

Sloppy Comments on Iran's 'Nukes'

Exclusive: The New York Times and other U.S. news outlets failed miserably to tell the truth before the Iraq War and they aren't doing much better as new war clouds build over Iran. Journalists lazily repeat false assumptions like Iran's purported threat to attack Israel with a nuclear bomb, Robert Parry writes.

By Robert Parry

As Americans ponder a possible war with Iran over its nuclear program, they reasonably might turn to someone like Mark Landler, the New York Times' White House correspondent, for a careful explication of the facts. If so, they might have heard an explanation like this, which Landler provided to MSNBC viewers on Monday:

"The Israelis feel the window for that [denying Iran the capability to build nuclear weapons] is closing and it's closing really fast, and if they allow it to close without taking military action, they would find themselves in a position where the Iranians suddenly are in possession of nuclear weapons, which they've threatened already to use against Israel.

"As the Israelis always say, that's an existential threat to Israel, which is something we don't necessarily feel here in the United States."

Now, that sounds really scary that the Iranians have "threatened already to use [nuclear weapons] against Israel" which the Israelis understandably perceive as an "existential threat." Except, of course, that Iran has not threatened to attack Israel with nuclear weapons. Indeed, Iranian leaders continue to deny that they even want nuclear weapons.

Just last month, Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, who controls the armed forces, called "the possession of nuclear weapons a grave sin" and said "the proliferation of such weapons is senseless, destructive and dangerous." He insisted that "the Iranian nation has never pursued and will never pursue nuclear weapons."

Further, the U.S. intelligence community reported in 2007 that Iran stopped research work on a nuclear weapon in 2003 and had not resumed that effort. That assessment was reaffirmed in 2010 and remains the position of the CIA and other intelligence agencies.

Last weekend elections also strengthened Khamenei's hand vis a vis the lame-duck President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, whose erratic statements are often cited by Israel and its supporters to justify a possible military attack on Iran. (Even

before the election, however, Ahmadinejad's power was tightly circumscribed by Khamenei, as [blogger Juan Cole has noted](#).)

Yet, it is common practice for American journalists simply to parrot the Israeli propaganda theme that Iran's achievement of just a "capability" to build a nuclear bomb, even if Iran is not really building one, represents an unacceptable threat to Israel. Those reporters also rarely mention that Israel has an actual arsenal of some 200 to 300 nuclear bombs.

These American journalists presumably see a greater risk to their careers from mentioning such inconvenient truths as the existence of Israel's sophisticated and undeclared nuclear arsenal than from misleading the U.S. people into another "war of choice" in the Middle East. You may recall a similar pattern during the run-up to the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003.

So, instead of balanced analysis on the true state of play in the Israeli-Iranian stand-off, U.S. journalists like Landler deliver fear- and war-mongering declarations, albeit in measured tones, thus leaving Americans like those MSNBC viewers with the unchallenged assertion that Iran already has threatened to annihilate Israel with nuclear weapons.

Landler did not provide any citation or any detail for his claim. It was presented as just one of those assumptions that everyone knows must be true.

Yet, it would be one of the strangest threats in world history for a nation without nuclear weapons and whose top leader disavows any intent to get nuclear weapons to threaten use of those non-existent weapons against a nation which has a large stockpile of nuclear weapons.

Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. His latest book, *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*, was written with two of his sons, Sam and Nat, and can be ordered at neckdeepbook.com. His two previous books, *Secrecy & Privilege: The Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq* and *Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press & 'Project Truth'* are also available there.

Can Rush Keep It Up?

Gerrymandering Threatens Kucinich

Ohio's Republican-controlled government gerrymandered a new congressional district across a northern strip of the state to pit two progressive Democrats Dennis Kucinich and Marcy Kaptur against each other in Tuesday's primary. Steve Cobble laments this and recalls some of Kucinich's brave stands.

By Steve Cobble

When Congressman Dennis Kucinich sat down in Los Angeles one night just over 10 years ago to write the prophetic speech that became known as "A Prayer for America," the invasion of Iraq was still just an evil gleam in the eyes of George W. Bush, Dick Cheney and Tony Blair. Yet Kucinich had the political courage to stand up by himself, and declare his opposition to the neocon plans:

"Because we did not authorize the invasion of Iraq. We did not authorize the invasion of Iran... We did not authorize war without end. We did not authorize a permanent war economy." But that courageous stand was far from all that Kucinich has done in his congressional career which began in 1997.

On Feb. 15, 2003, the day the world stood up in opposition to war with Iraq, Kucinich rallied with half a million activists in New York City. On Oct. 24, 2001, Kucinich was one of the few who voted against the Patriot Act. Kucinich co-authored, with Rep. John Conyers, the single-payer health-care-for-all bill. Four years ago, Kucinich offered 35 articles of impeachment regarding the Bush/Cheney administration's crimes against the Constitution.

When the time came to officially certify the 2004 Bush versus Kerry presidential votes in Ohio, Kucinich was one of the handful of progressive House members who joined Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-California, to oppose that certification and force a public debate about the electoral irregularities.

Kucinich also is one of the very few members of Congress who has voted to end the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan by cutting off the funding for those wars, the same way the Congress acted to end the Vietnam War in the 1970s.

Dennis Kucinich supports full equality for gays and lesbians. He opposes the Keystone Pipeline project to exploit Canada's Tar Sands, opposes increasing the retirement age for working people, and fiercely opposes cuts in Social Security and Medicare. He supports the Dream Act (to grant permanent residency to some young non-citizens who were brought to the United States as children), favors significant cuts in the military budget, and has long supported fair trade.

All in all, it is hard to think of anyone who has fought as hard for progressive

issues year after year after year as Kucinich has.

So take a second and think – wouldn't you have missed Dennis Kucinich if he had not been there standing up for these progressive values? And won't you miss him if he's not there to carry on the fight next year?

Kucinich is now caught up in a tough primary battle with Rep. Marcy Kaptur because the two Democrats have been pitted against each other by the creation of a gerrymandered district in northern Ohio. The primary vote is on Tuesday.

(If you wish to thank Kucinich for his often lonely work on behalf of progressive causes and peace, his Web site is www.kucinich.us.)

Steve Cobble worked on the presidential campaigns of Jesse Jackson and Dennis Kucinich, helped found AfterDowningStreet.org and Progressive Democrats of America, and currently works on the fight to roll back the *Citizens United* Supreme Court ruling.
