

Bipartisan Policy: Bomb-Bomb Iran

by Gordon Prather - www.antiwar.com - October 2008

Well, according to a report released last month by the Grand Pooh-Bahs of The Bipartisan Policy Center - and an op-ed piece based upon their report, published this week in the *Washington Post* - it shouldn't matter whether a Republican or a Democrat becomes our next President; he'll probably have to bomb-bomb Iran. And the sooner, the better.

Why?

Well, first of all, according to the Grand Pooh-Bahs, by insisting on their NPT rights and by defying the illegal efforts of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency and the UN Security Council to prevent their exercising those inalienable rights, the Islamic Republic's regime has "undermined" our glorious nuclear-weapons proliferation-prevention regime.

Never mind that representatives of that Islamic regime have repeatedly charged - at meetings of the IAEA Board of Governors, the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Group Ministerial Conference - that it is the *United States* that has deliberately all but destroyed the NPT-IAEA nuke proliferation-prevention regime.

Iran's Safeguards Agreement - which gave the IAEA the "right and the obligation" to ensure that safeguards are applied on "all source or special fissionable material ... for the exclusive purpose of verifying that such material is not diverted to nuclear weapons" - entered into force in 1974.

So what constitutes being in non-compliance with NPT obligations? The IAEA's reporting that certain NPT-proscribed materials have been diverted to a nuclear weapons program.

In the early 1990s, Russia had agreed to complete the nuclear power plants at Bushehr, whose construction had begun under the Shah, and build a gas-centrifuge uranium-enrichment facility at Natanz.

Also in the early 1990s, China had agreed to provide Iran two 300 MW nuclear power plants and a uranium-conversion plant at Isfahan.

But in 1995, as a result of intense pressure by President Clinton on Russia and China - and on European suppliers of auxiliary equipment - Russia canceled the gas-centrifuge facility contract and China canceled the power plant contract. In 1997, China also canceled the uranium-conversion plant contract.

The Russians continued to honor their contract to complete at least one of the 1,000 MW power plants at Bushehr.

So the Iranians decided to try to develop or acquire - secretly, but not illegally - elements of the nuclear fuel-cycle themselves.

(It is important to note that under their existing basic Safeguards Agreement, they were - and are, once again - under no obligation to inform the IAEA about any of those activities until shortly before they actually involve(d) the chemical or physical transformation of safeguarded nuclear materials.)

The most serious Iranian "violation" of its existing Safeguards agreement was the failure to report at the time the importation from China in 1991 of small amounts of uranium oxide to be used for testing of different processes involved in the then-to-be-supplied Chinese uranium-conversion facility.

The facility - which the Iranians had to build, themselves - had been subjected to IAEA Safeguards before their agreement required it, but the Iranians had never reported the test materials - which they had not yet used - they had got from China.

Then in December 2003, Iran signed the IAEA Additional Protocol and announced it would "cooperate with the Agency in accordance with the [Additional] Protocol in advance of its ratification."

And "cooperate" they did, until the summer of 2006, when under intense US pressure, the IAEA Board demanded that Iran suspend indefinitely (contrary to the IAEA Statute) all its Safeguarded uranium-enrichment programs.

However, last year Iran agreed to a Work Plan, which provided Director-General ElBaradei access to certain Iranian facilities, personnel, operating and procurement records - access going far beyond what would have been required even under the Additional Protocol if it had ever been ratified - that ElBaradei deemed necessary for satisfying his concerns about the "nature" of Iran's nuclear programs.

Contrary to the claims of the Bipartisan Grand Pooh-Bahs, the IAEA has never charged Iran with being in non-compliance with the NPT - has never even suggested that any NPT-proscribed materials may have been diverted to *any* military program. And ElBaradei has now reportedly satisfied himself that there is no evidence that Iran now has - or ever had - a nuclear *weapons* program.

In fact, as a result of having successfully undergone years of such unprecedented scrutiny, the Islamic regime has emerged as the most vocal defender of the virgin NPT-IAEA regime, and as the most vocal critic of the way it has been violated. To the dismay of the Israeli Ambassador, the Iranians were "hugged" and "cheered," primarily for that defense and criticism, at last month's meeting of the UN General Assembly.

Okay, never mind that. But, what about this?

According to the Bipartisan Grand Pooh-Bahs, Iran's refusal to suspend, indefinitely, its IAEA Safeguarded programs "*may pose the most significant strategic threat to the United States during the next administration.*"

But didn't last year's National Intelligence Estimate conclude that Iran had "suspended" way back in 2003 whatever "nuclear warhead" work they may have been doing?

Well, yes, but according to the Bipartisan Grand Pooh-Bahs -

"Its [the NIE's] artificial separation between military and civilian technology contradicts a reality where such distinction cannot be made. Despite Tehran's protestations, we do not believe its program is inherently peaceful in nature."

So what?

"Even if Tehran does not actually build or test a nuclear weapon, its establishment of an indigenous [uranium] enrichment capability places the region under a cloud of ambiguity, given uncertain Iranian capacities and intentions. Such ambiguity will give the Islamic Republic a de facto nuclear deterrent, which could embolden it to reinvigorate its export of revolution and escalate support for terrorist groups."

Mercy! What is the next President to do?

Well, the Bipartisan Grand Pooh-Bahs "agree" that "diplomacy" should "underlie" our "strategy" for illegally (under the IAEA Statute and the UN Charter) preventing Iran from exercising its NPT-guaranteed rights to the use of "atomic energy" for peaceful purposes. However, they "acknowledge" that said "diplomatic approach" hasn't "succeeded."

So, listen up, all you Presidential Candidates.

If you find, upon taking office, that Iran's alleged "*de facto* nuclear deterrent" hasn't already been "taken out," you'd better do it. In a bipartisan manner, of course.