

# A Neocon Admits the Plan to Bomb Iran

**Exclusive:** The neocon Washington Post, which wants to kill the talks aimed at constraining Iran's nuclear program, allowed a contrary opinion of sorts onto its pages a neocon who also wants to collapse the talks but is honest enough to say that the follow-up will be a U.S. war on Iran, reports Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

Not exactly known for truthfulness, U.S. neocons have been trying to reassure the American people that sinking a negotiated deal with Iran to limit its nuclear program would be a painless proposition, but at least one prominent neocon, Joshua Muravchik, acknowledges that the alternative will be war and he likes the idea.

On Sunday, the neocon Washington Post allowed Muravchik to use its opinion section to advocate for an aggressive war against Iran essentially a perpetual U.S. bombing campaign against the country despite the fact that aggressive war is a violation of international law, condemned by the post-World War II Nuremberg Tribunal as "the supreme international crime."

Given that the Post is very restrictive in the op-ed pieces that it prints, it is revealing that advocacy for an unprovoked bombing campaign against Iran is considered within the realm of acceptable opinion. But the truth is that the only difference between Muravchik's view and the Post's own editorial stance is that Muravchik lays out the almost certain consequences of sabotaging a diplomatic solution.

In his [article](#) headlined "War is the only way to stop Iran" in print editions and "War with Iran is probably our best option" online, Muravchik lets the bloody-thirsty neocon cat out of the bag as he agrees with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's hysterical view of Iran but recognizes that killing international negotiations on limiting Iran's nuclear program would leave open only one realistic option:

"What if force is the only way to block Iran from gaining nuclear weapons? That, in fact, is probably the reality. Sanctions may have induced Iran to enter negotiations, but they have not persuaded it to abandon its quest for nuclear weapons. Nor would the stiffer sanctions that Netanyahu advocates bring a different result.

"Does this mean that our only option is war? Yes, although an air campaign targeting Iran's nuclear infrastructure would entail less need for boots on the ground than the war Obama is waging against the Islamic State, which poses far

smaller a threat than Iran does. Wouldn't destroying much of Iran's nuclear infrastructure merely delay its progress? Perhaps, but we can strike as often as necessary."

Typical of the neocons, Muravchik foresees no problem with his endless bombing war against Iran, including the possibility that Iran, which Western intelligence agencies agree is **not** working on a bomb, might reverse its course if it faced repeated bombing assaults from the United States.

This neocon-advocated violation of international law also might further undermine hopes of curbing violence in the Middle East and establishing some form of meaningful order there and elsewhere. This neocon view that America can do whatever it wants to whomever it wants might actually push the rest of the world into a coalition against U.S. bullying that could provoke an existential escalation of violence with nuclear weapons coming into play.

### **Never Seeing Reality**

Of course, neocons never foresee problems as they draw up these war plans at their think tanks and discuss them on their op-ed pages. Muravchik, by the way, is a fellow at the neocon-dominated School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins and the Washington Post's editorial page is run by neocons Fred Hiatt and Jackson Diehl.

But, as U.S. officialdom and the American people should have learned from the Iraq War, neocon schemes often don't play out quite as well in the real world not that the neocons seem to care about the hundreds of thousands of dead Iraqis or the nearly 4,500 U.S. soldiers who died fighting in the neocons' Iraq debacle.

For the neocons, their true guiding star is to enlist the U.S. military as the enforcers of Netanyahu's strategic vision. If Netanyahu says that Iran not al-Qaeda and the Islamic State is the more serious threat then the neocons line up behind that agenda, which also happens to dovetail with the interests of Israel's new ally, Saudi Arabia.

So, Americans hear lots of scary stories about Iran "gobbling up" its neighbors as Netanyahu described in his lecture to a joint session of the U.S. Congress this month even though Iran has not invaded any country for centuries and, indeed, was the target of a Saudi-backed invasion by Iraq in 1980.

Not only did Netanyahu's wildly exaggerate the danger from Iran but he ignored the fact that Iran's involvement in Iraq and Syria has come at the invitation of those governments to help fight the terrorists of al-Qaeda's Nusra Front and the Islamic State. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Congress Cheers Netanyahu's Hatred of](#)

Iran.”]

In other words, Iran is on the same side of those conflicts against Sunni terrorists as the United States is. But what we’re seeing now from Israel and the neocons is a determined effort to shift U.S. focus away from combating Sunni terrorists – some backed by Saudi Arabia – and toward essentially taking their side against Iran, Iraq and Syria.

That’s why the neocons are downplaying the atrocities of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State or for that matter the chopping off of heads by Israel’s Saudi friends while hyping every complaint they can about Iran. [See Consortiumnews.com’s “The Secret Saudi Ties to Terrorism.”]

Muravchik favors this reversal of priorities and doesn’t seem to care that a U.S. bombing campaign against Iran would have a destructive impact on Iran’s ability to blunt the advances of the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda. The neocons also have been hot for bombing Syria’s military, which along with Iran represents the greatest bulwark against the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda.

The neocons and Netanyahu seem quite complacent about the prospect of the Islamic State or Al-Qaeda’s Nusra Front hoisting their black flags over Damascus or even Baghdad. Yet, such a move would almost surely force the U.S. president whether Barack Obama or his successor to return to a ground war in the Middle East at enormous cost to the American people.

The obvious alternative to this truly frightening scenario is to complete the international negotiations requiring Iran to accept intrusive inspections to ensure that its nuclear program remains peaceful and then work with Iran on areas of mutual interests, such as rolling back the advances of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq and Al-Qaeda’s Nusra Front in Syria.

This more rational approach holds out the prospect of achieving some stability in Iraq and if accompanied by realistic negotiations between Syria’s President Bashar al-Assad and his political opponents reducing the bloodletting in Syria if not ending it.

That pragmatic solution could well be the best result both for the people of the region and for U.S. national interests. But none of that would please Netanyahu and the neocons.

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America’s Stolen Narrative*, either in print here or as an e-book (from Amazon and barnesandnoble.com). You also can order Robert Parry’s trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The**

trilogy includes *America's Stolen Narrative*. For details on this offer, [click here](#).

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## The Not So Land of the Free

The United States may be the least self-aware nation on earth, condemning other countries for repressive policies and calling itself the “land of the free” while locking up citizens in staggering numbers often for minor, non-violent offenses, as anti-war activist Kathy Kelly sees while serving time in federal prison.

By Kathy Kelly

It was a little over two weeks ago that Marlo entered Atwood Hall, here in Lexington federal prison. Nearly all the women here are nonviolent offenders. When I first saw Marlo, her eyes seemed glued to the tiled floors as she shuffled along hallways. I guessed her age to be 25 or so.

A few days later, she came to a choir rehearsal. She was still shy, but she looked up and offered a quiet smile when she joined the soprano section. The next time our choir gathered, Marlo raised her hand before we ended our rehearsal. “I got something to say,” she said, as she stood.

“When I first came here, I can tell all of you now, I was terrified. Just plain terrified. I have 70 months, and I felt so scared.” The intake process for this, her introduction to the prison system, had badly frightened her, but before sundown that same day, a second intake process had occurred, with several inmates finding her, reassuring her, and getting her beyond that first panic.

During my four stints in U.S. federal prisons, I’ve witnessed long-term inmates’ unconquerably humane response when a newcomer arrives. An unscripted choreography occurs and the new prisoner finds that other women will help her through the trauma of adjustment to being locked up for many months or years. Halfway through a three-month sentence myself, I’m saddened to realize that I’ll very likely adapt to an outside world for which these women, and prisoners throughout the U.S. prison system, are often completely invisible.

U.S. state and federal prison populations have risen, since 1988, [from 600,000 to an estimated 1,600,000](#) in 2012. This trend shows inhumane behavior on the part of lawmakers and myriads of employees who benefit from the so-called “criminal justice” system. But our entire society bears responsibility for what now can aptly be labeled a “prison-industrial complex.”

Constructing prisons and filling prisons with people who posed little or no threat to our security didn't happen secretively, without our consent. We watched, mesmerized perhaps, and allowed ourselves to become a country with the world's largest prison system.

A friend from home recently sent me encouraging news of Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner's initiative to address the problems in some of the United States' most brutally overcrowded prisons. A [Chicago Tribune article](#) from several weeks ago notes that Rauner plans to reduce the state's prison population by 25 percent over the next ten years, establishing the reduction as a goal through executive order.

The article, by columnist Eric Zorn, cites a widely-cited recent [report](#) by the Vera Institute of Justice that "nearly 75% of the population of both sentenced offenders and pretrial detainees are in jail for nonviolent offenses like traffic, property, drugs or public order violations."

Skyrocketing costs of incarceration have finally convinced some lawmakers to work toward "reducing prison populations." Recently, I read a long report about how the California Department of Corrections has responded to a court-ordered demand that the state reduce the numbers of people locked up in California state prisons.

The order was first issued in 2009 by a three-judge panel. The state appealed the order, but in 2011, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld it, ordering the state of California to comply by 2013. The California government sought and was granted two extensions. As of now, the order insists that California must reduce its prison population, by 2016, to "no more than [137.5 percent of the design capacity](#)" of its state prisons.

Whatever plans Gov. Rauner's committee proposes for Illinois, the notoriously incarceration-minded Illinois state legislature is likely to put up just as vigorous a fight. Meanwhile the California report discusses "cost-effective measures," "recidivism reduction results," "rehabilitative programming" and "programming slots" at "in-state contract facilities." The language, highly impersonal, suggests warehousing. I wonder if zookeepers might be more attentive to the individuality of the beings they cage.

Trapped in a cruel and uncaring system, women here in Atwood Hall reliably find humane ways to cope. Among many signs of daily generosity, one of my favorites is the practice of "window shopping." Women place extra items they can spare in the window sills nearest the stairwells. A new prisoner can find new fresh socks, a warm knit cap, books, magazines, pitchers items that quickly disappear and are soon replenished.

Perhaps we'll begin to see a trend toward finding humane ways to cope with seemingly intractable problems in today's criminal justice system. The U.S. Supreme Court's insistence that the State of California must release many thousands of prisoners signals a trend in which, as Gov. Rauner's order recognizes, "States across the country have enacted bi-partisan, data driven and evidence based reforms that have reduced the use of incarceration and its costs while protecting and improving public safety."

Zorn notes that the MacArthur Foundation recently granted \$75 million for a five-year "Safety and Justice Challenge" meant "to reduce over-incarceration by changing the way America thinks about its prisons and jails." I can't imagine a figure too high to pay, in dollars or in human work hours, to effectively challenge the way U.S. people think about safety and justice. In describing a class that he taught in a New Jersey maximum-security prison, Chris Hedges wrote:

"The mass incarceration of primarily poor people of color, people who seldom have access to adequate legal defense and who are often kept behind bars for years for nonviolent crimes or for crimes they did not commit, is one of the most shameful mass injustices committed in the United States.

"The 28 men in my class have cumulatively spent 515 years in prison. Some of their sentences are utterly disproportionate to the crimes of which they are accused. Most are not even close to finishing their sentences or coming before a parole board, which rarely grants first-time applicants their liberty. Many of them are in for life.

"One of my students was arrested at the age of 14 for a crime that strong evidence suggests he did not commit. He will not be eligible for parole until he is 70. He never had a chance in court and because he cannot afford a private attorney he has no chance now of challenging the grotesque sentence handed to him as a child."

Here in Atwood Hall, guards and administrators know that they imprison humane, caring, generous and talented women, people not very different from their own relatives, friends and co-workers. Where are the "bad sisters" that could ever justify the punishment of isolating women like Marlo from their children and other loved ones for long and wearying years?

I imagine that many BOP guards admire, as I do, the courage and fortitude of the women facing long sentences here. Do they wonder, sometimes, what courage would be required, in their own lives, to stop working as enforcers of the prison system? Or do they perhaps wish, sometimes, that the general public could muster up the will to stop voting for the prison system?

There is a cynical quote which a cynical friend of mine likes to quote to me, from the philosopher David Hume: "A prisoner who has neither money nor interest, discovers the impossibility of his escape, as well when he considers the obstinacy of the gaoler, as the walls and bars with which he is surrounded; and, in all attempts for his freedom, chooses rather to work upon the stone and iron of the one, than upon the inflexible nature of the other."

It's the cliché of the prisoner attempting escape: the prisoner sees more hope tunneling out through bricks than appealing to the stone-faced jailer.

But who are the jailers? These prisons were built, and filled, in our name – in the name of making us "safer." More guards, more lawyers, judges, wardens, marshals, probation officers and court personnel would be hired even if the present ones resigned.

Meanwhile the creative work to create real security, real community in the face of social dislocation and crime, would still need to be done. We, the broader public, must be the jailers.

Sometimes we seem to be a stone rolling down the path of least resistance. But we're not stone. We can choose not to be jailers, and choose, instead, to be ever more inflexible in our resistance to injustice and to hatred born of fear.

I'm here among women, some of whom, I've been told, are supposed to be "hardened criminals." Fellow activists incarcerated in men's prisons likewise concur that the system is futile, merciless and wrongheaded. Our jailers, I'm convinced, can see this. Men like Gov. Rauner, it seems, can see it, or his advisers can.

Where are the inflexible ones keeping women like Marlo isolated from and lost to the world, trembling for their future for the next five years? I would like to make an appeal to you, and to myself two months from now when I've left here and once more rejoined the polite society of these women's "inflexible jailers."

I choose to believe that we can be moved and these women can escape. I am writing this, as many have written and will write, to see if we're easier to move than iron and stone.

**Kathy Kelly, co-coordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence ([info@vcnv.org](mailto:info@vcnv.org)), is in federal prison for participation in an anti-drone protest. She can receive mail at: KATHY KELLY 04971-045; FMC LEXINGTON; FEDERAL MEDICAL CENTER; SATELLITE CAMP; P.O. BOX 14525; LEXINGTON, KY 40512.**

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# Spring Fund Drive Goal: \$35,000

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Again, thanks for your support and for making our nearly two decades of honest journalism possible.

**Robert Parry is a longtime investigative reporter who broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for the Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. He founded Consortiumnews.com in 1995 to create an outlet for well-reported journalism that was being squeezed out of an increasingly trivialized U.S. news media.**

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