

BECAUSE YOU'D ALL BE SAD WITHOUT A "BORAT VISITS THE STRAITS OF HORMUZ" UPDATE

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates offered the following explanation to defend the Pentagon's escalation of the incident between five Iranian motorboats and the US ships that took place earlier this week:

Quoting former defense secretary William S. Cohen, Gates said: " 'Are you going to believe me or your lying eyes?' I think that aptly characterizes and appropriately characterizes the Iranian claim."

I see. Gates just wanted to offer **visual** proof to the rest of the world that Iranian acted aggressively, so the Pentagon kluged its video evidence together with audio, um, what? elaboration? to bolster that video evidence. He ought to be asking, "Are you going to believe me or your lying eyes and justifiably dubious ears?" Though speaking of lying eyes, I have yet to see those boxes the Iranians allegedly threw into the water, though the Pentagon renews that claim in this story, while offering no visual evidence.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon has backed further away from the strong implication it originally gave that those Borat threats came from the Iranians.

Pentagon officials insist that they never claimed Iran made the threat. "No one in the military has said that the transmission emanated from those boats. But when they hear it simultaneously to the behavior of those boats, it only adds to the tension," said Pentagon spokesman Geoff Morrell.

Uh huh. You just kluged together the two, but really, that wasn't meant to imply that Borat was on the blue speedboat.

Iran has released what it claims is a video of the incident, though Fred Kaplan thinks that's fake.

Meanwhile, the Iranians' footage shows an American vessel in the distance. An Iranian, speaking through a radio, says, "Coalition warship 73. This is Iranian patrol boat." We hear the American say, "I read you loud and clear." A bit later, the American says, "We are in international waters." In short, nothing momentous is going on at all. It is, as the Iranian foreign ministry shrugged afterward, "ordinary."

The likely explanation for the differences is this: The two videos are of *two different incidents*. During his Jan. 7 news conference, Vice Adm. Kevin Cosgriff, commander of the U.S. 5th Fleet, noted that American and Iranian ships have many interactions that are usually civil and peaceful, then he said:

In fact, this group [of U.S. warships] had passed an Iranian navy ship earlier in its transit and exchanged quite correct radio communications with that Iranian ship.

This earlier contact—with its "quite correct" communications—is probably the one depicted in the Iranian video.

Me, I think they're both fake. Until I hear (or don't hear, as would be the case) audio that sounds like it comes from an open boat with an outboard on the open sea, I'll just assume it's more propaganda, from both sides.

But that still raises my question. If this is all about visual images, then why are we fighting over a bunch of laughable audio tracks?