

How Israel Stole the Bomb

Exclusive: When Israel launched a covert scheme to steal material and secrets to build a nuclear bomb, U.S. officials looked the other way and obstructed investigations, as described in a book reviewed by James DiEugenio.

By James DiEugenio

In 1968, CIA Director Richard Helms was presented with a disturbing National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) stating that Israel had obtained atomic weapons, a dangerous development that occurred earlier than the CIA had anticipated.

It was particularly dangerous because just the year before, the Six Day War had marked the beginning of open hostilities between the Israelis and Arab nation states. To prevail, Israel had launched preemptive air attacks against Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Iraq at the start of the conflict. Considering that violent backdrop, Helms immediately arranged a meeting with President Lyndon Johnson to inform him of this troubling milestone.

The man who had prepared the NIE and gave it to Helms was the CIA's chief science and technology officer, Carl Duckett. After Helms met with Johnson, the CIA Director told Duckett about the President's rather odd reaction. LBJ did not get upset, and he did not order an investigation into how it happened. Further, he did not tell Helms to let both the Defense Department and State Department know about it so they could establish intelligence inquiries or consider sanctions.

Instead, Johnson did the opposite. He told Helms to keep the news secret and specifically told the Director *not* to let the secretaries of State or Defense know about it.

Helms obeyed the orders of his Commander in Chief, but he decided to talk to the FBI about how this development had occurred earlier than expected. Thus begins Roger Mattson's *Stealing the Atom Bomb: How Denial and Deception Armed Israel*, the riveting story of duplicity, betrayal, cover-ups and deceit.

As the book shows, the cover-ups and duplicity did not just come from Israel and its agents in America. The deceit also came from men inside the American government who, for whatever reasons, decided to cast a blind eye on what was really happening under their jurisdiction, even after they had been alerted to it.

What Mattson reveals is no less than an atomic heist – one that could have been prevented if men in high positions had done their duty.

Highly Enriched Uranium

After Johnson told Helms not to tell State or Defense, the CIA Director called Attorney General Ramsey Clark, because what made this news even more ominous – and a potential crime – was what the CIA had discovered when it conducted a chemical test around the Israeli nuclear reactor at Dimona, in the Negev desert.

Duckett had concluded that Israel had something that they should not have possessed at that time: HEU, or highly enriched uranium, which could only be produced by one of the five major powers that already had nuclear weapons.

But the test had also revealed characteristics that showed the material had originated in the United States. (Mattson, p. 97) Specifically, the HEU came from Portsmouth, Ohio and then was further processed at a plant in Apollo, Pennsylvania.

The importance of this information was that the HEU was processed to such a degree – well over 90 percent U 235 – that it was classified as weapons grade uranium. The technical term for it is the acronym SNM, or Special Nuclear Material, meaning that it is fissile: it can easily be split with neutrons. Although the Portsmouth plant is shut down today, beginning in 1956 it did produce weapons-grade uranium.

It was in Apollo, Pennsylvania, that the trail of the SNM and the crime of its diversion becomes exceedingly suspect. The plant that did the further processing of HEU, and the ultimate shipping, was named Nuclear Materials and Equipment Corporation, or NUMEC, and there were a number of reasons why suspicion had centered on NUMEC even before Helms called Clark.

First, NUMEC had a rather unreliable record when it came to keeping track of HEU and other materials that had been given to it through the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). The way the system worked is that the particular company would forward its business requests – from either private or governmental agencies – to the AEC. The AEC would then estimate how much nuclear material NUMEC would need to fulfill the contract. If a company was using up more material than the AEC properly estimated, that company would be fined quite a lot of money. If the shortages persisted, the AEC and the FBI could then open up an investigation.

With CIA's discoveries, the possibility presented itself that a diversion of the nuclear material could be taking place. Either someone from the outside was stealing the material, or someone on the inside was embezzling it.

As Mattson shows with charts, graphs and testimony, NUMEC had an extraordinarily bad record in this regard. The company was eventually fined over \$2 million for missing materials, which, with inflation factored in, would be about \$15 million

today. Mattson adduces that from 1959 to 1977, about 345 kilograms of HEU went missing from NUMEC, which translates to well over 700 pounds. (ibid, p. 286)

Explaining the Deficits

In just one year, there was a loss of over 56 kilograms (or about 123 pounds). The company made up all sorts of rationales as to why this much HEU was missing, including losses during the mechanical processing. But as the author points out, there are two problems with this accounting.

First, no other plant in America reported losses of this magnitude. The AEC concluded that the losses at Apollo were more than double what they were at any other comparably sized atomic plant in the U.S. (ibid, p. 65)

Secondly, even if one chalks up some of the missing HEU to a processing loss, that still does not account for the entire record of NUMEC. Mattson figures that, even giving the company the benefit of the doubt, it still leaves about 200 pounds of missing HEU. (ibid, p. 67) That's enough for about six atomic bombs, larger than the one used on Hiroshima.

As Mattson reports, what makes NUMEC an even more intriguing suspect is the fact that the company had some legitimate business transactions with Israel, concerning the irradiation of plants. And these legitimate packages were sent at about the time the HEU went missing. Further, the inventory records at NUMEC were extremely sloppy and some appear to have been destroyed in direct violation of the AEC code, meaning NUMEC should have been cited, but wasn't. (ibid, p. 75)

That brings us to the founders of the NUMEC plant in Apollo, Pennsylvania, a small town of approximately 1,600 people that lies about 30 miles northeast of Pittsburgh. In 1955, the Apollo Steel Plant was purchased by David Lowenthal. Two years later, Lowenthal and Zalman Shapiro cooperated in forming NUMEC.

Shapiro, a very accomplished metallurgist who lived next door to Lowenthal, had been employed for a number of years at the nearby Bettis Atomic Power Laboratory, which supported the AEC's Office of Naval Reactors.

In May 1958, Lowenthal merged Apollo Steel with the San Toy Mining Company in Maine. San Toy then changed its name to Apollo Industries, with the main operating officers of this new corporation Morton Chatkin, Ivan Novick and Lowenthal. (ibid, p. 43)

The board comprised these three men plus Shapiro, and later others. In the early 1960s, the steel plant's name was changed to Raychord Steel, but with the decline of the steel industry, Raychord became a subsidiary company to Apollo.

Ties to Zionist Groups

Novick, one of Apollo's officers, later served as national president of the Zionist Organization of America, in which Chatkin, another officer, also held a leadership role. The ZOA was a member group of the American Zionist Council, which later became the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, which today is considered to be the leading lobbying group for Israel and one of the most powerful lobbying groups in Washington.

Novick also later served as a personal liaison between Ronald Reagan's White House and the administration of Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin.

Lowenthal, who was born in Poland in 1921, came to America in 1932 and served in the American armed forces in World War II, eventually becoming a citizen in 1945. After the war, he worked with the Haganah, the Jewish paramilitary force inside Palestine, on the Zionist mission to ferry Jews into Palestine in 1947 on board the boat SS Exodus.

Since almost none of the passengers had legal immigration certificates to enter Palestine, the British Royal Navy, which ran the Palestinian Mandate, seized the ship and deported its passengers back to Europe. Lowenthal's mission was a practical failure, but a tremendous propaganda success for the Zionist cause. The event was novelized by author Leon Uris in the number-one best-selling book *Exodus*, which was published in 1958 and was made into a movie two years later by director Otto Preminger, starring Paul Newman.

Lowenthal later served on board the ship Pan York, which also attempted to evade the British quarantine but was captured in Cyprus with the crew arrested, including Lowenthal. He escaped and fled to Palestine where he served with the Haganah during the war that broke out there in 1948 after the British abandoned the mandate early. (ibid, p. 44)

Lowenthal ended up serving under the legendary Meir Amit, the leading intelligence officer in Israel during the 1960s. Lowenthal was also personally acquainted with future prime ministers David Ben Gurion and Golda Meir.

Nuclear Experience

Shapiro, who had advanced degrees in chemistry and metallurgy from Johns Hopkins, worked for Westinghouse and the Navy on the nuclear reactor that powered America's first atomic submarine, the Nautilus. Shapiro also helped develop the fuel for the first commercial nuclear reactor, the Shippingport Atomic Power Station in Pennsylvania.

Like Lowenthal, Novick and Chatkin, Shapiro also was active in supporting

Israeli causes, although his activities had a slightly educational tone. He was a member of the Technion Society, which supported advances in Israeli science and technology. Indeed, he became an Honorary Life Member of the group.

He also was a Director of Hillel, an international organization that tries to acquaint Jewish students with each other on campuses and organize student trips to Israel. Like Novick and Chatkin, he was a member of the Zionist Organization of America. Many years later, it was discovered that Shapiro was on the Board of Governors of the Israeli Intelligence Center, which honors spies for Israel who clandestinely advanced the interests of the state. (Mattson, p. 84)

Beyond the individual backgrounds of these four men, there was also something else which should have attracted the U.S. intelligence community's attention prior to Helms's meeting with President Johnson. While running NUMEC, both men – Shapiro and Lowenthal – were taking trips to Israel and had contacts with high officials of Israeli intelligence as well as Israel's version of the AEC.

Further, NUMEC had a guest worker, an Israeli metallurgist, in its plant, as part of an agreement NUMEC had with Israel to serve as a training consultancy which resulted in the formation of a joint company with Israel called ISORAD that initially was to deal with irradiation of citrus fruits through gamma rays. But the FBI later discovered that NUMEC also had contracts with Israel for the development of plutonium oxide as fuel elements in nuclear reactors. (Mattson, pgs. 80-81)

Since Lowenthal had so many acquaintances in high positions, he often visited Israel, including a most curious instance at about the time he purchased Apollo Steel in 1956. It was at this time that Israel was making decisions about foreign sourcing for nuclear materials and technology.

A year later, NUMEC was formed and Shapiro immediately applied for a license from the AEC to process uranium fuel in a building formerly occupied by Apollo Steel. John Hadden, CIA station chief in Tel Aviv, later noted the unusual coincidence of these events on two continents. (ibid, p. 45)

Israeli Visits

But declassified FBI files reveal that the visitations were not just one way, i.e. from Apollo, Pennsylvania, to Israel. There were also visits and meetings of Israeli officials who went to Apollo.

At the time of those meetings, there were four main branches of Israeli intelligence. The Shin Bet corresponded with the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the Mossad with the Central Intelligence Agency; the Aman roughly with the Defense Intelligence Agency; and the LAKAM, which was responsible for

security at Dimona and for procuring scientific and technological data from Western sources. (Mattson, p. 108)

In the mid-1960s, France started scaling back its support for the Dimona reactor, which was supposedly a research facility. With France's pullback, LAKAM began seeking out and purchasing parts and supplies from other sources to complete the project.

LAKAM's job included concealing the reactor's true function – the development of a nuclear bomb – from American inspections. (ibid) During an American inspection in 1964, LAKAM even created a "Potemkin village" control room to deceive the visitors.

Unlike American intelligence, Israel also had a special operations unit that served all branches. Established in 1957, it was run by Rafi Eitan and his deputy, Avraham Bendor. (In the 1980s, Eitan became notorious for the Jonathan Pollard spy case, in which Pollard, a navy intelligence employee, was paid tens of thousands of dollars to spy for Israel in the United States with Eitan his ultimate control agent.)

In September 1968, the AEC told the FBI that they were giving permission to NUMEC for a visit by four Israelis, including Eitan and Bendor. However, in the application to the AEC, the occupations of the two were disguised. Eitan was said to be a chemist in the Defense Ministry; Bendor supposedly worked for the electronics division. (ibid, p. 110)

The other two men were Avraham Hermoni, who was billed as a Scientific Counselor in the Israeli Embassy in Washington, and Dr. Ephraim Biegun, described as working in the Division of Electronics for Defense. Again, this was misleading. Hermoni did, at times, work out of Washington's Israeli Embassy, but his prime and most important function was overseeing and planning Israel's nuclear weapons program, which he did from 1959-69. Biegun was actually head of the technical division of the Mossad from 1960-70.

CIA Suspicions

After the visit, NUMEC reported that the four men were in Apollo to buy thermo-electrical generator systems. (ibid, p. 119) Why Eitan and Bendor had to be there for that purpose is not readily apparent.

CIA officer John Hadden thought the real reason for the visit was that Shapiro was divulging top-secret technical information about plutonium manufacture – and that he was aided in this by the visiting Israeli scientist working at NUMEC. The FBI later came to agree that this was most likely the true reason for the visit. (ibid, p. 120)

Hermoni revisited Shapiro in November 1968, but the capstone to the visits to Apollo came later that month. As noted previously, France had cut back on its support for Dimona in the mid-1960s, halting the supply of uranium fuel in 1967.

In late November 1968, the Mossad arranged a covert operation called Operation Plumbat, which employed a front company in West Germany to purchase 200 tons of uranium yellowcake from Belgium. The transaction was approved by Euratom, the European organization controlling such transactions, but once the transport ship set sail for the port of Genoa, Italy, it was intercepted by another ship used by the Mossad. When the original ship reached port, the hull was empty.

The timing of this operation, on the heels of the mysterious visits by Israeli intelligence agents to Apollo, seems to constitute powerful circumstantial evidence of Israeli intentions.

Then, right after the completion of the Plumbat mission, who arrived in Israel? None other than Zalman Shapiro. The FBI discovered that in November 1968, in addition to the personal visits, Shapiro was in frequent phone contact with a number of Israeli intelligence agents, including Hermoni. (Mattson, p. 126)

A Longstanding Goal

Israel's long trail of subterfuge and duplicity was part of a longstanding goal. As early as 1948, David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, stated that what Einstein, Teller and Oppenheimer did for America, they could easily do for Israel, since they were all Jews. In fact, he offered Einstein Israeli citizenship, which the great man declined. (ibid, p. 22) Ben-Gurion then had two meetings with Oppenheimer and numerous ones with Teller.

Ultimately, Israel settled on David Bergmann, a brilliant chemist whom Ben-Gurion appointed first chief of the Israel Atomic Energy Commission in 1952. By 1955, Bergmann was essentially running the day-to-day operations of Israel's atomic program.

In a conversation with the American ambassador, Bergmann said the Israeli science education program was adequate in physics and chemistry but weak in engineering and non-existent in metallurgy. He also revealed that the design he had laid out for a reactor was the same as the one at Shippingport, Pennsylvania, an intriguing clue because Shapiro was a metallurgist and had worked on the Shippingport power station.

Indeed, Shapiro eventually met Bergmann and the two became close friends and colleagues, serving on the board of ISORAD, which was a joint venture of NUMEC and the IAEC. Bergmann made his first visit to America for IAEC in 1956, the year before Lowenthal turned Apollo Steel into NUMEC.

There were two significant investigations of Shapiro and NUMEC. The first was instigated by Dick Helms's call to Ramsey Clark in 1968 and the discovery of the highly enriched uranium at Dimona. (Mattson, p. 99) The second began in 1976 when Jim Conran, a whistleblower at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, voiced complaints about the background and actions of Shapiro. Conran was a security officer and his warnings eventually got the attention of the White House. (ibid, p. 161)

During the first investigation, the FBI could not find enough evidence to justify a violation by Shapiro of the Foreign Agents Registration Act, which mandates that any person in the U.S. who is representing a foreign country's interests has to register with the Justice Department. But the FBI did recommend cancelling Shapiro's security clearances, based on wiretaps that revealed Shapiro in close contact with Israeli intelligence officials and with members of the IAEC. (ibid, p. 138)

During these calls Shapiro reportedly said he would help Israel in any way that he could. He also expressed frustration with the new ownership at NUMEC, which had been purchased by ARCO. But his Israeli contacts said he was too valuable to leave and encouraged him to stay there. (ibid, p. 139)

FBI Surveillance

One of the most curious episodes that the FBI surveillance revealed was a meeting between Shapiro and a man named Jeruham Kafkafi, a suspected Mossad officer working under diplomatic cover. He had left Washington by air on the morning of June 20, 1969, and met Shapiro at the Pittsburgh airport for about an hour. He then left and flew back to Washington.

As a result of that surveillance, Shapiro was interviewed by the AEC in August 1969, with some of Shapiro's answers to questions rather dubious. For instance, he said he did not know Hermoni was in charge of the Israeli nuclear development program and thought he was a university professor. Shapiro said his discussions in September and October 1968 with the Israeli officers were about water contamination, saboteur detection and military activities.

When asked why the Israelis could not have talked to the Defense Department about those topics, Shapiro had no answer. The interviewer wrote in his summary that Shapiro was cool and calm throughout except when the Kafkafi meeting was brought up. At first, Shapiro said he could not recall it, even though it happened just two months earlier. He then said he did remember it, claiming it was about an overdue invoice and a power supply resource. (p. 142)

The AEC investigators did not find the last reply credible, since it did not

seem to justify an airline flight from Washington to Pittsburgh and back. Shapiro adjusted his answer by saying that there was some discussion of an investigator whom he knew from America who was going to visit Israel. He also added the figure of \$32,000 as to how much Israel owed NUMEC. As Mattson notes, again, this explanation does not seem to justify an air flight and an hour-long meeting with a clandestine Mossad officer.

Closing the Inquiry

The man who ultimately decided to close this initial inquiry was Glenn Seaborg, head of the AEC. Not only did he not see any civil or criminal charges as being viable, but when President Richard Nixon's Attorney General John Mitchell recommended revoking Shapiro's security clearances, Seaborg balked at that also.

Mattson clearly sees Seaborg as being a villain in the piece. Late in the book, he explicitly accuses him of running a cover-up. (see p. 297) And, there is evidence to back up this charge. It was later discovered, during the second inquiry, that Seaborg had a close personal friendship with Shapiro. (ibid p. 268)

Earle Hightower, assistant director of safeguards at AEC, explicitly stated that the whole case regarding NUMEC was rigged because it was known that Seaborg would not take action. Little more than three years after Seaborg left the AEC, it was dissolved in 1975 and was replaced by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, in part, because critics accused the AEC of an insufficiently aggressive regulatory program.

The second, much longer, and more vigorous inquiry into NUMEC and Shapiro came about at the creation of the NRC when Jim Conran was tasked with reviewing the record of how safeguards had worked previously for the AEC so they could be strengthened in the future. In that review process, he came across the case of Shapiro and NUMEC.

When Conran asked to see more files on both, he was denied access, causing him to go up the NRC ladder to Chairman William Anders, who was briefed by, among others, Carl Duckett of the CIA. Since Anders was about to leave for a diplomatic post, he took his concerns to James Connor at President Gerald Ford's White House.

In March 1976, the CIA's Duckett addressed an informal gathering of pilots and astronauts, saying there was little doubt Israel had about 20 nuclear warheads. Although this was supposed to be off the record, the information leaked. In April 1976, *Time* reported that this claim was accurate, except the newsmagazine put the size of the arsenal at 13 bombs and added that the warheads could be

delivered by Phantom jets or Jericho missiles.

Duckett wrote a memo to CIA Director George Bush in which he said he suspected that the Israeli program was jumpstarted by a diversion of enriched uranium from the NUMEC plant. (p. 165) He attached various appendices to the memo to show the results of previous inquiries into NUMEC and explain why his belief was justified.

One of the appendices consisted of a paper by John Hadden in which he expressed the suspicion that NUMEC was actually a shell company the Israeli government had set up for the express purpose of diverting materials, technology and information that Israel needed to speed up and facilitate its longstanding quest for atomic weapons. (ibid, p. 166)

A New Investigation

Attorney General Edward Levi was then sent a summary of the FBI's previous investigation of NUMEC. Levi alerted Ford that he thought NUMEC was culpable for several crimes and, with Ford's permission, he wished to begin a criminal inquiry. Since Ford's close adviser James Connor was also disturbed by these findings, the President approved the investigation.

What followed was a tedious bureaucratic battle between the CIA and FBI. The FBI felt it did not have direct proof that a diversion had taken place, while the CIA had the proof – the chemical tests at Dimona – but was reluctant to reveal the intelligence to the FBI. Also, the CIA did not want to furnish the FBI with technical experts to help educate the investigating agents so they could effectively cross-examine important witnesses. Thus, the FBI's inquiry dragged on through three presidents: Ford, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan.

But even with these obstructions, the FBI did eventually find witnesses to a diversion from the Apollo plant. It turned out that the FBI did not do enough interviews of plant employees in its initial inquiry because there were at least four of them willing to talk. Those witnesses form the climax of Mattson's book.

In 1980, one witness said that when he read newspaper accounts about the losses of enriched uranium at Apollo, he had to chuckle to himself. When asked why, he replied that in 1965 or 1966, he was walking near the loading dock at Apollo and saw people loading containers – the dimensions that were used for HEU packets – into equipment boxes. He noticed that the shipping papers for the boxes revealed that the packages were destined for Israel. This witness then suggested some other workers at the plant who had seen similar activity. (Ibid, p. 272)

Suspicion Shipment

One of these witnesses saw a flatbed truck backed up into the loading dock area with Shapiro pacing around the area while the driver was loading "stove pipes" into a cabinet on the truck. This struck the witness as odd because the plant had regularly assigned workers for loading duties during the day but this shipment was being prepared in the evening. He explained that "stove pipes" were cylindrical containers that the plant used to pack enriched uranium inside. Each stove pipe usually contained three or four packets of HEU.

When he glanced at the clipboard resting on a package, he saw the destination was Israel. The clipboard then was yanked away and an armed guard escorted him off the dock. He also said it was unusual to see Shapiro in this area of the plant, and further, that Shapiro was very seldom there at night. (ibid, p. 275)

There were two other witnesses who told the FBI about similar events. The FBI also interviewed an NRC inspector named James Devlin, who told the agents that, contrary to what Shapiro had said, the security at the Apollo plant was below par and that NUMEC did not employ a professional security force. The company had one regular armed guard and Devlin happened to know who he was, since he was also a deputy for the township. The only other guards were unarmed and non-uniformed. (ibid, pgs. 272-73)

By this time, the FBI did not want to continue the investigation, believing that nothing would come of it, although the Justice Department urged the investigators on. But the FBI was correct since, as Mattson notes more than once in his book, the last president who really wanted to stop Israel from becoming a nuclear power was John F. Kennedy. (See pgs. 38-40, p. 256)

Richard Helms's conversation with a disinterested President Johnson underscores how that attitude changed after Kennedy's death. As Mattson further notes, opposition to Israel's nuclear-weapons program was more or less negated by President Richard Nixon's meeting with Prime Minister Golda Meir in 1969 when he agreed that the U.S. would not make any public statements revealing Israel's nuclear arsenal nor demand that it sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty, as long as Israel did no testing and made no public threats.

Even that policy was probably violated in 1979 with the Vela Incident: a suspected Israeli nuclear test done in the Indian Ocean.

Author Roger Mattson was part of the inquiry about the illegal transfer of atomic secrets to Israel, working in the NRC's safeguards department when Conran first voiced his fears about a diversion at NUMEC. Thus, Mattson became part of an internal review of the Shapiro case, seeing firsthand how certain intelligence agencies were, by accident or design, obstructing the investigation.

Mattson concludes his important book by stating that this policy of casting a deliberate blind eye towards a nuclear heist by Israel places the U.S. in a compromised position when trying to enforce a policy of non-proliferation on other nations because of the obvious double standards.

To point out one paradox, the U.S. government executed Julius and Ethel Rosenberg for purportedly supplying nuclear secrets to the Soviet Union with less evidence. Plus, the tinder box of the Middle East is probably the last place where America should have allowed atomic weapons to proliferate, but it did.

Because of that, the U.S. has little or no moral authority on the issue today.

James DiEugenio is a researcher and writer on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and other mysteries of that era. His most recent book is [Reclaiming Parkland](#).

North Korea's Understandable Fears

Official Washington is in full-throated fury over a new North Korean nuclear test, but fails to note that North Koreans face a vast array of U.S./South Korean military might, including potential U.S. nuclear weapons, writes James Bradley.

By James Bradley

North Korea carried out its fifth nuclear test on Friday, drawing condemnation from President Obama and a charge from the Pentagon that the test was a “serious provocation.” Ho-hum, here we go again.

Every year, America pays its vassal-state South Korea huge sums of U.S. taxpayer money to mount 300,000-man-strong military “games” that threaten North Korea. North Koreans view images that never seem to make it to U.S. kitchen tables: hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of U.S. armaments swarming in from the sea, hundreds of tanks and thousands of troops – their turrets and rifles pointed north – and nuclear-capable U.S. warplanes screaming overhead.

But when a young dictator straight out of central casting responds to U.S. threats with an underground test on North Korea’s founding day, it’s the number-one story on the front page of the *New York Times*.

Let’s connect some dots. Washington and their note takers in the American press

constantly tell us that crazies in Pyongyang and Tehran are nuclear threats. The misplaced, but easily sold, fears of the “North Korean missile threat” and the “Iran missile threat” allows the Pentagon to install “defensive” missile systems in South Korea and Eastern Europe which actually amount to offensive systems targeting Beijing and Moscow (by making first strikes against China and Russia more feasible).

We need to look beyond the simplistic, race-based cartoon-like scaremongering to see that far more reality-based and frightening is the nuclear threat posed by the United States.

President Obama – the Nobel Prize winner who pledged to lead a nuclear-free world – has committed over \$1 trillion dollars to modernize America’s nuclear arsenal. Almost unreported by the press, we have been spending a bundle to make nukes “usable,” by miniaturizing them. And to top it off, Obama has maintained a “first use” option for the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

Forget the tin-pot dictator with a bad crew-cut who leads an impoverished country. Here’s for some really scary reading:

Obama’s Trillion-Dollar Nuclear-Arms Train Wreck

Obama plans to retain first-use nuclear option

New U.S. Nuclear Bomb Moves Closer to Full-Scale Production

THAAD: A Major Security Risk for the ROK

James Bradley is author of several bestsellers including *Flyboys* and *Flags of Our Fathers*. His most recent book is *The China Mirage: The Hidden History of American Disaster in Asia*.

Obama Flinches at Renouncing Nuke First Strike

Exclusive: The U.S. threat to launch a first-strike nuclear attack has little real strategic value – though it poses a real risk to human survival – but President Obama fears political criticism if he changes the policy, as Jonathan Marshall explains.

By Jonathan Marshall

Time is running short for President Obama to make good on his 2009 promise “to

seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons,” for which he won the Nobel Peace Prize. Yet as both the Wall Street Journal and New York Times recently reported, Obama’s advisers may have just nixed the single most important reform advocated by arms control advocates: a formal pledge that the United States will never again be the first country to use nuclear weapons in a conflict.

Ever since President Truman ordered two atomic bombs dropped on Japan in 1945, the United States has reserved the right to initiate nuclear war against an overwhelming conventional, chemical or biological attack on us or our allies. But peace advocates – and more than a few senior military officers – have long warned that resorting to nuclear weapons would ignite a global holocaust, killing hundreds of millions of people.

In a talk to the annual meeting of the Arms Control Association on June 6, Deputy National Security Advisor Benjamin Rhodes promised that President Obama would continue to review ways to achieve his grand vision of a nuclear-free world during his last months in office. Obama was reportedly considering a “series of executive actions” to that end, including a landmark shift to a “no first use” policy.

Two-thirds of adult Americans surveyed support such a policy. So do 10 U.S. senators who wrote President Obama in July, proposing a no-first-use declaration to “reduce the risk of accidental nuclear conflict” and seeking cut-backs in his trillion dollar plan for nuclear modernization over the next 30 years.

But Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter, Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz (who oversees the nuclear stockpile), and Secretary of State John Kerry all warned during a National Security Council meeting in July that declaring a policy of “no first use” would alarm America’s allies, undercut U.S. credibility, and send a message of weakness to the Kremlin at a time of tense relations with Russia.

Yet until they took charge of giant bureaucracies whose funding depends on keeping the threat of nuclear war alive, both Carter and Moniz were on record *supporting* “a new strategy for reducing nuclear threats” and achieving security “at significantly lower levels of nuclear forces and with less reliance on nuclear weapons in our national security strategy.”

In a 2007 manifesto, Carter, Moniz, and other centrist Democratic foreign policy experts rejected the old claim that nuclear weapons are still needed to deter non-nuclear attacks.

“Nuclear weapons are much less credible in deterring conventional, biological, or chemical weapon attacks,” they wrote. “A more effective way of deterring and

defending against such non-nuclear attacks – and giving the President a wider range of credible response options – would be to rely on a robust array of conventional strike capabilities and strong declaratory policies.”

They also gave strong implicit support to a no-first-use doctrine, stating that “nuclear weapons must be seen as a last resort, when no other options can ensure the security of the U.S. and its allies.”

Risk of Overreaction

Why does a no-first-use policy matter? In a *New York Times* column last month, Gen. James Cartwright, former vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and head of the United States Strategic Command, emphasized the folly of introducing nuclear weapons into any conflict.

“Using nuclear weapons first against Russia and China would endanger our and our allies’ very survival by encouraging full-scale retaliation,” he and a colleague wrote. “Such use against North Korea would be likely to result in the blanketing of Japan and possibly South Korea with deadly radioactive fallout.”

A policy of no first use, backed up by a reconfiguration of U.S. nuclear forces to reduce their offensive capabilities, would lower the chance of a rival nuclear power rushing to launch early in a crisis and unleashing World War III. Today some nuclear powers like Russia have their forces on hair-trigger alert for fear of being wiped out by a U.S. surprise attack; as a result, the world is just one false alarm away from all-out nuclear war.

As two senior officials at the Arms Control Association observed recently in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, “Among other advantages, a clear US no-first-use policy would reduce the risk of Russian or Chinese nuclear miscalculation during a crisis by alleviating concerns about a devastating US nuclear first-strike.

“Such risks could grow in the future as Washington develops cyber offensive capabilities that can confuse nuclear command and control systems, as well as new strike capabilities and strategic ballistic missile interceptors that Russia and China believe may degrade their nuclear retaliatory potential.”

They also discounted the claim that U.S. allies such as Japan or Korea would rebel against such a change of policy: “They are highly likely to accept such a decision, since no first use will in no way weaken US military preparedness to confront non-nuclear threats to their security. . . Many US allies, including NATO members Germany and the Netherlands, support the adoption of no-first-use policies by all nuclear-armed states.”

Warnings by nuclear hawks that a common-sense doctrine of no-first-use would undercut U.S. “credibility” or project “weakness” are simply business-as-usual attempts by national security bureaucrats to inflate threats and keep the war machine in high gear. If they succeed in blocking reform, America and the rest of the world will remain at real risk of annihilation through accidental nuclear escalation.

The question now is whether President Obama will listen to the fear-mongers in his cabinet, or remember what he said in May at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial: “Among those nations like my own that hold nuclear stockpiles, we must have the courage to escape the logic of fear and pursue a world without them.”

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Christianity and the Nagasaki Bomb

Though Christianity began as a religion of peace, it soon became a cloak for genocidal violence, such as the incineration of defenseless civilians in Nagasaki, including many Japanese Christians, 71 years ago, writes Gary G. Kohls.

By Gary G. Kohls

Seventy-one years ago, on Aug. 9, 1945, an all-Christian bomber crew dropped a plutonium bomb on Nagasaki City, Japan, instantly vaporizing, incinerating, irradiating and otherwise annihilating tens of thousands of innocent civilians, men, women and children. Very few Japanese soldiers were affected.

In a nation whose citizens are historically non-Christian (Shintoism or Buddhism are the major religions), a disproportionately large number of the Nagasaki victims were Christian (see below for the history of that reality). The bomb mortally wounded uncountable thousands of other victims who succumbed to the blast trauma, the heat trauma and/or the radiation trauma.

In 1945, the U.S. was regarded as the most Christian nation in the world. The bomber crew, as were the two Christian military chaplains of the Hiroshima and

Nagasaki crews, were products of the type of Christianity that failed to teach what Jesus taught concerning violence (that it was forbidden to his followers) – which has been the case for the vast majority of Christians, both clergy and laity, for the past 1,700 years. For the first three centuries of its existence, Christianity was a pacifist religion.

Ironically, prior to the bomb exploding directly over the Urakami Cathedral, Nagasaki was the most Christian city in Japan, and the massive cathedral had been the largest Christian church building in the Orient.

Those Christian airmen, following their wartime orders to the letter, did their job, and they accomplished the mission with military pride. Most Christian Americans would have done what they did if they had been in the shoes of the crew.

And, if those Christians had never seen, heard or smelled the suffering humanity that the bomb caused on the ground, most of them would not have experienced any remorse for their participation in the atrocity – especially if they had been blindly treated as heroes in the aftermath.

Some of the crew did admit that they had had some doubts about what they had participated in afterwards. But none of them actually witnessed the horrific suffering of the tens of thousands of victims up close and personal.

“Orders are orders” and must be obeyed, and disobedience in wartime was known to be severely punishable, even by summary execution. So the bomber crew had no alternative but to obey the orders. Even the two chaplains had no doubts before they finally understood what they had participated in.

Hard for Japan to Surrender

It had been only three days since the August 6th bomb had incinerated Hiroshima. The Nagasaki bomb was dropped amidst massive chaos and confusion in Tokyo, where the fascist military command was meeting with the Emperor Hirohito to discuss how to surrender with honor. The military leadership of both nations had known for months that Japan had already lost the war.

The only obstacle to ending the war had been the Allied Powers insistence on unconditional surrender (which meant that Hirohito would have been removed from his figurehead position in Japan and perhaps even subjected to war crime trials). That demand was intolerable for the Japanese, who regarded the Emperor as a deity.

The USSR had declared war against Japan the day before (Aug. 8), hoping to regain territories lost to Japan in the humiliating (for Russia) Russo-Japanese

War 40 years earlier, and Stalin's army was advancing across Manchuria. Russia's entry into the war had been encouraged by President Harry Truman before he knew of the success of the atom bomb test in New Mexico on July 16.

But now, Truman and his strategists knew that the bomb could elicit Japan's surrender without Stalin's help. So, not wanting to divide any of the spoils of war with the USSR, and because the U.S. wanted to send an early Cold War message to Russia (that the U.S. was the new planetary superpower), Truman ordered bomber command to proceed with using the atomic bombs against a handful of targets as weather permitted and as atomic bombs became available (although no more fissionable material was actually available to make another bomb after Nagasaki).

Decision to Target Nagasaki

Aug. 1, 1945, was the earliest deployment date for the Japanese atom bombing missions, and the Target Committee in Washington, D.C. had already developed a short list of relatively un-damaged Japanese cities that were to be excluded from the conventional USAAF (US Army Air Force) fire-bombing campaigns (that, during the first half of 1945, had used napalm, augmented by high explosives, to burn to the ground over 60 essentially defenseless Japanese cities).

The list of protected cities included Hiroshima, Niigata, Kokura, Kyoto and Nagasaki. Those five cities were to be off-limits to the terror bombings that the other cities were being subjected to. They were to be preserved as potential targets for the new "gimmick" weapon that had been researched and developed in labs and manufacturing plants all across America over the several years since the Manhattan Project had begun.

Ironically, prior to August 6 and 9, the residents of those five cities had considered themselves lucky for not having been bombed as had the other large cities. Little did the residents of Hiroshima and Nagasaki know that they were only being temporarily spared for an even worse carnage from a revolutionary experimental weapon that could cause the mass annihilation of entire cities and their human guinea pig inhabitants.

The plutonium bomb that had been field tested at Alamogordo, New Mexico, was identical to the one that was dropped at Nagasaki. It had been blasphemously code-named "Trinity" (a distinctly Christian term) and had been detonated in secrecy three weeks earlier on July 16, 1945. The results were impressive, but the blast had just killed a few hapless coyotes, rabbits, snakes and some other desert varmints.

Trinity had produced large amounts of an entirely new type of rock that was

later called "Trinitite." Trinitite was a "man-made" radioactive molten lava rock that had been created from the intense heat that was twice the temperature of the sun. Samples of it still exist in the desert at Alamogordo.

At 3 a.m. on the morning of Aug. 9, 1945, a B-29 Superfortress bomber (that had been "christened" Bock's Car) took off from Tinian Island in the South Pacific, with the prayers and blessings of the crew's two chaplains. Barely making it off the runway just yards before the heavily loaded plane could have gone into the ocean (the bomb weighed 10,000 pounds), it headed north for Kokura, the primary target.

Bock's Car's bomb was code-named "Fat Man," partly because of its shape and partly to honor the rotund Winston Churchill. "Little Boy," first called "Thin Man" (after President Franklin Roosevelt), was the code name of the uranium bomb that had been dropped on Hiroshima three days earlier.

Japan's Supreme War Council in Tokyo, scheduled to convene their next meeting at 11 a.m. on Aug. 9, had absolutely no comprehension of what had really happened at Hiroshima. So the members had no heightened sense of urgency. The council was mostly concerned about Russia's declaration of war.

But it was already too late, because by the time the War Council members were arising and heading to the meeting with the emperor, there was no chance to alter the course of history. Bock's Car – flying under radio silence – was already approaching the southern islands of Japan, heading for Kokura, the primary target. The crew was hoping to beat an anticipated typhoon and the approaching clouds that would have delayed the mission.

The Bock's Car crew had instructions to drop the bomb only on visual sighting. But Kokura was clouded over. After making three failed bomb runs over the clouded-over city and then experiencing engine trouble on one of the four engines (using up valuable fuel all the while) the plane headed for its secondary target, Nagasaki.

History of Nagasaki Christianity

Nagasaki is famous in the history of Japanese Christianity. The city had the largest concentration of Christians in all of Japan. St. Mary's Urakami Cathedral was the megachurch of its time, with 12,000 baptized members.

Nagasaki was the community where the legendary Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier planted a mission church in 1549. The Catholic community at Nagasaki grew and eventually prospered over the next several generations. However it eventually became clear to the Japanese that the (Catholic) Portuguese and Spanish commercial interests were exploiting Japan. It didn't take very long before all

Europeans – and their very foreign religion – were expelled from the country.

From 1600 until 1850, being a Christian in Japan was a capital crime (punishable by death). In the early 1600s, Japanese Christians who refused to recant of their new faith were subject to unspeakable tortures – including crucifixion. After a well-publicized mass crucifixion was orchestrated, the reign of terror stopped, and it appeared to all observers that Japanese Christianity was extinct.

However, 250 years later, after the gunboat diplomacy of U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry forced open an offshore island for American trade purposes, it was discovered that there were thousands of baptized Christians in Nagasaki, living their faith in secret in a catacomb-like existence, completely unknown to the government.

With this revelation, the Japanese government started another purge; but because of international pressure, the persecutions stopped and Nagasaki Christianity came up from the underground. By 1917, with no financial help from the government, the re-vitalized Christian community had built their massive cathedral in the Urakami River district of Nagasaki.

So it was the height of irony that the massive Cathedral – one of only two Nagasaki landmarks that could be positively identified from 31,000 feet up – became Ground Zero. (The other identifiable aiming point landmark was the Mitsubishi armaments factory complex – which had run out of raw materials because of the successful Allied naval blockade.)

At 11:02 a.m., during Thursday morning confessions, an unknown number of Nagasaki Christians were boiled, evaporated, carbonized or otherwise disappeared in a scorching, radioactive fireball that exploded 500 meters above the cathedral.

The “black rain” that soon came down from the mushroom cloud also contained the mingled cellular remains of many Nagasaki Christians as well as many more Shintoists and Buddhists. The theological implications of Nagasaki’s Black Rain surely should boggle the minds of theologians of all denominations.

Nagasaki Christian Body Count

Most Nagasaki Christians did not survive the blast. Six thousand of them died instantly, including all who were at confession that morning. Of the 12,000 church members, 8,500 of them eventually died as a result of the bomb. Many of the others were seriously sickened with a highly lethal entirely new disease: radiation sickness.

Located near the cathedral were three orders of nuns and a Christian girl's school. They all disappeared into black smoke or became chunks of charcoal. Tens of thousands of other innocent non-Christian non-combatants also died instantly, and many more were mortally or incurably wounded. Some of the original victims (and their progeny) are still suffering from the trans-generational malignancies and immune deficiencies caused by the deadly plutonium and other radioactive isotopes produced by the bomb.

And here is one of the most important ironies: **What the Japanese Imperial government could not do in 250 years of persecution (i.e., to destroy Japanese Christianity) American Christians did in mere seconds.**

Even after a slow revival of Christianity after WWII, membership in Japanese Christian churches still represents a tiny fraction of 1 percent of the general population, and the average attendance at Christian worship services across the nation is reported to be only 30 per Sunday. The decimation of Nagasaki crippled what at one time was a vibrant church.

Father George Zabelka was the Catholic chaplain for the 509th Composite Group (the 1,500-man USAAF group whose only mission was to deliver atomic bombs to Japanese civilian targets). Zabelka was one of the few World War II clergy leaders who eventually came to recognize the serious contradictions between what his modern church had taught him and what the early pacifist church believed concerning homicidal violence.

Several decades after Zabelka was discharged from the military chaplaincy, he finally concluded that both he and his church had made serious ethical and theological errors in religiously legitimating the organized mass slaughter that is modern war. He eventually came to understand that (as he articulated it) "the enemy of me and the enemy of my nation is not an enemy of God. Rather my enemy and my nation's enemy are children of God who are loved by God and who therefore are to be loved (and not killed) by me as a follower of that loving God."

Father Zabelka's sudden conversion away from the standardized war-tolerant Christianity changed his Detroit, Michigan ministry around 180 degrees. His absolute commitment to the truth of gospel nonviolence – just like Martin Luther King's commitment – inspired him to devote the remaining decades of his life to speaking out against violence in all its forms, including the violence of militarism, racism and economic exploitation.

Zabelka travelled to Nagasaki on the 50th anniversary of the bombing, tearfully repenting and asking for forgiveness for the part he had played in the crime.

Likewise, the Lutheran chaplain for the 509th, Pastor William Downey (formerly

of Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota), in his counseling of soldiers who had become troubled by their participation in making murder for the state, later denounced all killing, whether by a single bullet or by weapons of mass destruction.

Wars That Ruined Their Souls?

In Daniel Hallock's important book, *Hell, Healing and Resistance*, the author described a 1997 Buddhist retreat that was led by the Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh. The retreat involved a number of combat-traumatized Vietnam War veterans who had left the Christianity of their birth.

The veterans had responded positively to Nhat Hanh's ministrations. Hallock wrote, "Clearly, Buddhism offers something that cannot be found in institutional Christianity. But then why should veterans embrace a religion that has blessed the wars that ruined their souls? It is no wonder that they turn to a gentle Buddhist monk to hear what are, in large part, the truths of Christ."

Hallock's comment should be a sobering wake-up call to Christian leaders who seem to regard as important both the recruitment of new members and the retention of old ones. The fact that the U.S. is a highly militarized nation makes the truths of gospel nonviolence difficult to teach and preach, especially to military veterans (particularly the homeless, psychologically tormented, spiritually-depleted, malnourished, over-diagnosed, over-medicated, over-vaccinated, homicidal and suicidal ones) who may have lost their faith because of horrors experienced on the battlefield.

I am a retired physician who has dealt with hundreds of psychologically traumatized patients (including combat-traumatized war veterans), and I know that violence, in all its forms, can irretrievably damage the mind, body, brain and spirit. But the fact that the combat-traumatized type is totally preventable – and oftentimes impossible to cure – makes prevention work really important.

An ounce of prevention is indeed worth a pound of cure when it comes to combat-induced PTSD. And where Christian churches should and could be instrumental in the prevention of the soul-destroying combat-type PTSD is by counseling their members to not participate in it (which should be obvious when considering the ethical message of the nonviolent Jesus, a message that guided the pacifist church in the first three centuries of its existence)

Experiencing violence, whether as victimizer or victim, can be deadly, and it can run through families like a contagion. I have seen violence, neglect, abuse and the resultant traumatic psychological and neurological illnesses spread through both military and non-military families – even involving the third and

fourth generations after the initial victimizations.

And that has been the experience of the hibakusha (the long-suffering atomic bomb survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki), whose progeny continue to suffer disease – which has likewise been the experience of many of the progeny of the warrior-perpetrators who participated in the act of killing in every war.

Years ago I saw an unpublished Veteran's Administration study that showed that, whereas most Vietnam War-era soldiers were active members of Christian churches before they went off to war, if they came home with PTSD, the percentage returning to their faith community approached zero. Daniel Hallock's sobering message above helps explain why that is so.

Therefore the church – at least by its silence on the critical issues of war and war preparation – seems to be actually promoting (rather than forbidding) homicidal violence, contrary to the ethical teachings of Jesus, by failing to teach what the primitive church understood was one of the core teachings of Jesus, who preached, in effect, that “violence is forbidden for those who wish to follow me.”

Therefore, by refraining from warning their adolescent members about the faith- and soul-destroying realities of war, the church is directly undermining the “retention” strategies in which all churches engage. The hidden history of Nagasaki thus has valuable lessons for American Christianity.

Bock's Car Crew and Chain of Command

The members of the Bock's Car bomber crew, like conscripted or enlisted men in any war, were at the bottom of a long, complex and very anonymous chain of command whose superiors demand unconditional obedience from those below them in the chain.

The Bock's Car crew had been ordered to “pull the trigger” of the lethal weapon that had been conceptualized, designed, funded, manufactured and armed by any number of other entities, none of which would feel morally responsible for doing the dirty deed because they didn't have literal blood on their hands.

As is true in all wars, soldier trigger-pullers are often the ones unjustly singled out and blamed for the killing in the combat zone, and therefore they often have the worst post-war guilt and shame that is often the most lethal part of combat-induced PTSD (other than the suicide and violence-inducing aspects of many psychiatric drugs and the chronic illness-stimulating aspects of the over-vaccination schedules to which all military recruits are subjected).

However, the religious chaplains that are responsible for their spiritual lives

of their soldiers, are also at the bottom of the chain of command and may share their guilt feelings. Neither group usually knows the real reasons their commanders are ordering them to kill or participate in the killing operations.

The early church leaders, who knew the teachings and actions of Jesus best, rejected the nationalist, racist and militarist agendas of whatever passed for nationalism 2,000 years ago.

And by following the Sermon on the Mount, true Christians of today similarly reject the homicidal agendas of the national security state, the military-industrial-congressional complex, the war-profiteering corporations, the mesmerizing major media, and the eye-for-an-eye retaliation church doctrines that have, over the past 1,700 years, enabled baptized and confirmed Christians to, if ordered to do so, willingly kill other humans in the name of Christ.

Gary G. Kohls is a retired physician from Duluth, MN, USA. He writes a weekly column for the Reader, Duluth's alternative newsweekly magazine. His columns mostly deal with the dangers of American fascism, corporatism, militarism, racism, malnutrition, psychiatric drugging, over-vaccination regimens, Big Pharma and other movements that threaten the environment or America's health, democracy, civility and longevity. Many of his columns are archived at http://duluthreader.com/articles/categories/200_Duty_to_Warn, http://www.globalresearch.ca/authors?query=Gary+Kohls+articles&by=&p=&page_id= or at <https://www.transcend.org/tms/search/?q=gary+kohls+articles>

How US Spies Secured the Hiroshima Uranium

A dark secret behind the Hiroshima bomb is where the uranium came from, a spy-vs.-spy race to secure naturally enriched uranium from Congo to fuel the Manhattan Project and keep the rare mineral out of Nazi hands, reports Joe Lauria.

By Joe Lauria

Since the first use of a nuclear weapon in Hiroshima 71 years ago, on Aug. 6, 1945, the story of where the uranium for the bomb came from and the covert operation the U.S. employed to secure it has been little known.

That is until the publication next week in the United States of a new book, *Spies in the Congo*, by British researcher Susan Williams (Public Affairs Books,

New York), which unveils for the first time the detailed story of the deep cover race between the Americans and the Nazis to get their hands on the deadliest metal on earth.

At the outset of World War II, when the U.S. launched the extraordinarily secret Manhattan Project, uranium from North America and most of the rest of the world was less than one percent enriched and considered inadequate to build the first atom bombs. But there was one mine in the world where, through a freak of nature, the ore contained up to an unheard of 75 percent enriched uranium: Shinkolobwe mine in the present-day Democratic Republic of Congo.

The link between Shinkolobwe and Hiroshima, where more than 200,000 people were killed, is still largely unknown in the West, in the Congo and even in Japan among the few survivors still alive. Another ignored link is the disastrous health effect on Congolese miners who handled the uranium as virtual slaves of the Belgium mining giant Union Minière, owners of Shinkolobwe in the then Belgian Congo.

Though it turned out the Nazis had not got very far in their quest for the bomb (because of a lack of highly-enriched uranium), the Americans were unaware of that in 1939, and were fearful Hitler would get a nuclear weapon before they did. That would have almost certainly affected the outcome of the war. As early as that year, Albert Einstein wrote President Franklin D. Roosevelt to advise him to keep the Nazis away from Shinkolobwe.

Williams's meticulously-researched and masterfully written book tells the intricate tale of a special unit of the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency, that was set up to purchase and secretly remove *all* the uranium from Shinkolobwe that the U.S. could get its hands on.

The unit was headed in Washington by OSS Director William "Wild Bill" Donovan and Rud Boulton, head of the OSS's Africa section. Donovan was obsessed with stopping the Nazis from getting the bomb and mistrustful of Britain's role in the uranium operation. Britain on the other hand feared the U.S. was trying to take over its West African colonies. Williams tells us that Donovan trained his agents to not only target Nazism but colonialism as well.

The OSS agents used a number of covers, such as ornithologists, naturalists collecting live gorillas, silk importers, and posing as an executive for the Texaco oil company, such as agent Lanier Violett did. This became an issue after Texaco's president, Torkild Rieber, was forced to resign in 1940 after being exposed as an oil smuggler to the Nazis.

Williams also tells us that the American spies had difficulties operating in French Congo and other colonies under General Charles De Gaulle's Free French control because the U.S. recognized the Vichy government until the Normandy invasion.

A Real-Life Thriller

Williams's real-life spy thriller focuses on a number of OSS agents involved in securing the uranium and stopping the Nazis from accessing the unique mine in Katanga province, a mission so secretive most of the agents involved thought they were preventing diamond smuggling. The few OSS agents who knew it was uranium that the U.S. was after, didn't know what the ore was for.

Once such agent, Wilbur "Dock" Hogue, the protagonist of the story, only found out after Aug. 6, 1945, why he had helped uncover Nazi smuggling routes from the Congo and helped spirit uranium out of the country. It was brought by train to Port-Francqui, then on barges down the Kasai to the Congo River to Leopoldville (Kinshasa), where it was reloaded on a train to the port of Matadi.

There the uranium was put on Pan American airplanes or on ships, both bound for New York, where it was unloaded and stored on the New York City borough of Staten Island. There the uranium remained until it was ready to be used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. (The New York site under the Bayonne Bridge still registers radiation levels today high enough for the U.S. government to order a clean-up.)

Williams also reveals that the U.S. mission was complicated by some Belgian officials in the Congo, as well as Union Minière, who cooperated at times with the Nazis to smuggle out some of the lethal ore. As Williams explains, after the Germans surrendered, the U.S. learned how far from a bomb the Nazis actually were, and after Japan was defeated, learned for the first time that Tokyo also had had a rudimentary nuclear weapons program.

After VE Day, Einstein tried to convince Truman to shut down the Manhattan Project. But it was too late. Though Generals Dwight Eisenhower, Douglas MacArthur and three other senior American military commanders were opposed to using the bomb, Truman dropped it anyway, not to end the war and save lives, as most historians now agree, but to test the weapon and send a message to the world, and especially the Soviets, about America's coming dominance.

"The Japanese were ready to surrender, and it wasn't necessary to hit them with that awful thing," Eisenhower said.

Though OSS agent Hogue did not know what the uranium was for, he knew he was on a highly dangerous mission. Nazi agents three times tried to kill him, with a

bomb, a knife and a gun. He survived the war only to succumb to stomach cancer at the age of 42.

As Williams points out: "Risk factors for this disease include exposure to radiation, which explains why atomic bomb survivors in the Second World War were more likely than most people to get stomach cancer."

Two other of Hogue's OSS colleagues from the Congo mission also died at very young ages. But Williams's concern also extends to the Congolese mine workers who handled the stuff for days on end and about which neither Belgium, Union Minière nor the Americans seemed to have the slightest concern.

"Astonishingly, hardly any attention has been paid to the Congolese, not one of whom was consulted about plans to make atomic bombs with Shinkolobwe's uranium," Williams writes. "What would have been their reaction, on a moral basis, to the building of such a destructive and terrible weapon with a mineral from their own land?"

"What would be their reaction today, if the disinformation, shadows and mirrors were swept aside and the full history was set out?" she asks. "Nor were the Congolese informed about the terrible health

and safety hazards to which they were exposed; they were simply used as workers, as if they had no rights as equal human beings. This was a process for which the US, the UK and Belgium bear a

heavy responsibility."

Joe Lauria is a veteran foreign-affairs journalist based at the U.N. since 1990. He has written for the Boston Globe, the London Daily Telegraph, the Johannesburg Star, the Montreal Gazette, the Wall Street Journal and other newspapers. He can be reached at joelauria@gmail.com and followed on Twitter at [@unjoe](https://twitter.com/unjoe).

Lurching Toward World War III

Anti-Russian hysteria has reached extraordinary levels in Official Washington with heated allegations about Russia hacking Democratic Party emails, but this over-the-top "group think" threatens the world's future, explains John Chuckman.

By John Chuckman

When did America's establishment ever discuss, in elections or at other times, issues of war and peace for the people's understanding and consent? Virtually never. There was no mandate for Vietnam, Cambodia, Iraq, Libya, Syria, or a dozen other conflicts.

Of course, once a war gets going, there is a tendency for Americans to close ranks with flags and ribbons and slogans such as "Support our troops" and "Love it or leave it." The senior leaders know this psychological pattern, and they count on it, every time.

The fundamental problem in America's government is an elaborate political structure much resembling democracy but with actual rule by a powerful establishment and a set of special interests – all supported by a monstrous security apparatus and a huge, lumbering military, which wouldn't even know what to do with itself in peace. Unfortunately, I don't think there is any apparent solution to this horrible political reality, and, while once it affected primarily Americans themselves, today it affects the planet.

There is an intense new element that has been added to America's governing establishment: the drive of the neocons for American supremacy everywhere, for complete global dominance, and it is something which is frighteningly similar to past drives by fascist governments which brought only human misery on a vast scale.

The neocons' underlying motive, I believe, is absolute security for America's colony in the Middle East, Israel – put another way, their concern is for Israel's hegemony over its entire region with no room for anyone else to act in their own interests. It is only if the United States is deeply engaged all over the planet that Israel can constantly benefit from its strange relationship with America.

It did not require the neocons to interest America's establishment with interfering in other people's affairs. America has a long history of doing so, stretching back to the Mexican War, the Spanish-American War, the Philippine-American War, the brazen seizure of Hawaii from its people and going right up to the pointless War in Vietnam and Cambodia in the hope of keeping the Pacific Ocean effectively an American lake. But the neocons have added a new force, a new impulse to something which would be better left alone, and they are very influential in American affairs.

Ordinary Americans are not interested in world affairs, and there is a great deal of evidence to support that statement. American Imperialists of earlier times disparaged this tendency to just want peace at home with the pejorative name, *isolationism*, and avoiding isolationism became an excuse for a whole

series of wars and interventions.

So, Americans today cannot be allowed to fall back into their natural tendency of not caring. Thus we have the drive of the neocons and, tragically, thus we have America being driven into direct confrontation with Russia. And with China, too, of course, but Russia is my focus since Russia is the only country in the world literally capable of obliterating the United States. There is unquestionably a sense here of Rome wanting to go after Carthage, although cavalry, swords, spears and catapults no longer can settle such conflicts.

The situation is compounded by the American establishment's dawning realization that its days of largely unquestioned supremacy in the world are fading into memory, as other countries grow and develop and have important interests in world affairs.

In many respects, it has been a long downhill slide for the average American since the economic heyday of the 1950s. Decline in real incomes, decline in good job opportunities at home, the export of American industries abroad to areas of less costly labor, and the virtual collapse of American towns and cities in many places, Detroit being perhaps the most sorrowful case of many – all these are evident year-in and year-out.

Lost Perspective

I do think the American establishment simply does not know how to handle its role in a brave new world, but do something it clearly thinks it must, and that is an extremely dangerous state of mind. It is armed with vast armies and terrible weapons so that it retains a sense of being able to act in some way to permanently reclaim its place, an illusion if ever there was one.

We know from scholars of the past the role that the mere existence of terrible military power can play in disaster. Huge standing armies were one of the major underlying causes of the First World War, a conflict in which 20 million people perished. Germany repeated the effort with Hitler's government working tirelessly to create what was to become the finest and most advanced army the world had ever seen until that time, but it, too, ended in disaster, and of even greater proportions.

America has not discovered the secret to making itself invulnerable, although I fear that its establishment believes that it can do so, and that represents the most dangerous possible thinking.

Contrary to political speeches, America's establishment has never shown great concern over the welfare of ordinary Americans, and today its lack of concern is almost palpable. Washington's white-maned, over-fed, crinkly-faced senators

spend virtually every ounce of effort in two activities: raising funds from special interests for re-election (estimated at two-thirds of an average Senator's time) and conspiring on how to keep America dominant in the world. Anything else is just piffle.

America's unique place in the world of 1950 took care of ordinary Americans, not any effort by government. Again, the utter contempt for ordinary Americans perhaps offers a dark element in the thinking of America's establishment when it comes to possible nuclear war.

Russia is not, of course, a direct threat to neocon interests, except when it comes to matters like Syria, a deliberately-engineered horror to bring down the last independent-minded leader in the Middle East and to smash and Balkanize his country, parts of which, Israel has always lusted after in its vision of Greater Israel.

The coup in Ukraine, which borders along a great stretch of Russia, represented a direct challenge to Russia's security, offering a place ultimately to be filled with hostile forces and missiles and American advisors – all of which was expected to silence Russia's independent voice in the world and its ability to in any way thwart neocon adventures, if not, in the longer-range, savage dreams of some, to provide a platform for the ultimate destruction or overthrow of Russia herself.

Russia's effective countering with skillful moves in its own interests both in Syria and Ukraine has driven some of America's establishment to the edge of madness, and that madness is what we see and hear in Europe, which is once again being turned into a vast armed camp. Europe is now seething with anti-Russian rhetoric, threats and activities such as huge war games, the largest of which occurred around the anniversary of Hitler's invasion of Russia, the single most destructive event in all of human history.

America has created deliberately a situation almost as dangerous as the days of the Cuban missile crisis, which itself arose from the American establishment's belief that it had every right to interfere in Cuba's affairs.

Nuclear Threats

We have another element, now compounding the danger, in a far greater variety and level of sophistication of weapons, including some nuclear weapons whose controlled yields are regarded by America's military as being perhaps "usable" in a theater like Europe.

The installation of anti-missile systems near Russia is very much part of this threat since these systems not only are intended to neutralize Russia's capacity

for response to a sudden, massive attack but to provide a cover for future covert, easily-done substitution of other kinds of missiles into the launchers, faster-arriving, nuclear-armed missiles which would indeed be an element in such an attack.

Russia, a country twice invaded with all the might of Germany and before that by Napoleon's Grande Armée, cannot be expected just to sit and do nothing. It won't. It cannot.

The world must not forget that America's military, a number of times in the past, created complete plans for a massive, surprise nuclear attack on what was then the Soviet Union, the last of which I am aware was in the early 1960s, and it was presented as being feasible to President Kennedy, who is said to have left the Pentagon briefing sick to his stomach.

Nuclear war, just as with any other kind of war, can happen almost by accident through blunders and careless acts and overly-aggressive postures. Just let the blood of two sides get up enough, and an utter disaster could quickly overtake us.

Constantly decreasing the possibilities for accidents and misunderstandings is a prime responsibility of every major world leader, and right now the United States is pretty close to having completely abdicated its responsibility.

John Chuckman is former chief economist for a large Canadian oil company.

The Fallacy of 'Regime Change' Strategies

"Regime change" or destabilizing sanctions are Official Washington's policy options of choice in dealing with disfavored nations, but these aggressive strategies have proved harmful and counterproductive, says ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

Many variables are involved in the messy predicaments in the Middle East, but one way of framing the history and issues of U.S. policy toward the region is in terms of the approaches that have been taken toward so-called rogue regimes. That term, one should hasten to add, obscures more than it enlightens. But it has been in general use for a long time. Take it as shorthand to refer to regimes that have come to be considered especially troublesome and are subjected

to some degree of ostracism and punishment.

Three basic approaches are available in formulating policy toward such a regime: (1) keep ostracizing and punishing it in perpetuity; (2) try to change the regime; or (3) negotiate and do business with it, to constrain it and to influence its actions. There are some contradictions between the approaches. Any regime that is led to believe that it is going to be overturned anyway, or that it will be perpetually punished anyway, lacks incentive to make concessions in a negotiation.

The approaches that outside powers, especially Western powers and above all the United States, have taken toward Middle Eastern regimes that have come to be considered rogue have varied – not only from one state to another but also over time in the policy toward any one state.

Iraq was subject to punishment for a long time, with the prevailing outlook not involving urgency to try different things. The perspective, as voiced by Secretary of State Colin Powell, was that Saddam Hussein was “in his box.”

Then suddenly the policy became one of forceful regime change, stimulated by nothing other than such a project has been on the neoconservative agenda and that the surge in militancy in the American public mood after the 9/11 terrorist attack, even though Iraq had nothing to do with that event, finally made realization of that agenda item politically possible.

Libya under Muammar Gaddafi was subject to years of punishment and ostracism. As far as international sanctions were concerned, this did have a specific declared objective: involving the turning over of named suspects in the bombing of Pan Am 103 in 1988. Once Qaddafi surrendered the suspects, real negotiation ensued. It resulted in an agreement that ended (while opening up to international inspection) Libya’s unconventional weapons programs and confirmed the Libyan regime’s exit from international terrorism.

Then, after an internal insurrection broke out in Libya, the idea took root – first in Western European capitals, although Washington would go along – that the situation should be exploited to intervene on behalf of the rebels and to help overthrow the regime. Regime change supplanted negotiation.

Policy toward Syria has been a mixed bag all along. There has been lots of punishment, but without some of the isolation to which other regimes have been subjected; the United States kept diplomatic relations with Syria even after placing it on the list of state sponsors of terrorism.

Once an internal revolt broke out in Syria, a situation similar to Libya arose, in that some outsiders (principally Gulf Arab states and Turkey) wanted to take

advantage of the situation to topple the Assad regime. With Russian and Iranian help, and also for internal reasons, the regime has managed to hang on.

But “Assad must go” became a slogan elsewhere, and many in the West took regime change to be an objective. There was negotiation leading to the surrender and disposal of Syrian chemical weapons, but some, including in the United States, did not like that approach.

While there has been some backing away from the idea that Assad must go, others outside Syria say that still should be an objective. In short, there has been conflict and controversy, even within the United States let alone in any larger coalition, over just what the objective should be.

Iran has been subject to much punishment in the form of sanctions. Then after Hassan Rouhani’s election in 2013 there was real negotiation on an important issue. This led to the conclusion and implementation of a multilateral agreement that places limits on, and subjects to international scrutiny, Iran’s nuclear program.

A Balance Sheet

Before turning to a balance sheet regarding the results of these different approaches, some observations are in order about what has too often been overlooked with two of the approaches. The sustained use of punishment in the form of sanctions often has been accompanied by confusion about exactly what the objectives are – if that objective is to be anything besides punishment for punishment’s sake, which does not advance anyone’s interests.

An objective might be to make it directly harder for the targeted regime to do certain things, such as to procure advanced military technology. Or it might be to try to provoke an internal revolt, although this rarely works, for several reasons including where the blame for the pain usually falls.

Often the rationale for the sanctions is that it is an inducement to get the targeted regime to change its policies. But this does not work unless there is a positive alternative to the negative one of punishment and sanctions, and unless there is a firm expectation that the sanctions will end if the regime chooses a different, specific, identifiable course. And that is what has often been overlooked and missing.

This explains the years of failure of imposing sanctions on Iran without providing any positive alternative. If such an alternative had been offered, a nuclear agreement could have been reached years earlier, when Iran’s nuclear program was much smaller.

As for regime change, one needs to reflect first of all on just how irregular and extreme is the notion that if we don't like someone else's government, forcefully overthrowing it is to be considered as just another policy option. Such a notion is contrary to tenets of international law and international order than have been in effect since the Peace of Westphalia in the Seventeenth Century.

Also overlooked when regime change is turned to is how other people may have different ideas from our own about what rulers are legitimate and who should get their support – a factor in considering the status of Bashar al-Assad in Syria. Overlooked all too often as well is what comes after the ruler we don't like is gone. A simple faith that something better is bound to fall into place has led to the problems we have seen in spades in Iraq and Libya.

Now for the balance sheet. The results of regime change in Iraq have been too glaringly bad to need a full recounting. They include a civil war that has never ended and has claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands, has disrupted the Iraqi economy, and has created enormous flows of refugees and displaced persons. These include the birth of a major terrorist group that we now know as ISIS. And for those who don't like to see Iranian influence anywhere, the war that toppled Saddam resulted in the single biggest increase in Iranian influence in the region in at least the last couple of decades.

Libya has seen prolonged chaos since the removal of Gaddafi. Contending governments based in different parts of the country have competed for power, with only tentative and fragile progress made recently toward a reconciliation. The economy, despite the oil resources, is in shambles. Instability has been exported from Libya in the form of both men and materiel, and ISIS established in Libya its biggest presence outside of Iraq and Syria.

In Syria, the closest thing to successes have come from the bits of negotiation and diplomacy that have come into play: those involving the Assad regime's surrender of chemical weapons and some partial and temporary cease-fires. The war in Syria – the war itself, not any particular political outcome in Damascus – has been a major breeder of extremism and the threat of instability spilling over borders.

Actions against the regime have brought counteractions not only from external supporters of the regime but also internal players who see the alternatives as worse for them. Moreover, it would be difficult to escape a similar conclusion from the point of view of our own interests – that is, that the most feasible alternatives to the current Syrian regime would not be those hoped-for moderate forces the building up of which always seems to fill short, but instead radical extremists.

The brightest spot in this regional picture is found in the one place where the policy move by the United States, in cooperation with international partners, has been in the direction of negotiation. That involves Iran, and the big result so far has been the agreement to restrict Iran's nuclear program, which certainly is one of the most significant steps in recent years on behalf of nuclear nonproliferation.

It is just one issue, but an important one. And lest we forget, it was the issue about which anti-Iran activists had for so long been crying most loudly. What comes later in dealings with the Iranian regime will depend in large part on the continued attempts of hardliners in more than one capital, but especially in Washington, to sabotage the nuclear agreement.

But at least there has been an unshackling of diplomacy in the Middle East in the sense of establishing, even in the absence of full diplomatic relations, something closer than before to a businesslike dialogue with one of the most significant states about issues of mutual concern (including countering ISIS, an issue on which U.S. and Iranian interests run parallel).

It should have been apparent, on an *a priori* basis alone, that overthrowing foreign government we don't happen to like is not to be considered as just another foreign policy option, even for a superpower. And it should have been apparent that punishment for the sake of punishment doesn't do anyone any good, beyond registering our dislikes.

When we take into account the actual record of results from the different approaches that have been taken toward regimes we choose to call rogue, these conclusions should be all the more obvious.

Paul R. Pillar, in his 28 years at the Central Intelligence Agency, rose to be one of the agency's top analysts. He is author most recently of [Why America Misunderstands the World](#). (This article first appeared as a [blog post](#) at [The National Interest's Web site](#). Reprinted with author's permission.)

VP Choice Pence Reaffirms Israel Devotion

Donald Trump may alarm Washington's foreign policy establishment with his "America First" rhetoric but Mike Pence, Trump's VP choice, reaffirms a commitment to the traditional "Israel First" doctrine, as Sam Hussein shows.

By Sam Hussein

Indiana Gov. (and Republican vice presidential nominee) Mike Pence addressed the Republican Convention on Wednesday night and declared: “And if the world knows nothing else, it will know this: America stands with Israel.”

I’ve heard him say that before. Being a journalist based in the Washington, D.C. area, I try to ask tough questions of political figures when I can. Perhaps my favorite question is some variation of “do you acknowledge that Israel has nuclear weapons?” I’ve asked this of many political figures and virtually no one has given me a straightforward response.

But the most surreal – almost comical – response came from Donald Trump’s VP pick in 2011. At the time, he was a congressman and vice-chair of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia:

Question: You’ve also served on the Foreign Affairs Committee. Do you know that Israel has nuclear weapons?

Pence: [long pause, looks down] I’m – I am aware that Israel is our most cherished ally. And I strongly support Israel’s right of self defense and to take such actions as are necessary to secure their homeland as much as we take actions to secure ours.

Question: Do you think it increases or decreases U.S. credibility around the world when U.S. government officials can’t even acknowledge that Israel has a massive nuclear arsenal?

Pence: The American people support Israel. I call Israel our most cherished ally and I will continue to stand – without apology – for a strong U.S.-Israel relationship and strong cooperation with our most cherished ally in a very volatile part of the world.

He was utterly incapable of engaging on the issue of Israel’s nuclear arsenal. His passionate attachment to Israel has become a mantra and no inconvenient facts need enter the equation.

Since my questioning of Pence and others U.S. leaders – shown in [“The Absurd U.S. Stance on Israel’s Nukes: A Video Sampling of Denial”](#) – information has come out about gag orders on the subject.

As Grant Smith of the Institute for Research: Middle Eastern Policy [wrote in 2015](#): “Under two known gag orders – punishable by imprisonment – U.S. security-cleared government agency employees and contractors may not disclose that Israel

has a nuclear weapons program. GEN-16 is a 'no-comment' regulation on 'classified information in the public domain.' 'DOE Classification Bulletin WPN-136 on Foreign Nuclear Capabilities' forbids stating what 63.9 percent of Americans already know – that Israel has a nuclear arsenal.'”

Thanks to Matt Bradley and Chris Belcher for help with the Washington Stakeout project, which questioning Pence was a part of: [@dcstakeout](#) and on [YouTube](#).

Sam Hussein is communications director for the Institute for Public Accuracy and founder of [votepact.org](#), which urges left-right cooperation. Follow him on twitter: [@samhusseini](#).

Turkey's Nukes: A Sum of All Fears

Exclusive: The post-coup chaos in Turkey is a reminder about the risk of leaving nuclear weapons in unstable regions where they serve no clear strategic purpose but present a clear and present danger, explains Jonathan Marshall.

By Jonathan Marshall

The national security priesthood in Washington has always used claims of superior wisdom and insider knowledge to silence dissent about nuclear policy. But not even they can explain any longer why U.S. nuclear bombs are being stored in politically unstable Turkey as it grows increasingly Islamist and anti-American.

The Incirlik air base in southeast Turkey – from which U.S. pilots launch bombing raids on ISIS forces in Syria – is home to about 50 B-61 hydrogen bombs. That makes it NATO's largest nuclear storage facility, with about a quarter of all theater nuclear weapons in the alliance's stockpiles.

Each bomb has a yield of up to 170 kilotons, nearly a dozen times more powerful than the weapon that leveled Hiroshima. The bombs are stored in underground vaults within aircraft shelters that in turn are protected by a base security perimeter.

But Eric Schlosser, author of a 2014 [book](#) on the perils of nuclear accidents, [observed](#) recently, “With a few hours and the right tools and training, you could open one of NATO's nuclear-weapons storage vaults, remove a weapon, and bypass the [protective switches] inside it. Within seconds, you could place an explosive device on top of a storage vault, destroy the weapon, and release a lethal radioactive cloud.”

In addition, the security of the bombs is premised on them being defended by loyal NATO forces. In the case of Incirlik, that loyalty proved uncertain at best. Power to the base was cut after mutinous troops used a tanker plane from the base to refuel F-16s that menaced Ankara and Istanbul.

After the coup, the Turkish commander of Incirlik was arrested for complicity and marched off in handcuffs. One can easily imagine a clique of Islamist officers in a future coup seizing the nukes as a bargaining chip with Ankara and Washington – or, worse yet, to support radical insurgents in the region.

Getting Attention

After years of inattention to NATO's nuclear deployment policy, the recent failed coup in Turkey is finally setting off alarm bells. Jeffrey Lewis, a nuclear proliferation expert at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, asked rhetorically, "Does it seem like a good idea to station American nuclear weapons at an air base commanded by someone who may have just helped bomb his own country's parliament?"

Hans Kristensen, a nuclear expert with the Federation of American Scientists, declared that "the security situation in Turkey and in the base area no longer meet the safety requirements that the United States should have for storage of nuclear weapons. You only get so many warnings before something goes terribly wrong. It's time to withdraw the weapons."

Most tellingly, former NATO Supreme Allied Commander James Stavridis wrote – being careful not to publicly confirm any classified information – that if NATO really does house tactical nuclear weapons at Incirlik Air Base, "this poses a very dangerous problem, and Washington will need Ankara's full cooperation to ensure that all U.S. military equipment and forces are fully protected."

The questioning should go beyond the obvious security risks of loose nukes falling into unfriendly hands, however. No one has ever explained what enemy the hydrogen bombs stored in Turkey might be used against, a quarter century after the fall of the Soviet Union. No doubt there are plenty of neocons in Washington who would delight in dropping them on Iran, as advocated by Republican billionaire Sheldon Adelson, but one hopes that most Americans do not share his fondness for gambling outside of casinos.

Nor has anyone explained how the bombs might be used if an appropriate enemy were found, since NATO has no nuclear-certified aircraft stationed in Turkey. But in Washington and in Brussels, the inability to answer such basic questions is rarely cause to rethink old policies. After all, how many priests give up their incantations just because the chants don't work?

Although Turkey offers an egregious case of nuclear risks, questions about nuclear weapons deployment should go well beyond that country. Security is also notoriously lax at NATO bases in Belgium and the Netherlands where nuclear weapons are stored.

As Schlosser recalls, “In 2010, peace activists climbed over a fence at the Kleine Brogel Airbase, in Belgium, cut through a second fence, entered a hardened shelter containing nuclear-weapon vaults, placed anti-nuclear stickers on the walls, wandered the base for an hour, and posted a video of the intrusion on YouTube. The video showed that the Belgian soldier who finally confronted them was carrying an unloaded rifle.”

Brandishing Nuclear Bombs

As I have argued before, the threat of terrorism is only one of several reasons to rethink the presence of theater nuclear weapons on NATO soil. Those weapons actually *decrease* the security of Western Europe by raising the risks of catastrophic escalation in the case of an inadvertent conflict with Russia. The weapons are also utterly unnecessary for deterrence, given the nuclear arsenals available to the United States, Great Britain and France.

Despite these risks, influential voices in the alliance are calling for more brandishing of nuclear weapons, not less. A recent article in *NATO Review* declared, “The forces involved in the nuclear mission should be exercised openly and regularly, without undermining their specific nature. Such exercises should involve not only nuclear-weapon states, but other non-nuclear allies.”

Last December, Poland’s deputy defense minister proposed putting U.S. nuclear weapons on Polish soil. That proposal came a year after Polish F-16 jets took part in a NATO nuclear exercise.

And the Obama administration, for now at least, remains bent on upgrading its hydrogen bombs and building a new class of nuclear-tipped cruise missiles, both of which would be deployed in Europe.

Yet the observation of German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier remains as true today as when he said it in 2009: “From the military point of view, those (theater) weapons are absolutely senseless today.”

The question he asked then is the one that all thinking people should be asking in the wake of Turkey’s recent debacle: “Isn’t it time to include substrategic and tactical nuclear weapons in the nuclear disarmament process, in order to [eliminate] once and for all the leftovers of the Cold War on the territory of Russia and Europe?”

Jonathan Marshall is author or co-author of five books on international affairs, including *The Lebanese Connection: Corruption, Civil War and the International Drug Traffic* (Stanford University Press, 2012). Some of his previous articles for Consortiumnews were "Risky Blowback from Russian Sanctions"; "Neocons Want Regime Change in Iran"; "Saudi Cash Wins France's Favor"; "The Saudis' Hurt Feelings"; "Saudi Arabia's Nuclear Bluster"; "The US Hand in the Syrian Mess"; and "Hidden Origins of Syria's Civil War."]

Israel's Wolf-Crying about Iran's Bomb

Despite Israeli and neocon-led doomsday talk, the year-old Iranian nuclear agreement has achieved its principal goal of stopping Iran from getting the Bomb and has even quieted alarums from Israel, writes Trita Parsi.

By Trita Parsi

A year has passed since diplomats from Iran and the P5+1 (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States; plus Germany) defied conventional wisdom and struck a deal aimed at both preventing Iran from getting the bomb and preventing it from getting bombed.

At the time, the deal's detractors were apoplectic; Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called it a "historic mistake" that would pave the way for Iran to obtain a bomb. But the world has not come to an end. Iran is not the hegemon of the Middle East, Israel can still be found on the map, and Washington and Tehran still define each other as enemies. These days, voices such as Jonathan Greenblatt of the Anti-Defamation League, criticize the deal for having changed too little.

But a closer examination shows that it has had a profound impact on the region's geopolitical dynamics. Only four years ago, the Iranian nuclear program was consistently referred to as the United States' number one national security threat. Senior U.S. officials put the risk of an Israeli attack on Iran at 50-50, a confrontation that the United States would quickly get dragged into. A war that was even more destabilizing than the Iraq invasion was not just a possibility; it seemed likely.

Today, however, the talk of war is gone. Even the hawkish government of Netanyahu has gone silent on the matter. Former Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon, a hawk in his own right, announced a few weeks ago that "at this point, and in the foreseeable future, there is no existential threat facing Israel. Thus it is

fitting that the leadership of the country stop scaring the citizenry and stop giving them the feeling that we are standing before a second Holocaust.”

Moreover, members of the U.S. Congress who have recently visited Israel have also noted that Israelis are no longer shifting every conversation to a discussion about the Iranian nuclear threat.

“I can’t count how many times I, and many members of Congress, were urgently and passionately informed that negotiation with the Iranian menace was wishful thinking and the height of folly,” Rep. Keith Ellison, D-Minnesota, wrote after a recent visit to Israel. “And now? Nothing.”

Silence, Not Admission

The nuclear deal has thus halted the march toward war and Iran’s progress toward a bomb. And that certainly qualifies as significant change. To continue to argue that Israel and the region are not safer as a result of the deal would be to contend that Iran’s nuclear program was never a threat to begin with. That is a not a position that the Likud government in Israel can argue with a straight face.

Other criticisms of the deal centered on predictions that Iran would not honor the agreement. Yet the International Atomic Energy Agency has reported that Iran is abiding by its obligations under the deal. Also not borne out have been prophecies that Iran’s regional policies would radicalize, that the deal would, as The Heritage Foundation’s James Phillips wrote, “project [American] weakness that could further encourage Iranian hardliners.”

To be sure, Washington continues to view many of Iran’s regional activities as unhelpful and destabilizing, but those activities have not increased as a result of the nuclear deal. Hezbollah and Tehran’s posture toward Israel has, for instance, not become more aggressive than it already was.

Any changes that have occurred have been rooted in regional developments – the Syrian civil war or the Saudi assault on Yemen – rather than the nuclear deal. Important developments in Syria, such as Russia’s broader entry into the war or Iran’s maneuvers on the ground, are divorced from the nuclear deal and directly tied to developments on the ground in Syria.

If anything, as the European Union’s foreign policy head, Federica Mogherini, told me last December, the deal paved the way for renewed dialogue on Syria, which offers a glimmer of hope to end the carnage there.

“What we have now in Syria – talks bringing together all the different actors (and we have it now and not last year) – is because we had the [nuclear] deal,”

she told me. And last month, U.S. Secretary Of State John Kerry stated that Iran has been “helpful” in Iraq, where both the United States and Iran are fighting the Islamic State (ISIS).

Shifting Relationship

It is undisputable that outside of the nuclear deal, the relationship between the United States and Iran has shifted significantly since the breakthrough. That became abundantly clear in January, when ten American sailors drifted into Iranian waters and were apprehended by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps – and were then promptly released.

An incident that in the pre-deal era likely would have taken months, if not years, to resolve was now settled in 16 hours. Direct diplomacy between Kerry and Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif combined with a mutual desire to resolve the matter quickly made all the difference. The two countries had embarked on a path that could transform their relationship, and both were too committed to that path to allow the incident to fester.

“I was afraid that this [the sailors’ arrest] would jeopardize everything, not just the implementation [of the JCPOA],” Zarif admitted to me.

But for relations to improve beyond the nuclear deal, moderate elements on both sides need to be strengthened by the deal. That is one area where the skepticism of the critics may have been justified. Rather than seeing the government of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani gain momentum after the deal, the pushback from Iranian hardliners has been fierce.

Those officials couldn’t prevent Iran from signing the agreement, but they could create enough problems to halt any effort to translate the nuclear deal into a broader opening to the United States. A swift crackdown against individuals and entities seeking to build bridges between Iran and the West had its intended effect: Confidence that the nuclear deal would usher in a new era for U.S.-Iranian relations quickly plummeted.

Moreover, challenges to sanctions relief has given hardline opponents of the deal in Iran a boost. Their critique of the agreement – that the United States is not trustworthy – seems to ring true since no major banks have been willing to enter the Iranian market. The banks’ hesitation, in turn, is mainly rooted in the fear that after the U.S. presidential elections, Washington’s political commitment to the deal will wane.

Neither Republican candidate Donald Trump nor Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton have signaled any desire to continue down the Obama administration’s path with Iran in general. Clinton has vowed to uphold the deal, but neither she

nor Trump have made it crystal clear that they will protect the agreement from new congressional sanctions or other measures that would cause the deal's collapse.

Clinton's team has signaled that its priority will be to rebuild relations with Israel and Saudi Arabia and restore those allies' confidence that the United States will counter Iran in the region. Meanwhile, the uncertainty around a Trump presidency needs no explaining. As a result, many banks deem the risk of entering the Iranian market too high due to the political challenges on the U.S. side. That has left Iranians without much in the way of sanctions relief, which is in turn costing Rouhani politically.

In other words, although the deal has been remarkably successful in achieving its explicit goals – halting, and even reversing, Iran's nuclear advances while avoiding a costly and risky war with Tehran – its true value in rebalancing U.S. relationships in the Persian Gulf and creating a broader opening with Iran may be squandered once Obama leaves office. If Obama's successor returns to the United States' old ways in the Middle East while hardliners in Tehran stymie outreach to the West, these unique and historic opportunities will be wasted.

Trita Parsi is the founder and president of the National Iranian American Council and an expert on US-Iranian relations, Iranian foreign politics, and the geopolitics of the Middle East. Parsi is the 2010 recipient of the Grawemeyer Award for Ideas Improving World Order. He is an award-winning author of two books, *Treacherous Alliance – The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran and the US* (Yale University Press, 2007) and *A Single Roll of the Dice – Obama's Diplomacy with Iran* (Yale University Press, 2012). Parsi currently teaches at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. He tweets at [@tparsi](https://twitter.com/tparsi). [This piece originally appeared in [Foreign Affairs](#).]
