

VIPS Call on Trump Not to Pull Out of Iran Nuclear Deal

As Donald Trump announces his decision at 2 pm Tuesday on staying in the Iran nuclear deal, the Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity urge him in this memo exclusive to Consortium News not to base his decision on fabricated evidence.

MEMORANDUM FOR: The President

FROM: Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS)

SUBJECT: Being "Played" By Bogus Evidence on Iran

***NOTE:** The evidence presented by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on April 30 alleging a covert Iranian nuclear weapons program shows blatant signs of fabrication. That evidence is linked to documents presented by the Bush Administration more a decade earlier as proof of a covert Iran nuclear weapons program. Those documents were clearly fabricated as well.*

We sent President Bush a similar warning about bogus intelligence – much of it fabricated by Israel –six weeks before the U.S./UK attack on Iraq, but Bush paid us no heed. This time, we hope you will take note before things spin even further out of control in the Middle East. In short, Israel's "new" damaging documents on Iran were fabricated by the Israelis themselves.

Executive Summary

The Bush administration account of how the documents on Iran got into the hands of the CIA is not true. We can prove that the actual documents originally came not from Iran but from Israel. And the documents were never authenticated by the CIA or the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Two former Directors-General of the IAEA, Hans Blix and Mohamed ElBaradei, have publicly expressed suspicion that the documents were fabricated. And forensic examination of the documents yielded multiple signs that they are fraudulent.

We urge you to insist on an independent inquiry into the actual origins of these documents. We believe that the renewed attention being given to claims that Iran is secretly working to develop nuclear weapons betokens a transparent attempt to stoke hostility toward Iran, with an eye toward helping "justify" pulling out of the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran.

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Mr. President,

We write you in the hope that you will be informed of our views before you decide whether to continue to adhere to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) regarding Iran. We fear that upcoming decisions may be based, in part, on unreliable documents alleging secret nuclear weapons activity in Iran.

On April 30, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu displayed some of those documents in his slide show on what he called the Iranian “atomic archive.” But those are precisely the same fraudulent documents that were acquired by the CIA in 2004.

The official accounts offered by the senior officials of the CIA about the provenance of these documents turned out to be complete fabrication. Journalists were told variously that the documents (1) were taken from the laptop computer of an Iranian working in a secret research program; (2) were provided by a German spy; or (3) simply came from a “longtime contact in Iran.”

However, Karsten Voigt, the former German Foreign Office official in charge of German-North American cooperation, revealed in an on the record interview with historian/journalist Gareth Porter in 2013 that senior officials of the German foreign intelligence service, the BND, told Voigt in November 2004 that the documents had been passed to the CIA by a BND source. That source, the senior BND official said, was not considered trustworthy, because he belonged to the Mujahideen-E-Khalq (MEK), the armed Iranian opposition group that was known to have served as a conduit for information that Israeli intelligence (Mossad) wanted to provide to the IAEA without having it attributed to Israel. (In 2012 Secretary of State Hillary Clinton removed MEK from the list of terrorist organizations.)

Voigt recalled that the senior BND officials told him of their worry that the Bush administration was going to repeat the error of using fraudulent intelligence, as was the case with the notorious “Curveball”, the Iraqi living in Germany, whom the BND had identified as unreliable. Nonetheless, Curveball’s fictions about mobile biological weapons laboratories in Iraq –with “artists renderings” by the CIA of those phantom labs – had been used by Colin Powell in his error-ridden presentation to the UN on February 5, 2003, leading to war on Iraq.

As for the purported Iranian documents, the CIA never ruled out the possibility that they were fabricated, and the IAEA made no effort to verify their authenticity. IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei recalled in his memoirs that he had believed the documents were not really from the Iranian government and that, as he put it, “it made more sense that this information originated in another country.” ElBaradei stated publicly from 2005 through 2009

that the documents had not been authenticated, and he refused to use them as “evidence” of a covert Iranian weapons research program. And ElBaradei’s predecessor as Director-General, Hans Blix, has said he is “somewhat more worried” about the intelligence on the alleged Iranian nuclear weapons program than about the dubious intelligence he saw on Iraq, because “there is as much disinformation as there is information.”

Each of the documents mentioned by both Netanyahu and the IAEA reports bears tell-tale signs of fraud. The most widely reported document in the collection is a set of schematic drawings showing efforts to redesign the re-entry vehicle of Iran’s Shahab-3 missile to accommodate a nuclear weapon. But the slide that Netanyahu displayed on the screen in his slide show provides visual confirmation of fraud. The drawing shows clearly the “dunce cap” design of the Shahab-3 reentry vehicle. But Iran’s Defense Ministry had already discarded that “dunce cap” reentry vehicle when it began to develop a new improved missile. That redesign began in 2000, according to the Congressional testimony in September 2000 of CIA national intelligence officer for strategic and nuclear programs Robert D. Walpole. But the earliest dates of any of the alleged Iranian nuclear weapon program documents on the project for redesign of the reentry vehicle in the May 2008 IAEA report on the entire collection are from summer 2002 after the “dunce cap” was replaced. The “baby-bottle” shaped reentry vehicle on the redesigned missile was not known to the outside world until the first test of the new missile in mid-2004. So those drawings could not have been done by someone who was actually involved in the redesign of the original Shahab-3 reentry vehicle; it was clearly the work of a foreign intelligence agency seeking to incriminate Iran, but slipping up on one important detail and thus betraying its fraudulent character.

The second document from that same collection turned over to the IAEA that has been widely reported is the so-called “green salt project” – a plan for a bench-scale system of uranium conversion for enrichment given the code name “Project 5.13” and part of a larger “Project 5”. Other documents that had been provided by the MEK showed that “Project 5” also included a sub-project involving ore processing at a mine designated “Project 5.15,” according to a briefing by IAEA Deputy Director Olli Heinonen in February 2008.

But when Iran turned over detailed documents to the IAEA in response to its questions about Project 5.15 in 2008, the IAEA learned the truth: there had been a real ore processing project called Project 5.15, but it was a civilian project of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran – not part of a covert nuclear weapons program—and the decision to create Project 5.15 had been made on August 25, 1999—more than two years before the initial date of the project found in the collection of supposedly secret nuclear weapons research documents. That fact

gives away the ruse surrounding the numbering system of "Project 5" adopted by intelligence specialists who had fabricated the document.

A third document that purportedly shows Iranian nuclear weapons research is about what Netanyahu called "Multi-Point Initiation in hemispheric geometry" and the IAEA called "experimentation in connection with symmetrical initiation of a hemispherical high explosive charge suitable for an implosion type nuclear device." Significantly, that document was not part of the original collection that the CIA had passed to the IAEA, but had been given to the IAEA years later, and officials from the IAEA, Europe and the United States refused to reveal which member country had provided the document. Former Director-General ElBaradei revealed in his memoirs, however, that Israel had passed a series of documents to the IAEA in 2008-09, in an effort to make the case that Iran had continued its nuclear weapons experiments until "at least 2007."

The summary picture we offer above includes unusually clear evidence of the fraudulent nature of the documents that are advertised as hard evidence of Iran's determination to obtain nuclear weapons. One remaining question is *cui bono?* – who stands to benefit from this kind of "evidence." The state that had the most to gain from the fabrication of such documents was obviously Israel.

Completely absent from the usual discussion of this general problem is the reality that Israel already has a secret nuclear arsenal of more than a hundred nuclear weapons. To the extent Israel's formidable deterrent is more widely understood, arguments that Israel genuinely fears an Iranian nuclear threat any time soon lose much of their power. Only an extreme few suggest that Iran's leaders are bent on risking national suicide. What the Israelis are after is regime change in Tehran. And they have powerful allies with similar aims.

We therefore urge you, Mr. President, not to go along with these plans or to decide to pull the U.S. out of the six-nation nuclear deal with Iran based on fraudulent evidence.

For the Steering Group, Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS)

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Ray McGovern, former US Army infantry/intelligence officer & CIA analyst; CIA Presidential briefer (ret.)

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Todd E. Pierce, MAJ, US Army Judge Advocate (ret.)

Gareth Porter, author/journalist (associate VIPS)

Scott Ritter, former MAJ., USMC, former UN Weapon Inspector, Iraq

Coleen Rowley, FBI Special Agent and former Minneapolis Division Legal Counsel (ret.)

Robert Wing, former Foreign Service Officer (associate VIPS)

Ann Wright, Colonel, US Army (ret.); also Foreign Service Officer who resigned in opposition to the US war on Iraq

This Memorandum was drafted by VIPS Associate Gareth Porter, author of "Manufactured Crisis: The Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare," 2014
