

ALBRIGHT FOLLOWS WARRICK INTO FULL NEOCON MODE, PRESENTS IRAN SANCTION MANIFESTO

On January 7, I noted that the Washington Post's Joby Warrick had allowed the neocon think tank Foundation for the Defense of Democracies to frame his discussion of the newest round of sanctions set to take effect against Iran. It now is clear that the article from Warrick was meant to prepare the ground for the unveiling, one week later, of David Albright's new working group developed precisely for the purpose of furthering the neocon position on Iran sanctions. By taking on additional policy members in this working group, Albright is now branching out from his usual area of commentary on technical issues (where Moon of Alabama has dubbed his Institute for Science and International Security the "Institute for Scary Iran Stories") all the way into policy and now promotes the full neocon position that Iran is dangerously close to having a nuclear weapon and therefore sanctions must be ratcheted up further.

Note how the press release from the working group opens:

Warning that time is running out as Iran accelerates its nuclear program, the non-partisan Project on U.S. Middle East Nonproliferation Strategy called on President Obama to use current U.S. sanctions laws to implement a "de facto international embargo on all investments in, and trade with, Iran (other than provision of humanitarian goods)" before Iran achieves "critical capability" – the point at which it could produce enough weapon-grade uranium (or

separated plutonium) for one or more bombs so rapidly that neither the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) nor Western intelligence agencies could be able to detect the move before it was too late to respond.

Let's unpack the lies just in that opening sentence.

First, the group chooses to label itself as "non-partisan". Nothing could be further from the truth. Of the five co-chairs of the group, two have direct ties to the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, which SourceWatch documents to be a primary force for the furtherance of neocon views, describing it as both a think tank and a lobbying organization. Mark Dubowitz, the Executive Director of the foundation, is one of the working group co-chairs and was the one chosen by Warrick to voice the neocon position earlier in January. Another co-chair is Orde Kittre, described in the press release as a Professor of Law at Arizona State University. The press release fails to note that Kittre also is a Senior Fellow at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies. Co-chair Leonard Spector is listed as Deputy Director of the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies. I see that he has been a featured speaker by the "non-partisan" AIPAC. The final co-chair besides Albright is Michael Yaffe of the National Defense University, whose own biography (pdf) notes: "In the immediate aftermath of the attack on September 11, 2001, he served as a coordinator on the counter-terrorism task force in support of "Operation Enduring Freedom."" With a lineup composed of Albright and four people hand-selected for backgrounds likely to promote neocon positions, this working group is nothing close to non-partisan.

Next, the flat statement that Iran now "accelerates its nuclear program" is so misleading as to border on falsehood as well. Iran is expanding its enrichment capability, but

there also are indications that portions of the 20% enriched uranium Iran is producing are being converted into chemical forms that are harder to submit to further enrichment to weapons grade. Further, the US stated in its 2007 National Intelligence Estimate that Iran ceased all nuclear weapons work in 2003. That NIE has been a target for neocons ever since, but there has been no definitive evidence provided that Iran has re-started weapons work or that it intends to enrich uranium beyond 20% to the 90%+ level required for weapons. All of the fear-mongering over Iran being able to have a weapon soon relies on a major step forward in enrichment for which there is zero evidence that Iran has either the capability or desire.

The biggest falsehood in the opening of the press release, though, is that the existing and expanded Iran sanctions don't extend to humanitarian goods. As I pointed out in the January 7 post, there already are reports of critical medical shortages as a result of the sanctions, so claiming that ratcheting up the sanctions even further can be done along with the "provision of humanitarian goods" is pure bunk. I had noted back in October the economic devastation of Iranian citizens by the sanctions and also linked to a report in January on the possible impact of the sanctions on recent acute air pollution in Tehran. The Iran sanctions are a humanitarian disaster of huge proportions and any claim that only Iran's government is affected is an outright lie.

The timing of Albright's release of the working group's findings also is not a coincidence. Today, the IAEA and Iran are meeting, with a primary focus on finalizing the framework that would allow IAEA access to the Parchin site which Albright has been claiming Iran has cleansed of decade-old work to develop an explosive trigger device. Also, Iran and the P5+1 group are very close to re-starting their negotiations, so the neocons are afraid that peace just might break out despite their best efforts to promote a war in Iran.