Israel Nuclear Reactor Raid Track Record: Osirak 1981, Al Kibar 2007 – Could it be Iran's Turn in 2015?

Last Thursday, the *New York Times* (NYT) published an op-ed by former US UN Ambassador John Bolton, To Stop Iran's Bomb, Bomb Iran. It created a firestorm of criticism from the left, like *Salon s*uggesting that Bolton's proposal buttressed the case for Obama's questionable pursuit of diplomatic outreach. With the diplomatic impasse at the P5+1 Lausanne venue that initiative appears to be faltering given a doubling down of extensions for discussions with Iran. Many suspect that this confirmed Iran's negotiating posture confounding any resolution as a ploy to buy time to complete nuclear breakout. This despite Foreign Minister Zarif demands for immediate sanctions relief. The Islamic Republic appears to be doing quite well, thank you, with the limited $700 million a month sanctions relief under the November 2013 Joint Plan of Action. It is the Russians, Chinese, and EU partners in the P5+1 group who are anxious to cut a deal because they vast economic benefits. Some international financial analysts see a mushroom of activity on the Tehran stock exchange resulting from such a move.

On the same day that the *NYT* published the Bolton op-ed Foundation for Defense of Democracies resident journalist, Claudia Rosett revealed in a *Wall Street Journa*l op-ed, Iran's adroit multiple foreign flagging of its oil carrier fleet to make deliveries to foreign clients, China among them, confounding US and International sanctions, *Obama's Iran Policy Is Lost at Sea.* Rosett's conclusion was*:* "Under the

emerging Iran nuclear deal, especially if sanctions are lifted, how exactly do the U.S. and its partners propose to keep a tighter leash on Iran's nuclear program than they are now keeping on its shipping traffic?" In October 2013 we wrote about an example of Iran cloaking operation for its tankers, "How Iran evades Oil Sanctions: Hacking AIS to Cloak Identity of Tankers."

Support also came from Republican John McCain; Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, with a new twist, Israel should bomb Iran. In a floor speech, McCain said:

> McCAIN: *The Israelis will need to chart their own path of resistance. On the Iranian nuclear deal, they may have to go rogue. Let's hope their warnings have not been mere bluffs. Israel survived its first 19 years without meaningful U.S. patronage. For now, all it has to do is get through the next 22, admittedly long, months.*

Watch this C-Span video of McCain Floor speech on March 26, 2015:

Bolton in his *NYT op ed* pointed to the Israeli Iraq and Syrian reactor raids as precedent for a limited bombing campaign to set back Iran's nuclear breakout, *NewsMax* noted:

> "The inescapable conclusion is that Iran will not negotiate away its nuclear program," Bolton wrote in an opinion piece for The New York Times on Thursday. "Nor will sanctions block its building a broad and deep weapons infrastructure."

The "inconvenient truth," Bolton insists, is that "only military action like Israel's 1981 attack on Saddam Hussein's Osirak reactor in Iraq or its 2007 destruction of a Syrian reactor, designed and built by North Korea, can accomplish what is required. Time is terribly short, but a strike can still succeed."

> Such an attack would not need to destroy Iran's entire nuclear infrastructure, but instead, Bolton said, would break key links in the nuclear fuel cycle and set back Iran's program by at least three to five years.

In a March 2, 2015 *Iconoclast* post, on the cusp of PM Netanyahu 's address before a joint meeting of Congress, we noted the Obama Administration allegedly thwarting a Israeli bombing scenario of Iranian facilities, "Did President Obama Invoke the Brzezinski Doctrine to Shoot Down IAF Planes Attacking Iran?" We covered the Brzezinski precedent during the Iraq war and its sequel, the Administration's alleged 2014 response to Netanyahu on a possible Iran nuke attack. We also recounted the 2008 IAF air exercises against Greek Russian supplied S-300 that rattled the IRGC Air Force Commander. We drew attention to the January 2015 visit by the Russian Defense Minister to his opposite number in Tehran with promised delivery of a new version of the Russian advanced air defense system following lifting of a moratorium by Putin. We concluded:

> While the threat of the Brzezinski doctrine allegedly may have been invoked by President Obama to foil an alleged IAF attack in 2014 against Iranian nuclear facilities, the Israelis are prepared in that eventuality to spring some surprises that neither the US nor Iran had planned to counter. These reports reinforce the widening divide that has erupted between the Obama Administration and the Israeli Netanyahu government.

At yesterday's, joint press conference in Jerusalem by US House Speaker with PM Netanyahu the Speaker declared US solidarity with Israel saying:

> The bonds between the United States and Israel are as strong as ever. Our two countries cooperate on many different levels. And while we may have political disagreements from time to time, the bonds between our two

> nations are strong and they're going to continue to be strong,

Israeli PM Netanyahu said:

> " believe it's plain to see that those common values and interests are clearer than ever. The Middle East is plagued by anti-Western, anti-democratic and anti-American extremism. Terrorists brutally behead their shackled captives before video cameras. Despots lead their people in chants of 'Death to America' while building intercontinental ballistic missiles to reach America.

Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Yuval Steinitz spoke today on public radio. The *Times of Israel* noted his message in the faltering P5+1 negotiations, 'Military option is on the table':

Speaking to public radio as crunch talks on Iran's nuclear program continue in Switzerland, Steinitz says Israel would seek to counter any threat through diplomacy and intelligence but "if we have no choice we have no choice… the military option is on the table."

> Asked about possible US objections to Israeli military action, Steinitz pointed to Israel's unilateral attack against the Osirak nuclear reactor in Saddam Hussein's Iraq in 1981.
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> "This operation was not carried out in agreement with the United States," he says.

In contrast the Syrian Al-Kibar reactor raid was cleared with Pentagon under Bush. Given the current Administration's actions, that would not occur given allegations of spying by Israel on US Iran negotiations and the alleged thwarting of an alleged 2014 Iran nuclear facilities strike ordered by Netanyahu. Saudi Arabia has undertaken its own unilateral actions against Iranian –supported air assaults and sea

blockades of Yemen, overthrown by Iran- supported, Houthi rebels for which it gave scant notice to the Administration and Pentagon. Would the Administration adopt the same attitude if Israel undertook an attack on strategic Iranian nuclear facilties? Doubtful at best.

Saudi Arabia, the Emirates in the Gulf Cooperation Council and Egypt wouldn't object to a possible unilateral Israeli limited strategic air assault scenario against key Iranian nuclear facilities. There is speculation that Saudi Arabia may have already made tacit arrangements for use of its airspace and possible emergency landing requirements should Israel launch a conventional air assault. But, as we written previously, Israel has other Arrows in its technological quiver for such an attack. Moreover, unlike the US, Israel maintains strictest secrecy, even following the conclusion of such a daunting operation. You may recall that President Reagan objected to the Osirak reactor raid. Ten years later in a 1991 speech to JINSA, then Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney said:

> "Let me tonight in front of this group thank my good friend David Ivry for the action Israel took in 1981 with respect to the [Osirak] reactor." He added: "There were many times during the course of the build-up in the Gulf and the subsequent conflict that I gave thanks for the bold and dramatic action that had been taken [by Israel] some ten years before."

Stay tuned for developments.