

# Senator Lieberman calls for US military attack on Iran

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Senator Joseph Lieberman (Independent, Connecticut), echoing the position of substantial sections of the US political establishment, said on Sunday that the US government must “be prepared to take aggressive military action against the Iranians.” Lieberman’s statements mark a sharp escalation of the bellicose US rhetoric against Iran and are part of a series of remarks that have been made by American officials in recent days.

On CBS’s “Face the Nation” June 10, Lieberman repeated one of the central lies of the Bush administration, claiming, “Iraq is now the main front in the long war we are fighting against the Islamist terrorists who attacked us on 9/11.” He asserted, “Iran is training and equipping soldiers, Iraqis, to come in and kill American soldiers and Iraqis,” He claimed that Iranian-trained agents had killed at least 200 American soldiers.

“I think we’ve got to be prepared to take aggressive military action against the Iranians to stop them from killing Americans in Iraq,” Lieberman continued. “And to me that would include a strike into—over the border into Iran where...we have good evidence that they have a base at which they are training these people coming back into Iraq to kill our soldiers.”

Pressed by “Face the Nation” host Bob Schieffer to elaborate, Lieberman said, “If there’s any hope of the Iranians living according to the rule of law and stopping for instance their nuclear weapons development, we can’t just talk to them.” If Iran does not “play by the rules,” then the US will “use our force.”

The claim that Iran is violating international law and is meddling in the affairs of Iraq is pretty rich, coming from someone who has supported the illegal US invasion and occupation of Iraq from the beginning. Putting this aside, neither Lieberman nor the Bush administration has provided any evidence to support their claims of Iranian involvement in Iraq or their attempts to present an unprovoked attack on Iran as another blow in the “global war on terrorism.” Teheran has denied any support for Iraqi insurgents.

Lieberman describes himself as an “Independent

Democrat.” A long-time Democrat and the party’s vice-presidential nominee in 2000, he kept his Senate seat in 2006 by running as an independent after losing the Democratic primaries as a result of his fulsome support for the Bush administration’s war policy in Iraq. However, he still caucuses with the Democrats and his views are representative of significant sections of the Democratic Party leadership.

Lieberman’s statement comes amidst heightening tensions between the US and Iran. According an article in the *Financial Times* on Sunday, Lieberman’s views “reflect growing anger and frustration in the administration and the military.”

Asked to comment on Lieberman’s statements, White House Press Secretary Tony Snow did not oppose the use of military force, but said that diplomatic measures are being employed for the time being. “When it comes to any other things, those are sheer speculation,” he said. However, he added, “What the President will do is what he considers absolutely necessary to keep this country and its people safe.”

An AP story published on June 9 cited Israel’s Deputy Prime Minister Shaul Mofaz as stating that military action is still on the table in dealing with Iran, while the current strategy of both the US and Israel is to pursue sanctions.

A few days after meeting with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Mofaz told Israel radio on June 9, “The strategy shared by the US and Israel has three elements. One is a united international front against the Iranian nuclear program. Secondly, at this time, sanctions are the best way to act against the aspirations of Iran.” However, the third element is “a very, very clear signal and a clear statement that all options are on the table,” including the military option.

The US is demanding from the UN a new round of economic and diplomatic sanctions against Iran. However, plans for harsh sanctions have run into opposition from China and Russia, In anticipation of threats of economic sanctions failing to convince Iran to adopt a more

subservient posture, the rationale for military action is already being laid.

From the standpoint of the American ruling elite, the major concern is that Iran is emerging as the principal regional power in the oil-rich Middle East. Undermining Iran—including through military action—is seen by dominant sections of the political and military establishment in the US as a necessary means of asserting US control over the region.

Reports indicate that the US is supporting efforts for a “soft regime change” in Iran. However, plans for military action have already been worked out. The *Jerusalem Post* reported on June 10, “Predictions within the US military are that Bush will do what is needed to stop Teheran before he leaves office in 2009, including possibly launching a military strike against its nuclear facilities.”

“According to a high-ranking American military officer,” the *Post* reported, “the US Navy and Air Force would play the primary roles in any military action taken against Iran. One idea under consideration is a naval blockade designed to cut off Iran’s oil exports.”

On Tuesday, Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns insisted, again without providing evidence, that “Iran is now even transferring arms to the Taliban in Afghanistan.” The claim that Iranian weapons were being supplied to Taliban fighters has been made before, but this was the first time that an American official asserted that the government of Iran itself was responsible.

The Bush administration has also seized on the arrest of four US-Iranian citizens by the Iranian government to escalate pressure.

For its part, Iran has warned that it would strike US military bases if they were used in any attack on Iran. If Iran’s neighboring countries let the US attack Iran from their territory, Iranian parliament speaker Gholam Ali Hadad Adel said on June 10, “we will be forced to defend ourselves...We will target those bases or points” used to attack Iran.

On Monday, the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohamed ElBaradei, warned that there is a “brewing confrontation” between the US and Iran. According to an article in the *New York Times* Tuesday, ElBaradei “stopped just short of saying that the confrontation could become a military conflict, though his aides said that was clearly the implication.”

Lieberman’s comments highlight the essential unanimity of both the Democrats and the Republicans in the belief that the US government needs to increase pressure on Iran. To the extent that there are differences between and within the parties, it is over the relative emphasis to be placed on diplomacy and economic pressure versus military threats.

However, leading figures of both parties have been adamant in their view that “all options are on the table” in dealing with Iran.

In the Republican Party presidential candidate debate on June 7, all but one of the ten candidates endorsed, either explicitly or tacitly, the first-strike use of tactical nuclear weapons against Iran if deemed necessary.

Congressman Duncan Hunter declared that he would “authorize the use of tactical nuclear weapons” to stop Iran from using centrifuges to process uranium. The question was deliberately raised by moderator Wolf Blitzer of CNN to get the candidates on the record in support of such action. Only Texas Congressman Ron Paul opposed the suggestion, with the other candidates endorsing it or else saying nothing.

In a Democratic Party debate two days earlier, Senator Hillary Clinton and form Senator John Edwards refused to rule out the use of force against Iran, while Senator Barack Obama has made similar comments. In an April 20 debate, Obama defended his statement that “all options were on the table with Iran” by declaring that a nuclear-armed Iran “will be a major threat to us and to the region,” and would be a “profound security threat for America.”

Obama is sponsoring, together with Democratic Representative Barney Frank, a bill that would increase economic sanctions against Iran. In a statement supporting the bill last month, Obama repeated the standard justifications being used to threaten military action, including the claim that Iran is using oil and gas money “to build its nuclear program and to fund terrorist groups that export its militaristic and radical ideology to Iraq and throughout the Middle East.”

The bipartisan policy for a more aggressive posture against Iran is in direct opposition to the wishes of the American population, which in the last election clearly repudiated the war in Iraq and the militarist policy of the Bush administration. There is unquestionably mass popular opposition to any attempt to expand the US military intervention in the region by launching yet another unprovoked war against Iran.



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