

Unknown

From: Dr. M. Javad Zarif [zarif@141.com]
Sent: Thursday, August 30, 2007 7:39 PM
To: 'Trita Parsi'
Subject: RE: White House moves on Iran with Congress in recess

Salaam Trita,

Many thanks for sending me this excellent – as usual – piece.

Javad

From: Trita Parsi [mailto:tp@tritaparsi.com]
Sent: Wednesday, August 29, 2007 6:39 PM
To: Trita Parsi
Subject: White House moves on Iran with Congress in recess

With Congress being in recess, the White House seems to have found an opportunity to ratchet up tensions with Iran without facing much pushback. President Bush's tough speech on Iran yesterday, which followed President Ahmadinejad's provocative statements at a Tehran press conference hours earlier, on surface appears as business as usual. But if Congress is unable or unwilling to contain deliberate or unintentional escalation, then there may be little business as usual about Washington and Tehran's intensified war of words.

In the analysis below, published by Inter-Press Services today, the issue is discussed in greater detail.

PS. My book "Tracherous Alliance" has hit the shelves! [You can also order it from Amazon here.](#) Israel's former foreign minister **Shlomo Ben-Ami** calls the book "a brilliant interpretation of one of today's most enigmatic conflicts," **Francis Fukuyama** says it is "extremely important," **John Mearsheimer** calls it "outstanding" and former National Security Advisor **Zbigniew Brzezinski** writes that *Tracherous Alliance* is "a penetrating, provocative, and very timely study."

Sincerely,
 Trita Parsi, PhD
www.tritaparsi.com

POLITICS: Bush Indictment of Iran Tops Usual Rhetoric

<http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=39061>

Analysis by Trita Parsi*

WASHINGTON, August 29 - The George W. Bush administration has seemingly taken advantage of the Congressional recess to escalate tensions with Iran. Earlier in August, the State Department revealed plans to designate the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) as a global terrorist organisation. On Tuesday, in a speech to U.S. war veterans in Nevada, President Bush raised the temperature further by declaring his intent to "confront Tehran's murderous activities" in Iraq.

But what on the surface may appear as business as usual in the war of words between Tehran

and Washington may in reality repeat an earlier pattern widely suspected to have been aimed at provoking war with Iran.

With Congress gearing up for a fight with the White House on the surge policy in Iraq, President Bush has arguably many reasons to talk up tensions with Iran. Focusing on Iran may help deflect attention away from the surge strategy's failure to turn the tide in Iraq. It can also help convince Congress that Iran is responsible for U.S. misfortunes in Iraq and that cutting the funds for the war would embolden the clergy in Tehran.

Iran's radical president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, is certainly not making the work of the administration more difficult. Shortly before Bush's address to the Nevada war veterans, Ahmadinejad did his part in ratcheting up tensions.

"Soon, we will see a huge power vacuum in the region," he predicted at a press conference. "Of course, we are prepared to fill the gap, with the help of neighbours and regional friends like Saudi Arabia, and with the help of the Iraqi nation," he continued in a clear reference to the United States's declining position in the Middle East and Iran's bid to reclaim a regional leadership role.

Still, the nature and implications of the Bush administration's recent moves do not have the characteristics of a customary rhetorical deflection exercise. Accusing Iran of seeking to put an already unstable Middle East under "the shadow of a nuclear holocaust" and promising to confront Tehran -- whose actions "threaten the security of nations everywhere" -- before it is too late echo statements made by the Bush White House about Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein prior to the invasion of Iraq.

In fact, Bush's speech to the veterans in Nevada has several similarities to his address to the nation on Jan. 10. That was also slated as a major speech on Iraq, though it spelled out little new about Washington's strategy except to call for staying the course. Instead, it revealed key elements of the U.S.'s new aggressive posture on Iran.

For the first time, the president accused Iran of "providing material support for attacks on American troops" while promising to "disrupt the attacks on our forces" and "seek out and destroy the networks providing advanced weaponry and training to our enemies in Iraq."

Moments after the president's speech in January, U.S. Special Forces stormed an Iranian consulate in Erbil in northern Iraq, arresting five Iranians who Tehran said were diplomats. Washington described the detained Iranians as agents and members of the IRGC. Later that day, U.S. forces almost clashed with Kurdish peshmerga militia forces when seeking to arrest more Iranians at Erbil's airport.

The U.S. move drew stark criticism from the Iraqi government. "What happened... was very annoying because there has been an Iranian liaison office there for years and it provides services to the citizens," Iraq's Minister of Foreign Affairs Hoshiyar Zebari told Al-Arabiya television.

Similarly, Bush's harsh words for Iran in Nevada were promptly followed by a raid at the Sheraton Ishtar Hotel in Baghdad where eight Iranian nationals were arrested. The group included two diplomats and six members of a delegation from Iran's Electricity Ministry. A U.S.-funded radio station reported that the Iranian delegation was in Baghdad to negotiate contracts on electric power stations.

While the eight Iranians were later released -- unlike the five taken in Erbil who still remain in U.S. custody -- actions of this kind combined with the intensified war of words can, intentionally or by accident, trigger a larger crisis. (A U.S. official later called the Sheraton incident "regrettable" and denied that it was related to President Bush's remarks in Nevada).

In January, the president's allegations against Iran were widely seen as preparing the grounds for war. Key lawmakers in the newly elected Democratic Congress moved swiftly to challenge the administration and demand evidence for its claims.

At a hearing in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee a day after the president's Jan. 10 address, Senator Chuck Hagel of Nebraska drew parallels with the Richard Nixon administration's attempt to deceive the public regarding the U.S. government's efforts to expand the Vietnam War into Cambodia.

"[O]ur government lied to the American people and said we didn't cross the border going into Cambodia. In fact we did," he told Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. "I think this speech given last night by this president represents the most dangerous foreign policy blunder in this country since Vietnam, if it's carried out. I will resist it," Hagel continued.

Other lawmakers publicly questioned the veracity of the president's allegations regarding Iranian involvement in Iraq. All in all, the pushback from Congress in January is believed to have played a key role in preventing hawks in the administration from forcing the U.S. into a military confrontation with Iran.

But with Congress preparing for a fight over Iraq -- not Iran -- and with key lawmakers planning to pass legislation imposing harsh new sanctions on Tehran, Congress' ability and willingness to simultaneously contain deliberate or unintentional escalation with Iran may be limited. If so, there may be little business as usual about Washington and Tehran's intensified war of words.

**Dr. Trita Parsi is the author of "[Traacherous Alliance -- The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran and the United States](#)" (Yale University Press, 2007). He is also president of the National Iranian American Council (<http://www.niacouncil.org/>). (END/IPS/NA AP/IP IR BW/TP/LD/07)*

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