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The American fear-mongering machine is about to scare us back into war again

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Did you know that the US government's counterterrorism chief Matthew Olson said last week that "there's no credible information" that the Islamic State (Isis) is planning an attack on America and that there's "no indication at this point of a cell of foreign fighters operating in the United States"? Or that, as the Associated Press reported, "The FBI and Homeland Security Department say there are no specific or credible terror threats to the US homeland from the Islamic State militant group"?

Probably not, because as the nation barrels towards yet another war in the Middle East and President Obama prepares to address that nation on the "offensive phase" of his military plan Wednesday night, mainstream media pundits and the usual uber-hawk politicians are busy trying to out-hyperbole each other over the threat Isis poses to Americans. In the process, they're all but ignoring any evidence to the contrary and the potential hole of blood and treasure into which they're ready to drive this country all over again.

Facts or consequences have never gotten in the way of Congress' lust for war before – this political body was, after all, George W Bush's chief enabler in Iraq the last time around – and this time it's no different. Sen James Inhofe (R-OK) recently said Isis militants are "rapidly developing a method of blowing up a major US city and people just can't believe that's happening." (Maybe because there's no proof that they are?) Sen Bill Nelson (D-FL) said, "It

ought to be pretty clear when they ... say they're going to fly the black flag of ISIS over the White House that Isis is a clear and present danger.” (Again, who cares if they're not?)

The White House declared on Tuesday night that it needn't bother to ask Congress for war powers, and Congress is more than happy to relieve itself of the responsibility of asking for them – or, you know, voting. Members of both parties have actually been *telling* the president to ignore the legislative branch entirely – as well as his constitutional and legal requirements. It seems so long ago now that presidential candidate Obama said, “The President does not have power under the Constitution to unilaterally authorize a military attack in a situation that does not involve stopping an actual or imminent threat to the nation.”

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“What if it comes over and you can't pass it?” asked Sen Lindsay Graham, as though he wouldn't want democracy getting in the way of a nice war. The aforementioned Sen Nelson said he thinks the president should go ahead and strike Isis all he wants, but added that “there are some legal scholars who think otherwise, so let's just put it to rest”. Those pesky legal scholars with their “laws” and that “Constitution” of theirs, always slowing things down.

Meanwhile, the media has been busy arguing whether Obama is talking “tough” enough, how closely Isis resembles the Nazis, and how much military strength the US is going to unleash to “destroy” Isis – never pausing to question whether that's prudent or even possible (or maybe that it's exactly what Isis wants).

How many people wake up and ask themselves, “I wonder what Dick Cheney and Henry Kissinger think about Isis?” Outside of a few TV bookers, absolutely no one does – but with war on the horizon, the nation's most awful surviving warmongers get to go back on the television circuit and address members of Congress, explaining that, if we just drop a few more bombs, it'll actually work this time! (Unlike all the other times.)

Thanks to this wall-to-wall fear mongering, a once war-weary public is now terrified. More than 60% of the public in a recent CNN poll now supports airstrikes against Isis. Two more polls came out on Tuesday, one from the Washington Post and the other from NBC New and the Wall Street Journal, essentially concluding the same thing. Most shocking, 71% think that Isis has terrorist sleeper cells in the United States, against all evidence to the contrary.

So where to from here? Well, those airstrikes the public have been scared into supporting, which already numbering the hundreds, will reportedly expand fast – not only in Iraq but into Syri. The White House even has shiny new euphemism for such military attacks, as the Wall Street Journal reported: “Mr. Obama could green-light the new ‘sovereignty strikes’ in his address on Wednesday.” George Orwell would be proud.

And the president is said to favor a multi-pronged approach that also relies on our “partners” – like the repressive Saudi Arabia – to train and arm the “moderate” Syrian resistance army that is fighting both Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and Isis in Syria. (Yes, that's the same Saudi Arabia which, as the Daily Beast's Josh Rogin reported, have been accused of funding and

supporting Isis, and the same Saudi Arabia that beheaded 19 people in just the first half of August, including eight for non-violent offenses.)

It's also strange that we are unquestionably calling the Free Syrian Army (FSA) the "moderate" opposition and putting our faith in their abilities, despite many actual experts claiming they're far from moderate and far from a cohesive army. As George Washington University's Marc Lynch wrote in the Washington Post recently, "The FSA was always more fiction than reality, with a structure on paper masking the reality of highly localized and fragmented fighting groups on the ground." The New York Times reported two weeks ago that FSA has a penchant for beheading its enemy captives as well, and now the family of Steven Sotloff, the courageous journalist who was barbarically beheaded by Isis, says that someone from the "moderate" opposition sold their son to Isis before he was killed.

The only red line when it comes to Isis, or at least the red line claimed by Secretary of State John Kerry, seems to be no ground troops. Of course, there are already ground troops in Iraq, fighting alongside the Kurds – we just call them "advisors", which is another innocuous euphemism for special forces. And as Glenn Greenwald writes, it's inevitably only a matter of time until there will be a clamoring from the chattering class for that, too.

So how, exactly, will the administration accomplish "destroying" Isis, when no amount of bombs and soldiers have been able to destroy al-Qaida or the Taliban in nearly 13 years of fighting? The administration openly admits it has no idea how long it will take, only that it won't be quick. "It may take a year, it may take two years, it may take three years," John Kerry said.

He didn't add, "it might take another 13", but he might as well have.