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## **The Folly of Invading Iran**

**by James Bovard**

Some Bush administration officials and advisors are hankering for another war. To judge from the saber rattling and rumblings coming out of the White House, the next target could be Iran. But invading Iran would be an act of folly that would make the invasion of Iraq look almost prudent by comparison.

Almost no one alleges that Iran poses any threat to the security of the United States. There are no allegations that Iranian naval forces could seize Boston harbor, or that Iranian paratroopers could descend upon Miami, or that an Iranian army could surge across the Rio Grande. Instead, the case against Iran is based almost entirely on distant hypotheticals — and on the notion that the United States needs to completely dominate the Middle East.

Some Bush administration officials are clamoring for U.S. action against Iran. John Bolton, undersecretary of state for arms control and international security affairs, declared on October 9, regarding an Iranian nuclear reactor, “The threat posed by Iran ... has to be eliminated.”

But Bolton is a poor guide for the case for going war. For many months before the United States invaded Iraq, Bush administration officials assured Americans that Saddam Hussein had vast stores of weapons of mass destruction that posed an immediate threat to Americans. Since the U.S. army captured Baghdad in early April, no WMDs have been found. But Bolton offered a bizarre vindication for a war that killed thousands of Iraqi civilians and cost the lives of hundreds of American soldiers. In a May 24, 2003, speech sponsored by the National Defense University Foundation, Bolton revealed that the war was justified because of Iraqi “intellectual capacity” — because of “the continued existence of what Saddam Hussein called the ‘nuclear mujahadeen,’ the thousand or so scientists, technicians, people who have in their own heads and in their files the intellectual property necessary at an appropriate time ... to recreate a nuclear weapons program.” With this all-inclusive standard, the U.S. government is now justified in attacking any potentially hostile nation that has a university with a good physics department.

Iran does have a nuclear program but Bush administration experts estimate that it could be six or seven years until they are able to have nuclear weapons — if that is what they seek to build.

There are many other countries in the world that could also acquire nuclear weapons in that time period. And Israel has a large stockpile of nuclear weapons. This is not a problem for the Bush administration, since pro-American governments are apparently entitled to unlimited numbers of WMDs.

The U.S. military might be able to defeat the Iranian military without too many American casualties — at least initially. However, Iran is a much larger country than Iraq and far more mountainous. Mountains are heaven-made for guerilla fighting.

Yet even if the United States can stop the current Iranian government, there is no reason to expect paradise to erupt in the aftermath. Prior to the invasion of Iraq, Americans were told that the Iraqi people would greet American soldiers with hugs and flowers. More than 300 dead Americans later, it appears that Iraqi hatred of Americans is becoming more perilous every month.

One of the drawbacks of bombing a foreign country into submission is that the United States is often expected to rebuild what it destroyed afterwards. Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, estimates that the cost of rebuilding Iraq could reach \$200 billion — far beyond the Bush administration's recent \$87 billion budget request. This is money that the U.S. government does not have; as a result, Americans for decades to come will be paying heavily for the privilege of underwriting President Bush's victory strut on the USS *Abraham Lincoln* last May 1.

Prior to invading Iraq, Bush talked as if overthrowing Saddam would bring peace between the Palestinians and Israelis. Yet, seven months after the United States conquered Baghdad, Palestinian suicide bombers continue blowing up Israeli buses and cafes and Israeli jets and helicopters continue killing innocent Palestinian bystanders in their attacks on the cars and homes of "militants."

Americans cannot afford any more Bush conquests. The Bush administration has already wrecked American credibility around the world with its Iraqi invasion. If Bush advisors want to conquer Tehran, let them do it themselves.

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