

[CONGRESS]

BLANK CHECK & BALANCE

An ominous digression in President Bush's surge speech set Iran squarely in American crosshairs—and Washington watches on edge. White House spokesman Tony Snow was swiftly dispatched to smooth feathers: "there are no war preparations underway."

But Congressman Walter Jones isn't taking any chances. The next day, the North Carolinian—a Republican darling once distinguished for rechristening French fries, now fallen for criticizing the Iraq War—introduced a joint resolution requiring congressional approval for military action against Iran.

Jones knows his James Madison—"The power to declare war, including the power of judging the causes of war, is fully and exclusively vested in the legislature. ... The executive has no right, in any case, to decide the question ..." He takes that mandate seriously.

"Absent a national emergency created by attack by Iran, or a demonstrably imminent attack by Iran, upon the United States, its territories, possessions, or its armed forces," his legislation reads, "the president shall consult with Congress, and receive specific authorization ... from Congress, prior to initiating any use of force on Iran."

That affirmation of founding principles should have broad appeal, especially among legislators increasingly aware of having been herded into the last Bush adventure. But as we go to press, just 27 co-sponsors have signed on. The supine remainder signal to the White House that if it wants another war, they won't allow the Constitution to stand in the way.

[NEOCONS]

KIDNAPPING KIRKPATRICK

The *Weekly Standard's* Feb. 5 cover story, an unfinished account of Dr. Jeane Kirkpatrick's "American girlhood"



written by Peter Collier, is nothing short of strange. Certainly Kirkpatrick's Feb. 6 memorial service at the National Cathedral deserved mention, as did the publication in late January of her new book on American foreign policy post-9/11. But the narrative of her quotidian childhood is surely not the stuff of cover stories—unless, of course, the American people have rejected your brand of conservatism and you hope to win them back by appropriating the legacy of one of America's best-known Cold War heroes.

Kirkpatrick's story suits the *Standard* well: bookish Southern Baptist girl rises from humble Middle-American beginnings to international prominence by helping craft the aggressive foreign policy that brought down the Evil Empire. But her usefulness to the magazine ends there.

In the late 1980s and early '90s, Kirkpatrick joined a chorus of neoconservatives—including Irving Kristol—who, in response to the crumbling of communism, promoted a more modest American foreign policy. "It is not the American purpose," she wrote, "to establish 'universal dominance' ... not even the universal dominance of democracy." Thus it's no surprise that, as Norman Podhoretz lamented, "She had serious reservations about the prudence of the Bush Doctrine, which she evidently saw neither as an analogue of the Truman Doctrine nor as a revival of the Reaganite spirit in foreign policy."

These words are from Podhoretz's fine eulogy of Kirkpatrick, which appeared in the Dec. 18 issue of—you guessed it—the *Weekly Standard*. Indeed, the *Standard's* editors would do well to pay more attention to the magazine's back issues. For unlike them, Dr. Kirkpatrick believed that America, "standing tall, talking straight, treating others with respect, and accepting nothing less from them," should first confront its problems "with optimism, initiative, and determination"—not with bravado and bombs.

[ELECTION]

RIGHTING OFF CPAC

Look who's not coming to dinner. Though he has just filed candidacy papers with the FEC, Rudy Giuliani hasn't accepted his invitation to CPAC, the annual D.C. conference where party activists and conservative foot soldiers inspect presidential candidates. CPAC organizer David Keene believes that the reception would have been warm: "Many conservatives admire his performance in NYC on crime, taxes, and after 9/11." Skipping the conference is odder still considering that in CPAC straw polls, Giuliani has landed in the top three spots two years running.

Rudy's accomplishments as a crime-fighting administrator and leader after 9/11 made him a fundraising favorite in the GOP, increasing his presidential profile. The question is whether he can

satisfy the demands of Republican primary voters, particularly on social issues. America's Mayor supports civil unions and abortion rights, but he downplays his differences with the conservative base: "John Roberts and Samuel Alito are exactly the sort of jurists I'll appoint," he stated.

His staff assured the press that Rudy wasn't snubbing conservatives by declining CPAC's invitation, but while social cons get verbal reassurances, another group will get the man himself. Far from the grassroots, Rudy will be making an appearance at the Hoover Institution, a neoconservative think tank. Where a man dines on rubber chicken, there his heart is.

[MEDIA]

HIT AND RUN

TAC noted with interest the "correction" printed in the *New York Times* last week, which read, "A review [about Bill O'Reilly] incorrectly attributed an anti-Semitic euphemism to Patrick J. Buchanan. ... Neither the reviewer, Jacob Heilbrunn, nor the editors of the Book Review have found evidence that Buchanan has ever denounced 'rootless cosmopolitans.' Some of Buchanan's ideological opponents have used the phrase in characterizing his views, and the reviewer wrongly assumed from their writings that Buchanan had used it himself."

For a war-mongering neocon or fence-straddling neoliberal, punditry must come very easy. When you want to take a shot at someone more prescient and courageous than yourself about vital matters like whether to take the country to war, just invent some discrediting quote, attach it to your target, and the *New York Times* will publish it. If someone calls you on your fiction, well, as the "Saturday Night Live" character used to say, "Never mind." Something of the slur will stick anyway.

[CULTURE]

SAFETY BLITZ

Good game or not, the Super Bowl brings Americans together more than any event in the year. Even the harpies who used to tout bogus statistics linking domestic violence to viewing the contest have given it a rest. Appreciation of pro football unites us—rich and poor, black and white, Left and Right—to the point that it may be the single most American thing we have in common.

That's why two stories about retired players, reported at surprising length in the *New York Times*, attracted the attention they did. One was of Andre Waters, a former Eagles safety who committed suicide in his early forties; an autopsy showed his brain with advanced Alzheimer's symptoms. A second was the story of Patriots linebacker Ted Johnson, all of 34, who lives with the symptoms of early Alzheimer's.

That pro football takes a toll on the body is well known, but the trade of creaky joints in middle age for the joy of being well-paid gladiators in their twenties seems a fair one. Cognitive dysfunction is another matter. Experts agree that the brain injuries come from suffering successive concussions—players who get their "bell rung" and then return too quickly to action. But the sport has long put a premium on toughness, on getting back in the game.

There is no better answer than increased medical supervision: empowering team physicians to keep players off the field, stripping coaches of some authority. Given the stature of the modern coach and football's macho aura, such modifications will at first seem a kind of sacrilege. But they are better than the alternatives: revered pigskin warriors reduced not to walking with canes but to senility or worse—fear of which could strip the zest from a national pastime. ■

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Who Will Stop The Next War?

If Americans sickened by the carnage of Iraq wish to stop an even more disastrous war on Iran, they had best get cracking.

For the “On-to-Baghdad!” boys are back, warning us that the only way to prevent an atom bomb from being detonated in an American city is to attack and destroy Iran’s nuclear sites. And the forces needed to execute an attack are moving into place. Army Gen. John Abizaid has been replaced as CENTCOM commander by Adm. “Fox” Fallon, commander of U.S. forces in the Pacific, who knows little about counterinsurgency but a lot about co-ordinating air strikes.

The carrier group *Stennis* is headed for the Gulf to join the *Eisenhower*. Minesweepers are headed for the Strait of Hormuz. American fighter-bombers have returned to Incirlik. Iranian officials have been seized in Iraq. Patriot missiles are being moved into Kuwait and Qatar. Why all this firepower—to secure Anbar province and Sadr City?

Bush’s anti-Iran rhetoric has been ratcheted up. Announcing his surge, Bush interjected that Tehran “is providing material support for attacks on American troops. ... [W]e will seek out and destroy the networks providing advanced weaponry and training to our enemies in Iraq.” This threat was followed by shoot-to-kill orders to U.S. troops encountering Iranians aiding the insurgency.

And Democrats are not going to let Bush get to their right. At the Herzliya Conference, John Edwards said that keeping Iran from nuclear weapons “is the greatest challenge of our generation.” “To ensure that Iran never gets nuclear weapons, we need to keep all options on the table. Let me reiterate—all options.”

At AIPAC, Hillary echoed Edwards: “In dealing with this threat ... no option

can be taken off the table. ... We need to use every tool about our disposal including ... the threat and use of military force.”

To Mitt Romney, this was wimpish. For Hillary had said she favors “engagement” with Iran. Roared Romney to Hill Republicans, “[W]e don’t need a listening tour about Iran. ... Someone who wants to engage Iran displays a troubling timidity toward a terrible threat of a nuclear Iran.”

Anybody think that Giuliani and McCain will let Edwards, Hillary, or Mitt be more menacing toward Tehran than they?

Consider the correlation of forces behind a new war.

If Bush goes home with Iran’s nuclear program not shut down, his legacy will be Iraq and a failed presidency. The Bush Doctrine—no nukes in rogue states—will have been defied by Pyongyang and Tehran.

Israel wants Iran attacked yesterday. The neocons need a new war to make America forget the disaster that they wrought in Iraq. Democratic candidates must be seen as hawkish as Giuliani and McCain. And the deadline for Iran to comply with UN Security Council directives to halt its enrichment of uranium is Feb. 23. What then is holding us back from war?

It is the realization, even on the part of the noisiest hawks, that war on Iran could precipitate a disaster worse than defeat in Iraq. A Shia uprising against U.S. troops could turn the Green Zone into Dien Bien Phu. Attacks on tankers and pipelines could send oil to \$200 a

barrel. America would have no international support and would receive virtually universal condemnation.

And like the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, bombing Iran could unite Iranians behind their rulers. Shia insurgencies could be ignited against Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. Hezbollah could bring down the Lebanese government and attack Americans in the Middle East and perhaps here in the United States.

And what would an attack accomplish besides setting back an Iranian nuclear-enrichment program that by most reports is a bust?

What is the threat? Iran has no missiles that can reach us, no atom bombs. Though the Mullahs have been in power 27 years, they have yet to launch their first war. The war they fought was in self-defense. They can no more want a Sunni-Shia regional war than we, for they would be in the isolated minority. They want the Taliban kept out of Kabul and Iraq to remain united under a Shia majority, as do we.

It is said that we cannot negotiate with men responsible for the Khobar Towers. But Bush negotiated with Muammar al-Gaddafi, who was responsible for Pan Am 103, and Gaddafi agreed to forego nuclear weapons. Sanctions were lifted and relations restored.

If FDR can talk to Stalin, and Nixon to Mao, and Bush to the North Vietnamese (who tortured John McCain), why can’t we talk to Mullahs who held 52 Americans hostage for a year?

Rep. Walter Jones (R-N.C.) has introduced a resolution declaring that in the absence of an imminent threat or an attack upon us from Iran, President Bush has no authority to attack Iran.

Next step: get Chuck Hagel and Jim Webb to sign on. ■