

# If it's 2005, it must be time for another war

**By Ted Rall**

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**Y**ou've heard this song before. There's this country, see, and they hate America. They'd nuke us if they had the chance, you bet they would. Damn Muslim religious fanatics! Guess what? They have weapons of mass destruction! Either that or their scientists are about to develop them. Whatever – we can't let that happen. We've gotta hit them before they hit us! What's that? Of course we're sure! Our intelligence says so. Huh? No. We can't show you the proof. We'll say this much...a little bird told us. A little exile bird that wants to run the country after we overthrow the current regime. They wouldn't lie, and neither would we. And while we're at it, can we borrow your son for the next few years?

Colin Powell, disgraced by his 2003 fictional anthrax speech at the U.N., is closing his run as Bush's poodle-in-chief with a bravura repeat performance. His last big PR project: conning us into war against Iran.

The Administration's sales pitch for "Attack on the Ayatollahs" reads a lot like the one for "So Long, Saddam." There's a supposed "grave and gathering threat" – a nuclear-capable, America-hating Iran. Even as presented, the intel is sketchy. Iran, Powell says, has "been actively working on delivery systems" – missiles that could carry nukes. During the Cuban missile crisis, JFK went on television to show us the satellite photos. Powell thinks we should believe him just because. "I have seen intelligence which would corroborate what this dissident group is saying," says the outgoing Secretary of Rationalization. Not that there's much there there: "I'm talking about information that says that they not only had these missiles, but I'm aware of information that suggests they were working hard as to how to put the two [missiles and nuclear weapons] together." Bombs haven't even started falling on Tehran and the WMDs have already become WMD-related programs.

Powell's intel is enough to make a 2005 gold star mother pine for George "Slam Dunk" Tenet. First, it's ancient. The Iraq WMD info ended in 1998 and was proven

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wrong in 2003. Powell's claims that Iran obtained schematics for an atomic bomb from Pakistan are even older, dating to 1996. Moreover, the Iran sourcing – the National Council for Resistance in Iran (NCRI) – makes Ahmed Chalabi look like a Boy Scout. The NCRI, a front organization for the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK), is a bizarre, Shiite, pro-Baathist (yes, you read that right) guerilla army infamous for crushing the 1991 Kurdish uprising on Saddam's orders. Better yet, it's designated as a "known terrorist organization" by Powell's own State Department.

Only the Bushiban know whether they plan to invade Iran. But, as Time magazine reports, "the neoconservative hawks who championed the Iraq war have long advocated an aggressive pursuit of regime change in Iran." Washington kremlinologists are waiting to see whether Bush will promote anti-Iran neocon John Bolton from Undersecretary of State for Arms Control to Deputy Secretary of State. A Bolton ascension, goes the word on K Street, probably means a third war. At bare minimum, writes centrist New York Times scribe Nicholas Kristof, "the United States will discuss whether to look the other way as Israel launches airstrikes on Iranian nuclear sites," a move that could easily lead to a broader conflict if Iran retaliates by attacking U.S.-occupied Iraq or Afghanistan, or Israel itself.

Does Iran pose a threat to the U.S.? The rejoinders are obvious. If Bush cared about real threats, he'd go after North Korea, which has at least six nuclear weapons and an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) that can hit the U.S. Of course, North Korea isn't the second biggest member of OPEC. Iran is, with 10 percent of the earth's proven oil reserves. Besides, no one with sense believes Bush about anything.

But enough snark.

Iranian nukes, minus a high-precision long-range delivery system, can't do us much harm. Iran's Shahab-3 missile has a maximum range of 800 miles, far enough to hit Israel. But that's Israel's problem. Iran has no ICBMs capable of traversing the Atlantic and accurately hitting an American target – and no immediate prospect of developing one. Besides, the Iranian government has repeatedly made overtures to the Bush Administration to talk about their nuclear program, only to be rebuffed. It would be truer to say that the U.S. is a threat to Iran.