

Criticized over war threat against Iran, Hillary Clinton sees conspiracy

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In a revealing incident from the 2008 presidential campaign trail, Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton lashed out at an Iowa voter for daring to suggest that her support for a recent Senate resolution threatening Iran reflected the same politics that led her in 2002 to support the war against Iraq.

Randall Rolph, a local Democrat with a reputation for discomfiting candidates with inconvenient questions, confronted the New York senator and former first lady at a town-hall style meeting in New Hampton, Iowa, demanding to know why she voted for the right-wing measure calling on the Bush administration to take an even more bellicose stand against Iran.

The resolution, an amendment to the Pentagon funding bill, was sponsored by Senators Joseph Lieberman, the so-called independent Democrat from Connecticut who failed to win his own party's nomination in the last election because of his support for the Bush administration's policy in Iraq, and Jon Kyl, a right-wing Republican from Arizona.

The measure accuses Iran of waging "a proxy war against the Iraqi state and coalition forces in Iraq," a charge that has been repeatedly made—but never substantiated—by the White House and some senior US military commanders. As a recent article in the *New Yorker*, written by investigative journalist Seymour Hersh and based on his sources in the military and intelligence apparatus, makes clear, this is precisely the pretext now being promoted by the Bush administration to justify military action against Iran.

Moreover, the amendment calls for the administration to formally designate the Iranian Revolutionary Guard as a "foreign terrorist organization" and impose new sanctions against Iran. Such a move—branding a sovereign government's principal uniformed security force a gang of "terrorists"—has no precedent in

international relations and provides a phony pretext for an unprovoked war on Iran.

Pointing to Clinton's vote for this resolution, and referring to her previous vote in October 2002 authorizing the Bush administration to attack Iraq, Rolph asked the candidate, "Why should I support your candidacy ... if it appears you haven't learned from your past mistakes?"

Clearly flustered by the question, Clinton jumped down Rolph's throat, telling him first that "the premise of the question is wrong" and then insinuating that he was a plant, sent into the meeting by unnamed political enemies to embarrass her. She referred to Rolph's remarks as "what you read to me, that somebody obviously sent to you."

The Iowan understandably took umbrage at Clinton's charge. "I take exception," he said. "This is my own research. Nobody sent it to me; I am offended that you would suggest that."

"Let me finish," said Clinton, talking over his protest. "I apologize. It's just that I've have been asked the very same question in three other places."

She insisted that the resolution was not meant to authorize war, but only to "send a clear message to the leadership" in Iran and further diplomacy.

Of course, Clinton made the same claim about her vote to authorize Bush to invade Iraq; that it would serve as a spur for diplomatic efforts. At that time she parroted the administration's false charges about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and ties to Al Qaeda—charges that she now echoes in her statements and vote on Iran.

In casting her vote, Clinton declared that it was time to "put some teeth into all this talk about dealing with Iran."

Her vote was by no means an isolated action. Hillary

Clinton has staked out a belligerent policy towards Iran over the past several years, attacking the Bush administration from the right for failing to act more aggressively against the country and linking her limited criticism of the US war strategy in Iraq to concern that the quagmire confronting the US military is limiting actions against Iran.

Last February, speaking before the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the largest Zionist lobbying group in the US, Clinton repeated the claim that Iran was orchestrating attacks on US troops in Iraq and declared that Teheran's "pro-terrorist, anti-American, anti-Israeli rhetoric only underscores the urgency of our response to the threat we face."

"US policy must be clear and unequivocal," she continued. "We cannot, we should not, we must not, permit Iran to build or acquire nuclear weapons. And in dealing with this threat as I have said for a very long time, no option can be taken off the table."

This statement came in the wake of published reports that the Bush administration and the Pentagon were weighing plans to hit Iranian targets with tactical nuclear weapons.

That voters should express concern and anger over her positions is hardly a surprise. That this should suggest to Clinton some kind of political conspiracy only underscores the extreme distance of the major candidates of both parties from the sentiments of broad masses of people and the carefully stage-managed character of their campaigns.

It is also a warning of their near unanimity about preparing for yet another war of aggression, this time against Iran.

As for Rolph, he was thoroughly unconvinced by Clinton's performance. "Who in this room believes we aren't going to attack Iran before Bush leaves office?" he declared.



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