Obama follows Bush's modus operandi on Iran

Peter Symonds
28 September 2009

In a manner chillingly reminiscent of the Bush administration's buildup to the Iraq war, top White House officials yesterday intensified the US propaganda offensive against Iran, threatening heavy sanctions if Tehran does not provide unrestricted access to its newly revealed uranium enrichment plant near the city of Qom and other nuclear facilities and personnel.

Interviewed on separate Sunday television programs, Defence Secretary Robert Gates and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton both painted the Qom revelations in the most sinister terms. If the "illicit nuclear facility" had been for peaceful nuclear purposes, Gates declared, "there's no reason to put it so deep underground, no reason to be deceptive about it, keep it a… secret for a protracted period of time."

That theme has been endlessly recycled in the US media over the past few days to cultivate a climate of fear and justify further punitive actions against Iran. The incomplete Qom plant is not "illicit," however, as countries are obliged to provide details under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty only when facilities become operational. Moreover, given repeated US and Israeli threats of military action, it is hardly surprising that the Qom plant, like its far larger counterpart at Natanz, is being built underground.

The furor surrounding the Qom facility is part of a carefully orchestrated US campaign leading up to the meeting on Thursday between the P5+1 powers—the US, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China—and Iran. In the lead-up to last week's UN meeting, the US received support from Russia for sanctions as a quid pro quo for ending its missile shield plans in Eastern Europe. Obama chaired the UN Security Council meeting that adopted a nuclear non-proliferation resolution that sets the stage for punitive measures against alleged "violators" such as Iran.

The timing of the Qom revelations is designed to maximise pressure, not so much on Iran, but on Russia and particularly China to back harsh new penalties against Iran. As US Defence Secretary Gates explained yesterday, the new uranium enrichment site placed Iran "in a very bad spot" and has created "an opportunity" for "severe additional sanctions." Unlike previous UN measures, the US is proposing crippling economic sanctions, including a ban on selling refined oil products to Iran.

The US and its European allies intend to use this week's meeting to demand Iran accept a sweeping inspection regime. US Secretary of State Clinton declared yesterday that Iran now faced a heavier burden of proof and had "to open their entire system to the kind of extensive investigation that the facts call for." According to the *New York Times*, American and European officials will press for unrestricted inspections of all nuclear-related sites, access to top scientists and the turning over of computers, notebooks and documentation.

Obama's campaign bears an unmistakable resemblance to Bush's use of the weapons of mass destruction allegations in the run-up to the war against Iraq. Like the Iraqi regime, Tehran is confronted with an impossible task—to prove a negative, namely, that it has no plans for a nuclear weapon. The failure to find evidence in one place simply leads to lurid new allegations and fresh demands to allow more extensive intrusions by international inspectors that have close

© World Socialist Web Site

links to Western and Israeli intelligence agencies. The purpose of such demands is not to test the veracity of Iran's claims but to justify an escalating confrontation.

Just as it did prior to the invasion of Iraq, the American media is functioning as propaganda arm of the state apparatus, regurgitating uncritically the innuendos, half-truths and outright lies of the Obama administration. The *New York Times*, for instance, is already circulating unsubstantiated claims by unnamed intelligence officials that the 2007 US National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iran identified "more than a dozen suspect locations." The same NIE, it should be recalled, concluded that Iran had ended its alleged nuclear weapons research in 2003.

The current campaign against Iran is not the product of a recent policy shift, but of longstanding plans. The tactics being followed by the Obama administration can be found in outline in a series of think tank studies by the Bipartisan Policy Centre, the Centre for a New American Security and the right-wing Washington Institute for Near East Policy last year. While varying in details, the reports all advised a steady escalation of diplomatic pressure followed by punitive sanctions, backed by preparations for military strikes.

Dennis Ross, who is well known for his pro-Israel views and links to Bush's notorious neo-cons, was centrally involved in all of the studies. He is currently Obama's top national security adviser on Iran.

While not openly advocating regime-change, that is clearly the Obama administration's intention. Having encouraged and exploited the opposition protests following last June's Iranian presidential election to the hilt, Washington calculates that further pressure on the nuclear issue will aid failed candidate Mir Hossein Moussavi and his backers. As Defence Secretary Gates noted yesterday, there are "deep fissures in Iranian society and politics." He added, "I think additional and especially severe sanctions could have some real impact."

The Obama administration is certainly aiming to pressure the UN Security Council into backing its plans, but will act unilaterally if that fails. As the *Washington Post* editorial declared on Saturday: "The United States must make clear to those governments that it will not settle for inaction against a regime that is brazenly defying international treaties and UN Security Council resolutions." And while downplaying military plans, for the present at least, that "option" remains a constant threat. In his comments yesterday, Gates repeated the constant refrain of the Bush administration—"You don't take options off the table."

The rapidly escalating confrontation with Iran demonstrates the utterly fraudulent character of Obama as the candidate of "change." In all essentials, the Obama administration is pursuing the same predatory ends with the same criminal modus operandi as its predecessor. Sections of the American political establishment backed Obama's election to refocus foreign policy away from Iraq and towards Afghanistan, but Iran remains central to US imperialism's ambitions to dominate the energy-rich regions of the Middle East and Central Asia. Another reckless adventure is being prepared that threatens to further destabilise and plunge these regions deeper into conflict.

Peter Symonds

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site