

this president has been pulling our chain, been lying to us, hyping this thing up, there is no threat, and Congress intervened in a way that it has refused to do to date, maybe this war could be stopped. But if Congress continues to turn a blind eye or worse, as in the case of the Senate resolution, facilitates the Bush administration's hyping of Iran as a threat, I think war is inevitable.

*Senior Israeli officials warned today they were still considering the option of a military strike against Iran, despite a fresh US intelligence report that concluded Tehran was no longer developing nuclear weapons. - Rory McCarthy, Jerusalem, 12/07/07, Guardian Unlimited*

**James Harris:** They have been asleep for five years now. Why would they wake up now? Hilary Clinton voted yes. She is a US senator and she is running for president and she said yes, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard is indeed a terrorist organization. Does this further the idea that the Democrats and the Republicans—they are all in bed together.

**Scott Ritter:** Well it furthers the notion that front runners are all in it together. The bottom line is that Hilary Clinton is getting money from the same sources that fund Giuliani and if you take a look at their foreign policies they are pretty much one and the same. They are very aggressive foreign policies; they are based on the premise of a unitary executive; that the president has the right to pre-emptively launch military strikes against threats that emerge, and maybe do so in a manner that negates Congress—there is no difference between Hilary and George W. Bush and Rudy Giuliani when it comes to issues of this sort. There are other Democrats out there that of course take a more nuanced, responsible point of view. I would say

that Bill Richardson, the Governor of New Mexico, is an outstanding candidate, but he isn't getting money from the same sources as Hilary and Giuliani and others.

**James Harris:** Tell me what you think the president should be all about these days.

**Scott Ritter:** the president should govern in accord with the constitution. We have a situation that has existed for some time now where successive presidential administrations have been frustrated by the inadequacies of democracy so as to speak. (laughs) It is an ugly process, it takes time, its not convenient, and presidents want to wield their executive authority and especially in time of war they have created this concept, and it is totally at odds with the constitution, of the unitary executive where the president has unilateral powers in times of war. And somebody like Ron Paul, I think, somebody who knows the constitution, takes a look at this notion of unitary executive and says humbug, that is ridiculous. And I agree with him.

I think it is imperative that whoever becomes president understands that there are constitutional restrictions on what the president can and can't do. And I think it is imperative that Congress start reading the constitution and start flexing the constitutional muscles. That there is a role for Congress to play—it is called oversight. And Congress can retard irresponsible policy, that the president doesn't get a blank cheque when it comes to foreign policy and national security policy.... we don't have too many people who have announced themselves as candidates for president who will publicly commit themselves to reversing this trend towards a unitary executive.....

**If you want to be a citizen of this country you have to be informed....The rule of law means nothing unless the law is**

enforced and we have a president who is showing a wanton disregard for the rule of law. There are constitutional remedies for executives who behave in this manner. It's called impeachment. And I'm a big fan of the American public letting the Congress know that impeachment is on the table. It's Congress' job not to impeach, per se, but to investigate We have clear example in the case of Iraq of wrong doing and Congress has yet to investigate in a satisfactory manner.... If we speak about holding the president to account for his actions, how about holding the congress accountable for their failure to act according to the will of the people....

These democrats who were elected by the will of the people and who have said they are not going to do anything with regards to Iraq and Iran to hold this president accountable with regard to Iran and Iraq...and the last thing they are going to do is defend the constitution by holding the president accountable for his failure to abide by the constitution. It's time for us to hold these people accountable as well.

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# The NIE Report and War With Iran

James Harris with Scott Ritter

[www.truthdig.com](http://www.truthdig.com) 12/07/07

**J**ames Harris: James here sitting down with Scott Ritter, the former chief weapons inspector in Iraq and today we are talking about the latest report from the National Intelligence Estimate. The report says that Iran is not ... in the nuclear [weapons] business [since 2003]. But Scott Ritter, I think wisely, told me to look at this report with caution and that this means nothing to the Whitehouse, that they are about regime change. Please explain.

*"I've told people that if you're interested in avoiding World War Three, it seems like you ought to be interested in preventing them from have the knowledge to make a nuclear weapon." - Pres. Bush, 10/17/07*

**Scott Ritter:** I think it is important to assess patterns of behaviour. When we take a look at the Bush Administration we see how it has sought to implement its policies of regional transformation in the middle east, inclusive of regime change—the notion of removing unpopular regimes: regimes that the United States unilaterally declares incompatible with its vision are removed from power. This includes Saddam Hussein and the theocracy in Tehran. They have demonstrated a tendency to exaggerate threats in the form of weapons of mass destruction, to exploit the ignorance of the American public and the fear that is derived from this ignorance. They did so with Iraq.

They made a case for war based on weapons of mass destruction that they failed to back up with anything other than rhetoric. I can say as a former weapons inspector who ran the intelligence programs from '91 to '98 that we had fundamentally disarmed Iraq. For the president to say that there is this new weapons capability he would have to demonstrate some new information and he failed to do so. And that is why I said unless he provides this new data there isn't the WMD threat that he says there is and the same thing can be said about Iran.

**James Harris:** Why should we be cautious of what President Bush is telling us right now?

**Scott Ritter:** Here is a president who has said that Iran is a threat, a threat in the form of a weapons programme. But for some time now I have been saying where is the beef Mr President. I hear the rhetoric. But your pattern of behaviour leads me to believe that you might be exaggerating the threat, fabricating the threat, misrepresenting data to achieve your policy objective of regime change, trying to exploit the ignorance of the American public and the fear derived from this ignorance. Now we have a National Intelligence Estimate that says time out; there hasn't been a nuclear weapons programme since 2003.

**Now I need to make a point here. I continue to say that there has never been a nuclear weapons programme in Iran.** The National Intelligence Estimate doesn't provide any evidence to sustain the assertion that there was a nuclear programme. Be that as it may, they are saying that the concept of Iran pursuing nuclear weapons today is a fallacy. There is no data to promote this. Now if we lived in a world where government functioned the way it is supposed to when it comes to policy: that is you get your intelligence, you

look at it, you examine it, you assess it and you say OK, how do we now interact with the target, the nation, in this case Iran. That is normal. That is cause and effect relationship. But what we have is an administration that has already made up its mind about what it wants to do with Iran and has been fabricating a case based on a nuclear weapons programme that the US intelligence community now says doesn't exist today. Do you think there will be a change in policy? And the answer of course is no because they have got the cart before the horse. They have got the policy out in front; inconveniently the intelligence community didn't back them on the nuclear weapons issue.

*President Bush said that he was only briefed on the NIE report a few days before a summary was released to the public. If that is true, he is either extremely incompetent for not knowing about an issue of such urgency and gravity or he is a liar. "You have no business being president." -- Keith Olbermann's, MSNBC, 12/06/07*

**James Harris:** But you say that Iran's status as a terrorist organization also plays into this. How so?

**Scott Ritter:** Not only does the Bush administration continue to say that Iran is a terrorist state, that it supports terrorists that were directly or indirectly involved in the events of Sept 11th 2001, the United States senate has passed a resolution that says the same thing and certifies the Revolutionary Guard Command as a terrorist organization. Anybody who thinks for a second that this National Intelligence Estimate retards the ability of the Bush Administration to engage in military action with Iran, you are sadly mistaken. The Bush administration's policy has been made. This estimate was not

used to make policy and you yourself have said the president is not going to let this estimate get in the way of continuing to articulate Iran as a threat.

**James Harris:** Scott if you are right, that is a high crime. That is a wanton disregard for the American wishes, a disregard for any of the intelligence agencies that cover our backs.

**Scott Ritter:** It is a wanton disregard for everything we stand for as a nation. We elect representatives to government to do our bidding. We expect them to operate within a framework of due process set forward by the rule of law. We might call this the constitution, or laws derived from the constitution. We speak of checks and balances where we have three separate but equal branches of government but when it comes to foreign policy and national security policy, really two—the judiciary takes a step aside and it becomes the executive and legislative branch. And there is a system, a bureaucratic system there—the state department, the CIA, the defence department—that is supposed to weigh in on these issues.

And like I said, you want to gather the facts, examine the reality and then make the policy. What we have here is an administration that is ideologically committed to certain policy actions divorced from what we call reality. Early on in the Bush administration we heard people speak of a new reality, that the Bush administration can make its own reality. I am not joking. Paul O'Neal, former secretary to the treasury, was sat in cabinet meetings where this was said. And so we now take a look at a situation where the president and his administration are continuing to march forward in a policy direction regardless of what the data says. Am I jaded? No. I am as alarmed as much as you are but I think it is imperative that we address this responsibly by first realistically

acknowledging what's occurring. There are too many pundits out there today that are raising the flag of victory. Saying aha because of this NIE, this national Intelligence Estimate, war is off the table; we don't have to worry about it; the Bush plan has been undermined. It most certainly hasn't because the Bush administration has never shown a tendency to respect the normal system of governance. This estimate won't have an impact at all.

**James Harris:** Is it likely that George Bush will look at this report, throw it in the garbage and continue on, business as usual. The business in this case engaging hostilely with Iran.

**Scott Ritter:** The answer is yes. He is engaging hostilely with Iran. Remember that I have been saying for some time now that the Bush administration is taking the nuclear issue off the front burner. **The CIA's estimate follows on the heels of a finding by the International Atomic Energy Agency back in September that said the same thing. There is no evidence of a nuclear weapons programme.** This is one of their final analysis. They have been saying this for some time. The Bush administration has been for many months now been having a hard time selling the nuclear threat as a casus belli. This is why they have shifted to terror and terrorism. The Bush administration is going to use the gift it was given by the US Senate, this target list of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Command to serve as the corner stone when it comes to launching a limited military operation against Iran that will probably take place some time in the spring.

This is the plan and the NIE I don't think has changed it one iota. Now it could. Let's say Congress woke up all of a sudden. Let's say that Congress said oh my goodness,