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Tenth Anniversary of Iraq Invasion: Lessons & Warnings for an Illegal War on Iran

By Muhammad Sahimi

March 18, 2013

March 19 is the tenth anniversary of invasion of Iraq by the United States, Britain and their allies. George W. Bush declared that the goals of the invasion were "to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, to end Saddam Hussein's support for terrorism, and to free the Iraqi people." Bush's poodle, British Prime Minister Tony Blair claimed that Iraq was invaded due to its failure to take a "final opportunity" to disarm itself of its arsenal of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons that it presented an immediate and intolerable threat to world peace. Both lied and deceived the public, and did so intentionally. Bush's infamous sixteen words, "The British Government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa," turned out to be a lie. The CIA had actually warned Bush's national security adviser Condoleezza Rice about it, but she had ignored it. The speech in the United Nations Security Council by Bush's Secretary of State Colin Powell on February 5, 2003 became a "blot" in his record. In his speech Powell declared that "there can be no doubt that Saddam Hussein has biological weapons and the capability to rapidly produce more, many more," but the "evidence" that he presented for his claims turned out to be utterly wrong. The devastation to Iraq, its infrastructure, and its people have been documented and enumerated by many, including the author, and need not be repeated here. Toppling Saddam Hussein's regime was supposed to bring peace to the Middle East, but the region is currently in complete turmoil.

According to former NATO and the U.S. Southern Command commander General Wesley Clark, after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the U.S. the Bush administration was to invade seven countries in the Middle East and Africa and topple their regimes. In addition to Iraq, Libya, Syria, Lebanon, Somalia, Sudan, and Iran were also the target. But, despite huge setbacks, the plan has been more or less implemented. The war between Israel and Lebanese Hezbollah during summer of 2006 was supposed to represent the beginning of a "new Middle East" and remaking of Lebanon, but failed. The so-called "humanitarian intervention" in Libya by the U.S., NATO, and Saudi Arabia was nothing but naked military aggression, with the carnage there continuing. Washington is involved in a "secret" war in Somalia, and has also been deeply involved in South Sudan for years due to the region's significant oil reserves. Needless to say, the bloody sectarian war in Syria has been raging for two years, with U.S. allies Saudi Arabia and Qatar arming the Salafi-Wahabi extremist and terrorist forces in Syria, the worst possible mistake that any nation can make.

This leaves only Iran, the prime target of the War Party in the U.S. and its Israeli allies. In May 2003, only two months after the invasion when Bush made the foolish declaration "mission accomplished," a senior official in his administration said, "Anyone can go to Baghdad. Real men go to Tehran." Ever since then the War Party and Israel lobby have been trying to send the American youth to war with Iran, spill the American blood, and waste trillions of dollars for another war, just so that Israel can feel "safe." The current situation regarding Iran is eerily similar to the run-up to the war with Iraq.

Just as Hans Blix, former Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) , warned the U.S. not to rush a war with Iraq, he is doing the same now regarding Iran.

Just as the U.S. mainstream media was complicit in debunking, or at least examining more closely, all the lies and exaggerations about Iraq's non-existence weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), and was actually a culprit in propagating the lies and exaggerations, it is now doing the same regarding Iran. The same *Washington Post* that declared the bogus evidence that Powell presented to the UN Security Council irrefutable, is now spreading baseless allegations about Iran's nuclear program, and its editorial page, taken over by the neoconservatives, is busy with its warmongering advocacy regarding Iran, while its op-ed pieces claim that attacking Iran "will calm nerves the region," and that Iran could produce a bomb in 62 days. The latter piece was published on November 7, 2011, and 491 days later (at the time of writing this piece) the bomb has not materialized. And then, of course, the *Post* has the Likud spokeswoman Jennifer Rubin on its staff who rants in her "Right Turn" columns. For her warmongering advocacy regarding Iran see, for example, here, here, and here. The outlandish claims that the *Post's* writers make about Iran's imminent threat to the U.S. have a long history; see here, here, and here, for example.

The *New York Times*, the same newspaper that published lies and exaggerations by Judith Miller and Michael Gordon about Iraq's WMDs – in fact, Gordon's lies about Iraq are still continuing – has contributed mightily to propagating exaggerations and innuendoes about Iran's nuclear program. The *Times'* David Sanger, its leading analyst of Iran's nuclear program, has repeatedly referred to the program as a *weapon* program, and has also warned about the "direct threat to the U.S." by Iran's non-existent nuclear weapon program. Another of the *Times'* reporters, Steven

Erlanger, was caught lying about Iran's nuclear program. The work of Sanger, Erlanger, and a third reporter, William Broad, got so bad that ombudsman Arthur S. Brisbane had to intervene, expressing the view that the paper's coverage of Iran's nuclear program had been unbalanced. The *Times* has learned nothing from its coverage of the Iraq debacle.

The *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* have many allies. One is George Jahn of the Associated Press who has had so many "exclusive" reports on Iran's nuclear program that have turned out to be bogus that I have simply lost track of its number. Add to them the British papers *Daily Telegraph* and the Rupert Murdoch-owned *Times of London*. The *Telegraph's* Con Coughlin has reported many bogus stories about Iran's nuclear program, including the claim that the IAEA could not account for 50-60 tons of uranium, prompting the IAEA to deny the fabrication. See here for more of his fabrications. Another *Telegraph's* reporter David Blair claimed that Iran tried to get uranium by arming Somalia, another sheer fabrication.

But here is the crucial point about the mainstream media: their goal is not to prove anything about Iran's nuclear program. The sort of campaign of which these reports form a part requires no real evidence, but merely the constant reiteration of accusations, so that a layman or casual observer is ultimately led to believe that there must be *something* to them.

Just as we had Ahmed Chalabi and the Curveball that fed the War Party with lies about Iraq's non-existent WMDs, we also have Iranian Ahmed Chalabis and Curveballs. There are too many candidates for an Iranian Chalabi. One is Amir Abbas Fakhrahar, a political charlatan and darling of the neocons and Richard Perle. Leaked State Department cables released by Wikileaks indicate that he has told the State Department that the U.S. must impose complete sanctions on Iran and attack Iran's nuclear facilities, and that Iranians would welcome foreign intervention. He has also called for "regime change."

Another candidate is Reza Pahlavi, a son of the late Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Others include several of the Iranian political activists that have moved to the U.S. with the hope of receiving support for regime change in Iran; see here, here, and here. Fakhrahar and Pahlavi have close relationship and work together. Following the NATO intervention in Libya and the civil war in Syria, Reza Pahlavi has formed a so-called National Council of Iran, with the hope that he and his Council, which is nothing but a council of diehard Iranian royalists and monarchists, would receive the U.S. support and recognition, while at the same time he criticizes President Obama for not confronting Iran. In an interview with an Israeli television, Reza Pahlavi even asked Israel to help Iran to develop democracy. In his trip to Israel Fakhrahar did the same. Imagine: Israel helping the cause of democracy in Iran!

There are also many candidates for an Iranian Curveball. One is Reza Kahlili who presents himself as a former CIA agent in Iran. He has reported many bogus stories about Iran's nuclear program, with the latest of which being a fabrication about an explosion in the Fordow uranium enrichment facility near Qom, Iran, which the IAEA denied. Kahlili has even claimed that Iran already has tactical nuclear weapons that it acquired from the old Soviet Union right after it collapsed at the end of 1991. Another candidate is Hamid Reza Zakeri who claims to be a former agent of Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and, similar to Kahlili, has reported outlandish stories

about Iran's regime, including the claim that Iran played a leading role in the September 11 terrorist attacks..

One difference between the current state of affairs regarding Iran and Iraq is that, while Blix and another former IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei tried to prevent a war in Iraq by urging the UN to give them more time for inspecting the country, the current IAEA Director Yukiya Amano has completely politicized the IAEA, and is a minion of the U.S. See also Robert Parry's piece, as well as Julian Borger's report and criticism of Amano.

In his political persecution of Iran's nuclear program Amano has had an ally in David Albright, President of Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) in Washington and the "go-to-expert" when it comes to Iran's nuclear program. During the Iraqi crisis, Albright was a more or less objective analyst. But, gradually, he has moved to the far right and now releases one sensational, but most often baseless, analysis after another on the developments on Iran's nuclear program. He has transformed himself to an expert on the Middle East, making recommendations not only about Iran, but also the entire Middle East. He has ventured into issues for which he has absolutely no expertise or knowledge, such as recommending how the U.S. should intervene *in Syria*. This is not surprising. When the funders of the Institute are, among others, the right wing Smith Richardson Foundation, the Amano-led politicized IAEA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, and the U.S. Department of Energy, one cannot expect objective analyses by Albright. See also [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) for critiques of his work. I suggest that ISIS should stand for Institute for Scary Iranian Stories, for which Albright has become a great "expert."

And, of course, no discussion of the similarities between Iran and Iraq is complete without mentioning the devastating economic sanctions imposed on Iraq in the 1990s all the way to its invasion in 2003, and their parallels imposed on Iran. The prestigious British medical journal Lancet put the number of dead Iraqi children as a result of the sanctions at 567,000. But, since the sanctions did not topple Saddam Hussein's regime, Iraq was invaded. Lancet estimated the number of casualties as the result of the invasion to be up to 793,000. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, retired Archbishop Desmond Tutu has called for Blair and George Bush to face prosecution at the International Criminal Court for their role in the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

The same type of sanctions have been imposed on Iran, creating great hardship for the ordinary Iranian people who have no say in what their leaders decide, but failing to change the fundamental stance of Iran's leaders regarding their nation's right to have the complete nuclear fuel cycle on Iran's soil. The War Party and Israel lobby hope that the ongoing negotiations between Iran and the 5+1 group – the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany – will fail, so that they can finally get their war with Iran.

It has been ten years since the catastrophic, illegal, and immoral invasion of Iraq that has cost the U.S. and the people of the Middle East dearly. If the American people do not learn their lessons and allow another illegal and criminal war in the Middle East, this time against Iran, they will have no one but themselves to blame. They must keep in mind that compared with a war with Iran, Iraq's invasion and its aftermath would be child's play.