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Reviving the cold war

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During the four-and-a-half decade US-Soviet standoff known as the "cold war" despite the untold amount of blood spilt in international proxy conflicts and superpower support for various forms of repression, the US used the alleged threat of Soviet penetration of the western hemisphere to justify its own meddling throughout the Americas.

US penetration of its southern backyard was characterised by everything from an illicit war against Nicaragua to the **facilitation of state terrorism in South America** - where suspected leftists were **dropped en masse from airplanes** - to the overthrow of Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz, which helped kicked off an era of violence in which over 200,000 people were killed.

Contrary to the US establishment portrayal of Arbenz as a Kremlin agent, Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer's acclaimed book *Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala* demonstrates that the man was a bourgeois capitalist whose activities merely included offering \$627,572 to the United Fruit Company - the US corporation that had established a parasitic presence on Guatemalan territory - in compensation for *unused* acreage appropriated by the Guatemalan government.

This was precisely the value of the land in question as declared by the company itself for purposes of tax evasion. Upon appropriation it assumed a spontaneous worth of \$16m and became proof of apocalyptic communist imperialism - a fabricated danger that would be dealt

with via concrete forms of US imperialism in Latin America.

The green-and-red menace

Two decades after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a new expansionist enemy has been trotted out. According to **certain policymakers** in Washington, the Islamic Republic of Iran is now lurking along the southern fringes of the US - necessitating the "**Countering Iran in the Western Hemisphere Act**" just signed by Barack Obama in order to "address Iran's growing hostile presence and activity".

Conveniently, the change in existential threats has been made easier by the fact that many aspects of the old communist menace have been conserved. Allegations that Iran's hemispheric encroachment is being **facilitated by left-leaning Latin American regimes**, specifically that of Venezuela's Hugo Chavez, have spawned a composite **green-and-red Islamo-Bolivarian menace**.

This helps to ensure a negative reaction in an American public already conditioned to respond viscerally to the colour red - much as the **labelling of Obama as a socialist** has been known to trigger automatic revulsion in swathes of the population despite the man's failure to pursue any policies that resemble socialism.

Neoconservatives have discovered numerous smoking guns indicating nefarious collaboration between the Islamic Republic and the Latin American left, such as the existence of regular commercial airline **flights between Tehran and Caracas** and the enrollment of more than two dozen offspring of **Iranian diplomatic personnel** at the international school in La Paz, Bolivia.

Norman A Bailey - the former Mission Manager for Cuba and Venezuela under Director of National Intelligence John D Negroponte, **patron saint of Honduran death squads** -announced in a February 2012 **report** for the US House Foreign Affairs Committee that Iran's protégé Hezbollah "is known to have opened numerous military camps inside Venezuela... with the express purpose of training young Venezuelans to attack American targets".

Readers unaware that this factoid is indeed "known" can pursue its citation in the report's endnotes. These direct us to a **working paper** by the Israeli International Institute for Counter-Terrorism's Dr Ely Karmon, who - **as I have previously noted** - is also an expert in the art of plagiarism.

True to form, Karmon has reproduced almost exactly **word for word a paragraph** from a 2008 *FrontPage Magazine* article called "Hugo's Hezbollah". Without properly signalling the paragraph's appropriation, he writes:

"It was reported... that the Venezuelan Minister of the Interior, Tarek El Aissami, was working directly with [Venezuelan diplomat] Ghazi Nasr al-Din to recruit young Venezuelans of Arab descent that were supportive of the Chavez regime to train in Lebanon with Hezbollah. Reportedly, the purpose was to prepare these youths for asymmetric warfare against the US in the event of a confrontation. According to this report, Hezbollah also established training camps

inside Venezuela, complete with ammunition and explosives, courtesy of El Aissami."

The *FrontPage* article itself includes a hyperlink directing us to the apparent source of the training camp reports - a **2008 column** in Spanish by a Venezuelan exile in Miami who happens to be tied to the **perpetrators of the 2002 coup** against Chavez - and throws in the additional ludicrous claim that "Hezbollah has been responsible for converting a number of indigenous tribes in Latin America to their radical version of Islam".

Terror on America's doorstep

During an April jaunt to Colombia, US Defence Secretary Leon Panetta was quoted by the *American Forces Press Service* as remarking:

"We always have a concern about, in particular, the [Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps] and efforts by the IRGC to expand their influence, not only throughout the Middle East but also into this region... In my book, that relates to expanding terrorism".

Of course, the title of the article - "Panetta: Violent Extremism Threatens Latin America" - seems somewhat misdirected given that it is the US and not the Islamic Republic that is known for things like **massive financial support** for a Colombian military that **wantonly slaughters civilians**. The participation of the US Drug Enforcement Agency in the **massacre of peasants in Honduras** might also qualify as a level of violent extremism to which Iran has not aspired.

Crusaders against the green-and-red menace, however, are committed to their hallucinated reality, capitalising on cold war precedents to underscore the urgency of the situation. A **2011 dispatch** from Vanessa Neumann, Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, defines one of Iran's "principal motivations" in Latin America as "a quest for a base of operations that is close to the US territory, in order to position itself to resist diplomatic and possible military pressure, possibly by setting up a missile base within striking distance of the mainland US, as the Soviets did in the Cuban Missile Crisis".

In this same vein, ex-presidential hopeful Michele Bachmann **incoherently warned audiences** on the campaign trail of Hezbollah's possible "missile sites or weapons sites" in Cuba, while other scholars have moved slightly further afield, **inventing Iranian intermediate-range missile launch pads** on the Paraguana Peninsula in Venezuela. Never mind the un-invented ubiquity of US, NATO and Israeli weapons sites in the vicinity of Iran.

Former diplomat **Roger Noriega**, whose claims to fame include assisting in the overthrow of the democratically elected president of Haiti, has displaced the blame for continental meddling with his **confirmation of the presence** of "two Iranian terrorist trainers" on Venezuela's Margarita Island and of an Iranian-Palestinian-Lebanese-Venezuelan plot to "cultivate a terror network on America's doorstep".

These calculations appeared in the *Washington Post* in 2011 despite the fact that Noriega should have ostensibly been banned from news outlets after his alarmist 2010 headline in *Foreign Policy* - "**Chavez's Secret Nuclear Programme**" - came with the self-discrediting qualifier: "It's

not clear what Venezuela's hiding, but it's definitely hiding something -and the fact that Iran is involved suggests that it's up to no good."

As for cold war-era US propaganda according to which a Soviet-infiltrated Guatemalan regime was scheming to appropriate the Panama Canal, a potential modern-day equivalent of such a threat turned up in late 2010 in a *Haaretz* **article** about the "ambitious plan by Venezuela, Iran and Nicaragua to create a 'Nicaragua Canal' linking the Atlantic and Pacific oceans that would rival the existing Panama Canal".

Unfortunately for the anti-Islamo-Bolivarians, it appears that such **ambitions may involve the Chinese menace** rather than the Islamic one.

To be sure, the resuscitation of fearmongering rhetoric about hemispheric penetration is a source of endless entertainment - until one remembers that the aim of some of these fearmongers is not a cold war but a hot one.