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## The Anti-Empire Report

William Blum

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The Lord High Almighty Pooh-Bah of threats. The Grand Ayatollah of nuclear menace.

As we all know only too well, the United States and Israel would hate to see Iran possessing nuclear weapons. Being "the only nuclear power in the Middle East" is a great card for Israel to have in its hand. But — in the real, non-propaganda world — is USrael actually fearful of an attack from a nuclear-armed Iran? In case you've forgotten ...

In 2007, in a closed discussion, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said that in her opinion "Iranian nuclear weapons do not pose an existential threat to Israel." She "also criticized the exaggerated use that [Israeli] Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is making of the issue of the Iranian bomb, claiming that he is attempting to rally the public around him by playing on its most basic fears." 1

2009: "A senior Israeli official in Washington" asserted that "Iran would be unlikely to use its missiles in an attack [against Israel] because of the certainty of retaliation." 2

In 2010 the Sunday Times of London (January 10) reported that Brigadier-General Uzi Eilam, war hero, pillar of the Israeli defense establishment, and former director-general of Israel's Atomic Energy Commission, "believes it will probably take Iran seven years to make nuclear weapons."

Early last month, US Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta told a television audience: "Are they [Iran] trying to develop a nuclear weapon? No, but we know that they're trying to develop a nuclear capability." 3

A week later we could read in the New York Times (January 15) that "three leading Israeli security experts — the Mossad chief, Tamir Pardo, a former Mossad chief, Efraim Halevy, and a former military chief of staff, Dan Halutz — all recently declared that a nuclear Iran would not pose an existential threat to Israel."

Then, a few days afterward, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, in an interview with Israeli Army Radio (January 18), had this exchange:

Question: Is it Israel's judgment that Iran has not yet decided to turn its nuclear potential into weapons of mass destruction?

Barak: People ask whether Iran is determined to break out from the control [inspection] regime right now ... in an attempt to obtain nuclear weapons or an operable installation as quickly as possible. Apparently that is not the case.

Lastly, we have the US Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, in a report to Congress: "We do not know, however, if Iran will eventually decide to build nuclear weapons. ... There are "certain things [the Iranians] have not done" that would be necessary to build a warhead. 4

Admissions like the above — and there are others — are never put into headlines by the American mass media; indeed, only very lightly reported at all; and sometimes distorted — On the Public Broadcasting System (PBS News Hour, January 9), the non-commercial network much beloved by American liberals, the Panetta quote above was reported as: "But we know that they're trying to develop a nuclear capability, and that's what concerns us." Flagrantly omitted were the preceding words: "Are they trying to develop a nuclear weapon? No ..." 5

One of Israel's leading military historians, Martin van Creveld, was interviewed by Playboy magazine in June 2007:

Playboy: Can the World live with a nuclear Iran?

Van Creveld: The U.S. has lived with a nuclear Soviet Union and a nuclear China, so why not a nuclear Iran? I've researched how the U.S. opposed nuclear proliferation in the past, and each time a country was about to proliferate, the U.S. expressed its opposition in terms of why this other country was very dangerous and didn't deserve to have nuclear weapons. Americans believe they're the only people who deserve to have nuclear weapons, because they are good and democratic and they like Mother and apple pie and the flag. But Americans are the only ones who have used them. ... We are in no danger at all of having an Iranian nuclear weapon dropped on us. We cannot say so too openly, however, because we have a history of using any threat in order to get weapons ... thanks to the Iranian threat, we are getting weapons from the U.S. and Germany."

And throughout these years, regularly, Israeli and American officials have been assuring us that Iran is World Nuclear Threat Number One, that we can't relax our guard against them, that there should be no limit to the ultra-tough sanctions we impose upon the Iranian people and their government. Repeated murder and attempted murder of Iranian nuclear scientists, sabotage of Iranian nuclear equipment with computer viruses, the sale of faulty parts and raw materials, unexplained plane crashes, explosions at Iranian facilities ... Who can be behind this but USrael? How do we know? It's called "plain common sense". Or do you think it was Costa Rica? Or perhaps South Africa? Or maybe Thailand?

Defense Secretary Panetta recently commented on one of the assassinations of an Iranian scientist. He put it succinctly: "That's not what the United States does." 6

Does anyone know Leon Panetta's email address? I'd like to send him my list of United States assassination plots. More than 50 foreign leaders were targeted over the years, many successfully. 7

Not long ago, Iraq and Iran were regarded by USrael as the most significant threats to Israeli Middle-East hegemony. Thus was born the myth of Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the United States proceeded to turn Iraq into a basket case. That left Iran, and thus was born the myth of the Iranian Nuclear Threat. As it began to sink in that Iran was not really that much of a nuclear threat, or that this "threat" was becoming too difficult to sell to the rest of the world, USrael decided that, at a minimum, it wanted regime change. The next step may be to block Iran's lifeline — oil sales using the Strait of Hormuz. Ergo, the recent US and EU naval buildup near the Persian Gulf, an act of war trying to goad Iran into firing the first shot. If Iran tries to counter this blockade it could be the signal for another US Basket Case, the fourth in a decade, with the devastated people of Libya and Afghanistan, along with Iraq, currently enjoying America's unique gift of freedom and democracy.

On January 11, the Washington Post reported: "In addition to influencing Iranian leaders directly, [a US intelligence official] says another option here is that [sanctions] will create hate and discontent at the street level so that the Iranian leaders realize that they need to change their ways."

How utterly charming, these tactics and goals for the 21st century by the leader of "The Free World". (Is that expression still used?)

The neo-conservative thinking (and Barack Obama can be regarded as often being a fellow traveler of such) is even more charming than that. Listen to Danielle Pletka, vice president for foreign and defense policy studies at America's most prominent neo-con think tank, American Enterprise Institute:

The biggest problem for the United States is not Iran getting a nuclear weapon and testing it, it's Iran getting a nuclear weapon and not using it. Because the second that they have one and they don't do anything bad, all of the naysayers are going to come back and say, "See, we told you Iran is a responsible power. We told you Iran wasn't getting nuclear weapons in order to use

them immediately." ... And they will eventually define Iran with nuclear weapons as not a problem. 8

What are we to make of that and all the other quotations above? I think it gets back to my opening statement: Being "the only nuclear power in the Middle East" is a great card for Israel to have in its hand. Is USrael willing to go to war to hold on to that card? Please tell me again ... What is the war in Afghanistan about?

With the US war in Iraq supposedly having reached a good conclusion (or halfway decent ... or better than nothing ... or let's get the hell out of here while some of us are still in one piece and there are some Iraqis we haven't yet killed), the best and the brightest in our government and media turn their thoughts to what to do about Afghanistan. It appears that no one seems to remember, if they ever knew, that Afghanistan was not really about 9-11 or fighting terrorists (except the many the US has created by its invasion and occupation), but was about pipelines.

President Obama declared in August 2009: "But we must never forget this is not a war of choice. This is a war of necessity. Those who attacked America on 9/11 are plotting to do so again. If left unchecked, the Taliban insurgency will mean an even larger safe haven from which al Qaeda would plot to kill more Americans." 9

Never mind that out of the tens of thousands of people the United States and its NATO front have killed in Afghanistan not one has been identified as having had anything to do with the events of September 11, 2001.

Never mind that the "plotting to attack America" in 2001 was devised in Germany and Spain and the United States more than in Afghanistan. Why hasn't the United States bombed those countries?

Indeed, what actually was needed to plot to buy airline tickets and take flying lessons in the United States? A room with some chairs? What does "an even larger safe haven" mean? A larger room with more chairs? Perhaps a blackboard? Terrorists intent upon attacking the United States can meet almost anywhere, with Afghanistan probably being one of the worst places for them, given the American occupation.

The only "necessity" that drew the United States to Afghanistan was the desire to establish a military presence in this land that is next door to the Caspian Sea region of Central Asia — which reportedly contains the second largest proven reserves of petroleum and natural gas in the world — and build oil and gas pipelines from that region running through Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is well situated for oil and gas pipelines to serve much of south Asia, pipelines that can bypass those not-yet Washington clients, Iran and Russia. If only the Taliban would not attack the lines. Here's Richard Boucher, US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, in 2007: "One of our goals is to stabilize Afghanistan, so it can become a conduit and a hub between South and Central Asia so that energy can flow to the south." 10

Since the 1980s all kinds of pipelines have been planned for the area, only to be delayed or canceled by one military, financial or political problem or another. For example, the so-called TAPI pipeline (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) had strong support from Washington, which was eager to block a competing pipeline that would bring gas to Pakistan and India from Iran. TAPI goes back to the late 1990s, when the Taliban government held talks with the California-based oil company Unocal Corporation. These talks were conducted with the full knowledge of the Clinton administration, and were undeterred by the extreme repression of Taliban society. Taliban officials even made trips to the United States for discussions. 11 Testifying before the House Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific on February 12, 1998, Unocal representative John Maresca discussed the importance of the pipeline project and the increasing difficulties in dealing with the Taliban:

The region's total oil reserves may well reach more than 60 billion barrels of oil. Some estimates are as high as 200 billion barrels ... From the outset, we have made it clear that construction of the pipeline we have proposed across Afghanistan could not begin until a recognized government is in place that has the confidence of governments, leaders, and our company.

When those talks stalled in July, 2001 the Bush administration threatened the Taliban with military reprisals if the government did not go along with American demands. The talks finally broke down for good the following month, a month before 9-11.

The United States has been serious indeed about the Caspian Sea and Persian Gulf oil and gas areas. Through one war or another beginning with the Gulf War of 1990-1, the US has managed to establish military bases in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan.

The war against the Taliban can't be "won" short of killing everyone in Afghanistan. The United States may well try again to negotiate some form of pipeline security with the Taliban, then get out, and declare "victory". Barack Obama can surely deliver an eloquent victory speech from his teleprompter. It might even include the words "freedom" and "democracy", but certainly not "pipeline".

Love me, love me, love me, I'm a Liberal (Thank you, Phil Ochs. We miss you.)

Angela Davis, star of the 1960s, like most members of the Communist Party, was/is no more radical than the average American liberal. Here she is recently addressing Occupy Wall Street: "When I said that we need a third party, a radical party, I was projecting toward the future. We cannot allow a Republican to take office. ... Don't we remember what it was like when Bush was president?" 12

Yes, Angela, we remember that time well. How can we forget it since Bush, by all important standards, is still in the White House? Waging perpetual war, relentless surveillance of the citizenry, kissing the corporate ass, police brutality? ... What's changed? Except for the worse. Where's our single-payer national health insurance? Nothing even close. Where's our affordable university education? Still the most backward in the "developed" world. Where's our legalized marijuana — I mean really legalized? If you think that's changed, you must be stoned. Where's our abortion on demand? What does your guy Barack think about that? Are the indispensable

labor unions being rescued from oblivion? Ha! The ultra-important minimum wage? Inflation adjusted, equal to the mid-1950s.

Has the American threat to the environment and the world environmental movement ceased? Tell that to a dedicated activist-internationalist. Has the 50-year-old embargo against Cuba finally ended? It has not, and I can still not go there legally. The police-state War on Terror at home? Scarcely a month goes by without the FBI entrapping some young "terrorists". Are more Banksters and Wall Street Society-Screwers (except for the harmless insider-traders) being imprisoned? Name one. The really tough regulations of the financial area so badly needed? Keep waiting. How about executives of the BP Oil Spill Company being arrested? Or war criminals, mass murderers, and torturers with names like ... Oh, I don't know, let's see ... maybe like Cheney or Bush or Rumsfeld or Wolfowitz or someone with a crazy name like Condoleezza? All walking completely free, all celebrated.

"A major decline of progressive America occurred during the Clinton years as many liberals and their organizations accepted the presence of a Democratic president as an adequate substitute for the things liberals once believed in. Liberalism and a social democratic spirit painfully grown over the previous 60 years withered during the Clinton administration." — Sam Smith<sup>13</sup>

"A change of Presidents is like a change of advertising campaigns for a soft drink; the product itself still tastes the same, but it now has a new 'image'." — Richard K. Moore  
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