

# Did Manning Help Avert War in Iran?

**From the Archive:** Though President Obama commuted Chelsea Manning's prison sentence, he showed no appreciation for her brave disclosures, including one that undercut war plans with Iran, Robert Parry reported in 2013.

By Robert Parry (Originally published on Aug. 19, 2013)

From U.S. embassy cables leaked by Pvt. Bradley Manning, you can easily imagine how the propaganda game might have played out, how Americans could have been panicked into supporting another unnecessary war in the Middle East, this time against Iran. Except that Manning's release of the documents spoiled the trick.

The gambit might have gone this way: One morning, a story would have led the front page of, say, the Washington Post citing how the widely respected International Atomic Energy Agency and its honest-broker Director-General Yukiya Amano had found startling "evidence" that Iran was nearing a nuclear bomb despite a longstanding U.S. intelligence estimate to the contrary and despite Iranian denials.

Next, the neocon-dominated opinion pages would ridicule anyone who still doubted these "facts." After all, these articles would say, "even" the IAEA, which had challenged President George W. Bush's claims about Iraq in 2002, and "even" Amano, who had initially believed Iran's denials, were now convinced.

Neocon think tanks would rush to join the chorus of alarm, dispatching WMD "experts" to TV talk shows bracing the American people on the need for military action. From Fox News to CNN to MSNBC, there would be a drumbeat about Iran's perfidy. Then, as hawkish Republicans and Democrats ratcheted up their rhetoric – and as Israeli leaders chortled "we told you so" – the war-with-Iran bandwagon might have begun rolling with such velocity that it would be unstoppable.

Perhaps, only years later after grave human costs and severe economic repercussions would the American people learn the truth: that the IAEA under Amano wasn't the objective source that they had been led to believe, that Amano was something of a U.S.-Israeli puppet who had feigned a pro-Iranian position early on to burnish his credentials for pushing an anti-Iranian line subsequently, that after he was installed, he had even solicited U.S. officials for money and had held secret meetings with Israelis (to coordinate opposition to Iran's nuclear program while maintaining a polite silence about Israel's rogue nuclear arsenal).

However, because of the actions of Bradley Manning, the rug was pulled out from

under this possible ruse. The U.S. embassy cables revealing the truth about Amano were published by the U.K. Guardian in 2011 (although ignored by The New York Times, The Washington Post and other mainstream U.S. news outlets). The cables also drew attention from Web sites, such as Consortiumnews.com.

So, the gambit could not work. If it had been tried, enough people would have known the truth. They wouldn't be fooled again and they would have alerted their fellow citizens. Bradley Manning had armed them with the facts.

And this scenario, while admittedly hypothetical, is not at all far-fetched. When the cables were leaked about a year after Amano's appointment, his IAEA was busy feeding the hysteria over Iran's nuclear program with reports trumpeted by think tanks, such as the Institute for Science and International Security, and by The Washington Post and other U.S. news media.

### **Revealing Cables**

According to those leaked U.S. embassy cables from Vienna, Austria, the site of IAEA's headquarters, American diplomats in 2009 were cheering the prospect that Amano would advance U.S. interests in ways that outgoing IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei wouldn't; Amano credited his election to U.S. government support; Amano signaled he would side with the United States in its confrontation with Iran; and he stuck out his hand for more U.S. money.

In a July 9, 2009, cable, American chargé Geoffrey Pyatt said Amano was thankful for U.S. support of his election. "Amano attributed his election to support from the U.S., Australia and France, and cited U.S. intervention with Argentina as particularly decisive," the cable said.

The appreciative Amano informed Pyatt that as IAEA director general, he would take a different "approach on Iran from that of ElBaradei" and he "saw his primary role as implementing safeguards and UNSC [United Nations Security Council] Board resolutions," i.e. U.S.-driven sanctions and demands against Iran.

Amano also discussed how to restructure the senior ranks of the IAEA, including elimination of one top official and the retention of another. "We wholly agree with Amano's assessment of these two advisors and see these decisions as positive first signs," Pyatt commented.

In return, Pyatt made clear that Amano could expect strong U.S. financial support, stating that "the United States would do everything possible to support his successful tenure as Director General and, to that end, anticipated that continued U.S. voluntary contributions to the IAEA would be forthcoming. Amano offered that a 'reasonable increase' in the regular budget would be helpful."

Pyatt learned, too, that Amano had consulted with Israeli Ambassador Israel Michaeli “immediately after his appointment” and that Michaeli “was fully confident of the priority Amano accords verification issues.” Michaeli added that he discounted some of Amano’s public remarks about there being “no evidence of Iran pursuing a nuclear weapons capability” as just words that Amano felt he had to say “to persuade those who did not support him about his ‘impartiality.’”

In private, Amano agreed to “consultations” with the head of the Israeli Atomic Energy Commission, Pyatt reported. (It is ironic indeed that Amano would have secret contacts with Israeli officials about Iran’s alleged nuclear weapons program, which has yet to yield a single bomb, when Israel possesses a large and undeclared nuclear arsenal.)

In a subsequent cable dated Oct. 16, 2009, the U.S. mission in Vienna said Amano “took pains to emphasize his support for U.S. strategic objectives for the Agency. Amano reminded ambassador [Glyn Davies] on several occasions that he was solidly in the U.S. court on every key strategic decision, from high-level personnel appointments to the handling of Iran’s alleged nuclear weapons program.

“More candidly, Amano noted the importance of maintaining a certain ‘constructive ambiguity’ about his plans, at least until he took over for DG ElBaradei in December” 2009.

In other words, Amano was a bureaucrat eager to bend in directions favored by the United States and Israel regarding Iran’s nuclear program. Amano’s behavior surely contrasted with how the more independent-minded ElBaradei resisted some of Bush’s key claims about Iraq’s supposed nuclear weapons program, correctly denouncing some documents as forgeries.

**Update:** It also is significant that Geoffrey Pyatt was rewarded for his work lining up the IAEA behind the anti-Iranian propaganda campaign by being made U.S. ambassador to Ukraine where he helped engineer the Feb. 22, 2014 coup that overthrew elected President Viktor Yanukovich. Pyatt was on the infamous “fuck the E.U.” call with Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland weeks before the coup as Nuland handpicked Ukraine’s new leaders and Pyatt pondered how “to midwife this thing.”

### **Salvaging Some Hype**

Though Manning’s release of the U.S. embassy cables from Vienna apparently scotched any large-scale deployment of the Amano ploy, some elements of the gambit did go forward nonetheless, albeit with less oomph than they might have had.

In February 2013, the front page of The Washington Post offered a taste of what the propaganda campaign might have looked like when investigative reporter Joby Warrick hyped an account about Iran's nuclear program pushed by David Albright, director of the Institute for Science and International Security who had given support to Bush's invasion of Iraq a decade ago.

The Albright/Warrick alarm cited Iran's alleged effort to place an Internet order for 100,000 ring-shaped magnets that would work in some of the country's older centrifuges.

"Iran recently sought to acquire tens of thousands of highly specialized magnets used in centrifuge machines, according to experts and diplomats, a sign that the country may be planning a major expansion of its nuclear program that could shorten the path to an atomic weapons capability," Warrick wrote in his lede paragraph.

You had to read to the end of the long story to hear a less strident voice, saying that Iran had previously informed IAEA inspectors that it planned to build more of its old and clunkier centrifuges, which use this sort of magnet, and that the enrichment was for civilian energy, not a nuclear bomb.

"Olli Heinonen, who led IAEA nuclear inspections inside Iran before his retirement in 2010, said the type of magnet sought by Iran was highly specific to the IR-1 centrifuge and could not, for example, be used in the advanced IR-2M centrifuges that Iran has recently tested," according to the final paragraphs of Warrick's article.

"The numbers in the order make sense, because Iran originally told us it wanted to build more than 50,000 of the IR-1s,' Heinonen said. 'The failure rate on these machines is 10 percent a year, so you need a surplus.'"

At the bottom of Warrick's story, you'd also learn that "Iran has avoided what many experts consider Israel's new 'red line': a stockpile of medium-enriched uranium greater than 530 pounds, roughly the amount needed to build a weapon if further purified."

So there was nothing urgent or particularly provocative about this alleged purchase, though the structure and placement of the Post story suggested otherwise. Many readers likely were expected to simply jump to the conclusion that Iran was on the verge of building an atomic bomb and that it was time for President Barack Obama to join Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in another Middle East war.

The pressure from the Post and other neocon-leaning news outlets on the Obama administration to fall in line with Netanyahu's belligerence toward Iran has

been building for years, often with Warrick channeling anti-Iranian propaganda from Albright and his ISIS, which, in turn, seems to be a pipeline for hardliners at the IAEA.

A decade ago, Albright and his ISIS [not to be confused with the head-chopping terrorist outfit] were key figures in stoking the hysteria for invading Iraq around the false allegations of its WMD program. In recent years, Albright and his institute have adopted a similar role regarding Iran and its purported pursuit of a nuclear weapon, even though U.S. intelligence agencies say Iran terminated that weapons project in 2003.

Nevertheless, Albright has transformed his organization into a sparkplug for a new confrontation with Iran. Though Albright insists that he is an objective professional, ISIS has published hundreds of articles about Iran, which has not produced a single nuclear bomb, while barely mentioning Israel's rogue nuclear arsenal.

An examination of the ISIS Web site reveals only a few technical articles relating to Israel's nukes while ISIS has expanded its coverage of Iran's nuclear program so much that it's been moved onto a separate Web site. The articles not only hype developments in Iran but also attack U.S. media critics who question the fear-mongering about Iran.

Despite this evidence of bias, the Post and other mainstream U.S. news outlets typically present Albright as a neutral analyst. They also ignore his checkered past, for instance, his prominent role in promoting President Bush's pre-invasion case that Iraq possessed stockpiles of WMD.

### **Stoking a War**

At the end of summer 2002, as Bush was beginning his advertising roll-out for the Iraq invasion and dispatching his top aides to the Sunday talk shows to warn about "smoking guns" and "mushroom clouds," Albright co-authored a Sept. 10, 2002, article entitled "Is the Activity at Al Qaim Related to Nuclear Efforts?" which declared:

"High-resolution commercial satellite imagery shows an apparently operational facility at the site of Iraq's al Qaim phosphate plant and uranium extraction facility. This site was where Iraq extracted uranium for its nuclear weapons program in the 1980s. This image raises questions about whether Iraq has rebuilt a uranium extraction facility at the site, possibly even underground. The uranium could be used in a clandestine nuclear weapons effort."

Albright's alarming allegations fit neatly with Bush's propaganda barrage, although as the months wore on with Bush's warnings about aluminum tubes and

yellowcake from Africa growing more outlandish Albright did display more skepticism about the existence of a revived Iraqi nuclear program.

Still, he remained a “go-to” expert on other Iraqi purported WMD, such as chemical and biological weapons. In a typical quote on Oct. 5, 2002, Albright told CNN: “In terms of the chemical and biological weapons, Iraq has those now.”

After Bush launched the Iraq invasion in March 2003 and Iraq’s secret WMD caches didn’t materialize, Albright admitted that he had been conned, explaining to the Los Angeles Times: “If there are no weapons of mass destruction, I’ll be mad as hell. I certainly accepted the administration claims on chemical and biological weapons. I figured they were telling the truth. If there is no [unconventional weapons program], I will feel taken, because they asserted these things with such assurance.” [See FAIR’s [“The Great WMD Hunt,”](#)]

Given the horrendous costs in blood and treasure resulting from the Iraq fiasco, an objective journalist might feel compelled to mention Albright’s track record of bias and error. But the Post’s Warrick didn’t, even though Albright and his ISIS were at the core of the February story, receiving credit for obtaining copies of the magnet purchase order.

So, while we’ll never know if the Amano ploy would have been tried – since Manning’s disclosures made it unfeasible – it surely would not have been unprecedented. The American people experienced similar deceptions during the run-up to war with Iraq when the Bush-43 administration assembled every scrap of suspicion about Iraq’s alleged WMD and fashioned a bogus case for war.

Eventually, Manning was pulled into that war as a young intelligence analyst. He confronted so much evidence of brutality and dishonesty that he felt compelled to do something about it. What he did in leaking hundreds of thousands of documents to WikiLeaks and, thus, to other news outlets was to supply “ground truth” about war crimes committed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

His disclosure of diplomatic cables also gave the American people and the world a glimpse behind the curtain of secrecy that often conceals the dirty dealings of statecraft. Perhaps most significantly, those revelations helped spark the Arab Spring, giving people of the Middle East a chance to finally take some political control over their own lives.

And, by letting Americans in on the truth about Amano’s IAEA, Bradley Manning may have helped prevent a war with Iran.

**[Update:** In August 2013, Bradley (now Chelsea) Manning was sentenced to 35 years in prison for leaking classified documents. Although President Obama supported her prosecution, he did – in one of his final acts in office – commute Manning’s

sentence to her nearly seven years already served in prison. She is scheduled for release on March 17.]

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).**

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## Twisting the Facts on Iran Nukes

Part of the credibility crisis afflicting the world's officialdom is the tendency to issue reports that start with the politically desired conclusion and then twist words and facts accordingly, a problem apparent in a U.N. report on Iran's alleged nuclear program, as Gareth Porter explains.

By Gareth Porter

Many government reports The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) assessment has cleared the way for the board of governors to end the Agency's extraordinary investigation into accusations of Iran's past nuclear weapons work. But a closer examination of the document reveals much more about the political role that the Agency has played in managing the Iran file.

Contrary to the supposed neutral and technical role that Director General Yukiya Amano has constantly invoked and the news media has long accepted without question, the Agency has actually been serving as prosecutor for the United States in making a case that Iran has had a nuclear weapons program.

The [first signs of such an IAEA role appeared in 2008](#) after the George W. Bush administration insisted that the Agency make a mysterious collection of intelligence documents on a purported Iranian nuclear weapons research program the centerpiece of its Iran inquiry.

The Agency's partisan role was fully developed, however, only after Amano took charge in late 2009. Amano got U.S. political support for the top position in 2009 because he had [enthusiastically supported the Bush administration's pressure on Mohammed ElBaradei](#) on those documents when Amano was Japan's permanent representative to the IAEA in 2008.

Amano delivered the Agency's November 2011 report just when the Obama administration needed additional impetus for its campaign to line up international support for "crippling sanctions" on Iran. He continued to defend

that hardline position and accuse Iran of failing to cooperate as the Obama administration sought to maximize the pressure on Iran from 2012 to 2015.

When the Obama administration's interests shifted from pressuring Iran to ensuring that the nuclear agreement with Iran would be completed and fully implemented, Amano's role suddenly shifted as well. In late June, according to Iranian officials involved in the Vienna negotiations, Secretary of State John Kerry reached agreement with both the Iranians and Amano that the "possible military dimensions" (PMD) issue would be resolved through a report by Amano before the end of the year.

Based on that agreement, Amano would write a report that would reach no definitive conclusion about the accusations of nuclear weapons work but nevertheless bring the PMD inquiry to an end. The report was still far from even-handed. It could not be, because Amano had embraced the intelligence documents that the United States and Israel had provided to the IAEA, around which the entire investigation had been organized.

### **Dodgy Intelligence Documents**

Iran had insisted from the beginning that the intelligence documents given to the IAEA were fraudulent, and ElBaradei had repeatedly stated publicly from late 2005 through 2009 that the documents had not been authenticated. ElBaradei observes in his 2011 memoirs that he could never get a straight answer from the Bush administration about how the documents had been acquired.

Different cover stories had been leaked to the media over the years suggesting that either an Iranian scientist involved in the alleged weapons program or a German spy had managed to get the documents out of Iran.

But in 2013, former senior German foreign office official Karsten Voigt revealed to me in an interview that German intelligence had obtained the documents in 2004 from a sometime source whom they knew to be a member of the Mujahideen E-Khalq (MEK). A cult-like Iranian exile terrorist group, MEK had once carried out terror operations for the Saddam Hussein regime but later developed a patron-client relationship with Israeli intelligence.

Quite apart from the unsavory truth about the origins of the documents, the burden of proof in the IAEA inquiry should have been on the United States to make the case for their authenticity. There is a good reason why U.S. judicial rules of evidence require that "the proponent must produce evidence sufficient to support a finding that the item is what the proponent claims it is."

But instead Amano has required Iran, in effect, to prove the negative. Since it is logically impossible for Iran to do so, that *de facto* demand has



systematically skewed the entire IAEA investigation toward the conclusion that Iran is guilty of the covert activities charged in the intelligence documents.

And the Agency has reinforced that distorted frame in its final assessment by constantly making the point that Iran possesses technology that could have been used for the development of a nuclear weapon. Every time Iran produced evidence that a technology that the IAEA had suggested was being used for the development of nuclear weapons was actually for non-nuclear applications, the Agency cast that evidence in a suspicious light by arguing that it bore some characteristics that are "consistent with" or "relevant to" work on nuclear weapons.

The "final assessment" uses that same tactic to frame not only Iranian development of various technologies but its organizations, facilities and research activities as inherently suspicious regardless of evidence provided by Iran that they were for other purposes.

Another tactic the IAEA had used in the past to attack Iran's credibility is the suggestion that the government actually made a partial confession. In May 2008, the IAEA had claimed in a quarterly report that Iran "did not dispute that some of the information contained in the documents was factually accurate but said the events and activities concerned involved civil or conventional military applications."

That statement had clearly conveyed the impression that Iran has admitted to details about activities shown in the documents. But in fact Iran had only confirmed information that was already publicly known, such as certain names, organizations and official addresses, as the IAEA itself acknowledged in 2011. Furthermore, Iran had also submitted a 117-page paper in which it had pointed out that "some of the organizations and individuals named in those documents were nonexistent."

The IAEA resorted to the same kind of deceptive tactic in the final assessment's discussion of "organizational structure." It stated, "A significant proportion of the information available to the Agency on the existence of organizational structures was confirmed by Iran during implementation of the Road-map."

That sentence implied that Iran had acknowledged facts about the organizations that supported the purported intelligence claims of a nuclear weapons research program. But it actually meant only that Iran confirmed the same kind of publicly available information as it had in 2008.

On the issue of whether an Iranian organization to carry out nuclear-weapons research and development had existed, the final assessment again uses suggestive but ultimately meaningless language: "[B]efore the end of 2003, an

organizational structure was in place in Iran suitable for the coordination of a range of activities relevant to the development of a nuclear explosive device.”

Similar language implying accusation without actually stating it directly can be found in most of the assessments in the document. In the section on “procurement activities,” the report refers to “indications of procurements and attempted procurements of items with relevance, inter alia, to the development of a nuclear device.”

That language actually means nothing more than that Iranians had sought to purchase dual-use items, but it preserves the illusion that the procurement is inherently suspicious.

### **EBW and MIP**

The use of “relevance” language was, in fact, the IAEA’s favorite tactic for obscuring the fact that it had no real evidence of nuclear weapons work. On the issue of the purported intelligence documents showing that Iran had developed and experimented with Exploding Bridge-Wire (EBW) technology for the detonation of a nuclear weapon, Iran had gone to great lengths to prove that its work on EBW technology was clearly focused on non-nuclear applications.

It provided detailed information about its development of the technology, including videos of activities it had carried out, to show that for the objective of the work was to develop safer conventional explosives.

The IAEA responded by saying “that the EBW detonators developed by Iran have characteristics relevant to a nuclear device.” By that same logic, of course, a prosecutor could name an individual as a suspect in a crime simply because his behavior showed “characteristics relevant” to that crime.

A similar tactic appears in the assessment of the “initiation of high explosives” issue. The 2011 IAEA report had recorded the intelligence passed on by the Israelis that Iran had done an experiment with a high explosives detonation technology called multipoint initiation (MIP) that the Agency said was “consistent with” a publication by a “foreign expert” who had worked in Iran.

That was a reference to the Ukrainian scientist Vyacheslav Danilenko, but he was an expert on producing nanodiamonds through explosives, not on nuclear weapons development. And the open-source publication by Danilenko was not about experiments related to nuclear weapons but only about measuring shock waves from explosions using fiber optic cables.

The 2011 report also had referred to “information” from an unnamed member

state that Iran had carried out the “large scale high explosives experiments” in question in the “region of Marivan.” In its final assessment, the Agency says it now believes that those experiments were carried out in a “location called ‘Marivan’,” rather than in the “region of Marivan.”

But although Iran has offered repeatedly to allow the IAEA to visit Marivan to determine whether such experiments were carried out, the IAEA has refused to carry out such an inspection and has offered no explanation for its refusal.

The Agency relies on its standard evasive language to cover its climb-down from the 2011 assessment. “The Agency assesses that the MPI technology developed by Iran has characteristics relevant to a nuclear device,” it said, “as well as to a small number of alternative applications.”

That wording, combined with its refusal to make any effort to check on the one specific claim of Iranian experiments at Marivan, makes it clear that the Agency knows very well that it has no real evidence of the alleged experiments but is unwilling to say so straightforwardly.

The Agency did the same thing in regard to the alleged “integration into a missile delivery system.” A key set of purported intelligence documents had shown a series of efforts to integrate a “new spherical payload” into the existing payload chamber of the Shahab-3 missile.

The final assessment avoids mention of the technical errors in those studies, which were so significant that Sandia National Laboratories found through computer simulations that not a single one of the proposed redesign efforts would have worked. And it later became apparent that Iran had begun redesigning the entire missile system, including an entirely different reentry vehicle shape from the one shown in the drawings, well before the start date of the purported nuclear weapons work.

But the IAEA was only interested in whether the workshops portrayed in the purported intelligence were in fact workshops used by the Iranian government. Iran allowed the Agency to visit two of the workshops, and the final assessment declares that it has “verified that the workshops are those described in the alleged studies documentation” and that “the workshop’s features and capabilities are consistent with those described in the alleged studies documentation.”

### **Flawed Computer Modeling**

One of the most egregious cover-ups in the assessment is its treatment of the alleged computer modeling of nuclear explosions. The agency recalled that it had “received information from Member States” that Iran had done modeling of

“nuclear explosive configurations based on implosion technology.”

Unfortunately for the credibility of that “information,” soon after that 2011 report was published someone leaked a graph of one of the alleged computer modeling efforts attributed to Iran to Associated Press reporter George Jahn. The graph was so similar to one published in a scholarly journal in January 2009 that Scott Kemp, an assistant professor of nuclear science and engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), said he suspected the graph had been “adapted from the open literature.”

Furthermore the information in the graph turned out to be inaccurate by four orders of magnitude. In response to that revelation, a senior IAEA official told Jahn that the Agency knew that the graph was “flawed” as soon as it had obtained it but that IAEA officials “believe it remains important as a clue to Iranian intentions.”

In fact, the official revealed to Jahn that the Agency had come up with a bizarre theory that Iranian scientists deliberately falsified the diagram to sell the idea to government officials of a nuclear explosion far larger than any by the United States or Russia.

That episode surely marks the apogee of the IAEA’s contorted rationalizations of the highly suspect “information” the Agency had been fed by the Israelis. In the final report, the Agency ignores that embarrassing episode and “assesses that Iran conducted computer modeling of a nuclear explosive device prior to 2004 and between 2005 and 2009,” even though it describes the modeling, enigmatically, as “incomplete and fragmentary.”

The assessment further “notes some similarity between the Iranian open source publications and the studies featured in the information from Member States, in terms of textual matches, and certain dimensional and other parameters used.”

Unless the Agency received the “information” from the unidentified states before the dates of the open-source publications, which one would expect to be noted if true, such similarities could be evidence of fraudulent intelligence rather than of Iranian wrongdoing. But the assessment provides no clarification of the issue.

## **Nuclear Material**

On the issue it calls “nuclear material acquisition,” however, the Agency makes a startling retreat from its previous position that has far-reaching implications for the entire collection of intelligence documents. In its 2011 report, the IAEA had presented a one-page flow sheet showing a process for converting “yellow cake” into “green salt” (i.e., uranium that can be enriched)

as a scheme to “secure a source of uranium suitable for use in an undisclosed enrichment program.”

But the final assessment explicitly rejects that conclusion, pronouncing the process design in question “technically flawed” and “of low quality in comparison with what was available to Iran as part of its declared nuclear fuel cycle.”

In other words, Iran would have had no rational reason to try to seek an entirely new conversion process and then turn the project over to incompetent engineers. Those were precisely the arguments that Iran had made in 2008 to buttress its case that the documents were fabricated.

The assessment carefully avoids the obvious implication of these new findings, that the anomalies surrounding the “green salt” documents make it very likely that they have were fabricated. To acknowledge that fact would cast doubt on the entire collection. But the surprising backtracking on the “green salt” evidence underlines just how far the IAEA has gone in the past to cover up awkward questions about the intelligence at the center of the case.

Now that the Obama administration has settled on a nuclear agreement with Iran, the IAEA will no longer have to find contorted language to discuss Iran’s past and present nuclear program.

Nevertheless, the Agency remains a highly political actor, and its role in monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the agreement may bring more occasions for official assessments that reflect the political interest of the U.S.-led dominant coalition in the IAEA board of governors rather than the objective reality of the issue under review.

**Gareth Porter, an investigative journalist and historian specializing in U.S. “national security” policy and was the recipient of the Gellhorn Prize for journalism in 2012. His latest book, *Manufactured Crisis: The Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare*, was published by Just World Books in 2014. [This story first appeared at LobeLog.]**

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## America’s Debt to Bradley Manning

**From the Archive:** The U.S. mainstream media is again embracing a U.N. report critical of Iran’s alleged past work on a nuclear bomb, but leaks from Pvt. Bradley (now Chelsea) Manning exposed Yukiya Amano, the key U.N. official, as a front for U.S. and Israeli interests, as Robert Parry reported in 2011.

By Robert Parry (Originally published Dec. 24, 2011)

One criticism about the value of the information that Pvt. Bradley Manning gave to WikiLeaks is that most of it was known in some form and thus didn't justify the risks to sources who might be identified from the diplomatic and military cables. However, that complaint misses the importance of detailed "ground truth" in assessing issues of war and peace.

For instance, the prospects of war with Iran escalated in November 2011 because of a toughly worded report by the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency, which compiled some old and new evidence to argue that Iran continues to make progress toward a nuclear bomb. Immediately, the U.S. news media accepted the IAEA's report as the unquestioned truth and as further repudiation of the 2007 U.S. intelligence estimate that Iran had ceased work on a nuclear weapon in 2003.

One might note the irony in this flip on Iran. In the run-up to war with Iraq, the U.S. media embraced CIA reports of secret Iraqi WMD programs while mocking the IAEA's doubts. Regarding Iran, the CIA and IAEA have traded places, with U.S. intelligence analysts chagrined over swallowing the bogus Iraq-WMD evidence being more skeptical of the Iran-nuke allegations, while the IAEA has taken the role as chief WMD exaggerator.

So, it was useful to examine the WikiLeaks documents regarding the election of the new IAEA leader in 2009 to understand why this flip may have occurred. What those classified State Department cables show is that the IAEA's new director general, Japanese diplomat Yukiya Amano, credited his victory largely to U.S. government support and promptly stuck his hand out for U.S. money.

Further, Amano left little doubt that he would side with the United States in its confrontation with Iran and that he would even meet secretly with Israeli officials regarding their purported evidence on Iran's nuclear program, despite the fact that Israel is arguably the world's preeminent rogue nuclear state and rejects IAEA inspections of its own nuclear sites.

According to U.S. embassy cables from Vienna, Austria, the site of IAEA's headquarters, American diplomats in 2009 were cheering the prospect that Amano would advance U.S. interests in ways that outgoing IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei wouldn't.

### **Cable Revelations**

In a July 9, 2009, cable, American chargé Geoffrey Pyatt said Amano was thankful for U.S. support of his election. "Amano attributed his election to support from the U.S., Australia and France, and cited U.S. intervention with

Argentina as particularly decisive," the cable said.

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Pyatt learned, too, that Amano had consulted with Israeli Ambassador Israel Michaeli "immediately after his appointment" and that Michaeli "was fully confident of the priority Amano accords verification issues."

Michaeli added that he discounted some of Amano's public remarks about there being "no evidence of Iran pursuing a nuclear weapons capability" as just words that Amano felt he had to say "to persuade those who did not support him about his 'impartiality.'"

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In a subsequent cable dated Oct. 16, 2009, the U.S. mission in Vienna said Amano "took pains to emphasize his support for U.S. strategic objectives for the Agency. Amano reminded ambassador [Glyn Davies] on several occasions that he was solidly in the U.S. court on every key strategic decision, from high-level personnel appointments to the handling of Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program.

"More candidly, Amano noted the importance of maintaining a certain 'constructive ambiguity' about his plans, at least until he took over for DG

ElBaradei in December” 2009.

In other words, the emerging picture of Amano is of a bureaucrat eager to bend in directions favored by the United States and Israel, especially regarding Iran’s nuclear program. Amano’s behavior surely contrasts with how the more independent-minded ElBaradei resisted some of Bush’s key claims about Iraq’s supposed nuclear weapons program, denouncing some documents as forgeries.

Today, with some Republican presidential contenders falling over themselves to bond with Israel over its desire to attack Iran, this sort of detail puts the IAEA report into a fuller context that can help American voters judge whether another war is necessary or whether they’re being misled again by hyped allegations.

These cables, which Manning allegedly gave to WikiLeaks, were first spotlighted by the Guardian newspaper in the U.K. in 2010. However, because the full cables were posted on the Internet, I could dig through them to find additional details, such as Amano asking for more U.S. money.

Without this level of “ground truth,” Americans would be at the mercy of the major U.S. news media, which seems as much on board for a war with Iran as it was for war with Iraq. [For more on this topic, see Consortiumnews.com’s “Dã©jã  
vu Over Iran Nuke Charges” and “Big Media’s Double Standards on Iran.”]

## **Slaughtering Iraqis**

Another example of how the material allegedly leaked by Manning helped educate the American people was the infamous gun-barrel video of U.S. attack helicopters mowing down seemingly defenseless Iraqi men, including two Reuters journalists, as they walked down a Baghdad street.

Not only did a U.S. military helicopter gunship slaughter the men amid macho jokes and chuckling apparently after mistaking a couple of cameras for weapons but the American attackers then blew away several Iraqis who arrived in a van and tried to take one of the wounded newsmen to a hospital. Two children in the van were badly wounded.

“Well, it’s their fault for bringing their kids into a battle,” one American remarked.

The videotaped incident entitled “Collateral Murder” by Wikileaks occurred on July 12, 2007, in the midst of President George W. Bush’s much-heralded troop “surge,” which the U.S. news media has widely credited for reducing violence in Iraq and bringing something close to victory for the United States.



But the U.S. press corps rarely mentions that the “surge” represented one of the bloodiest periods of the war. Beyond the horrific and untallied death toll of Iraqis, about 1,000 U.S. soldiers died during Bush’s “surge” of an additional 30,000 troops into Iraq.

It’s also unclear that the “surge” deserves much if any credit for the gradual decline in Iraqi violence, which had already reached turning points in 2006 before the “surge” with the death of al-Qaeda leader Musab al-Zarqawi, the U.S.-funded Sunni Awakening against al-Qaeda in Iraq, and the de facto ethnic cleansing of Iraqi cities with Sunnis and Shiites moving into separate neighborhoods.

Further putting the sectarian killing on a downward path was the Iran-brokered agreement with militant Shiite leader Moktada al-Sadr to have his militia stand down in exchange for an Iraqi government commitment to insist on a firm timetable for total U.S. military withdrawal, a process that has just been completed.

However, the U.S. news media continues to repeat the conventional wisdom about how U.S. troops protected Iraqis from violence through the “successful surge.” The “Collateral Murder” video puts the lie to that smug consensus, showing the “ground truth” of how the “surge” and indeed the entire Iraq War truly operated.

Many Americans may want to put the unpleasant memories of the Iraq War behind them from “shock and awe” and the illegal invasion, to the leveling of Fallujah and the Abu Ghraib atrocities, to the incompetent U.S. occupation, the Haditha murders and the sectarian slaughters but a failure to face the reality honestly will only encourage future war crimes of similar or even greater magnitude.

Already, Republicans such as Newt Gingrich, Rick Perry, Michele Bachmann and Mitt Romney are speaking as casually about going to war with Iran as George W. Bush and Dick Cheney did about war with Iraq.

As Bradley Manning wrote as he struggled over his decision to leak evidence of war crimes and other machinations by the U.S. government, “God knows what happens now. Hopefully worldwide discussion, debates, and reforms. I want people to see the truth because without information, you cannot make informed decisions as a public.”

(In 2013, Manning was court-martialed and sentenced to 35 years in prison for disclosing this classified information to the public.) But his gift to America may be that he provided the nation the “ground truth” that could give meaning to debates about past and possibly future wars.

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for**

The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).

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## More Wrenches into Iran-Nuke Deal

Even as [the Saudi-Israeli alliance](#) against Iran fuels Sunni jihadist gains in Syria and elsewhere, neocon operatives are pressing on another front, continuing to hurl wrenches into the final Iran-nuclear negotiations, as Gareth Porter explains at Middle East Eye.

By Gareth Porter

In the final phase of the negotiations with Iran, the U.S.-led international coalition is still seeking Iran's agreement to allow the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to visit any military facilities it deems suspicious and to interview a selected list of Iranian nuclear scientists.

Such measures are not necessary to ensure that Iran is adhering to its commitments under the agreement, but they are necessary to manage the political threat from the pro-Israel extremists in the U.S. Senate to sabotage the whole agreement.

To fend off that threat, the Obama administration made the [spurious claim](#) that it had succeeded in getting Iran to agree to the demand for IAEA inspection of any site it found suspicious. In fact, Iran had agreed only that IAEA would have "enhanced access through agreed procedures" as reflected in the wording of the [joint statement](#) of the P5+1 and Iran on 2 April. Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and senior military officials have vehemently ruled out both IAEA inspection of military sites on demand and interviews with Iranian scientists.

IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano claimed on May 12 that Iran's acceptance of the Additional Protocol as part of a comprehensive nuclear deal meant that Iran had accepted inspections of its military sites on demand.

"In many other countries from time to time we request access to military sites when we have the reason to, so why not Iran?" Amano said. "If we have a reason to request access, we will do so, and in principle Iran has to accept it."

But that was a brazen misrepresentation of the [Additional Protocol](#). That agreement allows unrestricted IAEA access to sites that have already been designated previously by the state as related to the nuclear fuel cycle. For all

other sites, IAEA access under the Additional Protocol clearly depends on the approval of the state in question. Article 5 (c) of the agreement, provides that, if the signatory state is “unable to provide such access,” it “shall make every effort to satisfy Agency requests without delay through other means.”

Now the New York Times has further muddied the waters by reporting on May 31 that the Iranian rejection of those demands had “prompted concern that Iran might be backtracking from understandings sketched out in earlier talks.”

The Times tries to support the U.S. demand by asserting that “experts” say “wide-ranging inspections are needed to guard against cheating.” That is a reference to the argument that opponents of a nuclear deal with Iran have been making for years that Iran is likely to try a “sneakout” route to nuclear weapons, using covert supplies of enriched uranium or plutonium and a covert enrichment facility.

The main figure to make that argument is David Albright, the founder of the Institute for Science and International Security, a Washington think tank on nuclear proliferation, who had testified on March 24 that Iran must be compelled to accept “anywhere, anytime inspections.” He argued that, without such inspections, Iran could “produce enough weapons grade uranium for a bomb while avoiding detection by the IAEA.” [For more on Albright, see Consortiumnews.com’s “An Iraq-WMD Replay on Iran?”]

Another source cited by the Times in the past for that argument is Gary Samore, who was Obama’s adviser on negotiations with Iran until early 2013. Last November, the Times quoted Samore as saying, “From the beginning, the administration thought a nuclear agreement with Iran would need elements to deal with the overt program and one to detect covert facilities.”

After leaving the administration, Samore became President of the organization called United Against Nuclear Iran (UANI), which got one-third of its funding in 2013 from Sheldon Adelson, the notorious right-wing extremist and the primary funder of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s campaigns.

But, although Samore has frequently reiterated the argument that the primary danger is Iranian “sneakout,” he admitted to Times correspondent David Sanger when he was still in the Obama administration that if Iran tried to deceive inspectors by using covert facilities, “We’re pretty certain we would detect it.”

An analysis by Robert Reardon of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University published in 2011 explains why the alarmist views of the problem put forward by Albright and Samore are politically motivated.

“The technical and resource barriers” to achieving a secret enrichment program, Reardon pointed out, “are likely prohibitive.” Iran would have to “find a foreign supplier willing and able to provide a substantial supply of yellowcake secretly and without detection,” he wrote. And then Iran would have to “build and operate a number of secret facilities,” which would involve a “significant risk of detection.”

The IAEA demand for interviews with Iranian scientists has long been contentious, because the IAEA wanted to talk with individuals based merely on the fact that their names had been found in the “laptop documents” collection. Those were the intelligence documents that the George W. Bush administration claimed had come from a covert Iranian nuclear weapons program. Both Iran and former IAEA Director Mohamed El Baradei challenged the authenticity of those documents, which bear the fingerprints of Israel’s Mossad.

The Iranian objection to such requests was validated when Israel carried out a series of assassinations of Iranian scientists from 2010 through 2012. Israel’s Mossad had chosen its targets for assassination, moreover, on the basis of open publications and positions in the nuclear program that were publicly known. Iran has every reason to believe that Israel could obtain any information gleaned from IAEA interviews with scientists on their list to plan more assassinations.

Even before Israel began killing Iranian scientists and engineers, however, it had strong objections to the request for interviews with leading scientists and engineers. For years, the IAEA explicitly demanded classified engineering data on the redesign of Iran’s Shahab-3 missile, even though a senior IAEA official acknowledged to this writer that it meant compromising Iran’s national security.

The official claimed it was necessary to prove that it had not been for the purpose of integrating a nuclear weapon into the missile. Iran’s military leadership undoubtedly drew the conclusion that IAEA demands for interviews with senior scientists and engineers were essentially an intelligence fishing expedition on behalf of U.S. and Israeli governments.

A U.S. State Department official told the Times that Iran had agreed to work on a “list of people and places for access.” That means they are simply going to recapitulate the long-running history of the IAEA-Iran negotiations over the issue.

Amano has steadfastly demanded to visit Parchin, where the IAEA says Iran installed an explosives container the IAEA says related to nuclear weapons research. Iran has made the counter-offer to let the IAEA carry out an inspection at Marivan, where, according to the IAEA, Iran had carried out “large scale high explosive experiments” on the “multipoint initiation concept” for a

nuclear weapon.

The IAEA has rejected the offer without any explanation. The refusal to visit what ought to be its highest priority suggests that either the IAEA doesn't have the coordinates of the alleged site of the experiments or it has reason to doubt that it is going to find anything there. In either case, its refusal to visit the site reveals the reality that Amano is not carrying out an objective investigation but supporting U.S. policy by keeping the political pressure on Iran for as long as the U.S. deems it necessary. [For more on Amano's documented bias, see Consortiumnews.com's "Slanting the Case on Iran's Nukes."]

Behind the U.S. political posturing of which the Times story is a part, the US delegation is almost certainly preparing to give up its demands for visits to military sites on demand and interviews with Iranian scientists. Meanwhile, however, we can expect the Kabuki theatre over those demands to continue as long as it can be useful for managing the Obama administration domestic political problems.

**Gareth Porter is an independent investigative journalist and winner of the 2012 Gellhorn Prize for journalism. He is the author of the newly published *Manufactured Crisis: The Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare*. [This story originally appeared at Middle East Eye.]**

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## Why Iran Distrusts the US in Nuke Talks

**Exclusive:** The mainstream U.S. media portrays the Iran nuclear talks as "our good guys" imposing some sanity on "their bad guys." But the real history of the West's dealings on Iran's nuclear program shows bad faith by the U.S. government, as ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern describes.

By Ray McGovern

The Iranians may be a bit paranoid but, as the saying goes, this does not mean some folks are not out to get them. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his knee-jerk followers in Washington clearly **are** out to get them and they know it.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the surreal set of negotiations in Switzerland premised not on evidence, but rather on an assumption of Iran's putative "ambition" to become a nuclear weapons state like Israel, which maintains a secret and sophisticated nuclear weapons arsenal estimated at about 200 weapons. The supposed threat is that Iran might build one.

Israel and the U.S. know from their intelligence services that Iran has no active nuclear weapons program, but they are not about to let truth get in the way of their concerted effort to marginalize Iran. And so they fantasize before the world about an Iranian nuclear weapons program that must be stopped at all costs including war.

Among the most surprising aspects of this is the fact that most U.S. allies are so willing to go along with the charade and Washington's catch-all solution sanctions as some U.S. and Israeli hardliners open call for a sustained bombing campaign of Iranian nuclear sites that could inflict a massive loss of human life and result in an environmental catastrophe.

On March 26, arch-neocon John Bolton, George W. Bush's Ambassador to the United Nations, graced the pages of the New York Times with his most recent appeal for an attack on Iran. Bolton went a bit too far, though, in citing the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) of November 2007, agreed to unanimously by all 16 U.S. intelligence agencies. Perhaps he reasoned that, since the "mainstream media" rarely mentions that NIE, "Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities," he could get away with distorting its key findings, which were:

"We judge with high confidence that in fall 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program; we also assess with moderate-to-high confidence that Tehran at a minimum is keeping open the option to develop nuclear weapons. ... We assess with moderate confidence Tehran had not restarted its nuclear weapons program as of mid-2007, but we do not know whether it currently intends to develop nuclear weapons. ...

"Our assessment that Iran halted the program in 2003 primarily in response to international pressure indicates Tehran's decisions are guided by a cost-benefit approach rather than a rush to a weapon irrespective of the political, economic and military costs."

An equally important fact ignored by the mainstream media is that the key judgments of that NIE have been revalidated by the intelligence community every year since. But reality is hardly a problem for Bolton. As the Undersecretary of State for Arms Control, Bolton made quite a name for himself by insisting that it was the proper function of a policy maker like him not intelligence analysts to interpret the evidence from intelligence.

### **An 'Embarrassment'**

So those of us familiar with Bolton's checkered credibility were not shocked by his New York Times op-ed, entitled "To Stop Iran's Bomb, Bomb Iran." Still less were we shocked to see him dismiss "the rosy 2007 National Intelligence

Estimate” as an “embarrassment.”

Actually, an embarrassment it was, but not in the way Bolton suggests. Highly embarrassing, rather, was the fact that Bolton was among those inclined to push President Bush hard to bomb Iran. Then, quite suddenly, an honest NIE appeared, exposing the reality that Iran’s nuclear weapons program had been stopped in 2003, giving the lie not only to neocon propaganda, but also to Bush’s assertion that Tehran’s leaders had admitted they were developing nuclear weapons (when they had actually asserted the opposite).

Bush lets it all hang out in his memoir, *Decision Points*. Most revealingly, he complains bitterly that the NIE “tied my hands on the military side” and called its findings “eye-popping.”

A disgruntled Bush writes, “The backlash was immediate. [Iranian President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad hailed the NIE as a ‘great victory.’” Bush’s apparent “logic” here is to use the widespread disdain for Ahmadinejad to discredit the NIE through association, i.e. whatever Ahmadinejad praises must be false.

But can you blame Bush for his chagrin? Alas, the NIE had knocked out the props from under the anti-Iran propaganda machine, imported duty-free from Israel and tuned up by neoconservatives here at home.

In his memoir, Bush laments: “I don’t know why the NIE was written the way it was. Whatever the explanation, the NIE had a big impact, and not a good one.”

Spelling out how the Estimate had tied his hands “on the military side,” Bush included this (apparently unedited) kicker: “But after the NIE, how could I possibly explain using the military to destroy the nuclear facilities of a country the intelligence community said had no active nuclear weapons program?”

It seems worth repeating that the key judgments of the 2007 NIE have been reaffirmed every year since. As for the supposedly urgent need to impose sanctions to prevent Iran from doing what we are fairly certain it is not doing well, perhaps we could take some lessons from the White Queen, who bragged that in her youth she could believe “six impossible things before breakfast” and counseled Alice to practice the same skill.

### **Sanctions, Anyway, to the Rescue**

Despite the conclusions of the U.S. intelligence community, the United States and other countries have imposed unprecedented sanctions ostensibly to censure Iran for “illicit” nuclear activities while demanding the Iran prove the negative in addressing allegations, including “intelligence” provided via Israel and its surrogates, that prompt international community concerns about Iran’s

nuclear program.

And there's the rub. Most informed observers share historian/journalist Gareth Porter's conclusion that the main sticking point at this week's negotiations in Lausanne is the issue of how and when sanctions on Iran will be lifted. And, specifically, whether they will be lifted as soon as Iran has taken "irreversible" actions to implement core parts of the agreement.

In Lausanne, the six-nation group (permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany) reportedly want the legal system behind the sanctions left in place, even after the sanctions have been suspended, until the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) officially concludes that Iran's nuclear activities are exclusively peaceful a process that could take many years.

Iran's experience with an IAEA highly influenced by the U.S. and Israel has been, well, not the best particularly since December 2009 under the tenure of Director-General Yukiya Amano, a Japanese diplomat whom State Department cables reveal to be in Washington's pocket.

Classified cables released by Pvt. Bradley (now Chelsea) Manning and WikiLeaks show that Amano credited his success in becoming director-general largely to U.S. government support and promptly stuck his hand out for U.S. money.

Further, Amano left little doubt that he would side with the United States in the confrontation with Iran and that he would even meet secretly with Israeli officials regarding their purported evidence on Iran's hypothetical nuclear weapons program, while staying mum about Israel's actual nuclear weapons arsenal.

According to U.S. embassy cables from Vienna, Austria, the site of IAEA's headquarters, American diplomats in 2009 were cheering the prospect that Amano would advance U.S. interests in ways that outgoing IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei never did.

In a July 9, 2009, cable, American chargé Geoffrey Pyatt yes, the same diplomat who helped Assistant Secretary Victoria Nuland choose "Yats" (Arseniy Yatsenyuk) to be the post-coup prime minister of Ukraine said Amano was thankful for U.S. support for his election," noting that "U.S. intervention with Argentina was particularly decisive."

A grateful Amano told Pyatt that as IAEA director-general, he would take a different "approach on Iran from that of ElBaradei" and that he "saw his primary role as implementing" U.S.-driven sanctions and demands against Iran.

Pyatt also reported that Amano had consulted with Israeli Ambassador Israel



Michaeli “immediately after his appointment” and that Michaeli “was fully confident of the priority Amano accords verification issues.” Pyatt added that Amano privately agreed to “consultations” with the head of the Israeli Atomic Energy Commission.

In other words, Amano has shown himself eager to bend in directions favored by the United States and Israel, especially regarding Iran’s nuclear program. His behavior contrasts with that of the more independent-minded ElBaradei, who resisted some of Bush’s key claims about Iraq’s supposed nuclear weapons program, and even openly denounced forged documents about “yellowcake uranium” as “not authentic.” [For more on Amano, see Consortiumnews.com’s [“America’s Debt to Bradley Manning.”](#)]

It is a given that Iran misses ElBaradei; and it is equally clear that it knows precisely what to expect from Amano. If you were representing Iran at the negotiating table, would you want the IAEA to be the final word on whether or not the entire legal system authorizing sanctions should be left in place?

### **Torpedoing Better Deals in 2009 and 2010**

Little has been written to help put some context around the current negotiation in Lausanne and show how very promising efforts in 2009 and 2010 were sabotaged the first by Jundullah, a terrorist group in Iran, and the second by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. If you wish to understand why Iran lacks the trust one might wish for in negotiations with the West, a short review may be helpful.

During President Barack Obama’s first year in office, the first meeting of senior level American and Iranian negotiators, then-Under Secretary of State William Burns and Iran’s chief nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili, on Oct. 1, 2009, seemed to yield surprisingly favorable results.

Many Washington insiders were shocked when Jalili gave Tehran’s agreement in principle to send abroad 2,640 pounds (then as much as 75 percent of Iran’s total) of low-enriched uranium to be turned into fuel for a small reactor that does medical research.

Jalili approved the agreement “in principle,” at a meeting in Geneva of representatives of members of the U.N. Security Council plus Germany. Even the New York Times acknowledged that this, “if it happens, would represent a major accomplishment for the West, reducing Iran’s ability to make a nuclear weapon quickly, and buying more time for negotiations to bear fruit.”

The conventional wisdom in Western media is that Tehran backed away from the deal. That is true, but less than half the story a tale that highlights how, in Israel’s (and the neocons’) set of priorities, regime change in Iran comes

first. The uranium transfer had the initial support of Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. And a follow-up meeting was scheduled for Oct. 19, 2009, at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna.

The accord soon came under criticism, however, from Iran's opposition groups, including the "Green Movement" led by defeated presidential candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi, who has had ties to the American neocons and to Israel since the Iran-Contra days of the 1980s when he was the prime minister who collaborated on secret arms deals.

At first blush, it seemed odd that it was Mousavi's U.S.-favored political opposition that led the assault on the nuclear agreement, calling it an affront to Iran's sovereignty and suggesting that Ahmadinejad wasn't being tough enough.

Then, on Oct. 18, a terrorist group called Jundullah, acting on amazingly accurate intelligence, detonated a car bomb at a meeting of top Iranian Revolutionary Guards commanders and tribal leaders in the province of Sistan-Baluchistan in southeastern Iran. A car full of Guards was also attacked.

A brigadier general who was deputy commander of the Revolutionary Guards ground forces, the Revolutionary Guards brigadier commanding the border area of Sistan-Baluchistan, and three other brigade commanders were killed in the attack; dozens of other military officers and civilians were left dead or wounded.

Jundullah took credit for the bombings, which followed years of lethal attacks on Revolutionary Guards and Iranian policemen, including an attempted ambush of President Ahmadinejad's motorcade in 2005.

Tehran claims Jundullah is supported by the U.S., Great Britain and Israel, and former CIA Middle East operations officer Robert Baer has fingered Jundullah as one of the "good terrorist" groups benefiting from American help.

I believe it no coincidence that the Oct. 18 attack the bloodiest in Iran since the 1980-88 war with Iraq came one day before nuclear talks were to resume at the IAEA in Vienna to follow up on the Oct. 1 breakthrough. The killings were sure to raise Iran's suspicions about U.S. sincerity.

It's a safe bet that after the Jundullah attack, the Revolutionary Guards went directly to their patron, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, arguing that the bombing and roadside attack proved that the West couldn't be trusted. Khamenei issued a statement on Oct. 19 condemning the terrorists, whom he charged "are supported by certain arrogant powers' spy agencies."

The commander of the Guards' ground forces, who lost his deputy in the attack, charged that the terrorists were "trained by America and Britain in some of the

neighboring countries,” and the commander-in-chief of the Revolutionary Guards threatened retaliation.

The attack was front-page news in Iran, but not in the United States, where the mainstream media quickly consigned the incident to the memory hole. The American media also began treating Iran’s resulting anger over what it considered an act of terrorism and its heightened sensitivity to outsiders crossing its borders as efforts to intimidate “pro-democracy” groups supported by the West.

Despite the Jundullah attack and the criticism from the opposition groups, a lower-level Iranian technical delegation did go to Vienna for the meeting on Oct. 19, but Jalili stayed away. The Iranians questioned the trustworthiness of the Western powers and raised objections to some details, such as where the transfer should occur. The Iranians broached alternative proposals that seemed worth exploring, such as making the transfer of the uranium on Iranian territory or some other neutral location.

But the Obama administration, under mounting domestic pressure to be tougher with Iran, dismissed Iran’s counter-proposals out of hand, reportedly at the instigation of White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel and neocon regional emissary Dennis Ross.

### **If at First You Don’t Succeed**

Watching all this, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan saw parallels between Washington’s eagerness for an escalating confrontation with Iran and the way the United States had marched the world, step by step, into the invasion of Iraq.

In spring 2010, hoping to head off another such catastrophe, the two leaders dusted off the Oct. 1 uranium transfer initiative and got Tehran to agree to similar terms on May 17, 2010. Both called for sending 2,640 pounds of Iran’s low-enriched uranium abroad in exchange for nuclear rods that would have no applicability for a weapon. In May 2010, that meant roughly 50 percent of Iran’s low-enriched uranium would be sent to Turkey in exchange for higher-enriched uranium for medical use.

Yet, rather than embrace this Iranian concession as at least one significant step in the right direction, U.S. officials sought to scuttle it by pressing instead for more sanctions. The U.S. media did its part by insisting that the deal was just another Iranian trick that would leave Iran with enough uranium to theoretically create one nuclear bomb.

An editorial in the Washington Post on May 18, 2010, entitled “Bad Bargain,” concluded wistfully/wishfully: “It’s possible that Tehran will retreat even from

the terms it offered Brazil and Turkey, in which case those countries should be obliged to support U.N. sanctions.”

On May 19, a New York Times' editorial rhetorically patted the leaders of Brazil and Turkey on the head as if they were rubes lost in the big-city world of hardheaded diplomacy. The Times wrote: “Brazil and Turkey are eager to play larger international roles. And they are eager to avoid a conflict with Iran. We respect those desires. But like pretty much everyone else, they got played by Tehran.”

The disdain for this latest Iranian concession was shared by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who was busy polishing her reputation for “toughness” by doing all she could to undermine the Brazil-Turkey initiative. She pressed instead for harsh sanctions.

“We have reached agreement on a strong draft [sanctions resolution] with the cooperation of both Russia and China,” Clinton told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on May 18, making clear that she viewed the timing of the sanctions as a riposte to the Iran-Brazil-Turkey agreement.

“This announcement is as convincing an answer to the efforts undertaken in Tehran over the last few days as any we could provide,” she declared. Her spokesman, Philip J. Crowley, was left with the challenging task of explaining the obvious implication that Washington was using the new sanctions to scuttle the plan for transferring half of Iran's enriched uranium out of the country.

### **Obama Overruled?**

Secretary Clinton got her UN resolution and put the kibosh on the arrangement that Brazil and Turkey had worked out with Iran. The Obama administration celebrated its victory in getting the UN Security Council on June 9, 2010, to approve a fourth round of economic sanctions against Iran. Obama also signed on to even more draconian penalties sailing through Congress.

It turned out, though, that Obama had earlier encouraged both Brazil and Turkey to work out a deal to get Iran to transfer about half its low-enriched uranium to Turkey in exchange for more highly enriched uranium that could only be used for peaceful medical purposes. But wait. Isn't that precisely what the Brazilians and Turks succeeded in doing?

Da Silva and Erdogan, understandably, were nonplussed, and da Silva actually released a copy of an earlier letter of encouragement from Obama.

No matter. The tripartite agreement was denounced by Secretary Clinton and ridiculed by the U.S. mainstream media. And that was kibosh enough. Even after

Brazil released Obama's supportive letter, the President would not publicly defend the position he had taken earlier.

So, once again. Assume you're in the position of an Iranian negotiator. Trust, but verify, was Ronald Reagan's approach. We are likely to find out soon whether there exists the level of trust necessary to start dealing successfully with the issue of most concern to Iran lifting the sanctions.

**Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He was a CIA analyst for 27 years and now serves on the Steering Group of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS).**

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## How the Iran-Nuke Crisis Was Hyped

A prized weapon in the U.S. geopolitical arsenal is "information warfare," the ability to promote false or misleading information to heighten the pressure on an adversary, often using supposedly neutral UN agencies as a front, as may have happened on Iran's nuclear program, reports Gareth Porter.

By Gareth Porter

In a critique of the handling of the Iran file by the International Atomic Energy Agency, former IAEA Director General Han Blix has called for greater skepticism about the intelligence documents and reports alleging Iranian nuclear weapons work and warned that they may be used to put diplomatic pressure on Tehran.

In an interview with this writer in his Stockholm apartment late last month, Blix, who headed the IAEA from 1981 to 1997, also criticized the language repeated by the IAEA under its current director general, Yukiya Amano, suggesting that Iran is still under suspicion of undeclared nuclear activity.

Blix, who clashed with U.S. officials when he was head of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) on weapons of mass destruction in Iraq from 2000 to 2003, said he has long been skeptical of intelligence that has been used to accuse Iraq and Iran of having active nuclear-weapons programs.

"I've often said you have as much disinformation as information" on alleged weaponization efforts in those countries, Blix said.

Referring to the allegations of past Iranian nuclear weapons research that have been published in IAEA reports, Blix said, "Something that worries me is that these accusations that come from foreign intelligence agencies can be utilized by states to keep Iran under suspicion."

Such allegations, according to Blix, "can be employed as a tactic to keep the state in a suspect light, to keep Iran on the run." The IAEA, he said, "should be cautious and not allow itself to be drawn into such a tactic."

Blix warned that compromising the independence of the IAEA by pushing it to embrace unverified intelligence was not in the true interests of those providing the intelligence.

The IAEA Member States providing the intelligence papers to the IAEA "have a long-term interest in an international service that seeks to be independent," said Blix. "In the Security Council they can pursue their own interest, but the [IAEA] dossier has to be as objective as possible."

In 2005, the George W. Bush administration gave the IAEA a large cache of documents purporting to derive from a covert Iranian nuclear weapons research and development program from 2001 to 2003. Israel provided a series of documents and intelligence reports on alleged Iranian nuclear weapons work in 2008 and 2009.

Blix's successor as IAEA director general, Mohamed ElBaradei, recalled in his 2011 memoirs having doubts about the authenticity of both sets of intelligence documents. ElBaradei resisted pressure from the United States and its European allies in 2009 to publish an "annex" to a regular IAEA report based on those unverified documents.

But Amano agreed to do so, and the annex on "possible military dimensions" of the Iranian nuclear program was published in November 2011. During the current negotiations with Iran, the P5+1 (U.S., UK, Russia, China, France plus Germany) has taken the position that Iran must explain the intelligence documents and reports described in the annex.

The provenance of the largest part of the intelligence documents, the so-called "laptop documents", was an unresolved question for years after they were first reported in 2004 and 2005. But former senior German foreign office official Karsten Voigt confirmed in 2013 that the Iranian exile opposition group, the *Mujahedeen E-Khalq* (MEK), gave the original set of documents to the German intelligence service (BND) in 2004.

The MEK has been reported by Seymour Hersh, Connie Bruck, and a popular history of the Mossad's covert operations to have been a client of Israel's

foreign intelligence agency, the Mossad, serving to “launder” intelligence that Mossad did not want to have attributed to Israel.

Blix has been joined by two other former senior IAEA officials in criticizing the agency for its uncritical presentation of the intelligence documents cited in the November 2011 annex. Robert Kelley, the head of the Iraq team under both Blix and ElBaradei, and Tariq Rauf, the former head of the Agency’s Verification and Security Policy Coordination Office, have written that the annex employed “exaggeration, innuendo and careful choice of words” in presenting intelligence information from an unidentified Member State of the IAEA on the alleged cylinder at the Parchin military facility.

Blix said he is “critical” of the IAEA for the boilerplate language used in its reports on Iran that the Agency is “not in a position to provide credible assurances about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities.”

Blix added that it is “erroneous” to suggest that the IAEA would be able to provide such assurances if Iran or any other state were more cooperative. As head of UNMOVIC, Blix recalled, “I was always clear that there could always be small things in a big geographical area that can be hidden, and you can never guarantee completely that there are no undeclared activities.”

“In Iraq we didn’t maintain there was nothing,” he said. “We said we had made 700 inspections at 500 sites and we had not seen anything.”

Blix emphasized that he was not questioning the importance of maximizing inspections, or of Iran’s ratification of the Additional Protocol. “I think the more inspections you can perform the smaller the residue of uncertainty,” he said.

**Gareth Porter, an investigative journalist and historian specializing in U.S. “national security” policy and was the recipient of the Gellhorn Prize for journalism in 2012. His latest book is *Manufactured Crisis: The Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare*. [This article first appeared at LobeLog.]**

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## Did Manning Help Avert War in Iran?

**From the Archive:** A little-noticed disclosure from cables leaked by Pvt. Bradley (now Chelsea) Manning showed how the U.S. government put Yukiya Amano in as the UN’s top nuclear inspector so he could hype claims about Iran building a nuclear bomb, as Robert Parry reported on the eve of Manning’s sentencing in 2013.

By Robert Parry (Originally published on Aug. 19, 2013)

From U.S. embassy cables leaked by Pvt. Bradley Manning, you can easily imagine how the propaganda game might have played out, how Americans could have been panicked into supporting another unnecessary war in the Middle East, this time against Iran. Except that Manning's release of the documents spoiled the trick.

The gambit might have gone this way: One morning, a story would have led the front page of, say, the Washington Post citing how the widely respected International Atomic Energy Agency and its honest-broker Director-General Yukiya Amano had found startling "evidence" that Iran was nearing a nuclear bomb despite a longstanding U.S. intelligence estimate to the contrary and despite Iranian denials.

Next, the neocon-dominated opinion pages would ridicule anyone who still doubted these "facts." After all, these articles would say, "even" the IAEA, which had challenged President George W. Bush's claims about Iraq in 2002, and "even" Amano, who had initially believed Iran's denials, were now convinced.

Neocon think tanks would rush to join the chorus of alarm, dispatching WMD "experts" to TV talk shows bracing the American people on the need for military action. From Fox News to CNN to MSNBC, there would be a drumbeat about Iran's perfidy. Then, as hawkish Republicans and Democrats ratcheted up their rhetoric and as Israeli leaders chortled "we told you so" the war-with-Iran bandwagon might have begun rolling with such velocity that it would be unstoppable.

Perhaps, only years later after grave human costs and severe economic repercussions would the American people learn the truth: that the IAEA under Amano wasn't the objective source that they had been led to believe, that Amano was something of a U.S.-Israeli puppet who had feigned a pro-Iranian position early on to burnish his credentials for pushing an anti-Iranian line subsequently, that after he was installed, he had even solicited U.S. officials for money and had held secret meetings with Israelis (to coordinate opposition to Iran's nuclear program while maintaining a polite silence about Israel's rogue nuclear arsenal).

However, because of the actions of Bradley Manning, the rug was pulled out from under this possible ruse. The U.S. embassy cables revealing the truth about Amano were published by the U.K. Guardian in 2011 (although ignored by the New York Times, the Washington Post and other mainstream U.S. news outlets). The cables also drew attention from Web sites, such as Consortiumnews.com.

So, the gambit could not work. If it had been tried, enough people would have known the truth. They wouldn't be fooled again and they would have alerted their



fellow citizens. Bradley Manning had armed them with the facts.

And this scenario, while admittedly hypothetical, is not at all far-fetched. When the cables were leaked about a year after Amano's appointment, his IAEA was busy feeding the hysteria over Iran's nuclear program with reports trumpeted by think tanks, such as the Institute for Science and International Security, and by the Washington Post and other U.S. news media.

### **Revealing Cables**

According to those leaked U.S. embassy cables from Vienna, Austria, the site of IAEA's headquarters, American diplomats in 2009 were cheering the prospect that Amano would advance U.S. interests in ways that outgoing IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei wouldn't; Amano credited his election to U.S. government support; Amano signaled he would side with the United States in its confrontation with Iran; and he stuck out his hand for more U.S. money.

In a July 9, 2009, cable, American chargé Geoffrey Pyatt said Amano was thankful for U.S. support of his election. "Amano attributed his election to support from the U.S., Australia and France, and cited U.S. intervention with Argentina as particularly decisive," the cable said.

The appreciative Amano informed Pyatt that as IAEA director general, he would take a different "approach on Iran from that of ElBaradei" and he "saw his primary role as implementing safeguards and UNSC [United Nations Security Council]/Board resolutions," i.e. U.S.-driven sanctions and demands against Iran.

Amano also discussed how to restructure the senior ranks of the IAEA, including elimination of one top official and the retention of another. "We wholly agree with Amano's assessment of these two advisors and see these decisions as positive first signs," Pyatt commented.

In return, Pyatt made clear that Amano could expect strong U.S. financial support, stating that "the United States would do everything possible to support his successful tenure as Director General and, to that end, anticipated that continued U.S. voluntary contributions to the IAEA would be forthcoming. Amano offered that a 'reasonable increase' in the regular budget would be helpful."

Pyatt learned, too, that Amano had consulted with Israeli Ambassador Israel Michaeli "immediately after his appointment" and that Michaeli "was fully confident of the priority Amano accords verification issues." Michaeli added that he discounted some of Amano's public remarks about there being "no evidence of Iran pursuing a nuclear weapons capability" as just words that Amano felt he had to say "to persuade those who did not support him about his 'impartiality.'"

In private, Amano agreed to “consultations” with the head of the Israeli Atomic Energy Commission, Pyatt reported. (It is ironic indeed that Amano would have secret contacts with Israeli officials about Iran’s alleged nuclear weapons program, which has yet to yield a single bomb, when Israel possesses a large and undeclared nuclear arsenal.)

In a subsequent cable dated Oct. 16, 2009, the U.S. mission in Vienna said Amano “took pains to emphasize his support for U.S. strategic objectives for the Agency. Amano reminded ambassador [Glyn Davies] on several occasions that he was solidly in the U.S. court on every key strategic decision, from high-level personnel appointments to the handling of Iran’s alleged nuclear weapons program.

“More candidly, Amano noted the importance of maintaining a certain ‘constructive ambiguity’ about his plans, at least until he took over for DG ElBaradei in December” 2009.

In other words, Amano was a bureaucrat eager to bend in directions favored by the United States and Israel regarding Iran’s nuclear program. Amano’s behavior surely contrasted with how the more independent-minded ElBaradei resisted some of Bush’s key claims about Iraq’s supposed nuclear weapons program, correctly denouncing some documents as forgeries.

**Update:** It also is significant that Geoffrey Pyatt was rewarded for his work lining up the IAEA behind the anti-Iranian propaganda campaign by being made U.S. ambassador to Ukraine where he helped engineer the Feb. 22 coup that overthrew elected President Viktor Yanukovich. Pyatt was on the infamous “fuck the E.U.” call with Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland weeks before the coup as Nuland handpicked Ukraine’s new leaders and Pyatt pondered how “to midwife this thing.”

### **Salvaging Some Hype**

Though Manning’s release of the U.S. embassy cables from Vienna apparently scotched any large-scale deployment of the Amano ploy, some elements of the gambit did go forward nonetheless, albeit with less oomph than they might have had.

In February 2013, the front page of the Washington Post offered a taste of what the propaganda campaign might have looked like when investigative reporter Joby Warrick hyped an account about Iran’s nuclear program pushed by David Albright, director of the Institute for Science and International Security who had given support to Bush’s invasion of Iraq a decade ago.

The Albright/Warrick alarm cited Iran’s alleged effort to place an Internet

order for 100,000 ring-shaped magnets that would work in some of the country's older centrifuges.

"Iran recently sought to acquire tens of thousands of highly specialized magnets used in centrifuge machines, according to experts and diplomats, a sign that the country may be planning a major expansion of its nuclear program that could shorten the path to an atomic weapons capability," Warrick wrote in his lede paragraph.

You had to read to the end of the long story to hear a less strident voice, saying that Iran had previously informed IAEA inspectors that it planned to build more of its old and clunkier centrifuges, which use this sort of magnet, and that the enrichment was for civilian energy, not a nuclear bomb.

"Olli Heinonen, who led IAEA nuclear inspections inside Iran before his retirement in 2010, said the type of magnet sought by Iran was highly specific to the IR-1 centrifuge and could not, for example, be used in the advanced IR-2M centrifuges that Iran has recently tested," according to the final paragraphs of Warrick's article.

"The numbers in the order make sense, because Iran originally told us it wanted to build more than 50,000 of the IR-1s,' Heinonen said. 'The failure rate on these machines is 10 percent a year, so you need a surplus.'"

At the bottom of Warrick's story, you'd also learn that "Iran has avoided what many experts consider Israel's new 'red line': a stockpile of medium-enriched uranium greater than 530 pounds, roughly the amount needed to build a weapon if further purified."

So there was nothing urgent or particularly provocative about this alleged purchase, though the structure and placement of the Post story suggested otherwise. Many readers likely were expected to simply jump to the conclusion that Iran was on the verge of building an atomic bomb and that it was time for President Barack Obama to join Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in another Middle East war.

The pressure from the Post and other neocon-leaning news outlets on the Obama administration to fall in line with Netanyahu's belligerence toward Iran has been building for years, often with Warrick channeling anti-Iranian propaganda from Albright and his ISIS, which, in turn, seems to be a pipeline for hardliners at the IAEA.

A decade ago, Albright and the ISIS were key figures in stoking the hysteria for invading Iraq around the false allegations of its WMD program. In recent years, Albright and his institute have adopted a similar role regarding Iran and its

purported pursuit of a nuclear weapon, even though U.S. intelligence agencies say Iran terminated that weapons project in 2003.

Nevertheless, Albright has transformed his organization into a sparkplug for a new confrontation with Iran. Though Albright insists that he is an objective professional, ISIS has published hundreds of articles about Iran, which has not produced a single nuclear bomb, while barely mentioning Israel's rogue nuclear arsenal.

An examination of the ISIS Web site reveals only a few technical articles relating to Israel's nukes while ISIS has expanded its coverage of Iran's nuclear program so much that it's been moved onto a separate Web site. The articles not only hype developments in Iran but also attack U.S. media critics who question the fear-mongering about Iran.

More than a year ago when a non-mainstream journalist confronted Albright about the disparity between ISIS's concentration on Iran and *de minimis* coverage of Israel, he angrily responded that he was working on a report about Israel's nuclear program. But there is still no substantive assessment of Israel's large nuclear arsenal on the ISIS Web site, which goes back to 1993.

Despite this evidence of bias, the Post and other mainstream U.S. news outlets typically present Albright as a neutral analyst. They also ignore his checkered past, for instance, his prominent role in promoting President Bush's pre-invasion case that Iraq possessed stockpiles of WMD.

### **Stoking a War**

At the end of summer 2002, as Bush was beginning his advertising roll-out for the Iraq invasion and dispatching his top aides to the Sunday talk shows to warn about "smoking guns" and "mushroom clouds," Albright co-authored a Sept. 10, 2002, article entitled "Is the Activity at Al Qaim Related to Nuclear Efforts?" which declared:

"High-resolution commercial satellite imagery shows an apparently operational facility at the site of Iraq's al Qaim phosphate plant and uranium extraction facility. This site was where Iraq extracted uranium for its nuclear weapons program in the 1980s. This image raises questions about whether Iraq has rebuilt a uranium extraction facility at the site, possibly even underground. The uranium could be used in a clandestine nuclear weapons effort."

Albright's alarming allegations fit neatly with Bush's propaganda barrage, although as the months wore on with Bush's warnings about aluminum tubes and yellowcake from Africa growing more outlandish Albright did display more skepticism about the existence of a revived Iraqi nuclear program.

Still, he remained a “go-to” expert on other Iraqi purported WMD, such as chemical and biological weapons. In a typical quote on Oct. 5, 2002, Albright told CNN: “In terms of the chemical and biological weapons, Iraq has those now.”

After Bush launched the Iraq invasion in March 2003 and Iraq’s secret WMD caches didn’t materialize, Albright admitted that he had been conned, explaining to the Los Angeles Times: “If there are no weapons of mass destruction, I’ll be mad as hell. I certainly accepted the administration claims on chemical and biological weapons. I figured they were telling the truth. If there is no [unconventional weapons program], I will feel taken, because they asserted these things with such assurance.” [See FAIR’s [“The Great WMD Hunt,”](#)]

Given the horrendous costs in blood and treasure resulting from the Iraq fiasco, an objective journalist might feel compelled to mention Albright’s track record of bias and error. But the Post’s Warrick didn’t, even though Albright and his ISIS were at the core of the February story, receiving credit for obtaining copies of the magnet purchase order.

So, while we’ll never know if the Amano ploy would have been tried since Manning’s disclosures made it unfeasible it surely would not have been unprecedented. The American people experienced similar deceptions during the run-up to war with Iraq when the Bush-43 administration assembled every scrap of suspicion about Iraq’s alleged WMD and fashioned a bogus case for war.

Eventually, Manning was pulled into that war as a young intelligence analyst. He confronted so much evidence of brutality and dishonesty that he felt compelled to do something about it. What he did in leaking hundreds of thousands of documents to WikiLeaks and, thus, to other news outlets was to supply “ground truth” about war crimes committed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

His disclosure of diplomatic cables also gave the American people and the world a glimpse behind the curtain of secrecy that often conceals the dirty dealings of statecraft. Perhaps most significantly, those revelations helped sparked the Arab Spring, giving people of the Middle East a chance to finally take some political control over their own lives.

And, by letting Americans in on the truth about Amano’s IAEA, Bradley Manning may have helped prevent a war with Iran. [Update: In August 2013, Bradley (now Chelsea) Manning was sentenced to 35 years in prison for leaking classified documents.]

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America’s Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#)**

and [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.com)). For a limited time, you also can order Robert Parry's trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes *America's Stolen Narrative*. For details on this offer, [click here](#).

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## Iran Answers Questions on Explosives

To get elected chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency in 2009, Yukiya Amano agreed to carry water for the U.S. on the Iranian nuclear issue, a chore that he is continuing in a dispute over Iran's work on detonators, as Gareth Porter explains for Inter Press Service.

By Gareth Porter

The head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, Ali Akbar Salehi, says the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) should now close its investigation of the issue of Iran's development of high explosives detonators that the IAEA has said may have been part of a covert nuclear weapons program.

IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano has thus far refused to close the file on the issue, which is the first one that Iran and the IAEA had agreed to resolve as part of an agreement on the question of what the Agency calls "possible military dimensions" of the Iranian nuclear program.

In an interview with IPS in his office in Tehran, Salehi said the IAEA should have ended the investigation of the detonator issue in keeping with an understanding that he claimed had been reached between the two sides on procedures for carrying out the February 2014 "Framework for Cooperation" agreement.

Referring to IAEA officials, Salehi said, "To the best of my knowledge and the best of my information, they have come up with the conclusion that what Iran has said is consistent with their findings."

The use of the term "consistent with" the IAEA's information from all other sources would be identical to the formulation used by the IAEA in closing its inquiry into six "unresolved issues" that Iran and the IAEA agreed to resolve in an August 2007 "Work Program".

Salehi said the IAEA had agreed to do the same thing in regard to the issues included in the "Framework for Cooperation" agreement.

"We have agreed that once our explanations were enough to bring this to conclusion they would have to close that issue," said the U.S.-educated Salehi. "They should not keep the issue open."

The most recent IAEA report, dated May 23, confirmed that Iran had shown the Agency documents supporting the Iranian contention that it had carried out exploding bridge-wire (EBW) experiments for civilian applications rather than as part of a nuclear weapons program.

Reuters had reported May 20 that the IAEA had requested that Iran provide "verification documents" to support Iran's claim that it had a valid reason for developing an EBW detonator program.

But a "senior official close to the Iran dossier" meaning a senior IAEA official was quoted by The Telegraph on May 23 as claiming it was "still too early" to say that the information was "credible."

The Agency was obviously capable of reaching an assessment of the credibility of the information within a relatively short time. But Amano declared in a June 2 press conference that the IAEA would provide an assessment of its investigation on the EBW issue "in due course, after a good understanding of the whole picture."

Unlike the August 2007 Work Plan, which resulted in the IAEA closing the files on six different issues that had been open nearly five years, the February 2014 "Framework" agreement has not been made public. So Salehi's claim could not be independently confirmed.

But when asked for the IAEA's response to Salehi's statements that the Agency had agreed to close the investigation of an issue once Iran had provided the needed information and had accepted the validity of Iran's explanation, Amano's spokesperson, Gill Tudor, did not address either of these statements directly.

In an email to IPS on Thursday, she said, "As the Director General has made clear, the Agency's approach is to consider each issue and then provide an assessment after we have a good understanding of the whole picture."

Amano's declaration was clearly intended to indicate that he has no intention of clearing Iran of the suspicion on the EBW program until the larger issue of "possible military dimensions" of Iran's nuclear program is resolved. The spokesperson's refusal to deny Salehi's assertions implies that they accurately reflect both the unpublished "Framework" agreement and what IAEA officials told the Iranians on May 20.

Amano appears to be holding back on his official acceptance of Iran's

documentation on this and other issues until an agreement is reached between Iran and the P5+1. The “possible military dimensions” issue, which involves the authenticity of the large collection of documents said to have come from an alleged secret Iranian nuclear weapons research program from 2001 to 2003, is not likely to be resolved any time soon.

Amano had pledged to support the U.S. policy toward Iran in return for U.S. support for his candidacy to replace then IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei in 2009, according to a diplomatic cable released by Wikileaks. Since taking over in November 2009, he has not deviated from the U.S and P5+1 position that Iran has had a nuclear weapons program in the past. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“Did Manning Help Avert War in Iran?”](#)]

Iran had denounced the documents as fraudulent from the beginning, and ElBaradei and other senior officials believed they were probably forged by a foreign intelligence service, according to published sources. A former IAEA official who asked not to be identified confirmed ElBaradei’s belief to IPS. Nevertheless, under pressure from the George W. Bush administration (2001-2009), the IAEA endorsed the documents as “credible,” starting with its May 2008 report.

Until Iran showed the documents to IAEA officials last month, the IAEA had taken the position in reports that Iran remains under suspicion because it had acknowledged having carried out a program of EBW research and development for civilian and conventional military applications but had not provided proof of those applications.

In its first reference to the issue, the May 2008 IAEA report said Iran had “acknowledged that it had conducted simultaneous testing with two to three EBW detonators with a time precision of about one microsecond” but that “this was intended for civil and conventional military applications.” The report thus led the reader to infer that Iran had acknowledged the authenticity of parts or all of the documents on the EBW studies they had been asked to explain and had sought to describe them as having non-nuclear applications.

But the report failed to clarify that the experiments outlined in the document under investigation had involved EBW detonators firing at a rate of 130 nanoseconds eight times faster than the ones Iran had acknowledged, as had been revealed by then Deputy Director General Olli Heinonen in a February 2008 briefing for member states.

Based on the false premise that Iran had admitted to carrying out the experiments shown in the intelligence documents, the IAEA demanded that Iran provide the details of its EBW development program and allow visits to the site where Iran conducted testing of its EBW experiments.



The objective of that demand appears to have been to provoke a rejection by Iran which could then be cited as evidence of non-cooperation. When Iran refused to provide information on its conventional military applications of EBW technology, which were obviously secret, the Barack Obama administration and its allies used it to justify new international economic sanctions against Iran.

The idea that Iran was obliged to prove that it had a legitimate non-nuclear need for EBW technology was disingenuous. Iran's development of anti-ship missiles is well documented, as is the fact that such weapons use EBW technology for their firing mechanisms.

Iran apparently resolved the issue by providing documentary evidence of one or more civilian applications of EBW technology in Iran.

**Gareth Porter is an independent investigative journalist and winner of the 2012 Gellhorn Prize for journalism. He is the author of the newly published *Manufactured Crisis: The Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare*.**

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## A Poison Pill for Iran Nuke Talks

Israel and its hardline U.S. backers have tried to manipulate the UN's IAEA to ensure failure of negotiations aimed at constraining but not eliminating Iran's nuclear program. The new ploy is to sink the talks with a demand for an Iranian "confession," as Gareth Porter wrote for Inter Press Service.

By Gareth Porter

President Barack Obama's administration appears to have rejected a deal-breaking demand by Israel for an Iranian confession to having had a covert nuclear weapons program as a condition for completing the comprehensive nuclear agreement.

Pro-Israeli commentators have openly criticized the Obama administration for failing to explicitly demand that Iran confess to charges by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) of a covert nuclear weapons program.

Demanding such a confession would be an obvious deal-breaker, because Iran has consistently denied those past charges and denounced the documents and intelligence reports on which they were based as fraudulent. In fact, the failure of the talks appears to be precisely the Israeli intention in pressing Washington to make that demand.

All the intelligence in question can be traced back to Israel, and investigation of the material has shown that the documents and reports that have been most widely publicized betray multiple indications of having been fabricated, as reported by IPS.

A "senior administration official" told reporters after the Nov. 24 Joint Plan of Action was announced that the United States had "made clear" in the negotiations that "the Security Council resolutions must still be addressed and that Iran must come into compliance with its obligations under the NPT and its obligations to the IAEA."

The U.N. Security Council Resolution 1929 of Jun. 9, 2010 says Iran "shall cooperate with the IAEA on all outstanding issues, particularly those which give rise to concerns about the possible military dimensions of the Iranian nuclear program."

The term "possible military dimensions" had been used by the IAEA in referring to the claims publicized by the agency over the past six years of covert Iranian nuclear weapons development projects, including an alleged facility at Parchin for testing nuclear weapons designs.

The Obama administration thus seemed to suggest that some kind of Iranian admission to past nuclear weapons work is a condition for a final agreement. But the administration's rhetoric on resolving IAEA claims of a nuclear weapons program appears to be less about forcing Iran to confess than responding to pressures from Israel and its supporters in the United States.

The first explicit indication of Israeli pressure on Obama to demand an Iranian confession as part of any diplomatic settlement came in a September 2012 article by Patrick Clawson and David Makovsky, then both senior staff members of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), whose analysis and recommendations reflect Israeli government policy.

"Given Iran's past undeclared activities," Clawson and Makovsky wrote, "a particular concern is that Iran will develop clandestine nuclear facilities. Tehran's coming clean about the past will therefore be an important determinant of whether it has any hidden capabilities."

The demand that Iran "come clean" on its alleged nuclear weapons program entered into the Obama administration's public posture for the first time after consultations with Israel in advance of the October 2013 round of negotiations with Iran.

Secretary of State John Kerry declared in Tokyo on Oct. 3 that Iran would "have to prove it's willing to come clean about the nuclear program." That same day,

Ambassador James Jeffrey, a senior fellow at WINEP, in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said Iran “must come clean on its nuclear-related military research”.

By the time the negotiations on the joint Plan of Action were completed in November, however, the State Department adopted language on the issue that harkened back to Kerry’s testimony at his Senate confirmation hearings in January 2013. Kerry had said then that “questions surrounding Iran’s nuclear weapons program” had to be “resolved”.

It quickly became apparent that Israel had wanted the United States to demand not only a pro forma confession by Iran but the details of its alleged work on nuclear weapons. On the very day the agreement was announced, however, Robert Satloff, the executive director of WINEP, expressed his unhappiness that the deal did not include “getting Iran to come clean on all its past clandestine programs.”

Also on Nov. 24, in the Wall Street Journal, Mark Dubowitz and Orde Kittrie of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, which is well known for expressing Israeli policy on Iran, criticized the Joint Plan of Action for failing to “make clear reference to Iran revealing its past nuclear weapons research.”

The following day, again in the Wall Street Journal, WINEP managing director Michael Singh objected to the same U.S. failure to demand all the details of Iranian work on nuclear weapons. “Without insight into the full extent of Iran’s clandestine nuclear activities,” Singh wrote, “no amount of monitoring and inspection can provide confidence that Iran lacks a parallel program beyond the inspectors’ view.”

Along with Kerry’s initial adoption of the “come clean” rhetoric, these sharp criticisms of the U.S. refusal to call explicitly for a confession indicate that the Obama administration had initially gone along with Israel in calling for Iran to “come clean” but concluded that such a demand risked a premature breakdown in the talks.

Since the interim agreement, moreover, the State Department has avoided language that would commit it to requiring anything resembling an Iranian confession. In Israel on Feb. 22, Undersecretary of State Wendy Sherman, who is the primary negotiator with Iran, said, “What we have said to Iran is that [the ‘possible military dimensions’ issue] will have to be addressed in some way.”

Sherman suggested for the first time the possibility of a less than complete and clear-cut outcome of the process. The IAEA was “very much focused on working

through PMD with Iran,” said Sherman. “And the more Iran can do with the IAEA, which is where this belongs, the more likely we will have successful comprehensive agreement.”

A former U.S. official who had worked on Iran suggested in a recent off-the-record meeting that the “possible military dimensions” issue could not be resolved completely, but that one or more parts could be clarified satisfactorily. The rest could be left for resolution by the IAEA after the comprehensive agreement is signed, the ex-official said.

That possibility arises because Iran and the IAEA agreed in February to work on the “Exploding Bridgewire” (EBW) issue the claim published by the IAEA that Iran had carried out experiments on high explosives developed for the purpose of detonating a nuclear weapon. That claim was based on a document that was part of the large collection originally said by anonymous intelligence sources to have come from the laptop computer of a participant in a purported Iranian nuclear weapons research project.

The documents were actually turned over to German intelligence by the Iranian terrorist organization Mujahedin-E-Khalq, which had close links to Israel’s intelligence agency, Mossad.

Iran provided the IAEA with an account of its actual EBW development program in 2008. The Iranian account, cited by the agency in its May 2008 report, indicated the rate of explosions in its experiments, which was just one-eighth the rate mentioned by then IAEA deputy director Olli Heinonen in a briefing for member states in 2008.

But instead of acknowledging that fact in its report, the IAEA suggested repeatedly that Iran had acknowledged carrying out the EBW experiments described in the purported document from the secret weapons program while claiming it was for non-nuclear applications.

The new Iran-IAEA agreement on the EBW issue raises the question of whether IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano is now ready to reach a deal with Iran, despite having staked his own reputation on the November 2011 report on intelligence claims of covert Iranian nuclear weapons research coming from Israel.

Such an agreement might be based on the IAEA’s stating accurately the Iranian explanation for the EBW and thus implicitly admitting that the agency had distorted the issue in the past. Other issues might be left to be resolved quietly after the negotiations on a comprehensive agreement are completed.

**Gareth Porter, an investigative historian and journalist specialising in U.S. national security policy, received the UK-based Gellhorn Prize for journalism**

for 2011 for articles on the U.S. war in Afghanistan. His new book is *Manufactured Crisis: the Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare.*

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## Did Manning Help Avert War in Iran?

**From the Archive:** Many of the world's crises, like those in Syria and Ukraine, can be better understood by factoring in Israel's maneuvers to involve the U.S. in bombing Iran. Documents leaked by Pvt. Manning exposed how one such scheme might have played out, as Robert Parry wrote in 2013.

By Robert Parry (Originally published on Aug. 19, 2013)

From U.S. embassy cables leaked by Pvt. Bradley (now Chelsea) Manning, you can easily imagine how the propaganda game might have played out, how Americans could have been panicked into supporting another unnecessary war in the Middle East, this time against Iran. Except that Manning's release of the documents spoiled the trick.

The gambit might have gone this way: One morning, a story would have led the front page of, say, the Washington Post citing how the widely respected International Atomic Energy Agency and its honest-broker Director-General Yukiya Amano had found startling "evidence" that Iran was nearing a nuclear bomb despite a longstanding U.S. intelligence estimate to the contrary and despite Iranian denials.

Next, the neocon-dominated opinion pages would ridicule anyone who still doubted these "facts." After all, these articles would say, "even" the IAEA, which had challenged President George W. Bush's claims about Iraq in 2002, and "even" Amano, who had initially believed Iran's denials, were now convinced.

Neo-con think tanks would rush to join the chorus of alarm, dispatching WMD "experts" to TV talk shows bracing the American people on the need for military action. From Fox News to CNN to MSNBC, there would be a drumbeat about Iran's perfidy. Then, as hawkish Republicans and Democrats ratcheted up their rhetoric and as Israeli leaders chortled "we told you so" the war-with-Iran bandwagon might have begun rolling with such velocity that it would be unstoppable.

Perhaps, only years later after grave human costs and severe economic repercussions would the American people learn the truth: that the IAEA under Amano wasn't the objective source that they had been led to believe, that Amano was something of a U.S.-Israeli puppet who had feigned a pro-Iranian position

early on to burnish his credentials for pushing an anti-Iranian line subsequently; that after he was installed, he had even solicited U.S. officials for money and had held secret meetings with Israelis (to coordinate opposition to Iran's nuclear program while maintaining a polite silence about Israel's rogue nuclear arsenal).

However, because of the actions of Pvt. Manning, the rug was pulled out from under this possible ruse. The U.S. embassy cables revealing the truth about Amano were published by the U.K. Guardian in 2011 (although ignored by the New York Times, the Washington Post and other mainstream U.S. news outlets). The cables also drew attention from Web sites, such as Consortiumnews.com.

So, the gambit could not work. If it had been tried, enough people would have known the truth. They wouldn't be fooled again and they would have alerted their fellow citizens. Pvt. Manning had armed them with the facts.

And this scenario, while hypothetical, is not at all far-fetched. When the cables were leaked about a year after Amano's appointment, his IAEA was busy feeding the hysteria over Iran's nuclear program with reports trumpeted by think tanks, such as the Institute for Science and International Security, and by the Washington Post and other U.S. news media.

### **Revealing Cables**

According to those leaked U.S. embassy cables from Vienna, Austria, the site of IAEA's headquarters, American diplomats in 2009 were cheering the prospect that Amano would advance U.S. interests in ways that outgoing IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei wouldn't; Amano credited his election to U.S. government support; Amano signaled he would side with the United States in its confrontation with Iran; and he stuck his hand out for more U.S. money.

In a July 9, 2009, cable, American chargé Geoffrey Pyatt said Amano was thankful for U.S. support of his election. "Amano attributed his election to support from the U.S., Australia and France, and cited U.S. intervention with Argentina as particularly decisive," the cable said.

The appreciative Amano informed Pyatt that as IAEA director general, he would take a different "approach on Iran from that of ElBaradei" and he "saw his primary role as implementing safeguards and UNSC [United Nations Security Council]/Board resolutions," i.e. U.S.-driven sanctions and demands against Iran.

Amano also discussed how to restructure the senior ranks of the IAEA, including elimination of one top official and the retention of another. "We wholly agree with Amano's assessment of these two advisors and see these decisions as

positive first signs," Pyatt commented.

In return, Pyatt made clear that Amano could expect strong U.S. financial support, stating that "the United States would do everything possible to support his successful tenure as Director General and, to that end, anticipated that continued U.S. voluntary contributions to the IAEA would be forthcoming. Amano offered that a 'reasonable increase' in the regular budget would be helpful."

Pyatt learned, too, that Amano had consulted with Israeli Ambassador Israel Michaeli "immediately after his appointment" and that Michaeli "was fully confident of the priority Amano accords verification issues." Michaeli added that he discounted some of Amano's public remarks about there being "no evidence of Iran pursuing a nuclear weapons capability" as just words that Amano felt he had to say "to persuade those who did not support him about his 'impartiality.'"

In private, Amano agreed to "consultations" with the head of the Israeli Atomic Energy Commission, Pyatt reported. (It is ironic indeed that Amano would have secret contacts with Israeli officials about Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program, which has yet to yield a single bomb, when Israel possesses a large and undeclared nuclear arsenal.)

In another leaked cable dated Oct. 16, 2009, the U.S. mission in Vienna said Amano "took pains to emphasize his support for U.S. strategic objectives for the Agency. Amano reminded ambassador [Glyn Davies] on several occasions that he was solidly in the U.S. court on every key strategic decision, from high-level personnel appointments to the handling of Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program.

"More candidly, Amano noted the importance of maintaining a certain 'constructive ambiguity' about his plans, at least until he took over for DG ElBaradei in December" 2009.

In other words, Amano was a bureaucrat eager to bend in directions favored by the United States and Israel regarding Iran's nuclear program. Amano's behavior surely contrasted with how the more independent-minded ElBaradei resisted some of Bush's key claims about Iraq's supposed nuclear weapons program, correctly denouncing some documents as forgeries.

[Pyatt, who was the chief contact with Amano, is now U.S. ambassador to Ukraine and was a key figure, working with neocon Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland, in orchestrating the violent coup that overthrew the democratically elected President Viktor Yanukovich in February and touched off a confrontation between Russian President Vladimir Putin and U.S. President Barack Obama, a clash that disrupted their cooperation in trying

arrange a peaceful resolution to the Iran-nuclear issue. For details, see Consortiumnews.com's "[What Neocons Want from Ukraine Crisis.](#)" ]

### **Salvaging Some Hype**

Though Manning's release of the embassy cables apparently scotched any large-scale deployment of the Amano ploy, some elements of the gambit did go forward nonetheless, albeit with less oomph than they might have had.

In February 2013, the front page of the Washington Post offered a taste of what the propaganda campaign might have looked like when investigative reporter Joby Warrick hyped an account about Iran's nuclear program pushed by David Albright, director of the Institute for Science and International Security who had lent support to Bush's invasion of Iraq a decade ago.

The Albright/Warrick [alarm](#) cited Iran's alleged effort to place an Internet order for 100,000 ring-shaped magnets that would work in some of the country's older centrifuges.

"Iran recently sought to acquire tens of thousands of highly specialized magnets used in centrifuge machines, according to experts and diplomats, a sign that the country may be planning a major expansion of its nuclear program that could shorten the path to an atomic weapons capability," Warrick wrote in his lede paragraph.

You had to read to the end of the long story to hear a less strident voice, saying that Iran had previously informed IAEA inspectors that it planned to build more of its old and clunkier centrifuges, which use this sort of magnet, and that the enrichment was for civilian energy, not a nuclear bomb.

"Olli Heinonen, who led IAEA nuclear inspections inside Iran before his retirement in 2010, said the type of magnet sought by Iran was highly specific to the IR-1 centrifuge and could not, for example, be used in the advanced IR-2M centrifuges that Iran has recently tested," according to the final paragraphs of Warrick's article.

"The numbers in the order make sense, because Iran originally told us it wanted to build more than 50,000 of the IR-1s,' Heinonen said. 'The failure rate on these machines is 10 percent a year, so you need a surplus.'"

At the bottom of Warrick's story, you'd also learn that "Iran has avoided what many experts consider Israel's new 'red line': a stockpile of medium-enriched uranium greater than 530 pounds, roughly the amount needed to build a weapon if further purified."



So there was nothing urgent or particularly provocative about this alleged purchase, though the structure and placement of the Post story suggested otherwise. Many readers likely were expected to simply jump to the conclusion that Iran was on the verge of building an atomic bomb and that it was time for President Barack Obama to join Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in another Middle East war.

The pressure from the Post and other neocon-leaning news outlets on the Obama administration to fall in line with Netanyahu's belligerence toward Iran has been building for years, often with Warrick channeling anti-Iranian propaganda from Albright and his ISIS, which, in turn, seems to be a pipeline for hardliners at the IAEA.

A decade ago, Albright and the ISIS were key figures in stoking the hysteria for invading Iraq around the false allegations of its WMD program. In recent years, Albright and his institute have adopted a similar role regarding Iran and its purported pursuit of a nuclear weapon, even though U.S. intelligence agencies say Iran terminated that weapons project in 2003.

Nevertheless, Albright has transformed his organization into a sparkplug for a new confrontation with Iran. Though Albright insists that he is an objective professional, ISIS has published hundreds of articles about Iran, which has not produced a single nuclear bomb, while barely mentioning Israel's rogue nuclear arsenal.

An examination of the ISIS Web site reveals only a few technical articles relating to Israel's nukes while ISIS has expanded its coverage of Iran's nuclear program so much that it's been moved onto a separate Web site. The articles not only hype developments in Iran but also attack U.S. media critics who question the fear-mongering about Iran.

More than a year ago when a non-mainstream journalist confronted Albright about the disparity between ISIS's concentration on Iran and *de minimis* coverage of Israel, he angrily responded that he was working on a report about Israel's nuclear program. But there is still no substantive assessment of Israel's large nuclear arsenal on the ISIS Web site, which goes back to 1993.

Despite this evidence of bias, the Post and other mainstream U.S. news outlets typically present Albright as a neutral analyst. They also ignore his checkered past, for instance, his prominent role in promoting President Bush's pre-invasion case that Iraq possessed stockpiles of WMD.

### **Stoking a War**

At the end of summer 2002, as Bush was beginning his advertising roll-out for

the Iraq invasion and dispatching his top aides to the Sunday talk shows to warn about “smoking guns” and “mushroom clouds,” Albright co-authored a Sept. 10, 2002, article entitled “Is the Activity at Al Qaim Related to Nuclear Efforts?” which declared:

“High-resolution commercial satellite imagery shows an apparently operational facility at the site of Iraq’s al Qaim phosphate plant and uranium extraction facility. This site was where Iraq extracted uranium for its nuclear weapons program in the 1980s. This image raises questions about whether Iraq has rebuilt a uranium extraction facility at the site, possibly even underground. The uranium could be used in a clandestine nuclear weapons effort.”

Albright’s alarming allegations fit neatly with Bush’s propaganda barrage, although as the months wore on with Bush’s warnings about aluminum tubes and yellowcake from Africa growing more outlandish Albright did display more skepticism about the existence of a revived Iraqi nuclear program.

Still, he remained a “go-to” expert on other Iraqi purported WMD, such as chemical and biological weapons. In a typical quote on Oct. 5, 2002, Albright told CNN: “In terms of the chemical and biological weapons, Iraq has those now.”

After Bush launched the Iraq invasion in March 2003 and Iraq’s secret WMD caches didn’t materialize, Albright admitted that he had been conned, explaining to the Los Angeles Times: “If there are no weapons of mass destruction, I’ll be mad as hell. I certainly accepted the administration claims on chemical and biological weapons. I figured they were telling the truth. If there is no [unconventional weapons program], I will feel taken, because they asserted these things with such assurance.” [See FAIR’s “The Great WMD Hunt,”]

Given the horrendous costs in blood and treasure resulting from the Iraq fiasco, an objective journalist might feel compelled to mention Albright’s track record of bias and error. But the Post’s Warrick didn’t, even though Albright and his ISIS were at the core of the February story, receiving credit for obtaining copies of the magnet purchase order.

So, while we’ll never know if the Amano ploy would have been tried since Manning’s disclosures made it unfeasible it surely would not have been unprecedented. The American people experienced similar deceptions during the run-up to war with Iraq when the Bush-43 administration assembled every scrap of suspicion about Iraq’s alleged WMD and fashioned a bogus case for war.

Eventually, Manning was pulled into that war as a young intelligence analyst. He confronted so much evidence of brutality and dishonesty that he felt compelled to do something about it. What he did in leaking hundreds of thousands of

documents to WikiLeaks and, thus, to other news outlets was to supply “ground truth” about war crimes committed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

His disclosure of diplomatic cables also gave the American people and the world a glimpse behind the curtain of secrecy that often conceals the dirty dealings of statecraft. Perhaps most significantly, those revelations helped sparked the Arab Spring, giving people of the Middle East a chance to finally take some political control over their own lives.

And, by letting Americans in on the truth about Amano’s IAEA, Bradley Manning may have helped prevent a war with Iran.

[Pvt. Manning is now serving a 35-year prison sentence for unauthorized release of classified material.]

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

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