The Urgent Need to Attack Iran Has Been Falsely Advertised for 20 Years

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For a couple of decades now, the very worst people in Washington, D.C., have pushed hard for a war on Iran. Some high points have come in 2007, 2015, 2017, and 2024. Each time it has been absolutely critical to attack Iran at once. There could be no delay. Dominoes would fall. Terrorism would prevail. Credibility would be sqandered. And yet, each time, the threatened war has not been launched, and the world has gone on just the same.

We've seen a wide variety of excuses deployed over these years of unsuccessful propaganda for a war on Iran, including false claims about nuclear weapons, the pretense that attacking Iran would improve civil liberties within Iran, and shockingly honest commitments to gaining control of more oil with which to slowly destroy the habitability of the Earth. The push to attack Iran has been on for so long that entire categories of arguments for it (such as that the Iranians are fueling the Iraqi resistance) and demonized leaders of Iran have come and gone. The latest excuse is the killing of three members of the U.S. military.

Ordinarily, killing people could be prosecuted as a crime. But that's tricky, because the United States government opposes and refuses to take part in international law, the U.S. troops had no legal justification for being where they were, and the violence across the region is being driven by U.S. support for enormous crimes by the Israeli government.

More importantly, the advocates for war do not want to prosecute a crime, but to use a crime as an excuse to commit much larger crimes, on the familiar model of September 11, October 7, etc. The choice to escalate is not imposed on anyone; similar situations in the past have been used as excuses for war and also allowed to pass without the launching of any war.

The U.S. government purports to believe that escalating wars will reduce wars, flying in the face of the overwhelming evidence of centuries, and to believe that there is no alternative, even though the demands of all sorts of warmakers across Western Asia are all the same and extremely easy to satisfy (and satisfying them has been ordered by the International Court of Justice): stop destroying Gaza and killing Gazans.

The U.S. government distorts the notion of "defense" beyond all recognition by claiming that harm done to its imperial troops anywhere on Earth can justify a "defensive" war. This is highly convenient for war hawks in Washington, D.C., who have known for many years that getting U.S. troops killed can be a big propaganda boost for war madness — an idea eagerly encouraged today by U.S. media outlets that are always perfectly capable of demanding revenge while simulaneously calling it "defense."

In 2022 military spending, Iran spent 0.8% what the U.S. did. Iran is not a threat to the United States, despite having put its nation so close to so many U.S. military bases.
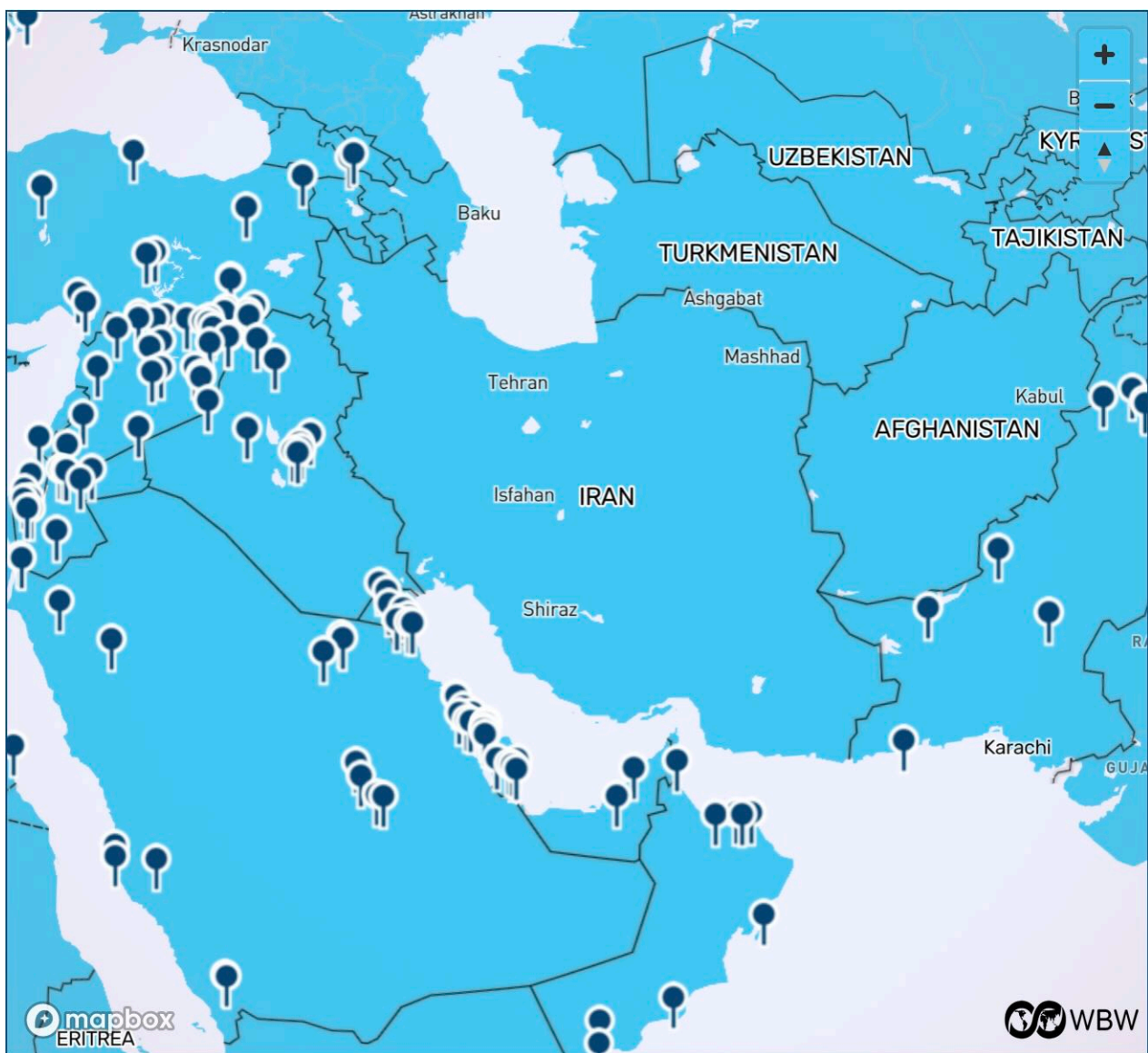
This is what the empire of U.S. military bases looks like to Iran. Try to imagine if you lived there, what you would think of this. Who is threatening whom? Who is the greater danger to whom? The point is not that Iran should be free to attack the United States or anyone else because its military is smaller. The point is that doing so would be national suicide. It would also be something Iran has not done for centuries. But it would be typical U.S. behavior.

The U.S. overthrew Iran's democracy in 1953 and installed a brutal dictator / weapons customer. The U.S. gave Iran nuclear energy technology in the 1970s. Following the Iranian revolution, the United States aided Iraq in the 1980s in attacking Iran, providing Iraq with some of the weapons (including chemical weapons) that were used on Iranians and that would be used in 2002-2003 (when they no longer existed) as an excuse for attacking Iraq.

The roots of a Washington push for a new war on Iran can be found in the 1992 Defense Planning Guidance, the 1996 paper called A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm, the 2000 Rebuilding America's Defenses, and in a 2001 Pentagon memo described by Wesley Clark as listing these nations for attack: Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Lebanon, Syria, and Iran. It's worth noting that Bush Jr. overthrew Iraq, and Obama Libya, while the others remain works in progress. The arguments in these old forgotten memos were not what the war makers tell the public, but much closer to what they tell each other. The concerns were those of dominating regions rich in resources, intimidating others, and establishing bases from which to maintain control of puppet governments.

In 2000, the CIA gave Iran nuclear bomb plans in an effort to frame it. This was reported by James Risen, and Jeffrey Sterling went to prison for allegedly being Risen's source. But nobody involved in the scheme was ever punished in any way.

In 2010, Tony Blair included Iran on a list of countries that he said Dick Cheney had aimed to overthrow. The line among the powerful in Washington in 2003 was that Iraq would be a cakewalk but that real men go to Tehran.

For many years, the United States has labeled Iran an evil nation, attacked and destroyed the other non-nuclear nation on the list of evil nations, designated part of Iran's military a terrorist organization, falsely accused Iran of crimes including the attacks of 9-11, murdered Iranian scientists, funded opposition groups in Iran (including some the U.S. also designates as terrorist), flew dronesover Iran, openly and illegally threatened to attack Iran, and built up military forces all around Iran's borders, while imposing cruel sanctions on the country. The long history of the United States lying about Iranian nuclear weapons is chronicled by Gareth Porter's book *Manufactured Crisis*.

In 2007, we were told that Iran needed to be attacked urgently due to false claims about nuclear weapons. Even a National Intelligence Estimate in 2007 pushed back and admitted that Iran had no nuclear weapons program.

In 2015, Republicans urged war justified by Iran's nuclear weapons program, while Democrats successfully moved for passage of an agreement with Iran, also justified by Iran's nuclear weapons program. The agreement was not a treaty, and President Trump would later throw it out. But the damage of both sides falsely claiming that Iran had a nuclear weapons program was done.

Dick and Liz Cheney's book, *Exceptional*, tell us we must see a "moral difference between an Iranian nuclear weapon and an American one." Must we, really? Either risks further proliferation, accidental use, use by a crazed leader, mass death and destruction, environmental disaster, retaliatory escalation, and apocalypse. One of those two nations has nuclear weapons, has used nuclear weapons, has provided the other with plans for nuclear weapons, has a policy of first-use of nuclear weapons, has leadership that sanctions the possession of nuclear weapons, and has frequently threated to use nuclear weapons. I don't think those facts would make a nuclear weapon in the hands of the other country the least

bit moral, but also not the least bit more immoral. Let's focus on seeing an *empirical*difference between an Iranian nuclear weapon and an American one. One exists. The other doesn't.

If you're wondering, U.S. presidents who have made specific public or secret nuclear threats to other nations, that we know of, as documented in Daniel Ellsberg's *The Doomsday Machine,* have included Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and Donald Trump, while others, including Barack Obama and Donald Trump have frequently said things like "All options are on the table" in relation to Iran or another country.

Proponents of war or steps toward war (sanctions was a step toward the war on Iraq) say we urgently need a war on Iran now, but they have no argument for urgency, and they've been making the same argument with ever less credibility for years.

The Trump White House early on openly expressed a desire to claim that Iran had violated the 2015 nuclear agreement, but produced no evidence. It didn't matter. Trump tore up the agreement anyway and used his own shredding of the agreement as grounds for nuclear fearmongering about Iran.

In 2017, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations [claimed](#) that Iranian weapons had been used in a war that the U.S.., Saudi Arabia, and allies were illegally and disastrously waging in Yemen. While that's a problem that should be corrected, it is hard to find a war anywhere on the planet without U.S. weapons in it. In fact, a report that made [news](#) the same day as the ambassador's claims, pointed to the long-known fact that many of the weapons used by ISIS had once belonged to the United States, many of them having been given by the U.S. to non-state fighters (aka terrorists) in Syria.

Fighting wars and arming others to fight wars/terrorism is a justification for indictment and prosecution, but not for war, legally, morally, or practically. The United States fights and arms wars, and no one would be justified in attacking the United States.

If Iran is guilty of a crime, and there is evidence to support that claim, the United States and the world should seek its prosecution. Instead, the United States is isolating itself by tearing down the rule of law.

President Biden came into office with the possibility wide open to restore the Iran agreement and pursue a better course. He chose not to do so, and not to even try to do so. He waited for a less amendable government to take power in Iran, and then did seemingly everything he could to stir up hostitlities in the region. Now an agreement looks much more difficult to obtain.

Of course the reason why "real men go to Tehran" is that Iran is not the impoverished disarmed nation that one might find in, say, Afghanistan or Iraq, or even the disarmed nation found in Libya in 2011. Iran is much bigger and much better armed. Whether the United States launches a major assault on Iran or Israel does, Iran [will retaliate](#) against U.S. troops and probably Israel and possibly the [United States itself](#) as well. And the United States will without any doubt re-retaliate for that. Iran cannot be unaware that the U.S. government's pressure on the Israeli government not to attack Iran consists of [reassuring](#) the Israelis that the United States will attack when needed, and does not include even threatening to stop funding Israel's military or to stop vetoing measures of accountability for

Israeli crimes at the United Nations.

Of course, many in the U.S. government and military oppose attacking Iran, although key figures like Admiral William Fallon have been moved out of the way. Much of the Israeli military is [opposed](#) as well, not to mention the Israeli and U.S. people. But war is not clean or precise. If the people we allow to run our nations attack another, we are all put at risk.

Most at risk, of course, are the people of Iran, people as peaceful as any other, or perhaps more so. As in any country, no matter what its government, the people of Iran are fundamentally good, decent, peaceful, just, and fundamentally like you and me. I've met people from Iran. You may have met people from Iran. They look like [this](#). They're not a different species. They're not evil. A "surgical strike" against a "facility" in their country [would cause](#) a great many of them to die very painful and horrible deaths. Even if you imagine that Iran would not retaliate for such attacks, this is what the attacks would in themselves consist of: [mass murder](#).

And what would that accomplish? It would unite the people of Iran and much of the world against the United States. It would justify in the eyes of much of the world an underground Iranian program to develop nuclear weapons, a program that probably does not exist at present, except to the extent that legal nuclear energy programs move a country closer to weapons development. The environmental damage would be tremendous, the precedent set incredibly dangerous, all talk of cutting the U.S. military budget would be buried in a wave of war frenzy, civil liberties and representative government would be flushed down the Potomac, a nuclear arms race would spread to additional countries, and any momentary sadistic glee would be outweighed by accelerating home foreclosures, mounting student debt, and accumulating layers of cultural stupidity.

Strategically, legally, and morally weapons possession is not grounds for war, and neither is pursuit of weapons possession. And neither, I might add, with Iraq in mind, is theoretically possible pursuit of weapons never acted upon. Israel has nuclear weapons. The United States has more nuclear weapons than any other country but Russia (the two of them together have 90% of the world's nukes). There can be no justification for attacking the United States, Israel, or any other country. The pretense that Iran has or will soon have nuclear weapons is, in any case, just a pretense, one that has been revived, [debunked](#), and revived again like a zombie for years and years. But that's not the really absurd part of this false claim for something that amounts to no justification for war whatsoever.

The really absurd part is that it was the United States in 1976 that pushed nuclear energy on Iran. In 2000 the [CIA gave](#) the Iranian government (slightly flawed) plans to build a nuclear bomb. In 2003, Iran proposed negotiations with the United States with everything on the table, including its nuclear technology, and the United States refused. Shortly thereafter, the United States started angling for a war. Meanwhile, U.S.-led [sanctions prevent](#) Iran from developing wind energy, while the Koch brothers are allowed to [trade with Iran](#) without penalty.

Another area of ongoing [lie debunking](#), one that almost exactly parallels the buildup to the 2003 attack on Iraq, is the relentless false claim, including by [candidates in 2012 for U.S. President](#), that Iran has not allowed inspectors into its country or given them access to its sites. Iran had, in fact, prior to the agreement [voluntarily accepted](#) stricter standards than the IAEA requires. And of course a separate line of propaganda, albeit a contradictory one, holds that the IAEA has discovered a nuclear weapons program in Iran. Under the nuclear

non-proliferation treaty (NPT), Iran was [not required](#) to declare all of its installations, and early last decade it chose not to, as the United States violated that same treaty by blocking Germany, China, and others from providing nuclear energy equipment to Iran. While Iran remains in compliance with the NPT, India and Pakistan and Israel have not signed it and North Korea has withdrawn from it, while the United States and other nuclear powers continuously violate it by failing to reduce arms, by providing arms to other countries such as India, and by developing new nuclear weapons, not to mention keeping nuclear weapons in six European countries, providing Russia to put them into one European country as well.

Are you ready for an even more absurd twist? This is on the same scale as Bush's comment about not really giving much thought to Osama bin Laden. Are you ready? The proponents of attacking Iran [themselves admit](#) that if Iran had nukes it would not use them. This is from the American Enterprise Institute:

"The biggest problem for the United States is not Iran getting a nuclear weapon and testing it, it's Iran getting a nuclear weapon and not using it. Because the second that they have one and they don't do anything bad, all of the naysayers are going to come back and say, 'See, we told you Iran is a responsible power. We told you Iran wasn't getting nuclear weapons in order to use them immediately.' … And they will eventually define Iran with nuclear weapons as not a problem."

Is that clear? Iran using a nuclear weapon would be bad: environmental damage, loss of human life, hideous pain and suffering, yada, yada, yada. But what would be really bad would be Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon and doing what every other nation with them has done since Nagasaki: nothing. That would be really bad because it would damage an argument for war and make war more difficult, thus allowing Iran to run its country as it, rather than the United States, sees fit. Of course it might run it very badly (although the U.S. is hardly establishing a model for the world over here either), but it would run it without U.S. approval, and that would be worse than nuclear destruction.

Inspections were allowed in Iraq and they worked. They found no weapons and there were no weapons. Inspections have been allowed in Iran and have worked. However, the IAEA has come under the [corrupting influence](#) of the U.S. government. And yet, the bluster from war proponents about IAEA claims over the years is [not backed up](#) by any actual claims from the IAEA. And what little material the IAEA has provided for the cause of war [has been](#) widely [rejected](#) when not being [laughed at](#).

Another year, another lie. No longer do we hear that North Korea is helping Iran build nukes. Lies about [Iranian backing](#) of [Iraqi resisters](#) have faded. (Didn't the United States back French resistance to Germans at one point?) Another recent concoction is the "Iran did 911" lie. Revenge, like the rest of these attempted grounds for war, is actually not a legal or moral justification for war. But the 9/11 fiction has already been put to rest by the indispensable [Gareth Porter](#), among others. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia, which did play a role in 911 as well as in the Iraqi resistance, is being sold record quantities of that good old leading U.S. export of which we're all so proud: [weapons of mass destruction](#).

Oh, I almost forgot another lie that hasn't quite entirely faded yet. Iran [did not](#) try to [blow up](#) a Saudi [ambassador](#) in Washington, D.C., an action which President Obama would have considered perfectly praiseworthy if the roles were reversed, but a lie that even Fox News had [a hard time stomaching](#). And that's saying something.

And then there's that old standby: Ahmadinejad said "Israel should be wiped off the map." While this does not, perhaps, rise to the level of John McCain singing about bombing Iran or Bush and Obama swearing that all options including nuclear attack are on the table, it sounds extremely disturbing: "wiped off the map"! However, the translation is a bad one. A more accurate translation was "the regime occupying Jerusalem must vanish from the page of time." The government of Israel, not the nation of Israel. Not even the government of Israel, but the current regime. Hell, Americans say that about their own regimes all the time, alternating every four to eight years depending on political party (some of us even say it all the time, without immunity for either party). Iran has made clear it would approve of a two-state solution if Palestinians approved of it. If the U.S. launched missile strikes every time somebody said something stupid, even if accurately translated, how safe would it be to live near Newt Gingrich's or Joe Biden's house?

Luckily, war resisters have succeeded for so long (even while telling each other that they never succeed) that the war mongers don't remember who Ahmadinejad even was anymore, and all that demonization has gone to nought.

The real danger may not actually be the lies. The Iraq experience has built up quite a mental resistance to these sorts of lies in many U.S. residents. The real danger may be the slow start of a war that gains momentum on its own without any formal announcement of its initiation. Israel and the United States have not just been talking tough or crazy. They've been [murdering Iranians](#). And they seem to have no shame about it. The day after a Republican presidential primary debate at which candidates declared their desire to kill Iranians, the CIA apparently made certain [the news](#) was public that it was in fact already [murdering Iranians](#), not to mention [blowing up buildings](#). Some would say and have said that the [war has already begun](#). Those who cannot see this because they do not want to see it will also miss the deadly humor in the United States asking Iran to return [its brave drone](#).

Perhaps what's needed to snap war supporters out of their stupor is a bit of slapstick. Try this on for size. From [Seymour Hersh](#) describing a meeting held in Vice President Cheney's office:

"There was a dozen ideas proffered about how to trigger a war. The one that interested me the most was why don't we build — we in our shipyard — build four or five boats that look like Iranian PT boats. Put Navy seals on them with a lot of arms. And next time one of our boats goes to the Straits of Hormuz, start a shoot-up. Might cost some lives. And it was rejected because you can't have Americans killing Americans. That's the kind of — that's the level of stuff we're talking about. Provocation. But that was rejected."

Now, Dick Cheney is not your typical American. Nobody in the U.S. government is your typical American. Your typical American is struggling, disapproves of the U.S. government, wishes billionaires were taxed, favors green energy and education and jobs over military boondoggles, thinks corporations should be barred from buying elections, and would not be inclined to apologize for getting shot in the face by the Vice President.

Back in the 1930s, the Ludlow Amendment nearly made it a Constitutional requirement that the public vote in a referendum before the United States could go to war. President Franklin Roosevelt blocked that proposal. Yet the Constitution already required and still requires that Congress declare war before a war is fought. That has not been done in almost 80 years, while wars have raged on almost incessantly. In the past decade and right up through President Obama's signing of the outrageous National Defense Authorization Act on New

Years Eve 2011-2012, the power to make war has been handed over to presidents. Here is one more reason to oppose a presidential war on Iran: once you allow presidents to make wars, you will never stop them. Another reason, in so far as anybody any longer gives a damn, is that war is a crime. Iran and the United States are parties to the Kellogg-Briand Pact, which bans war. One of those two nations is not complying.

But we won't have a referendum. The U.S. House of Misrepresentatives won't step in. Only through widespread public pressure and nonviolent action will we intervene in this slow-motion catastrophe. This war, if it happens, will be fought by an institution called the United States Department of Defense, but it will endanger rather than defending us. As the war progresses, we will be told that the Iranian people want to be bombed for their own good, for freedom, for democracy. But nobody wants to be bombed for that. Iran does not want U.S.-style democracy. Even the United States does not want U.S.-style democracy. We will be told that those noble goals are guiding the actions of our brave troops and our brave drones on the battlefield. Yet there will be no battlefield. There will be no front lines. There will be no trenches. There will simply be cities and towns where people live, and where people die. There will be no victory. There will be no progress accomplished through a "surge." On January 5, 2012, then-Secretary of "Defense" Leon Panetta was asked at a press conference about the failures in Iraq and Afghanistan, and he replied simply that those were successes. That is the kind of success that could be expected in Iran were Iran a destitute and disarmed state.

Now we begin to understand the importance of all the media suppression, blackouts, and lies about the damage done to Iraq and Afghanistan. Now we understand why Obama and Panetta embraced the lies that launched the War on Iraq. The same lies must now be revived, as for every war ever fought, for a War on Iran. Here's a video explaining how this will work, even with some new twistsand lots of variations. The U.S. corporate media is part of the war machine.

Planning war and funding war creates its own momentum. Sanctions become, as with Iraq, a stepping stone to war. Cutting off diplomacy leaves few options open. Electoral pissing contests take us allwhere most of us did not want to be.

These are the bombs most likely to launch this ugly and quite possibly terminal chapter of human history. This animation shows clearly what they would do. For an even better presentation, pair that with this audio of a misinformed caller trying hopelessly to persuade George Galloway that we should attack Iran.

On January 2, 2012, the New York Times reported concern that cuts to the U.S. military budget raised doubts as to whether the United States would "be prepared for a grinding, lengthy ground war in Asia." At a Pentagon press conference on January 5, 2012, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff reassured the press corpse (sic) that major ground wars were very much an option and that wars of one sort or another were a certainty. President Obama's statement of military policy released at that press conference listed the missions of the U.S. military. First was fighting terrorism, next detering "aggression," then "projecting power despite anti-access/area denial challenges," then the good old WMDs, then conquering space and cyberspace, then nuclear weapons, and finally — after all that — there was mention of defending the Homeland Formerly Known As The United States.

The cases of Iraq and Iran are not identical in every detail, of course. But in both cases we are dealing with concerted efforts to get us into wars, wars based, as all wars are based, on

lies. We may need to revive this appeal to U.S. and Israeli forces!

Additional reasons not to Iraq Iran include the numerous reasons not to maintain the institution of war at all, as laid out at WorldBeyondWar.org.

For more information, and a list of the Top 100 Reasons not to launch this war, and a petition to end the brutal sanctions on Iran, go to https://worldbeyondwar.org/iran-war

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