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## **Busy Bush Has Time to Run the World** **by Sheldon Richman**

President Bush has been a busy man. Even though the quagmire in Iraq threatens to worsen as Turkey prepares to invade the Kurdish north, Bush has time to undertake the arduous task of preventing World War III *and* begin the transition to democracy in Cuba. How does he do it?!

The president is on a sticky wicket in northern Iraq. The Kurds have longed to unite with their brethren in Turkey, Iran, and Syria to form independent Kurdistan. The big powers, the United States included, have never been crazy about the idea. But that hasn't stopped American presidents from posing as champions of their cause — until it's inconvenient. That's what it is now.

Turkey is an "important ally," as big powers like to say. For one thing, it's been a member of NATO almost from the beginning. The "NA" stand for "North Atlantic," and the last time I checked a map, Turkey was nowhere near the Atlantic Ocean. But never mind that; it's an important ally that gives the U.S. military easy access to Iraq and other parts of the Middle East. No country that useful should be alienated. That's why the Bush administration opposed the resolution in the House labeling Turkey's slaughter of Armenians as "genocide" — in 1915! You've got to hand it to the House. It sure stays on top of things.

Anyway, the Kurds have been assaulting Turkish troops across their border, and the Turkish legislature has okayed an invasion of Iraq, warning Bush he'd better tame the unruly Kurds or else. You can bet that administration people are working overtime on that project. On the other hand, the Iranian government has complained that the Kurds are attacking their forces too. But I suspect that complaint is getting a much less sympathetic hearing.

Which brings us to World War III. President Bush raised the specter of another Great War during a news conference: "We've got a leader in Iran who has announced that he wants to destroy Israel. So I've told people that, if you're interested in avoiding World War III, it seems like you ought to be interested in preventing them from having the knowledge necessary to make a nuclear weapon."

Whoa! Let's slow down. Bush wants to leave the impression that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad wants to attack Israel with nukes. Although he said he'd like that state to disappear, he's never threatened Israel. He's not that crazy. Israel has been a nuclear monopolist in the Middle East since the 1960s. And it should be noted that Ahmadinejad is not the actual leader of Iran. In that country the president is not the head of state or leader of the armed forces.

More fundamentally, why is Bush linking Iran's attitude toward Israel and World War III? Is he saying he would plunge the world into war if Iran attacks Israel? Isn't that a little — well, ridiculous?

At any rate, it's far more likely that the Iranian government wants a nuclear weapon to deter the U.S. government from attacking *it*. A bomb would have little offensive value, but it might keep the U.S. away. That seems like a reasonable calculation, but it's not one Bush wants the American people to see. While I don't think he has decided to attack Iran (yet), he has a political interest in keeping us agitated so that the option will be available if he decides to go ahead. Re-read what he and his people were saying about Iraq before the 2003 invasion and you'll see what's going on.

Needless to say, an attack on Iran would kill many innocents, further jeopardize U.S. troops in Iraq, and light a fuse in the entire region. No stupider idea has ever been proposed by an American president. And note that Bush is out to prevent Iran from even *learning how* to make a weapon.

But Bush has things well in hand — so well that he has time to lecture Castro about who should succeed him when he dies. As if that were any of his business.

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