

Lying and Spinning by the Obama White House

What a surprise! It was revealed from the highest level that the Obama White House has been downright deceptive and told the truth it had lied to the American public and media about the nuclear deal with Iran as well as carrying on secret bilateral negotiations with Iran.

In spite of arguments by the Obama administration to the contrary, it has been clear from the beginning that the nuclear deal with Iran, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action signed on July 14, 2015 will not stop the Iranian effort to develop nuclear weapons.

President Barack Obama optimistically sent a message to Iran in March 2015 that a nuclear agreement could lead to a better path, the path of greater opportunities for the Iran people. Those “greater opportunities” materialized on May 8, 2016 with the announcement that Iran had successfully tested a ballistic missile, with a 1,240 mile range, capable of reaching Israel with full accuracy. In spite of UN Security Council Resolution 2231 of July 20, 2015 that calls on Iran not to launch tests of ballistic missiles this was the third test by Iran. One of the two missiles fired in March 2016 carried the slogan, “Israel must be wiped out.”

By chance the ballistic missile testing coincided with the publication of the extraordinary revealing article by David Samuels in the *New York Times* on May 8, 2016 on Ben Rhodes, the Boy Wonder of the Obama White House, the single most influential voice next to the President shaping American foreign policy.

Rhodes is officially the deputy national security adviser for strategic communications in the Obama administration, but he

is really the spin-doctor narrating or fabricating fantasies or half-truths to the mainstream media that he arrogantly seems to despise. The willingness of the media to consume and disseminate the inaccurate information given them has long been known, but the full extent to which the media was spun has now been revealed.

The main revelation was that Rhodes presented the story of negotiations on the nuclear deal with Iran as having started in 2013 due to the fact the moderates in Iran, led by Hassan Rouhani had won the election and became president. The moderates therefore were influential, and were willing to make a deal with the United States. The media believed this though it was disputed by well-informed individuals such as Leon Panetta, former Secretary of Defense, who denied there was any such division in Iran between hard and soft Iranians. Rhodes, with evident contempt, regards previous decision makers on Iran and Iraq, the Washington foreign policy establishment, or the Blob as he calls it that includes Hillary Clinton, as "morons."

But Rhodes's spin was false. The negotiations with Iran had in fact started earlier in 2012 before Rouhani was elected. The White House deliberately spun the view that Iran moderates wanted peace with the U.S. and with Middle East neighbors. What is important is his contempt for the media as well as for the Washington establishment. Rhodes observed that news bureaus today do not have foreign bureaus, as they used to have, and therefore call the White House to find out what is happening.

The result is that most of the news outlets are reporting on world affairs from Washington. Rhodes said the average reporter he talks to is 27 years old, and literally knows nothing. The White House therefore shapes the news and has particular journalists it can use for spreading it and validating what we had given them to say. As Samuels writes." The way in which most Americans have heard the story of the

nuclear deal ...was largely manufactured for the purpose of selling the deal.”

The consensus in the U.S. today is that the Iran deal was a major political blunder. Of the two main adversaries during the discussion, most informed commentators would agree that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who opposed the deal, was right and President Obama was wrong,

The issue is not stated in in Samuel’s article, but it is worth remembering how the media accepted the White House spin on Netanyahu’s speech to Congress on March 3, 2015. Their presentation was that House Speaker John Boehner had invited the Israeli Prime Minister, a foreign leader, to address Congress without first consulting Obama. Boehner suggested that Netanyahu comment on the threats stemming from radical Islam as well as from Iran. It was understood that he would discuss critically and would oppose the Iran negotiations.

Two factors are involved in the White House attempt to prevent Netanyahu from speaking. The first expressed by the media was on the wisdom of the invitation, because Netanyahu was going to criticize the Obama policy. Though most of Congress expressed opposition to the negotiations, there was a genuine difference of opinion on them. President Obama believed and still appears to believe that a deal in which Iran agreed to limit its nuclear program in exchange for relief from sanctions was the way to stop Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. Netanyahu disagreed on the whole idea, and believed Iran was not negotiating in good faith. Iran has a record of secret uranium enrichment facilities, and Israel was in danger. He argued that the sanctions on Iran, the removal of which was the real reason for Iran’s willingness to negotiate, should not be removed, in fact should be increased.

The second factor was the White House spin, that the media highlighted, was that the invitation was unconstitutional. Either Rhodes or someone else in the White House invented

something called the “presidential protocol.” The White House spokesperson though not a scholar, Josh Earnest on January 20, 2015, slightly off the point informed the media that the typical protocol would suggest that “the leader of a country would contact the leader of another country when he is travelling there.”

The media, though few of whom if any were constitutional lawyers, claimed such an invitation had no precedent in American history, Yet, one may disagree on whether the invitation may or may not have been unwise or inopportune, but it was not unconstitutional. There was no breach of any constitutional provision.

The U.S. Constitution of course states that the president shall receive ambassadors and other public ministers, but this has nothing to do with the Netanyahu visit. The Constitution also gives Congress a role in foreign affairs, the power to declare war, to finance government, rejection or approval of treaties. It was therefore perfectly appropriate for Congress to hear the views of foreign leaders, especially one whose country would be affected by the nuclear agreement.

The political argument that Boehner went behind Obama’s back when issuing the invitation is invalidated by the evidence of Rhodes on the White House spin. *The New York Times* incorrectly reported that Netanyahu had accepted the invitation to speak before the White House had been informed. This was not true, and the *NYT* had to issue a correction. Netanyahu did not formally accept the invitation until after the White House had been informed. It was not true, as Earnest had said, that the White House did not know about the invitation until Boehner announced it publically. The spin converted the difference of opinion on an important issue into a diplomatic row with constitutional implications. In reality, Boehner had earlier in 2011 invited Netanyahu to speak, and had informed the White House that never responded.

Many in the media bought the White House spin and deception that to oppose the nuclear deal was to support Israel against the Obama Administration. That made the State of Israel a partisan issue, while in the past support for Israel has been overwhelmingly bipartisan. The White House and the mainstream media owe Netanyahu an apology for their fallacious and dishonorable presentation of a controversial issue.