

Blaming Each Other for Backing Terrorism

The two sides of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)'s Qatar rift are far from reconciling as both accuse the other of supporting terrorism, reports Giorgio Cafiero.

By [Giorgio Cafiero](#)

Special to Consortium News



The Gulf Crisis between Qatar and its neighbors (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE) is no closer to being settled than when it erupted in May 2017. The differences – including displeasure by the Saudi-led faction with Qatar's relations with Iran, its pro-Muslim Brotherhood stance and its alleged support of terrorism – have only heated after a controversial new documentary aired by Qatar government-owned *Al Jazeera Arabic* last month that accuses Bahrain of coordinating with terrorists.

The 52-minute [film](#), "Playing with Fire," makes extremely serious accusations about the Bahraini royal family's alleged ties with Salafist-jihadist terrorists. It claims to expose recordings and communications that prove that the Bahraini kingdom recruited Al-Qaeda terrorists to establish a cell to carry out targeted assassinations of key figures within the country's Shi'a opposition. According to "Playing with Fire," King Hamad Bin Isa al-Khalifa authorized the operation, even intervening with Riyadh to release Mohammed Saleh, an Al-Qaeda commander, from a Saudi prison.

The documentary alleges that Bahraini intelligence officials and Al-Qaeda coordinated acts of terrorism in the southeastern Iranian province of Sistan Baluchistan.

According to *Al Jazeera's* conclusions, in 2006, Bahraini intelligence officials recruited Hosham Baluchi, the ex-leader of Ansar al-Forghan, whom the Iranians later killed in 2015, for such terror operations in Iran's restive areas near Pakistan.

Responses

Predictably, the government of Bahrain had harsh words for Qatar and its state-owned pan-Arab network. Bahraini Foreign Minister Khaled bin Ahmed said the documentary was merely a "new episode in a series of conspiracies from a rogue state against the Kingdom of Bahrain, and against the stability of the entire region." Packed with "lies and fallacies against the state Bahrain," the documentary's allegations have no basis in fact, asserted Bahrain's chief diplomat. He went further, doubling down on the narratives that drove Manama and other Arab capitals to begin blockading Qatar in 2017, stating that Doha "has become the biggest threat to the Gulf Cooperation Council."

Mohamed Mubarak, a Bahraini journalist based in the United Kingdom, spoke to RT and fired back against *Al Jazeera Arabic's* documentary. He claimed that in 2006 Bahraini authorities instead captured a group of extremists and that the video footage of Al-Qaeda commander Saleh used in the documentary was fabricated in order to "blackmail" Bahrain's rulers. Mubarak claimed that "Bahrain is a spearhead in combating terrorism [which has joined] the international coalition in fighting ISIS, either in Syria or Iraq." For Qatar to level such accusations against Bahrain was "paradoxical and ironic" given *Al Jazeera's* history of providing a platform for Al-Qaeda members and sympathizers,

Mubarak said.

Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) also delivered an official [response](#) to the documentary. The terrorist group released a statement denying such links with the Bahraini state. The Al-Qaeda franchise asserted that such accusations of a secret agreement between the Al Khalifas and Al-Qaeda operatives illustrated how GCC member-states remain “keen to persuade their master Trump of who is the most loyal of his devoted workers in the war against the mujahideen.”

War of Narratives

There have been accusations for years about the Arabian Peninsula’s monarchies making backdoor deals with Al-Qaeda and other Salafist-jihadist factions, often within the framework of utilizing these Sunni extremists to push back against Iranian/Shi’a influence in the region.

AP Investigation: US allies, al-Qaida battle rebels in Yemen

By MAGGIE MICHAEL, TRISH WILSON and LEE KEATH August 6, 2018



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In the Yemeni civil war, numerous media sources, including the [Associated Press](#), have alleged coordination between the Saudi/Emirati-led coalition and AQAP. This reporting from

Yemen claimed that Riyadh and Abu Dhabi cut “secret deals with al-Qaida fighters, paying some to leave key cities and towns and letting others retreat with weapons, equipment and wads of looted cash ... hundreds more were recruited to join the coalition itself.”

There are several pieces of evidence showing that both sides in the GCC dispute were seen by Western intelligence to be supporting terrorist groups in the earlier stages of the Syrian war. A leaked memo, published in October 2016 by *WikiLeaks*, which was sent as an attachment in an email from Hillary Clinton, said: “We need to use our diplomatic and more traditional intelligence assets to bring pressure on the governments of Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which are providing clandestine financial and logistic support to Isis and other radical groups in the region.”

A declassified document from the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency predicted in August 2012 the rise of the Islamic State and said that the U.S. and European and Gulf Arab allies were supporting the establishment of a salafist principality in eastern Syria, which the document predicted, two years in advance, would give rise to an “Islamic State.” The document said:

“Western countries, the Gulf states and Turkey are supporting these efforts” by Syrian “opposition forces” to “control the eastern areas (Hasaka and Der Zor), adjacent to Western Iraqi provinces (Mosul and Anbar) ... there is the possibility of establishing a declared or undeclared Salafist Principality in eastern Syria (Hasaka and Der Zor), and this is exactly what the supporting powers to

the opposition want, in order to isolate the Syrian regime, which is considered the strategic depth of the Shia expansion (Iraq and Iran).”

Then U.S. Vice President Joe Biden told a Harvard University audience in 2015 that, “Our biggest problem is our allies,” naming Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the UAE. “What did they do? They poured hundreds of millions of dollars and tens of thousands of tons of weapons into anyone who would fight against [Syrian President Bashar al-] Assad, except that the people who were being supplied were [Jabhat] al-Nusra and Al-Qaida and the extremist elements of jihadis coming from other parts of the world.” Biden later went on an apology tour of the region, after complaints from the UAE, and he tried to withdraw his remarks.

The Pariah

Ironically, a main justification for the 26-month blockade of Qatar, imposed by half of the Saudi-led GCC’s member-states and Egypt, has been Doha’s alleged support for Al-Qaeda and other groups, from Islamic State to Lebanese Hezbollah.

In the past, before the ongoing GCC crisis, all Arab Gulf monarchies essentially joined a collective effort to fortress each other from such accusations made by Western politicians, think tanks and media.

Notwithstanding major differences between each GCC member, these six states largely operated as one family in the sense that they defended each other in discourse surrounding such alleged ties between royal families of Arabian sheikdoms and

terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda.

In the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, in which all but one of the 19 hijackers came from countries that are currently blockading Qatar (15 Saudis, two Emiratis, and one Egyptian), nearly all in the GCC had to bend over backwards to demonstrate to Washington and other Western governments that Gulf regimes were fully on board with America's "war on terror."

In the current era, however, there is mudslinging and finger pointing within the GCC as the war of narratives rages on. Which Gulf states maintain tacit relations with nefarious terror outfits that target the Arab monarchies' chief ally –the U.S. – and which of these GCC members are truly committed to working with the West in this struggle against extremism?

Until or unless the Gulf dispute is resolved, these questions and their answers will continue to be framed by the blockading states in a way to portray Qatar as the pariah state, while Doha will use its media outlets such as *Al Jazeera* Arabic to counter such narratives and turn the accusations around against its GCC accusers.

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THE ANGRY ARAB: The UAE and the Arab Counter-Revolution

As'ad AbuKhalil looks at Gulf rulers vying to play top host to U.S. interests in the Middle East.

By **As`ad AbuKhalil**

Special to Consortium News



The political role of the United Arab Emirates has changed dramatically since the death of its founding ruler, Shaykh Zayed bin Sultan.

He was officially succeeded by his son, Khalifah bin Zayed, in 2004 but the latter has been largely distant from governmental affairs for health and other reasons. The actual reins are held by Abu Dhabi's highly ambitious Crown Prince Muhammad bin Zayed. Muhammad has been the effective ruler, along with his brothers on his mother's side, Fatimah bint Mubarak, who control all the key posts of government.

The current de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia, Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, has largely emulated Muhammad (known commonly as MbZ, while Muhammad bin Salman is commonly known as MbS).

Under Shaykh Zayed, the UAE avoided internal Arab conflicts and steered its foreign policy largely according to the pan-Arab consensus. While the country was charted by the British colonial powers it smoothly made the transition to a strong alliance with the U.S. Despite tensions with Saudi Arabia it mainly avoided open conflicts.

Shaykh Zayed was a loyal ally, or client, of the U.S. and its interests in the region. And while generally deferring to Saudi hegemony, he paid lip service to the pro-Palestinian sentiment of the Arab population. In the early 1970s he even welcomed Leila Khalid, the famous commander of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, to the UAE and is said to have made a donation to the PFLP (a small subset of which defected after the incident and started their own small organization).

Muslim Brotherhood in Ministries

Shaykh Zayed was uneducated and was not known for speech-making. His country benefited from the educated Palestinian community. He also invited Muslim Brotherhood functionaries to fill various posts in justice and education ministries.

Zayed, for instance, invited Hasan Al-Turabi, the famous Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood leader, to help draft the UAE constitution. This was a time when both the UAE and Saudi Arabia enthusiastically welcomed Muslim Brotherhood leaders and members to combat the tide of secular Arab nationalism and leftism in the region.

In his last year, Zayed increasingly surrendered power to his sons and his last political role was in 2003 when he proposed an initiative according to which Saddam Husain

would relinquish power in return for the U.S. backing away from war with Iraq (an initiative in which neither the U.S. nor Saddam showed any interest).

MbZ has taken the UAE in a very different direction. He has clearly wanted to make the UAE a sort of new Arab Israel, which could serve the interests of the U.S. MbZ was interested in military-intelligence affairs and built up his power from that basis.

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His rule has been characterized by 1) establishment of covert, but strong relations with Israel; 2) an open war against the Muslim Brotherhood; 3) competition with Qatar and Saudi Arabia for regional dominance, especially after the demise of Saddam's regime; 4) direct involvement in Palestinian affairs through the agency of Muhammad Dahlan, the notoriously shady Palestinian intelligence figure; and 5) heavy lobbying in Washington, with disregard for Arab public opinion on all matters.

MbZ was not satisfied with being one of many loyal allies/clients of the U.S. in the Middle East. He has sought to rival Israel in serving as a strategic partner of the U.S. in the region and outdo Jordan in providing intelligence and military services. His military emphasizes special forces and hosts one of the biggest U.S. intelligence stations in the world. MbZ also invested in buying influence in Washington.

Intense D.C. Courtship

The role of his D.C. ambassador, Yousef Al-Otaiba, who courted journalists, officials, and think tank experts with unprecedented intensity, has become well-known. UAE money flowed into think tanks, and the UAE received favorable coverage in Western media. It also helped that Al-Otaiba established a strong friendship with the Israeli [ambassador](#) and the Israeli lobby began to promote both Saudi and UAE regime interests in Washington, after both regimes had abandoned a verbal commitment to the Palestinian cause.

Arab lobbies – no matter what states or interests they represent, no matter how well-funded they are – can't achieve great success without the blessings of the Israeli lobby.

The AWACs sale to Saudi Arabia during the Reagan years was an exception: a time when the Saudi regime – supported by a different Republican Party prior to the rise of the Evangelical Zionists – prevailed against the Israeli lobby.

The Saudi and UAE regime took a back seat to Qatar in 2011 and 2013. For the first few years of the Arab uprisings, Doha was in the driver's seat. The Saudi King, Abdullah, was too feeble to run the affairs of his own government, let alone the affairs of the Arab regional system. Qatari foreign ministers ran the Arab League in the first few years after the Arab uprisings and arranged for the ouster of Syria from the Arab League.

Qatar, after all, was celebrating the victory of its allies in the Muslim Brotherhood in Tunisia, Libya and most importantly Egypt. They also were on the ascendancy in Yemen. The Arab counter-revolution was in Doha's hands

during this time: the Qatari regime was making sure that the popular protests didn't get out of hand and didn't disturb the Arab regional system.

The Qatari regime also negotiated a deal between the local Muslim Brotherhoods and the Israeli lobby in Washington, according to which the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood would not challenge the Egyptian-Israeli treaty, and the Tunisian Muslim Brotherhood would stop an article criminalizing normalization with Israel, which was high on the protesters' agenda, from entering the new constitution.

Quietly Sponsoring a Coup in Egypt

But the UAE was not dormant during those times. It was quietly sponsoring a coup in Egypt against the Muslim Brotherhood, and preparing for an open war against it throughout the Arab world, in every country where the Brotherhood may have had a chance of electoral success.

The UAE created a front (the Egyptian youth movement, Tamarrud) and worked with Egypt's General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi to oust the first freely elected president in the country's history.

It also supported the relics of the ancien regime in Tunisia, and sponsored Gen. Khalifa Haftar in Libya. In 2015, when Salman ascended the Saudi throne, MbZ became the chief counsel and advocate for Salman's son MbS in Washington.

The two seemed to agree on the need to expel Qatar from the affairs of Arab politics and to engineer together a tougher war on Iran. They both launched – with Western support – the war on Yemen assuming, wrongly, that it would be over in a few weeks.

The current era in Arab politics is largely the design of MbZ with the enthusiastic support of MbS. But the two personalities are quite different. While MbS is flashy and outspoken, MbZ keeps a low-profile. MbS likes to impress Western audiences (and he succeeded in doing that until the murder of Jamal Khashoggi last year). MbZ, by contrast, only cares about impressing the White House and his interlocutors in Tel Aviv.

MbZ is now trying to influence events in Sudan and Algeria where he maintains close ties to the ruling militaries and wants to prevent democratic rule in both countries. Protest signs against UAE and Saudi intervention were visible in Sudanese demonstrations that led last month to the fall of President [Omar al-Bashir](#) (MbZ intelligence advisor, Muhammad Dahlan, visited Sudan the other day).

In Yemen, MbZ has been quite assertive and even clashed with the Saudi regime to promote his own clients there. The ability of MbZ to continue playing his leadership role on behalf of the U.S. and Israel may not last forever. In the meantime, however, MbZ has emerged as Israel's enforcer in the region; a role that is bound to earn him accolades in Washington, and especially on Capitol Hill.

As'ad AbuKhalil is a Lebanese-American professor of political science at California State University, Stanislaus. He is the author of the "Historical Dictionary of Lebanon" (1998), "Bin Laden, Islam and America's New War on Terrorism (2002), and "The Battle for Saudi Arabia" (2004). He tweets as [@asadabukhalil](#)

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THE ANGRY ARAB: Lebanon's New Government Faces Old Overseers

Interference by Gulf and Western governments in Beirut's affairs has been increasing steadily, writes As'ad AbuKhalil for **Consortium News**.

By **As'ad AbuKhalil**

Special to Consortium News



After nine months of delays and political feuding, Lebanon finally has a new government. The parliament will begin in a few days the discussion of the cabinet's statement (which contains the program of the new government).

The news of the government's formation was first announced by the UAE ambassador in Lebanon, which is significant because Western media coverage of Lebanon (which is entirely slanted to cover whatever is of interest to Israel) rarely entails discussion of the dominant UAE-Saudi influence and clout in Lebanon.

The Israeli narrative about Lebanon—to the effect that there is Iran and Hizbullah but no one else there—has prevailed in much of the Western coverage. Lebanon, both in the past and today, is an arena of regional and international conflict, and the sectarian parties in the country attach themselves—since the 19th century—to this or that outside power.

David Hale, the American undersecretary of state for political affairs, visited Lebanon in January to make clear that the U.S. would not tolerate a Hizbullah takeover of the Ministry of Public Health; or any service ministry for that matter. Hale went further and indicated what the “kind” of government in Lebanon is of interest to the U.S. government. Such heavy-handed interference in Lebanese affairs does not cause much consternation among Western media and D.C. think tanks who are busy with Russian ads on Facebook during the last presidential election.

Filling a Vacuum

The formation of Lebanese governments has never been a domestic affair. But since 2005, when the Syrian regime was forced – by domestic and international pressures – to withdraw its troops from Lebanon (in the wake of the assassination of Rafiq Hariri), Gulf and Western governments have been steadily filling the power vacuum.

The U.S., for example, often has a say about ministers it trusts and approves of. The March 14 coalition – pro-U.S., pro-Saudi and comprising mostly rightist Sunni, Druze, and some Christian political forces in Lebanon – always took that into consideration. By the same token, the Syrian regime had its ministerial preferences. But the role of Iran has been wildly exaggerated largely because the relationship between Hasan Nasrallah, the secretary-general of Hizbullah since 1992, and Iran is not a replica of the Saudi regime’s relationship with its Lebanese clients (or the relationship between the U.S. and its clients for that matter).

Sa`d Hariri, the prime minister, and Walid Jumblat, the Druze political leader and head of the Progressive Socialist Party who is notorious for his political oscillations and shifts, take orders from the Saudi regime and the U.S.

By contrast, Nasrallah has far more influence in his camp. It is fair to say that the Iranian regime seeks Nasrallah's say and counsel more than the other way around. Nasrallah is a chief policy maker for Iranian regional policies in the Arab East. None of the clients of the Saudi-U.S. coalition ever reached that level of clout or decision making—not even Rafiq Hariri, who was as good in taking Saudi orders as his son.

False Cheering for Feminism

The new government has four female ministers, which is a record for Lebanon and the region. And some Western governments and media were cheering the appointment of a woman as interior minister, which is a first for an Arab country. Their warped understanding of feminism may one day lead them to cheer the appointment of a woman as chief of the secret police or the division for torture within the secret police. None of the female ministers have a feminist agenda and the new government showed its insensitivity to women when it announced the creation of a new ministry for the “rehabilitation of women and youth.”

Later, in response to feminist uproar, the name was changed to “empowerment of women and youth.” But the government did not understand that the complaint was not only about the name; linking women with youth and children is a classical sexist view. But this is not surprising for Sa`d Hariri

who, in the last cabinet, assigned a man to head a ministry of women's affairs.

There was a lot of attention about the entrance of Hizbullah into the new cabinet. But Hizbullah has been represented in parliament since the early 1990s and (since 2005) in cabinets. The U.S. has, yet again, expressed its disapproval of the representation of Hizbullah in government and all Western governments raised alarm over the news that Hizbullah (for electoral reasons) would be insisting on a service-based ministry. Those ministries often receive Western aid and consultancy, and the U.S. did not want any USAID money to land in Hizbullah hands.

Hizbullah rejected Western pressures at first but later succumbed to those pressures by appointing a physician (said to be the personal physician of Nasrallah, although it is likely that he has more than one physician) who is not an official member of the party. The U.S. responded by threatening sanctions if Hizbullah members or fighters were to receive aid or money from the state budget. This of course is bizarre because Hizbullah members and fighters—like other Lebanese citizens—do receive certain benefits (social security, or health coverage or loans, etc) from the state budget. The U.S. had to register its disapproval but it is unlikely that it will do more than what it normally does: deny Hizbullah leaders the chance to come to the U.S. to visit Disney Land or Disney World, and to freeze the non-existent assets of Hizbullah leaders.

US Keeps Eye on the Weapons

The U.S. also takes a firm stance against the arms of

Hizbullah. U.S. and Western officials never tire of reiterating that the Lebanese Army should have a monopoly of arms in Lebanon (of course, the Lebanese people have historically always been armed). But this Western stance is now weaker than ever: the minutes of the last meeting of the Higher Defense Council of Lebanon were leaked to *Al-Akhbar*, the leftwing Beirut daily, a few weeks ago, and in them, the director of Army Intelligence conceded that the Lebanese Army can't stand in the face of the Israeli army for more than 24 hours.

This exposes the real motives behind U.S. insistence on the Lebanese Army's role in national defense: the U.S. wants Lebanon to be weak as it has been prior to the rise of the national resistance (first undertaken by leftist and secular groups and later by Hizbullah and others). Since 1948 the U.S. has been key in denying Lebanon the means to defend itself against Israeli aggression. But since 2000, when Israel was forced into a humiliating withdrawal from South Lebanon, Israel has been deterred from attacking Lebanon because it knows that there is now a Lebanese force which—unlike the Lebanese Army historically—would not stand by while it attacks and kills at will.

The new government faces a severe economic crisis. While the Lebanese pound remains relatively stable (by virtue of the constant intervention of the Central Bank) economic growth has slowed down. Promises of Western and Gulf assistance has only translated into a trickle, while the Saudi and UAE governments still impose a tourist boycott of Lebanon (citizens from Gulf countries formed the bulk of the tourism sector).

Economic growth has slowed down and the Syrian refugees have been blamed for the economic crisis by politicians of the right. Furthermore, the Western and Gulf governments have promised a package of loans (under the Cedar conference in [Rome](#)) provided Lebanon enacts a series of “reforms.” Those reforms will only serve to tie Lebanon deeper into Western governments and lending institutions. Lebanon already has the highest debt per capita of any country in the world, and the “reforms” imposed by Western governments will only sink Lebanon deeper into debt and political subservience.

The sovereignty of developing countries is increasingly jeopardized by virtue of foreign debts and U.S. military intervention and training of local armies. In the time of the Cold War, developing countries could maneuver between the two rivals which gave them more power and more sovereignty. Lebanon today is an Iranian vassal in Western media propaganda but more like a vassal of Western and Gulf governments in reality, the presence of Hizbullah arms notwithstanding.

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The Coming War Against Iran

We've been through this before: the trumped-up threat from Iraq based on false evidence in 2003 is the harrowingly similar model to what is emerging for Iran in 2018, argues John Kiriakou.

By **John Kiriakou**



I spent nearly 15 years in the CIA. I like to think that I learned something there. I learned how the federal bureaucracy works. I learned that cowboys in government – in the CIA and elsewhere around government – can have incredible power over the creation of policy. I learned that the CIA will push the envelope of legality until somebody in a position of authority pushes back. I learned that the CIA can wage war without any thought whatsoever as to how things will work out in the end. There's never an exit strategy.

I learned all of that firsthand in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq. In the spring of 2002, I was in Pakistan working against al-Qaeda. I returned to CIA headquarters in May of that year and was told that several months earlier a decision had been made at the White House to invade Iraq. I was dumbfounded, and when told of the war plans could only muster, "But we haven't caught bin Laden yet." "The decision has already been made," my supervisor told me. He continued, "Next year, in February, we're going to invade Iraq, overthrow Saddam Hussein, and open the world's largest air force base in southern Iraq." He went on, "We're going to go to the United Nations and pretend that we want a Security Council Resolution. But the truth is that the decision has already been made."

Soon after, Secretary of State Colin Powell began traveling around Europe and the Middle East to cultivate support for the invasion. Sure enough, he also went to the United Nations and argued that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, necessitating an invasion and overthrow because that country posed an imminent threat to the United States.

But the whole case was built on a lie. A decision was made and then the “facts” were created around the decision to support it. I think the same thing is happening now.

Iraq Redux

First, Donald Trump said repeatedly during the 2016 campaign that he would pull out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) (which he did on Tuesday), also known as the Iran sanctions deal. The JCPOA allows for international inspectors to examine all of Iran’s nuclear sites to ensure that the country is not enriching uranium and is not building a weapons program. In exchange, Western countries have lifted sanctions on Iran, allowing them to buy spare parts, medicines, and other things that they had been unable to acquire. Despite the protestations of conservatives in Congress and elsewhere, the JCPOA works. Indeed, the inspection regime is exactly the same one that the United Nations imposed on Iraq in the last two decades.

Trump has kept up his anti-Iran rhetoric since becoming president. More importantly, he has appointed Iran hawks to the two most important positions in foreign policy: former CIA Director Mike Pompeo as secretary of state and former US ambassador to the UN John Bolton as national security advisor. The two have made clear that their preferred policy toward Iran is “regime change,” a policy that is actually prohibited by international law.

Perhaps the most troubling development, however, is the apparent de facto alliance against Iran by Israel, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain. Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s recent “presentation” on what he called a clandestine Iranian nuclear weapons program was embarrassingly similar to Powell’s heavily scripted speech before the UN Security Council 15 years earlier telling the world that Iraq had a program. That, too, was a lie.

Another Hyped Threat

Saudi crown prince Muhammad bin Salman, the godfather of the Saudi war in Yemen, which in turn is a proxy war against Iran, recently made a grand tour of the United States and France talking about “the Iranian threat” at every turn. The rhetoric coming out of the UAE and Bahrain is at least as hostile as what has been spewed by the Saudis.

Meanwhile, there’s silence on Capitol Hill. Just like there was in 2002.

I can tell you from firsthand experience, that I’ve seen this before. Our government is laying the groundwork for yet another war. Be on the lookout for several things. First, Trump is going to begin shouting about the “threat” from Iran. It will become a daily mantra. He’ll argue that Iran is actively hostile

and poses an immediate danger to the United States. Next Pompeo will head back to the Middle East and Europe to garner support for military action. Then US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley will scream in front of the UN Security Council that the US has no choice but to protect itself and its allies from Iran. The final shoe to drop – a clear indication of war – will be if naval carrier battle groups are deployed to the eastern Mediterranean, the Arabian Sea, or the Persian Gulf. Sure, there's always one in the region anyway. But more than one is a provocation.

We have to be diligent in opposing this run into another war of choice. We can't be tricked or taken by surprise. Not again.

This piece originally appeared at [RSN](#).

John Kiriakou is a former CIA counterterrorism officer and a former senior investigator with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. John became the sixth whistleblower indicted by the Obama administration under the Espionage Act – a law designed to punish spies. He served 23 months in prison as a result of his attempts to oppose the Bush administration's torture program.
