of groups seeking a federal Iran. This may be another neocon delusion, but that may not be the point. Making Tehran concentrate on internal problems leaves it unable to act elsewhere.

The Israeli Military and Political Dimension

Israel has consistently taken a strong line on Iran's nuclear weapons capabilities, stressing worse case scenarios, usually going well beyond conclusions that have been supported by the CIA or other American or western intelligence agencies. The most recent analysis from Israeli military intelligence estimates that Iran could have a bomb as soon as mid-2009, but more likely one or two years later. In contrast the CIA worst case is that Iran is three to six years from a possible nuclear capability. The *Sunday Times* reported in January 2007 that raids were being planned by Israel on Arak, Natanz and Isfahan, and that these might include nuclear weapons.⁶⁵

Journalists briefed by Israeli military intelligence have written that:

*The Israeli analysts gave little chance of the Islamic regime in Tehran being toppled from within, noting that huge oil revenue enabled it to ensure domestic peace despite widespread dissatisfaction with the regime. International pressure and sanctions could delay Iran's program and oblige Tehran to compromise, the assessment said. Technological difficulties Iran is having with the atomic program could also slow it up. The last-resort option, a military strike, could significantly set back Iran's efforts despite the extensive safeguarding of nuclear facilities it has done, the assessment said. Israeli officials say the chances of a US strike at Iran's nuclear facilities are steadily diminishing. An Israeli strike remains on the table, although its likelihood is far from certain. Israeli military intelligence has set up a new department charged with translating intelligence into firm targets for such a strike. This is in addition to the efforts of the Israeli air force, which has its own department to process intelligence and identify targets.*⁶⁶

This analysis, with its heavy emphasis on the need for military action against Iran within a window of opportunity that is quickly closing, fits with Israeli analyses over the past few years. Israel began an assertive campaign of action against the Iranian nuclear program very early after revelations of illicit nuclear in Iran first surfaced:

Israel is working on a wide range of measures to undermine Iran's nuclear program, with senior leaders hinting that Israel may take preemptive action if that is deemed necessary. Analysts here suggest that action may include a strike similar to Israel's 1981 attack on Iraq's Osirak reactor. The Israeli initiative includes political, military, and intelligence wings of government and dovetails with US efforts to contain Iran within the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The effort reflects the widespread assessment here that Iran poses a greater threat than Iraq has for the past decade and is gaining nuclear expertise more quickly than the US estimates.

The Center for Non-Proliferation Studies has written that:

.. it appears that some in Israel are seriously considering a pre-emptive attack similar to the June 1981 attack on Osirak that destroyed Iraq's nuclear reactor. Meir Dagan, the Chief of Mossad, told parliament members in his inaugural appearance before the Israeli Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that Iran was close to the "point of no return" and that the specter of Iranian possession of nuclear weapons was the greatest threat to Israel since its

inception. On November 11, 2003, Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom said that Israel had "no plans to attack nuclear facilities in Iran." Less than two weeks later however, during a visit to the United States, Israel's Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz stated that "under no circumstances would Israel be able to tolerate nuclear weapons in Iranian possession" and just six weeks earlier, Mossad had revealed plans for preemptive attacks by F-16 bombers on Iranian nuclear sites.⁶⁷

In a recent interview, President Clinton's Middle East envoy, Dennis Ross, said that:

They [Israel] take what (Iranian President Mahmoud) Ahmadinejad says very seriously, and only last (month) he said, "The countdown to the destruction of the Zionist regime is under way." Even (Former President Ali Akbar Hashemi) Rafsanjani, who is seen as more pragmatic, said several years ago that it would take only one nuclear weapon to destroy Israel.

Overwhelmingly, Israel's political and military establishment want the rest of the world to act diplomatically or otherwise to stop Iran. But if that doesn't happen, then the impulse toward the use of force will become quite strong.

For Israel, the "redline" is not so much when Iran has enough enrichment capacity for weapons-grade material. Their deadline is 18 months from now when Iran's air defense system, which is being upgraded by the Russians, will be completed. That will make it much more difficult to successfully strike Iran's nuclear capacity from the air. The closer we get to that window without resolution of the Iranian nuclear problem, the more Israel will feel compelled to strike.

Clearly, at the moment, we are headed down the path of use of force. The slow-motion diplomacy of the West simply does not match the rapid development of Iran's nuclear capacity and the closing window when Iran's upgraded air defenses will be in place.

... We are headed on a pathway now that will lead to the use of force. We don't want it to be that way. It doesn't have to be that way. There are alternatives, but the clock is ticking.⁶⁸

Israel is clearly preparing for an attack on Iran *in extremis*. As early as 2005, the Times of London reported that:

Israel has drawn up secret plans for a combined air and ground attack on targets in Iran if diplomacy fails to halt the Iranian nuclear programme. The inner cabinet of Ariel Sharon, the Israeli prime minister, gave "initial authorisation" for an attack at a private meeting last month on his ranch in the Negev desert. Israeli forces have used a mock-up of Iran's Natanz uranium enrichment plant in the desert to practise destroying it. Their tactics include raids by Israel's elite Shaldag (Kingfisher) commando unit and airstrikes by F-15 jets from 69 Squadron, using bunker-busting bombs to penetrate underground facilities.⁶⁹

In July 2007, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman stepped up the pressure, claiming EU and US support for eventual Israeli military action against Iran:

“If we start military operations against Iran alone, then Europe and the US will support us,” Lieberman told Army Radio following a meeting earlier in the week with NATO and European Union officials. Lieberman said the Western powers acknowledged the severity of the Iranian nuclear threat to the Jewish state, but said that ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq are “going to prevent the leaders of countries in Europe and America from deciding on the use of force to destroy Iran’s nuclear facilities,” even if diplomacy ultimately fails. The message Lieberman said the NATO and EU officials conveyed to him is that Israel should “prevent the threat herself.”⁷⁰

In addition, Israel possesses long range cruise missile firing submarines that can reach key targets in Iran from the Arabian sea. Israel’s war with Hizbullah in 2006 may have been prompted in part by the need to prepare for war with Iran, one of Hizbullah’s sponsors. The US director of national intelligence, John Negroponte, explained that the threat to launch Hizbullah against Israel was the main deterrent to a US attack on Iran. Although politically Hizbullah scored a major victory in holding off the Israeli army last summer, in fact it was badly damaged.

Israel has obvious reasons for supporting efforts to stop the Iranian nuclear program in its tracks. Its concern about Iran stems from the country’s proximity, its longstanding hostility to Israel, and its support for groups like Lebanese Hizbullah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad. A nuclear Iran would also erode Israel’s strategic edge, and even threaten the existence of the Jewish state. An Iranian bomb would, at least, negate the advantage Israel gains from having a military superior to any of its Middle East counterparts. Israel is also widely understood to have an arsenal of nuclear weapons. Israel clearly has a vital interest in preventing Iran obtaining nuclear weapons.

Israeli special forces have a history of operating alongside US and other nations equivalent units, as well as a history of participating in counterproliferation missions. In the run-up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Times reported that:

.. members of Sayeret Matkal, Israel’s commando force, are also said by Western military experts to have carried out covert reconnaissance operations inside the Western Iraqi desert. They are thought to be pre-empting a repeat of the first Gulf War when Saddam fired 39 Scuds at Israel.⁷¹

Israeli special forces soldiers are also likely to be participating in intelligence gathering missions currently in Iran.

Israel’s special forces are said to be operating inside Iran in an urgent attempt to locate the country’s secret uranium enrichment sites. “We found several suspected sites last year but there must be more,” an Israeli intelligence source said. They are operating from a base in northern Iraq, guarded by Israeli soldiers with the approval of the Americans, according to Israeli sources.⁷²

According to some sources, the US and Israel are also training Iranian rebel groups to help destabilize the government:

Now the U.S. military, with Israeli commandos lending a hand, is arming and secretly training a different breed of mujahideen, or Islamic fighters—Kurdish militias with links to ethnic Kurdish communities in Iran and Syria, and fighters from the Iranian Mujahideen-e-Khalq (MEK), which has bases in southern Iraq and has provided the United States with information about the Iranian military and Iran’s nuclear sites.⁷³

There is also a possibility that Israel has been taking direct action against Iran’s nuclear infrastructure. It has been alleged that Dr. Ardeshir Hosseinpour, a scientist involved in the Iranian nuclear program, was killed by Mossad on January 15, 2007. This claim was made by the private intelligence company, Stratfor.⁷⁴ Again, it is impossible to verify any of these specific claims, but the fact that some stories are leaking out indicates that some activity must be underway.

A significant aim of Israeli political positions, intelligence revelations and preparations for an assault on Iranian nuclear facilities is to pressure the United States into taking action so that Israel need not do so. Clearly it would best suit Israeli needs for the United States to destroy the current Iranian government, and its nuclear and other military infrastructure.

Iran Policy in London: Would Brown Attack?

Summary

UK policy on Iran appeared to shift when Jack Straw was replaced by Margaret Beckett. Beckett's refusal to rule out military action reversed the position put forward by Straw – if not Blair. Beckett's position has been reiterated by David Miliband, the new Foreign Secretary.

Should the external political situation require it, it is likely that Brown would have enough votes in Parliament for UK support through the use of the British Indian Ocean Territory, Diego Garcia and even token military participation.

Labour party discipline is such that only 11 MPs voted for an inquiry into the Iraq war as late as December 2006, while the Conservative Party is most unlikely to oppose British participation.

The UK government has a clear position that Iran should not become a nuclear weapon state. The ambiguity over Iran's real nuclear programme in contrast to Iraq's mythical programme and the simplicity of the claim to be preventing the ovens of Auschwitz arriving in Tel Aviv in the form of an Iranian nuclear bomb means that there is a powerful political message.

One key caution is that regardless of the realities of Iran's programme, the British public and elite may simply refuse to participate – almost out of bloody minded revenge for the Iraq deceit.

Labour and other party positions

In January 2005, Jack Straw visited Washington DC and obtained Bush administration support (however weak) for EU negotiations with Iran. He urged Condoleezza Rice, amongst others, to come round to his point of view that the time was not right for a military option. The price for US support was an EU endorsement, in the longer term, to keep all options on the table. According to governmental sources in London and Washington DC, Straw headed off what was serious mounting pressure for immediate military action against Iran. At the time, President Bush newly installed in his second term was riding high in the polls, and seemed untouchable. No Democrats were ready to criticize him on foreign affairs. Later, in mid-2006, Straw publicly ruled out the possibility of military action: *Mr Straw, speaking on BBC1's Sunday AM Programme, stressed that the UK would not launch a pre-emptive strike on Iran, adding that he was as "certain as he could be" that neither would the US. There was "no smoking gun" and therefore no justification for military action, he said.*⁷⁵

While then-Prime Minister Tony Blair obviously supported this line, it was never possible to shake off the conviction that he would, if the time came, at least support a Bush attack on Iran – if not actually allow the UK military to participate. The position of the new Brown government has been laid out, if somewhat opaquely, by the new Foreign Secretary, David Milliband. Milliband has been keen to signal that he was not enthusiastic about the invasion of Iraq. His recent interview in the Financial Times leaves the situation unclear, although he refused to eliminate the possibility of using military force to disarm Iran:

FT: And military action? Is it conceivable?

DM: I think that the whole of the international community wants a non-military diplomatic solution to this problem.

FT: So it's inconceivable?

DM: Sorry?

FT: Military action is inconceivable?

DM: I stand totally four square behind what the prime minister has said on this, which is that we want a non-military solution to this, we are working very hard to achieve a non-military solution to this. I don't think it does any good to speculate any wider than that. Our intent and our actions and our efforts are absolutely clear about the way we want to solve this.

FT: But you'd understand that people might interpret that as leaving all options on the table?

DM: I think that people should... I hope that people will come to see that they should look carefully at the words I use, and they should look at what I say, not at what I don't say.

Beyond this, the clues are few and far between. Privately, there are many reports that Brown has done all he can to alleviate worries in Washington DC that he will be a less positive ally than was Tony Blair, but those worries do exist – and the background briefings from Milliband and others disparaging Iraq policy will have done little to assuage American concerns. Indeed, the recent speech to the Council on Foreign Relations by Brown protégé, Douglas Alexander, and by Mark Mallach Brown have only heightened worries in Washington that Brown will be much less supportive of the Bush agenda than his predecessor.⁷⁶ The Milliband response is clearly more equivocal than the statements of Condoleeza Rice and others, but does not rule out the use of force. At the same time, the UK has pressured the EU into taking a relatively hard stance in negotiations with Iran, and in taking action through the United Nations Security Council, and there is pressure to hold to a hard line. US Senator John McCain, noted for his view that the only thing worse than war with Iran is a nuclear Iran, was the guest speaker at the 2006 Conservative Party Conference where he was lauded as the next US President.

The Conservative opposition leader, David Cameron, in May 2007 called for a harder line on Iran:

David Cameron today called for much tougher international sanctions against Iran to stop it developing nuclear weapons, and said military action should not be ruled out. The Conservative leader urged a "rapid" shift in policy, as current sanctions were "too weak to bring about a change in behaviour ... Make no mistake, the threat is growing. The scale and urgency of our response needs to match it."

Speaking at a press conference in London, Mr Cameron said tough measures were needed to prevent Iran becoming a nuclear power. "Tougher penalties means increasing the extent and scope of sanctions." He said the west needed to recognise "the current response to Iran's nuclear programme is not yet working".

Britain should be pushing for tougher restrictions on individuals involved in Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programs, the banning of new arms sales to

Iran, and action to discourage investment in its nuclear programme. Within the European Union, he called for limits on Iranian banks' access to the European financial system, restrictions on export credit guarantees, and action to restrict investment in gas and oil fields.

Mr Cameron said the threat of military action against Iran could not be ruled out, as Jack Straw had done when he was foreign secretary. "I think Jack Straw made a mistake when he explicitly ruled it out. I don't think that's sensible in international affairs and I wouldn't take that path. What we want to do is to avoid that happening. It would be a calamity if they get a nuclear weapon, but military action would be calamitous."⁷⁷

In January 2007, a report in *the Independent* stated that,

'Liam Fox MP, Conservative Defence Spokesman gave the clearest signal yet that the Conservatives would support military action, including the use of nuclear strikes by the US or Israel, to halt the alleged production of a nuclear weapon by Iran.

"I am a hawk on Iran," said Mr Fox. "We should rule absolutely nothing out when it comes to Iran. His remarks follow reports in the US that Israel is ready to use nuclear "bunker buster" bombs to knock out the Iranian nuclear plants."⁷⁸

Such senior support for nuclear war is reason enough to consider what such rhetoric might mean in practice, so a detailed analysis of an Anglo-American nuclear strike is included in this study.

Relations between the UK and Iran are poor. Iran's seizure of British sailors in the Persian Gulf still rankles greatly, even after the Iranian leadership asserted its control over the Revolutionary Guard to enforce their release. A steady flow of UK claims that Iran is fuelling and supplying the insurgency in southern Iran has worsened Tehran's view of London.

It is obvious that military strikes against Iran would not be the policy of choice for Brown and his team. However, as with Iraq, there may not be a choice, and the course of action that they would pursue if informed that the US will attack whether or not the UK offers support remains unknown.

Shaping public opinion

Iran has gradually become more and more of a "threat" in the media over that last three years. Numerous former British military, diplomatic and intelligence officials have told the authors that they regard the information management as uncannily similar to the lead up to the Iraq war. Newspapers owned by Rupert Murdoch and by the Barclay Brothers in the UK have begun to call for war with Iran.

One clear result of the perceived humiliation of the vaunted Royal Navy at the hands of Iran is that in the next confrontation, the British public will want a far more robust reaction from the heirs of Lord Nelson, their belligerence will be formed in ignorance of the scale of the war already in preparation.

Military participation

The British government sent additional naval vessels to the Gulf when the US added a second Carrier Strike Force to its fleet in the Gulf in early 2007. These vessels included anti-mine vessels. As discussed elsewhere in this study there are fragmentary

accounts of UK participation in special operations inside Iraq and in exercises for an attack. Iran makes repeated allegations of UK involvement in attacks inside Iran, and most recently claimed that Britain ran a training base in Jordan for Iranians wishing to fight the regime in Tehran.⁷⁹ However, it is unclear how far UK officials and military staff are briefed on overall US planning for Iran. The British Indian Ocean Territory, Diego Garcia, would be a vital base in any attack.

How Might Iran Respond to Attack:

And How Could This Affect the Gulf States and Combatants

While states in the region are by far the best able to assess likely consequences of a war with Iran for themselves, some conclusions can be drawn. Iran has military and political cards it is able to play, and the military and economic consequences could be significant, even disastrous.

If the United States were to attack Iran, even in a fairly limited series of air attacks aimed at a small number of nuclear-related targets, Iran is certain to fight back. It would have both military and political options for pre-emption or retaliation. Most of these have been considered above and the authors conclude that a US strike is unlikely to leave the Iranian regime and state intact.

Military options

Indeed, it is possible that Iran would be able to predict a coming attack and begin hostilities itself. As the *Atlantic Monthly* wrote in 2004:

Thomas Hammes, the Marine expert in counterinsurgency, said . "We never 'red-celled' the enemy in this exercise" (that is, let him have the first move), Hammes said after the Iran war game. "What if they try to pre-empt us? What if we threaten them, and the next day we find mines in Baltimore Harbor and the Golden Gate, with a warning that there will be more? .. Its leaders would have every incentive to strike pre-emptively in their own defense. Unlike Saddam Hussein's Iraq, a threatened Iran would have many ways to harm America and its interests. Apart from cross-border disruptions in Iraq, it might form an outright alliance with al-Qaeda to support major new attacks within the United States. It could work with other oil producers to punish America economically. It could, as Hammes warned, apply the logic of "asymmetric," or "fourth-generation," warfare, in which a superficially weak adversary avoids a direct challenge to U.S. military power and instead strikes the most vulnerable points in American civilian society, as al-Qaeda did on 9/11. If it thought that the U.S. goal was to install a wholly new regime rather than to change the current regime's behavior, it would have no incentive for restraint."⁸⁰

That Iran would seek to destabilize Iraq, and hit out at US forces and interest there, is a common assumption amongst analysts and planners. Iran has close links with Muqtada al-Sadr and his Mahdi Army; helped form and trained the Badr brigades, which fought against Saddam and have now mostly been absorbed into security forces in Basra and other areas of southern Iraq; as well as with the Dawa Party of prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and with many other politicians. Their ability to send Revolutionary Guards and others into Iraq to work with their allies and foment a major uprising against the coalition forces there should not be understated. It is also likely that Iranian allies in Afghanistan would carry out similar actions, although on a much smaller scale.

Most analysts also assume that Iran would also push Hezbollah to attack Israel and look for other ways to hit back. The Center for Non-proliferation Studies published just such an analysis:

On July 5, 2004, during a visit to Hamedan in western Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei told a crowd of thousands: "the United States says that we have endangered their interests... if anyone invades our nation, we will jeopardize

their interests around the world." In December 2003, Iran's Air Force Commander General Seyed Reza Pardis, said in response to statements by Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz that if Israel attacks Iran it will be "digging its own grave." Considering the extensive financial and national policy investment Iran has committed to its nuclear projects, it is almost certain that an attack by Israel or the United States would result in immediate retaliation. A likely scenario includes an immediate Iranian missile counterattack on Israel and U.S. bases in the Gulf, followed by a very serious effort to destabilize Iraq and foment all-out confrontation between the United States and Iraq's Shi'i majority. Iran could also opt to destabilize Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states with a significant Shi'i population, and induce Lebanese Hizbullah to launch a series of rocket attacks on Northern Israel.⁸¹

Iranian missile attacks are to be feared. Iran is thought to have around 500 missiles capable of delivering high explosives, chemical or biological weapons to Israel and to US allies in the Gulf States. As the CNS says:

.. the destructive potential of these ballistic missile systems should not be underestimated. Although these Scud variants are relatively inaccurate - they are certainly incapable of the pinpoint accuracy associated with U.S. cruise missiles and guided munitions - they do have much greater accuracy and higher payloads than the Iraqi al-Husseins that turned out a mediocre CEP (circular error probability) of 1 to 3km in 1991. Multiple missiles attacks on U.S. or Israeli targets carrying large warheads can potentially be very deadly, as demonstrated by an Iraqi Scud attack on barracks in Saudi Arabia in early 1991. It turned out to be the deadliest such incident of the entire war for U.S. troops, killing 28 and injuring 98.⁸²

However as discussed in the section "Scud Hunt" above such attacks would not be decisive in the war. They might be able, if not neutralized, to cause significant economic damage in the Gulf region.



All infrastructure for oil and gas production, refinement and supply is vulnerable to attack by missile, by Revolutionary Guard or other military attack, or from sabotage by Iranian sleeper cells that could be activated in the event of war. Iran would likely try to make the most of its power to wreak economic havoc in the region that would have the effect of harming the US and western economies.

Other important infrastructure, including airports, ports, roads, power generation facilities and others would be at risk in such a scenario. There is substantial risk of economic dislocation.

Even without major Iranian attacks on Gulf States, the fact of a war would have the effect of disrupting the region's economy, at least temporarily. Civil airlines would likely halt flights into and through the region while any military air campaign was underway. Insurance rates for planes and ships transporting passengers or goods through the region would be raised significantly.

Iran would also attempt to disrupt and attempt to stop oil supplies leaving the Gulf and the region as a whole if it were attacked, as Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei indicated last year "If the U.S. makes a wrong move against Iran, energy flow in the region will be definitely put at serious risk", Khamenei said in a speech aired on state television. "You can never maintain security for [the flow of] energy in the region", the Supreme Leader said in comments directed at the U.S. "We are committed to our ideals and national interests and if anyone threatens our national interests it will face the Iranian nation's wrath".⁸³ This could be achieved through mining the Gulf, attacking oil tankers, destroying oil pipelines across the region, and bombing or firing missiles against oil production and refining facilities in proximity to Iran. While a

military action the prime effect of such disruption would be economic, likely causing a massive rise in the price of oil on world markets with the ensuing possibility of global recession as a possible consequence.

As noted above, Iran could also attempt to internally destabilize Gulf States in the event of war. A report in the Daily Telegraph states that:

Iran has trained secret networks of agents across the Gulf states to attack Western interests and incite civil unrest in the event of a military strike against its nuclear programme, a former Iranian diplomat has told The Sunday Telegraph. Spies working as teachers, doctors and nurses at Iranian-owned schools and hospitals have formed sleeper cells ready to be "unleashed" at the first sign of any serious threat to Teheran, it is claimed. Trained by Iranian intelligence services, they are also said to be recruiting fellow Shias in the region..⁸⁴

Such mobilization could range from small sleeper cells attempting minor economic sabotage to an attempt to foment major demonstrations and unrest.

Attacks on Military Targets

Iran would also be in a position to attack US naval forces in the Persian Gulf and surrounding area:

In wartime, Iranian naval forces would seek to close the Strait of Hormuz and destroy enemy forces bottled up in the Persian Gulf; therefore speed and surprise would be key. Iranian naval forces would seek to identify and attack the enemy's centers of gravity as quickly as possible and inflict maximum losses before contact with subordinate units were lost as a result of enemy counterattacks. Geography is Iran's ally. Because of the proximity of major shipping routes to the country's largely mountainous 2,000-kilometer coastline, Iranian naval elements can sortie from their bases and attack enemy ships with little advance warning. Meanwhile, shore-based antiship missiles can engage targets almost anywhere in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. To achieve the latter capability, and to improve the survivability of its shore-based missile force, Iran has devoted significant efforts to extending the range of locally produced variants of a number of Chinese shore-based antiship missiles such as the HY-2 Silkworm and the C-802 (from 50 to 300 kilometers and from 120 to 170 kilometers, respectively). It has also introduced the use of helicopter-borne long-range antiship missiles.

The section above on Littoral warfare indicates that the US has a strong technical, and physical military ability to preempt, destroy and defend against Iranian attacks of this sort.

To ensure that it can achieve surprise in the event of a crisis or war, Iran's naval forces keep U.S. warships in the region under close visual, acoustic, and radar observation. The Iranian navy commander—Rear Adm. Sajad Kouchaki, one of the architects of the country's naval doctrine—recently claimed that Iranian submarines continually monitor U.S. naval movements, frequently at close range, and have even passed underneath American aircraft carriers and other warships undetected. Iranian UAVs also frequently shadow U.S. carrier battle groups in the area.⁸⁵

Indeed, however the US does exactly the same, with far greater resources.

One factor for states in the region to consider is the extent to which these Iranian attacks, and requirements for US military assistance to guard against them, risk linking those states to the US action. At the very least, there will need to be GCC acquiescence in an attack on Iran for the use of US facilities in the region, for the use of territorial waters and for overflights. If Iran manages to attack US or regional bases, facilities, or civilian infrastructure, then regional states risk a much deeper involvement in any ongoing war.

Possible Political Actions by Iran

In addition to military responses to a US or Israeli attack, Iran has political recourse as well. The first response would be to gather domestic and international support. It is likely that all elements of Iranian society would gather around the current government, opposing US action, and supporting a fully fledged nuclear program. And Iran, would be able to benefit from the attack to dramatically accelerate its activities in this field, just as Iraq did after the Israeli strike on the Osiraq reactor in 1981. The Center for Non-Proliferation Studies argues that:

In the event of an unprovoked preemptive attack on its nuclear facilities, Iran could justifiably argue that it requires nuclear weapons to guard against aggression and protect its sovereignty, effectively announcing its intention to withdraw from the NPT and altering the current international dynamic. Especially given the recent lack of substantiation in the Iraqi WMD case, such a strike would undoubtedly result in U.S. or Israeli diplomatic isolation.

The practical diplomatic consequences of a preemptive attack in Iran are worth considering. In the aftermath of such a strike, it is highly unlikely that the United States would be able to convince members of the UN Security Council to impose sanctions on Iran. Without international sanctions, Iran will be able to allocate greater financial and human resources to its nuclear program. If the Iraqi Osirak example is any indication, the size of Iran's nuclear program would probably increase dramatically, as the Iranian government touts an expanded nuclear program as the key to deterring Iran's enemies.

This like much similar analysis presumes that Iran would remain as a functioning central state after a US attack.

Since Russia and China oppose all but the mildest sanctions, it is likely that they would turn against the US in the event of a unilateral attack. The European Union would also be unable to support such a move. The Non-Aligned Movement has supported Iran's right to nuclear technology for civilian purposes and would undoubtedly rally round Iran in the event of an attack. In short, the United States would find itself almost completely diplomatically isolated, whereas Iran would have its hands untied.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the US has made military preparations to destroy Iran's WMD, nuclear energy, regime, armed forces, state apparatus and economic infrastructure within days, if not hours, of President George Bush giving the order.

This report is focussed on the prospect of the possible attempted destruction of the Iranian regime and state by the United States and its allies. It neither examines the realities of Iran's nuclear programme, the negotiations between Iran and the international community nor does it examine in detail the human, political, economic and environmental consequences of such an attack.

Nevertheless a number of conclusions can be reached.

1. If the attack is "successful" and the US reasserts its global military dominance and reduces Iran to the status of an oil-rich failed state, then the risks to humanity in general and to the states of the Middle East are grave indeed.

The two world wars of 1914-18 and 1939-1945, the creation of nuclear weapons, and the advent of global warming have created successive lessons that humanity and states cannot prosper or survive long unless they hold their security in common-sharing sovereignty and power to ensure both survival and prosperity.

A "successful" US attack, without UN authorisation, would return the world to the state that existed in the period before the war of 1914-18, but with nuclear weapons.

The self-styled realists argue that this is an inevitable and manageable world, the naivety of imagining a nuclear armed world without nuclear war is utopian in the extreme.

States and regimes in the region may consider that in the short-run they would benefit from the implosion of Iran and the eclipse of *Shi'a* power. However, the threat from within from disaffected elements outraged at further unabashed Western militarism is likely to threaten crowns and republics alike. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi deaths have had no electoral cost to American and British leaders, the same number of Iranian deaths may have equally little impact in the West, but it is unimaginable that it would not cause far greater spurs to anger than already exist in the region.

The impact of on Turkey of an autonomous Iranian and Iraqi territory of Kurdistan is hard to overestimate.

2. If the attack is pursued with the skill of the Iraq campaign then we face major and unpredictable escalation arising from the fallacy of attempting to make "the last move" on the political game board. Should Iranians rally to their battered state regardless of their, then what has been seen in Iraq will merely become an overture to a larger regional war, and one where a blip in oil prices becomes a prolonged global recession. Regional instability that might follow "victory" will be magnified. The Shakespearean quote, "cry havoc and let loose the dogs of war" expresses the simple rule that wars, like fires are far easier to start than to contain or put out.

3. The potential for a major regional war over Iran should give greater impetus to all sides to avoid conflict and act on previously agreed objectives for security in the region as a whole. In this respect the UNSC (687, 1540) objective of establishing a WMD Free Zone in the Middle East should be given far greater political investment by all parties.

¹ “About ten days after 9/11, I went through the Pentagon and I saw Secretary Rumsfeld and Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz. I went downstairs just to say hello to some of the people on the Joint Staff who used to work for me, and one of the generals called me in. He said, “Sir, you’ve got to come in and talk to me a second.” I said, “Well, you’re too busy.” He said, “No, no.” He says, “We’ve made the decision we’re going to war with Iraq.” This was on or about the 20th of September. I said, “We’re going to war with Iraq? Why?” He said, “I don’t know.” He said, “I guess they don’t know what else to do.” So I said, “Well, did they find some information connecting Saddam to al-Qaeda?” He said, “No, no.” He says, “There’s nothing new that way. They just made the decision to go to war with Iraq.” He said, “I guess it’s like we don’t know what to do about terrorists, but we’ve got a good military and we can take down governments.” And he said, “I guess if the only tool you have is a hammer, every problem has to look like a nail.” So I came back to see him a few weeks later, and by that time we were bombing in Afghanistan. I said, “Are we still going to war with Iraq?” And he said, “Oh, it’s worse than that.” He reached over on his desk. He picked up a piece of paper. And he said, “I just got this down from upstairs” -- meaning the Secretary of Defense’s office -- “today.” And he said, **“This is a memo that describes how we’re going to take out seven countries in five years, starting with Iraq, and then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and, finishing off, Iran.”** I said, “Is it classified?” He said, “Yes, sir.” I said, “Well, don’t show it to me.” And I saw him a year or so ago, and I said, “You remember that?” He said, “Sir, I didn’t show you that memo! I didn’t show it to you!” (emphasis added)

General Wesley Clark, March 2nd 2007, describing a conversation in the Pentagon in September 2001 on www.democracynow.org

N.B. Since 2001 of the seven countries mentioned; The regime has been changed in Iraq, Lebanon and Somalia. The Libyan government has changed orientation and aligned with the West. The positions of the Sudan and Syrian governments have weakened. Iran remains defiant.

² Daniel Plesch, Next Target Tehran, The Guardian, 15 January 2007.

³ Air Force Doctrine Document 1 (AFDD-1)

⁴ A full documentation of the establishment of the US Global Strike system can be found at <http://www.fas.org/ssp/docs/GlobalStrikeReport.pdf>

⁵ More details about MOP can be found at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/munitions/dshtw.htm>.

⁶ Further analysis of global strike capabilities with reference to a war with Iran can be found at http://www.tau.ac.il/jcss/sa/10_1_09.html.

⁷ There are a variety of media reports for the MOP development program. These include <http://www.strategypage.com/dls/articles/20078623938.asp>; http://www.domain-b.com/aero/july/2007/20070724_penetration.htm;

⁸ Further analysis of global strike capabilities with reference to a war with Iran can be found at http://www.tau.ac.il/jcss/sa/10_1_09.html.

⁹ This thinking is backed up by the September 2006 Time magazine article which gave some details of the likely military operations the United States was planning for in an attack on Iran. It reported that “No one is talking about a ground invasion of Iran. Too many U.S. troops are tied down elsewhere to make it possible, and besides, it isn't necessary. If the U.S. goal is simply to stunt Iran's nuclear program, it can be done better and more safely by air. An attack limited to Iran's nuclear facilities would nonetheless require a massive campaign. Experts say that Iran has between 18 and 30 nuclear-related facilities. The sites are dispersed around the country - some in the open, some cloaked in the guise of conventional factories, some buried deep underground. A Pentagon official says that among the known sites there are 1,500 different “aim points,” which means the campaign could well require the involvement of almost every type of aircraft in the U.S. arsenal: Stealth bombers and fighters, B-1s and B-2s, as well as F-15s and F-16s operating from land and F-18s from aircraft carriers. GPS-guided munitions and laser-targeted bombs - sighted by satellite, spotter aircraft and unmanned vehicles - would do most of the bunker busting. But because many of the targets are hardened under several feet of reinforced concrete, most would have to be hit over and over to ensure that they were destroyed or sufficiently damaged. The U.S. would have to mount the usual aerial ballet, refueling tankers as well as search-and-rescue helicopters in case pilots were shot down by Iran's aging but possibly still effective air defenses. U.S. submarines and ships could launch cruise missiles as well, but their warheads are generally too small to do much damage to reinforced concrete - and might be used for secondary targets. An operation of that size would hardly be surgical. Many sites are in highly populated areas, so civilian casualties would be a certainty.” (Michael Duffy, What Would War Look Like?, Time Magazine, 17 September 2006.)

¹⁰ The Air Combat Information Group (www.acig.org, an independent analysis group producing information on air warfare since 1945) analyzed the potential for this kind of scenario in 2003. “The core target set for both minimal and maximal operations would be the Iranian nuclear industry. Attacks on Iran’s air defences would not seek to cause long-term degradation, though any maximal plan would require a broader range of air defence targets to be struck. Beyond this, the two concepts of operations diverge. A maximal operation might embrace a wider strike against known or suspected non-nuclear elements of the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programme, such as alleged biological weapons centres recently designated by the Iranian opposition – the Mojaheddin-e Khalq Organisation (MKO). As in Desert Fox, the US may strike delivery systems – strategic missiles and long-range aircraft – as a means of setting back Iran’s overarching capability to deploy WMD. Unlike Israel, the US would have a responsibility to screen its own deployed forces in the Gulf and the maritime assets and homelands of regional allies from any Iranian response. This could draw the US into strikes on anti-shipping missiles, tactical ballistic missiles, and naval forces. The US could also launch counter-terrorism strikes against the sections of Iran’s government accused of sponsoring terrorism – the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) and the Quds sections of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) – or in response to actionable intelligence that located Al Qaeda or Hezbollah leadership figures in Iran. A maximal air operation in Iran would thus have great potential for ‘mission creep’, with an ever-broadening number of systems filling out the target list. Dr. Michael Knights, Hard Target: Rolling-Back Iranian Nuclear Programmes, Arabian Peninsula & Persian Gulf Database, Air Combat Information Group, 18 December 2003. Available at http://www.acig.org/artman/publish/printer_398.shtml on 17 January 2007.

¹¹ **Cordesman:** Possible US War Plans: Attacking, Delaying, and Waiting Out

If the US does choose to respond militarily, it has several major types of military and strategic options. Each of these options might have many of the following broad characteristics, although it should be stressed that these are only rough outlines of US options and are purely speculative and illustrative points. They are more warnings than recommendations, and they are not based on any inside knowledge of actual US war plans, and calculations. Those who argue strongly for and against such options should note, however, that there are many different ways in which the US could act. There are no rules or certainties that either say such attacks could not succeed or that they would.

Demonstrative, Coercive, or Deterrent Strikes

1. Conduct a few cruise missile or stealth strikes simply as a demonstration or warning of the

seriousness of US intentions if Iran does not comply with the terms of the EU3 or UN.

2. Hit at least one high value target recognized by IAEA and EU3 to show credibility to Iran, minimize international criticism.

3. Might strike at new sites and activities to show Iran cannot secretly proceed with, or expand its efforts, by ignoring the UN or EU3.

4. Could carrier base; would not need territory of Gulf ally.

5. International reaction would be a problem regardless of the level of US action.

6. Might trigger Iranian counteraction in Iraq, Afghanistan, and dealing with Hezbollah.

Limited US attacks:

1. Limited strike would probably take 16-20 Cruise missile and strike sorties. (Total sorties in Gulf and area would probably have to total 100 or more including escorts, enablers, and refuelers.

2. Might be able to combine B-2s and carrier-based aircraft and sea-launched cruise missiles. Might well need land base(s) in Gulf for staging, refueling, and recovery.

3. Goal would be at least 2-3 of most costly and major facilities critically damaged or destroyed.

4. Hit at high value targets recognized by IAEA and EU3 to show credibility to Iran, minimize international criticism.

5. Might strike at new sites and activities to show Iran cannot secretly proceed with, or expand its efforts, by ignoring the UN or EU3.

6. Might slow down Iran if used stealth aircraft to strike at hard and underground targets, -but impact over time would probably still be more demonstrative than crippling.

7. Hitting hard and underground targets could easily require multiple strikes during mission, and follow-on restrikes to be effective.

8. Battle damage would be a significant problem, particularly for large buildings and underground facilities.

9. Size and effectiveness would depend very heavily on the quality of US intelligence, and suitability of given ordnance, as well as the time the US sought to inflict a given effect.

10. Iran's technology base would survive; the same would be true of much of equipment even in facilities hit with strikes. Little impact, if any, on pool of scientists and experts.

11. Iranian response in terms of proliferation could vary sharply and unpredictably: Deter and delay vs. mobilize and provoke.

12. Likely to produce cosmetic Iranian change in behavior at best. Would probably make Iran disperse program even more, and drive it to deep underground facilities. Might provoke to implement (more) active biological warfare program.

13. Any oil embargo likely to be demonstrative.

14. Would probably trigger Iranian counteraction in Iraq, Afghanistan, and dealing with Hezbollah.

15. International reaction could be a serious problem; US might well face same level of political problems as if it had launched a comprehensive strike on Iranian facilities.

Major US attacks on Iranian CBRN and major missile targets:

1. 200-600 cruise missiles and strike sorties; would have to be at least a matching number of escorts, enablers, and refuelers. Period of attacks could extend from 3 to 10 days.

2. Hit all suspect facilities for nuclear, missile, BW, and related C4IBM.

3. Knock out key surface-to-air missile sites and radars for future freedom of action

4. Would need to combine B-2s, carrier-based aircraft and sea-launched cruise missiles, and used of land base(s) in Gulf for staging, refueling, and recovery.

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5. *Threaten to strike extensively at Iranian capabilities for asymmetric warfare and to threaten tanker traffic, facilities in the Gulf, and neighboring states.*
 6. *At least 7-10 days to fully execute and validate.*
 7. *Goal would be at least 70-80% of most costly and major facilities critically damaged or destroyed.*
 8. *Hit at all high value targets recognized by IAEA and EU3 to show credibility to Iran, minimize international criticism, but also possible sites as well.*
 9. *Strike at all known new sites and activities to show Iran cannot secretly proceed with, or expand its efforts, unless hold back some targets as hostages to the future.*
 10. *Impact over time would probably be crippling, but Iran might still covertly assemble some nuclear device and could not halt Iranian biological weapons effort.*
 11. *Hitting hard and underground targets could easily require multiple strikes during mission, and follow-on restrikes to be effective.*
 12. *Battle damage would be a significant problem, particularly for large buildings and underground facilities.*
 13. *Size and effectiveness would depend very heavily on the quality of US intelligence and suitability of given ordnance, as well as the time the US sought to inflict a given effect.*
 14. *Much of Iran's technology base would still survive; the same would be true of many equipment items, even in facilities hit with strikes. Some impact, if any, on pool of scientists and experts.*
 15. *Iranian response in terms of proliferation could vary sharply and unpredictably: Deter and delay vs. mobilize and provoke.*
 16. *A truly serious strike may be enough of a deterrent to change Iranian behavior, particularly if coupled to the threat of follow on strikes in the future. It still, however, could as easily produce only a cosmetic Iranian change in behavior at best. Iran might still disperse its program even more, and shift to multiple, small, deep underground facilities.*
 17. *Might well provoke Iran to implement (more) active biological warfare program.*
 18. *An oil embargo might be serious.*
 19. *Iranian government could probably not prevent some elements in Iranian forces and intelligence from seeking to use Iraq, Afghanistan, support of terrorism, and Hezbollah to hit back at the US and its allies if it tried; it probably would not try.*
 20. *International reaction would be a serious problem, but the US might well face same level of political problems as if it had launched a small strike on Iranian facilities.*

Major US attacks on military and related civilian targets:

1. *1000-2,500 cruise missiles and strike sorties*
2. *Hit all suspect facilities for nuclear, missile, BW, and C4IBM, and potentially "technology base" targets including universities, dual use facilities.*
3. *Either strike extensively at Iranian capabilities for asymmetric warfare and to threaten tanker traffic, facilities in the Gulf, and neighboring states or threaten to do so if Iran should deploy for such action.*
4. *Would require a major portion of total US global assets. Need to combine B-2s, other bombers, and carrier-based aircraft and sea-launched cruise missiles. Would need land base(s) in Gulf for staging, refueling, and recovery. Staging out of Diego Garcia would be highly desirable.*
5. *Would probably take several weeks to two months to fully execute and validate.*
6. *Goal would be 70-80%-plus of most costly and major CBRN, missile and other delivery systems, key conventional air and naval strike assets, and major military production facilities critically*

damaged or destroyed.

- 7. Hit at all high value targets recognized by IAEA and EU3 to show credibility to Iran, minimize international criticism, but also possible sites as well.*
- 8. Strike at all known new sites and activities to show Iran cannot secretly proceed with, or expand its efforts, unless hold back some targets as hostages to the future.*
- 9. Hitting hard and underground targets could easily require multiple strikes during mission, and follow-on restrikes to be effective.*
- 10. Impact over time would probably be crippling, but Iran might still covertly assemble some nuclear device and could not halt Iranian biological weapons effort.*
- 11. Battle damage would be a significant problem, particularly for large buildings and underground facilities.*
- 12. Size and effectiveness would depend very heavily on the quality of US intelligence and suitability of given ordnance, as well as the time the US sought to inflict a given effect.*
- 13. Much of Iran's technology base would still survive; the same would be true of many equipment items, even in facilities hit with strikes. Some impact, if any, on pool of scientists and experts.*
- 14. Iranian response in terms of proliferation could vary sharply and unpredictably: Deter and delay vs. mobilize and provoke.*
- 15. Such a series of strikes might be enough of a deterrent to change Iranian behavior, particularly if coupled to the threat of follow on strikes in the future. It still, however, could as easily produce only a cosmetic Iranian change in behavior at best. Iran might still disperse its program even more, and shift to multiple, small, deep underground facilities.*
- 16. Might well provoke Iran to implement (more) active biological warfare program.*
- 17. An oil embargo might be serious.*
- 18. Iranian government could probably not prevent some elements in Iranian forces and intelligence from seeking to use Iraq, Afghanistan, support of terrorism, and Hezbollah to hit back at the US and its allies if it tried; it probably would not try.*
- 19. International reaction would be a serious problem, and far greater than strikes that could be clearly associated with Iran's efforts to proliferate.*

Delay and then strike:

- 1. The US could execute any of the above options, and wait until after Iran provided proof was proliferating. Such a "smoking gun" would create a much higher chance of allied support, and international tolerance or consensus*
- 2. Iran will have committed major resources, and created much higher value targets*
- 3. The counter-risk is an unanticipated Iranian break out; some form of Iranian launch on warning (LOW), launch under attack (LUA), or survivable "ride out" capability.*
- 4. Iranian dispersal and sheltering may be much better.*
- 5. Iran might have biological weapons as a counter*
- 6. Allied and regional reactions would be uncertain. Time tends to breed tolerance of proliferation.*

¹² Gen. Henry H. Shelton, Special Operations Forces: Key Role in Preventive Defense, Defense Issues: Volume 12, Number 12.

¹³ William S. Cohen, Secretary of Defense, Annual Report to Congress 1996, Chapter 22, Department of Defense.

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By [Reuel Marc Gerecht](#) | April 14, 2006

"The opponents of military strikes against the mullahs' weapons facilities say there are no guarantees that we can permanently destroy their weapons production. This is true. We can't guarantee the results. But what we can do is demonstrate, to the mullahs and to others elsewhere, that even with these

uncertainties, in a post-9/11 world the United States has red lines that will compel it to act. And one nonnegotiable red line is that we will not sit idly and watch a virulently anti-American terrorist-supporting rogue state obtain nukes. We will not be intimidated by threats of terrorism, oil-price spikes, or hostile world opinion. If the ruling clerical elite wants a head-on collision with a determined superpower, then that's their choice.

“No matter what happens, it is long overdue for the Bush administration to get serious about building clandestine mechanisms to support Iranians who want to change their regime. This will take time and be brutally difficult. And overt democracy support to Iranians—which is the Bush administration's current game plan—isn't likely to draw many recruits. Most Iranians probably know that this approach is a one-way invitation to Evin prison, which isn't the most effective place for expressing dissent. However we go about assisting the opposition, the prospects for removing the regime before it acquires nuclear weapons are slim.

“So we will all have to wait for President Bush to decide whether nuclear weapons in the hands of Khamenei, Rafsanjani, Ahmadinejad, and the Revolutionary Guards Corps are something we can live with. Given the Islamic Republic's dark history, the burden of proof ought to be on those who favor accommodating a nuclear Iran. Those who are unwilling to accommodate it, however, need to be honest and admit that diplomacy and sanctions and covert operations probably won't succeed, and that we may have to fight a war—perhaps sooner rather than later—to stop such evil men from obtaining the worst weapons we know.”

“Maybe the Mullahs Don't Want War”

http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.24241/pub_detail.asp

By [David Frum](#) | April 18, 2006

“If there is to be any hope of avoiding a U.S.-Iranian war, the U.S. and its friends have to act now to stop the confrontation from working for the mullahs—and start making it work against them.

“That would begin with recognizing that the Iranians do fear the United States and do fear war—and that the more credible the threat of an American strike is, the better the hopes for a negotiated end. Which in turn means that America's friends must applaud, not criticize, when the Americans take a tough line—when, for example, they position their forces in a more menacing way, or test ‘bunker-busting’ bombs, or fund anti-regime Iranian groups.

“There are nervous days ahead, and the winner will be the side better able to keep its nerve. And if anyone finds this confrontation too scary, please keep in mind: The confrontations will only get scarier after the Iranians go nuclear.”

“Nuclear Hostage Crisis”

http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.24232/pub_detail.asp

By [Michael Rubin](#) | April 14, 2006

“It is comforting but dangerous and naive to believe a magic formula of incentives and guarantees can defuse the Iranian nuclear crisis. The cost of diplomacy alone is high. The Islamic Republic did not construct its centrifuge cascade overnight. Mr. Ahmadinejad may want glory, but the credit for Iran's nuclear enrichment lies with his reformist and pragmatist predecessors. That Iran is now enriching uranium is a testament to years of diplomatic insincerity.

“There is little to negotiate. Either Iran agrees to open its sites—both declared and undeclared—to unfettered inspection, or it does not. Either Tehran details its dealings with Pakistani nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan, or it does not. While the National Intelligence Estimate says Iran is five to 10 years away from building a bomb, this assumption rests on an entirely domestic program. If Iran purchases weapons-grade material from outside suppliers, all bets are off. North Korea, partner in Washington's last Grand Bargain, would be happy to sell.

“The cost of any military strike on Iran would be high, although not as high as the cost of the Islamic Republic gaining nuclear weapons. The Bush administration is paying the price for more than five years without a cogent, coordinated Iran policy. Each passing day limits policy options. Engaging the regime will preserve the problem, not eliminate it. Only when the regime is accountable to the Iranian people can there be a peaceful solution. To do this requires targeted sanctions—freezing assets and travel bans—on regimes officials, coupled with augmented and expedited investment in independent

rather than government-licensed civil society, labor unions, and media. It may be too late, but it would be irresponsible not to try.”

“Iran is at War with Us”

http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.24123/pub_detail.asp

By [Michael Ledeen](#) | March 28, 2006

“It’s time to take action against Iran and its half-brother Syria, for the carnage they have unleashed against us and the Iraqis. We know in detail the location of terrorist training camps run by the Iranian and Syrian terror masters; we should strike at them, and at the bases run by Hezbollah and the Revolutionary Guards as staging points for terrorist sorties into Iraq. No doubt the Iraqi armed forces would be delighted to participate, instead of constantly playing defense in their own half of the battlefield. And there are potent democratic forces among the Syrian people as well, as worthy of our support as the Iranians.

“Once the mullahs and their terrorist allies see that we have understood the nature of this war, that we are determined to promote regime change in Tehran and Damascus, and will not give them a pass on their murderous activities in Iraq, then it might make sense to talk to Khamenei’s representatives. We could even expand the agenda from Iraqi matters to the real issue: we could negotiate their departure, and then turn to the organization of national referenda on the form of free governments, and elections to empower the former victims of a murderous and fanatical tyranny that has deluded itself into believing that it is invincible.”

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