

WASHINGTON POST FAILS TO DISCLOSE HEINONEN'S UANI CONNECTION IN ANTI- IRAN OP/ED

We are now in the “final” week of negotiations to set the framework for the P5+1 long-term agreement on Iran’s nuclear technology. With so much in the balance, voices are popping up from every direction to offer their opinions on what constitutes a good or bad deal. While Netanyahu’s address to Congress dominated the headlines in that regard, other sources also have not held back on offering opinions. In the case of Netanyahu, informed observers considering his remarks knew in advance that Netanyahu considers Iran an “existential threat” to Israel and that violent regime change in Iran is his preferred mode of addressing Iran’s nuclear technology. When it comes to other opinions being offered, it is important to also have a clear view of the backgrounds of those offering opinions so that any biases they have can be brought into consideration.

With that in mind, the Washington Post has committed a gross violation of the concept of full disclosure in an Iran op/ed they published yesterday. I won’t go into the “substance” of this hit piece on Iran, suffice it note that the sensationalist headline (The Iran time bomb) warns us that the piece will come from an assumption that Iran seeks and will continue to seek a nuclear weapon regardless of what they agree to with P5+1.

The list of authors for this op/ed is an anti-Iran neocon’s wet dream. First up is Michael Hayden. The Post notes that Hayden led the CIA from 2006-2009 and the NSA from 1999 to 2005. I guess they don’t think it’s important to note that he now is a principal with the Chertoff

Group and so stands to profit from situations in world politics that appear headed toward violence.

The third of the three authors is perhaps the least known, but he's a very active fellow. Here is how Nima Shirazi describes Ray Takeyh:

Takeyh is a mainstay of the Washington establishment – a Council on Foreign Relations Senior Fellow before and after a stint in the Obama State Department and a founding member of the neoconservative-created Iran Strategy Task Force who has become a tireless advocate for the collective punishment of the Iranian population in a futile attempt to inspire homegrown regime change (if not, at times, all-out war against a third Middle Eastern nation in just over a decade). Unsurprisingly, he dismisses out of hand the notion that “the principal cause of disorder in the Middle East today is a hegemonic America seeking to impose its imperial template on the region.”

The Post, of course, doesn't mention Takeyh's association with the group Shirazi describes, nor his membership in another Iran Task Force organized by the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs.

Sandwiched between Hayden and Takeyh, though, is the Post's biggest failure on disclosure. Olli Heinonen is described by the Post simply as “a senior fellow at Harvard's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs and a former deputy director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency”. As such, uninformed readers are likely to conclude that Heinonen is present among the authors to serve as a hefty dose of neutrality, given his background in the IAEA. Nothing could be further from the truth. What the Post fails to disclose is that Heinonen is also a prominent member of the Advisory Board of United Against Nuclear Iran.

Not only is UANI an advocacy group working against Iran, but they are currently embroiled in litigation in which it has been learned that UANI has come into possession of state secrets from the United States. The Department of Justice has weighed in on the UANI case, urging the judge to throw the case out on the grounds that continuing to litigate it will disclose the US state secrets that UANI has obtained. Since the litigation involves UANI actions to “name and shame” companies it accuses of violating US sanctions against Iran, one can only assume that the state secrets leaked to UANI involve Iran.

How in the world could the Washington Post conclude that Heinonen’s role on the Advisory Board for United Against Nuclear Iran would not be something they should disclose in publishing his opinion piece entitled “The Iran time bomb”?

Oh, and lest we come to the conclusion that failing to note Heinonen’s UANI connection is a one-off thing in which Heinonen himself is innocent, noted AP transcriptionist of neocon anti-Iran rhetoric George Jahn used Heinonen in exactly the same way a month ago.

We can only conclude that Heinonen is happily doing the neocons’ bidding in their push for war with Iran.

Update from emptywheel: The judge in Victor Restis’ lawsuit just dismissed the suit on state secrets grounds. Here’s the opinion, h/t Mike Scarcella.