

New WikiLeaks revelations confirm

Obama administration targets Iran for aggression

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The Obama administration has devoted enormous attention and effort to a worldwide campaign to destabilize Iran and open the way to direct military aggression, the latest mass of documents released by WikiLeaks confirms. The first batch of more than 250,000 secret diplomatic cables between the State Department and 270 US embassies and missions around the world were made public Sunday night by the Internet-based organization, which is opposed to US militarism.

The documents reveal a wide range of efforts by the US government over the past decade, and especially in the last three years, to mobilize support for its campaign against Iran—as well as to forestall a premature Israeli air strike against the Islamic Republic, which US officials feared would be counterproductive and strengthen Iran in the long run.

The most provocative allegation contained in the documents is the claim, in a February 24, 2010 cable describing a US-Russian meeting, that North Korea had shipped Iran 19 medium-range, Russian-designed missiles, capable of delivering nuclear warheads. This claim was trumpeted in US media accounts of the WikiLeaks documents, as though it was a smoking gun, but it amounts to no more than an unsupported US government allegation, similar to lies used by the Bush administration to justify the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The *New York Times* devoted a lengthy article to the claim of a “cache” of missiles which it said would give Iran the ability to strike cities 2,000 miles away: “If fired from Iran, that range, in theory, would let its warheads reach targets as far away as Western Europe, including Berlin. If fired northwestward, the warheads could easily reach Moscow.”

The *Times* account was crafted in collaboration with the Obama administration—as the newspaper’s editors shamelessly admit, explaining, “At the request of the Obama administration, The New York Times has agreed not to publish the text of the cable.”

The WikiLeaks documents also demonstrate that US embassies throughout the Middle East and Central Asia were instructed to focus their espionage activities on Iran, particularly in those countries with a common border. This was necessary because there has been no official US presence in Tehran since the 1979 takeover by militant students, who branded the embassy—with perfect justice—as a “nest of spies.”

Washington pursued a course of heavy-handed diplomatic pressure on countries with important economic relations with Tehran, particularly China, Russia and Germany. The Bush administration intervened with China in November 2007, seeking to intercept a cargo of missile stabilizers en route from North Korea to Iran via Beijing, one of at least a dozen such diplomatic exchanges targeting cargo ranging from carbon fiber to gyroscopes to ordinary chemicals.

Particularly significant are the repeated entreaties by the monarchs of Saudi Arabia and other Arab sheikdoms for American military intervention against Iran. All of the crowned heads of the Persian Gulf still tremble at the memory of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which destroyed the absolute monarchy of the Shah, at the time the most powerful ruler in the Middle East.

As early as 2005, two years into the US war in Iraq, Arab rulers who nominally opposed the US invasion, because of overwhelming popular hostility, were urging Washington behind the scenes to extend its war of aggression into Iran. Tailoring their arguments to the lies used by the Bush administration to justify the attack on Iraq, they argued that Iran would certainly develop a nuclear bomb if left undisturbed.

Saudi King Abdullah frequently pressed the US to attack Iran’s nuclear facilities “to cut off the head of the snake,” while officials in Bahrain and Jordan also told their US interlocutors that military means should be used against Iran if necessary. “The danger of letting it go on is greater than the dangers of stopping it,” Bahrain’s King Hamad ibn Isa

Al Khalifa told visiting US General David Petraeus.

The transparent falsity of these arguments—urgently warning that an Iranian bomb was “inevitable” in 2006, 2007 or 2008—provides a useful yardstick for evaluating similar arguments today, made by both the Obama administration and Israel.

The uncensored views of the Arab sheiks also shed light on a major foreign policy initiative of the Obama administration, the extension of US military relationships with the Persian Gulf states, and in particular, the resumption of massive arms sales to Saudi Arabia and its smaller neighbors. In September, the Pentagon publicly endorsed a record \$60 billion sale of weapons, including advanced fighter jets, to Saudi Arabia.

These sales have both a political/diplomatic and a military/technical component, since the huge influx of US-built weapons means that American troops can operate seamlessly with their counterparts in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, the UAE and Oman. “We are helping these allied and partner nations create their own containment shield against Iran,” a US officer told the press at the time. “It is a way of deterring Iran, but helpful to us in so many other ways.”

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, while denouncing the WikiLeaks release of the documents, seized on the anti-Iranian comments reported by US diplomats in the Arab capitals as proof that the US concern over the supposed Iranian threat was widely shared. “I think that it should not be a surprise that Iran is a source of great concern, not only in the US,” she said, adding, “the comments reported in the cables prove that Iran poses a serious threat in the eyes of its neighbors, and beyond the region.”

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke in a similar vein, citing the WikiLeaks documents as proof that the Arab rulers shared Israel’s hostility to Iran. He declared, “Our region has been hostage to a narrative that is the result of 60 years of propaganda, which paints Israel as the greatest threat. In reality leaders understand that that view is bankrupt. For the first time in history there is agreement that Iran is the threat.”

Admiral Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, took the occasion of the WikiLeaks document release to reiterate US preparations for military action against Iran. Speaking Sunday on CNN, Mullen said, “Iran is still very much on a path to be able to develop nuclear weapons, including — and including weaponizing them, putting them on a missile and being able to use them.”

In response to a direct question from interviewer Fareed Zakaria, he said, “We’ve actually been thinking about military options for a significant period of time. And I’ve spoken with many others, that we’ve had options on the

table. We continue to do that...and we will continue to do that in the future.”

Exactly what those “military options” are, Admiral Mullen did not say. But within 24 hours, a terrorist attack in the Iranian capital seemed to provide at least one answer. Two Iranian nuclear scientists were targeted for attack by groups of men riding motorcycles, who attached bombs to their cars, rode away, and then detonated them.

Majid Shahriari, a professor in the nuclear engineering department at Shahid Beheshti University in Tehran was killed, and Fereydoon Abbasi, a professor at the same university who is involved in nuclear research at the Defense Ministry, was wounded. The wives of both men and one other person were wounded in the attacks, which took place in two separate locations.

The organized, simultaneous character of the attack suggests that an intelligence service or services was involved. It is the fifth such attack on an Iranian nuclear expert in the recent period. Professor Shahriari was said to be an expert in the separation of isotopes and to have taught at the Supreme National Defense University, run by the Iranian Army. Iran’s nuclear facilities have also reportedly been targeted for cyber-warfare attack, with the Stuxnet worm, rumored to have been devised by the Israelis.

At a news conference, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said that “undoubtedly the hand of the Zionist regime and Western governments is involved” in the killing. Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of Iran’s nuclear development program, warned the US and its allies not to “play with fire.”

According to press reports, Abbasi was targeted by the US-sponsored sanctions regime adopted by the UN Security Council, which barred him from international travel since 2007 because of his alleged role in the Iranian nuclear and ballistic missile programs.



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