

**Iran's Terrorist Proxy:
Penetrating the United States with Nuclear Material as the Trigger to Setting
off a US Media Explosion, Is a Reality.**

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Abstract

Iran's Terrorist Proxy: The possibility of penetrating the United States with nuclear material as the trigger, setting off a US media explosion, is a reality.

The US, as the dominant global force, has influenced the development of telecommunications, satellite, TV, internet, and wireless technologies. With the advent of nuclear arms, primed by the media threatening annihilation and destruction of the world, conditions are ripe for a catastrophic terrorist event. The impact of global nuclear terrorism to the citizens of the world has become a perceived reality.

Iran's aggressive pursuit of a nuclear program has reignited the global media. The ability to initiate terrorist events using Hezbollah as a proxy in far-reaching areas such as South America has been demonstrated. Most recently, the narco-terrorist connections with FARC, Sinaloa, and Los Zetas, who control the travel routes, connections, and capabilities of entering the United States, has further expanded Iran's reach. This global network now presents a plausible case for Hezbollah's entry into the United States.

Al-Qaida has demonstrated that media can be the ultimate weapon of the terrorist. By coupling the media with terrorists having access to nuclear material, a plan for casting widespread global fear is complete. This paper analyzes the plausibility of Hezbollah obtaining nuclear material from Iran, routing it undetected into the United States via South America, and deploying it as a trigger to activate a US media explosion. Unleashing the perception of nuclear fallout within the United States will create complete chaos and mass hysteria, having far-reaching effects well beyond the nuclear material itself. The concept of safety and security, as people know it, will be changed forever in the minds of citizens.

Introduction

The US, as the dominant global force, has greatly influenced the development of telecommunications, satellite, TV, internet, and wireless technologies since the end of WWII. With the advent of nuclear arms during this period of history, primed by the media threatening annihilation and destruction of the world, future conditions have been established in the United States for a catastrophic terrorist event. The impact of global nuclear terrorism to the citizens of the world has become a perceived reality. The pundits, media and purported experts on Iran have been creating global hype over the Iranian nuclear program and its potentially devastating

Iran's Terrorist Proxy

effects on the balance of power in the Middle East. The current rhetoric captured by the media implies that Iran possesses the will to initiate a "first strike" against Israel, the United States, as well as others, and that developing a nuclear program is for this precise purpose. Both the United States and Israel possess nuclear weapons of equal capability. This scenario harkens back to the Cold War era when the United States and Russia were playing the "first strike" game. Imagine for a minute that Iran has established the prerequisites for a much more sinister plot and this plot is obfuscated by the doomsday media projections. The prevailing base of scholars seems to agree with this doomsday supposition however, they are failing to evaluate Iran's historical actions of warfare in the proper context. Iran has demonstrated a persistent will to attack others by employing guerilla tactics, using proxies as a means to their political ends. Iran does not confront its enemies head-on. Iran's aggressive pursuit of a nuclear enrichment program has reignited the global media, setting the stage, strategically, for Iran to strike. Iran's ability to initiate terrorist events using HezbAllah as a proxy in such far-reaching areas as South America has been demonstrated in numerous cases. Most recently, HezbAllah's relationship with the narco-terrorist groups, FARC, Sinaloa, and Los Zetas, who control the travel routes, connections, and capabilities of entering the United States, has further expanded Iran's reach. This global network now presents a case for Iran's entry into this country. Al-Qa'ida has demonstrated to the world, proper use of the media, given their appetite for the next big story, can be the ultimate weapon of the terrorist. By coupling the media's drive with terrorists having access to nuclear material, a plan for casting widespread global fear is complete.

Barring the incorrect use of terminology, Presidential Candidate Governor Mitt Romney hit the mark with his comments in a 17 May 2012 press statement, saying "If I were Iran,... a crazed fanatic, I'd say let's get a little fissile material to Hezbollah, have them carry it to Chicago or some other place [and]... let off a dirty bomb" (Cirincione, J., 'Dirty Bomb, Muddy Thinking', par. 1). His remark is much closer to the ground truth than many people care to acknowledge. The general concern reflected by this statement is sound, possible, and valid and should not be dismissed as the article indicates. The article focuses on discrediting the choice of words by Governor Romney in speaking about a "dirty bomb"; it additionally causes grave harm by implying that exposure of radiological (nuclear) material to the US population from Iran through HezbAllah is not likely. Well, they missed the point completely. It is not only plausible but becoming more probable as Israel continues its caustic rhetoric about the Iranian nuclear program; the US engages the global community to step up sanctions; and displaying verbal inclinations for potential intervention into Syria, and suddenly Iran begins to feel politically cornered. This paper analyzes the plausibility of HezbAllah obtaining nuclear material from Iran, routing it undetected into the United States via South America, and deploying it as a psychological trigger to activate a US media explosion. Unleashing the perception of nuclear fallout within the United States would create complete chaos and mass hysteria, having far-reaching effects well beyond the nuclear material itself. The concept of safety and security, as people know it, will be changed forever in the minds of citizens. The five components of plausibility will be assessed against the possible plot and political goals to be gained. The media environment, the will to act, access to the nuclear materials, the existence of a network for transfer, and the tipping point for action all form a chain of events potentially leading to a catastrophic terror attack against US citizens. The concept being presented in this research is specific to the terminology of a radiological dispersal weapon (RDW) and should not be confused with a radiological dispersal device (dirty bomb) or a nuclear weapon, although a "dirty bomb" is certainly not out of the question. The media has floated many stories in the past sixty

plus years, intermixing many of the terms, which have added to the creation of a false baseline of fear among average citizens of the world. Every effort has been made by the authors to maintain accuracy and clarity within the nuclear science discussions.

Media: Post-World War II Era

With efforts to unlock the power of atomic energy during the later part of WWII between Germany and the United States, none knew then of the global impact. Soon after the fall of Germany to the Allied Powers, the United States unleashed the power of the atom by dropping two atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima, Japan. The destruction was mind-altering, and through the media, citizens worldwide were led to believe that they now had something to fear more ominous than war itself, namely, the annihilation of the human race and destruction of the world. The nuclear arms race spread quickly to Europe and Asia with the media seizing upon the fears of all citizens to predict the future if others discovered the way to unleash the power of the atom. The story of atomic energy may be considered the discovery of the century for the human race; however, it also brings with it the potential for untold evil. Russia, having witnessed considerable destruction during WWII, vowed to pursue atomic energy with the idea it would never again have to live through the horrors brought to the country by Germany. Russia became the new threat to the West and the rest of the world as the Soviet Empire became the next in a growing list of countries to eventually embrace nuclear technology. Middle-aged United States citizens can still recall, with perfect clarity, their experience of participating in civil defense drills as children. The act of diving underneath desks while under a simulated nuclear attack could save them from destruction. The prevailing ignorance of nuclear energy among citizens at that time is evident and genuinely ridiculous when the stories are told today. The mass media had convinced North America of the untold evil that nuclear energy would unleash on the world, further indoctrinating citizens through insistence on building personal bomb shelters in their basements and backyards. Stocking plenty of emergency foodstuffs and other items would help them survive a nuclear attack. These ideas coupled with information provided by atomic research scientists of the time made its way into mass media and into universities as well as primary and secondary schools, promoting the false idea of survivability.

The media, in its zeal to publish the story confused American citizens with their lack of understanding by trying to reconcile both ends of the spectrum of nuclear science for all citizens to comprehend, namely, the annihilation of human beings and reliable, inexpensive electricity for the world. Citizens were left to decide whether or not the power of the atom could really be a peaceful proposition because releasing this energy was capable of untold destruction. According to Brown (1988) in his journal article, he stated the following: “Mass media in the post war period (1945-1949) promoted a future filled with assurances of a peaceful world under the influence of the United Nations” (p. 72). Brown further expounds on the fears of the public in the following excerpt: “When the horizon looked gray in the relations between the Soviet Union and the United States.... The educational writers [devised] a new slogan, the “peaceful atom.” This new approach... [appeared] to be an attempt to lessen public fear” (p. 72). Perhaps this slogan also carried with it subtleties for maintaining supremacy in the expanding global nuclear arms race. Convincing the public to accept the idea that the atom has a productive and peaceful purpose aside from simply annihilating human beings worldwide never effectively achieved the original purpose of the “peaceful atom” concept. The horrific destruction to Hiroshima and Nagasaki was permanently seared into the minds of all citizens, least among them Americans.

Iran's Terrorist Proxy

Japan, the United States, and the world realized that the potential of mega-death from a nuclear device was no longer only just a test in the Nevada desert. The release of a single atomic bomb now represented a new level of fear and terror never previously known. The media capturing human beings' first use of an atomic weapon was now a powerful reminder to citizens to pass on the visual horror to future generations. Szasz and Takechi (2007) state the following: "They... [see] themselves as victims of this new terror—the nuclear bomb" (p. 729) and wanted assurances that humans would never again consider doing something so reprehensible. Capturing the deaths of hundreds of thousands on film has permanently created a reflexive response from all citizens even to the mention of the word nuclear. Using nuclear energy for peaceful purposes remains incomprehensible to average global citizens today.

In this aftermath, the media stirred the minds of all citizens with questions, concerns, and thoughts of the way the human race would continue, given the emergence of nuclear science. Opening "Pandora's box" presented the world with a perceived black and white dilemma, that is, annihilation or survivability. According to Szasz and Takechi, "Nearly every person that was aware of the war and its effects realized that civilization had entered into a new and irreversible age. The atom needed to be researched further to be understood [,] so it could be controlled" (p. 729-30). The authors also stated the following: "From that time forward, the United States media from the newspapers of well known publications of the New York Times to the least known local township paper, were trying to comprehend and then explain the historical event to the readership".(p. 729-30). Chancellor Robert Hutchins of the University of Chicago asked the question that everyone was pondering, "Gentlemen, is the atomic bomb good or bad for the world?" (p.729-30). With the discovery of the atom's power and its eventual application for generating electricity, the question remains, nonetheless, why nuclear energy has not become more widely accepted over the years. Global governments' attempts to educate their citizens on the use of nuclear energy as a peaceful alternative, continues to be a failure. Charles Imbrecht made the point, in the Los Angeles Times, some years ago on the reliability of nuclear power plants; concern remains with California's San Onofre nuclear power plant. The state will not license any new plants until a safer method is developed for disposal of nuclear waste. The wait is anticipated to be well into the 21st century (Rosenblatt, R. A., 1990, par 11). The question may not be whether nuclear technology can be used for peaceful purposes, but whether it is safe, further exacerbating any attempt to convince American citizens that nuclear energy is good for everyone.

The pursuit of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes will most likely never be a trusted road by the general public despite the public-relations efforts of the government. This dilemma is a testament to the power of the media and its efforts to create a lasting impression, whether real or perceived. The global community's political position, promulgated ad nauseam by the media, regarding Iran's pursuit of nuclear technology as a means of producing weapons grade plutonium is one side. The other side is the perceived false insistence by Iran on their research in the nuclear sciences as only a means of generating electricity. This continuing conflict of messages maintains a divergence in global thought, which originally emerged at the end of WWII. This competing rhetoric is simply the battle for the minds of global citizens as the media insists they rely on them for truthful information about the world. The latest pursuit of nuclear energy by Iran has re-engaged the media, returning memories of WWII destruction to the minds of veterans and once again solidifying the same false fears of nuclear energy in the minds of the next generation with the same old hype.

Media Hype

The news of the last couple years touting Iran's progress on a nuclear program as the next significant threat to the United States and the world is reminiscent of "Cold War" media hype. The claim by Iran that its pursuit of nuclear research is focused on peaceful purposes is not presented in an unbiased manner to the world. Television outlets, newspapers, magazines and pundits in an effort to be the first to predict the outcome, have all facilitated the further demise of the "peaceful atom" concept in the minds of today's global community. Claiming that Iran's pursuit is actually directed at achieving a nuclear weapon is presented by the media as a foregone conclusion, triggering an emotional and irrational mindset of old in the average citizen, namely, the fear of potential annihilation and destruction of the human race. As discussed earlier, the vivid images of nuclear flashes within the earth's atmosphere from Nagasaki and Hiroshima to the numerous tests conducted by India, Pakistan, the United States, and the former Soviet Union are pulled from the media archives. According to research conducted by Kelton Research for National Geographic, the two worries of surveyed Americans revealed significant concern of 55% fearing a terrorist attack and 14% fearing nuclear fallout (Katel, 2013, p. 672). Based on the timing of this research, citizens may have considered nuclear fallout a remote possibility as the result of not understanding the potential delivery methods for nuclear materials. They were presumably thinking nuclear bomb conceived at the end of WWII or radiological dispersal device (dirty bomb) which has come into our consciousness only in the past decade. The words used by the media are of no consequence, as the public is engulfed with visual stimuli of nuclear blasts as the saying goes, "A picture is worth a thousand words." Lee's (2007) research on the disagreement among experts regarding a dirty bomb and its impact cites Pincock's argument that "the fear of dirty bombs is overblown, as no one knows what would happen, because no one apparently has ever set one off" (p. 3). The idea that nuclear fallout can only come from a nuclear weapon or radiological dispersal device (dirty bomb) is a misperception embedded in the minds of citizens as history's only examples of nuclear weapons ever being used against a population center are overused by the media.

A radiological dispersal weapon (RDW) deployed within the United States would be the trigger, igniting a chain of events in American society whereby the physical destruction would be miniscule in comparison to the second and third order effects. This type of terrorist event could easily exceed the effects of the Twin Towers on American society. Lee strengthens this point by referring to Charles Ferguson's findings that "dirty bombs serve more as weapons of mass disruption rather than mass destruction. Ferguson finds the devices are primarily a means to spread panic and fear rather than death and destruction" (p. 3). Radiological dispersal devices, as referred to by experts in the field are also called "dirty bombs." They are normally constructed of conventional explosives and a radioactive (nuclear) material such as noted by Lee in the following excerpt: "Cobalt 60, cesium 137 or iridium are powerful radioactive elements that are much more commonly available than most people believe" (p.13). The context of this research refers to a radiological dispersal weapon which contains a delivery method, other than conventional explosives, and a radioactive (nuclear) material with the majority of the material emitting alpha particle radiation. Panic and fear serve as the primary destructive force to the intended victims. Furthermore a free and open press, with freedom of information flow coupled with today's social media and instant connectivity exacerbate reactions. The media of today, given the right story, is similar to a contagion that could spread uncontrollably. The concept of a simple radiological dispersal weapon is not difficult to understand, assembly can be quick and the materials are not difficult to collect nor do they draw attention to their potential nefarious

Iran's Terrorist Proxy

use. Terrorist plots, when overly reported by the media and their doomsday predictions, create irrational perceptions of fear that impact the United States' way of life. Fortunately, the media has not had any catastrophic terrorist event since 11 September 2001 that would cause a "viral" spread of information lacking detail and clarity as well as triggering reactive hysteria and panic among average citizens. "We give comfort to our enemies," said Charles E. Allen, a 40-year C.I.A. veteran who served as the top intelligence official at the Department of Homeland Security from 2007 to 2009 when discussing the way the media actually helps the United States' enemies. Exaggerated news coverage and commentary, he said, "Creates an atmosphere of tension and fear... and to me that's exactly the wrong way to go" (Scott, January 13, 2010). The reporting of incidents from every possible angle, filled with supposition and agenda driven comments establishes a desensitization syndrome among citizens. Is it plausible that human ears are now deaf, reducing our conscious thought to the early warnings of terrorist threats? A country of citizens in information overload sets the strategic environment in favor of Iran's HezbAllah and a future terrorist event.

Terrorists strive to generate real fear in the minds of a third party, which is then used as leverage for and against the actions of the primary target. Genuine fear can easily be created through false information as the average citizen rarely questions media reporting. Average citizens are unpredictable to the terrorist; the exception is their reaction to media reporting, as Orson Welles "War of the Worlds" radio program demonstrated. This program instilled a fear in all citizens so real that massive panic and civil disruption occurred across the United States. Americans thought the country was being invaded by aliens. With the outbreak of anthrax cases reported in the media, it created a psychiatric syndrome referred to as "psychogenic illness." Mass psychogenic illness triggered by false information caused real symptoms. Carney (2003) wrote in the Los Angeles Times that the war of the destruction of the world was witnessed through the ears. Orson Welles said of the broadcast on 30 October 1938, "We annihilated the world before your very ears..." (Par. 2-3). The famous radio program in Grover's Mill, New Jersey created a sensational and unexpected panic among thousands who believed it was real. This media broadcast dramatized the extremely powerful potential of this relatively new medium. The power of information, its reach and capability, has increasingly been realized as technologies are now a part of daily living, especially with the growing applications of Smartphone technology. The realities that the quality of life for global citizens is now a function of information and news, equates to real-time information reaching almost everyone, instantaneously. With little validation or verification of facts, citizens are left to separate fact from fiction and then simply react. The reasoning behind rapid media reporting is most likely ego-driven; every news agency wants to be first to publish the story; however, releasing incomplete or incorrect information in an age of instantaneous communications will surely have devastating effects on the American way of life. Media reporting by means of sensationalism and marketing has affected the mindset of the general population and potentially the national security agencies in the way they perceive the potential for terrorist events. If truth be known, terrorist organizations certainly consider this instant communication as an ace in their hands. Americans have "come to expect news that... entertains, frightens or flatters preconceived notions" (Ehrenreich and Gitlin, 1993, Abstract, par. 3). The media of the past were objective and insightful, providing facts that potentially dispelled myths and preconceived notions. The current media trend, however, is using the concept of marketing, one of sensationalism, opinions, and repetition to gain readers' attention. Reporting the same news story through numerous outlets, all using the same words and substance, convinces people to believe and react based on

the content of the news. Known as media hype, this non-objective, agenda-driven marketing of news has created a groupthink population that effectively destroys creative thinking and individual responsibility; this kind of thinking spells disastrous consequences in the face of genuine threats of terrorism to national security.

Iran

US analysts are potentially overlooking the most critical point regarding Iran's nuclear program. It has politicians, global experts and pundits focused on the efforts to enrich uranium to ninety percent. This rhetoric is feeding the media frenzy, with indicators to Iran's presumed development of a nuclear weapon to attack the United States or Israel, and the media has seized upon this moment and spun numerous stories of pending doom. One substantial discrepancy exists, though; historical fact about Iran's perceived aggressive nature tells a completely different story. Consider for a moment that Iran could use its enriched uranium stockpile for more insidious purposes. Approximately fifty percent of its current capacity in twenty percent enriched uranium has been converted to powder form to be used in the research reactor as stated in the following excerpt from The Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation website: "As of November 2012, Iran has produced 232.8 [kilograms]... of 20% uranium...96.3 [kilograms]... has been converted to powder for the production of fuel plates for the Tehran Research Reactor... effectively leaving 134.9 kilograms of 20% enriched uranium for further enrichment" (Sec 3, The Uranium, par. 1), meaning this enriched uranium powder could be transported via a known network and used as the primer for a terrorist attack.

Historical Perspective of Warfare

The following historical facts deliver a different picture regarding a possible "first strike" attack by Iran as touted by politicians and pundits the world over and mimicked by the media, even if it does obtain a nuclear weapon. Iran will presumably not go head-to-head with other countries in this manner, least of all the United States or Israel and thus, a factual-based assessment sets the potential risk for a "first strike" attack by Iran as extremely low, almost non-existent with Iran's current leaders. The fact exists that the Islamic Republic of Iran as it is known today, has no relevant history of a "first strike" against another nation since its acceptance as an official state by the League of Nations, after World War I, as indicated in the following excerpt on the About Archeology website: "The Persian Empire included all of what is now Iran, and in fact Persia was the official name of Iran until 1935" (Persian Empire, par. 1), more than seventy-five years ago. The last known "first strike" offensive by Iran harkens back much further in history, when Iran was part of Persia. Then the actual offensive was specific to economic purposes and did not have any political implications attached to its positioning among the existing regimes of the world. All aggressive actions taken by Iran today are centered on political reasons. The last known "first strike" offensive against another country by Persia (now Iran) happened more than 225 years ago when Persia attacked the Ottoman Turks in what is now Iraq, at Basra, as noted on the Modern World History Facts on File, inc. website: "Nadir Shah attempted to take the city several times between 1733 and 1736.... The city's luck ran out... in 1775, when Karim Khan Zand, ruler of Iran [Persia]...laid siege to the city. Basra surrendered to Zand's Iranian [Persian] forces in 1776" (Basra and The Ottoman Empire, par. 5). Therefore, once again the question remains whether or not Iran will blatantly attack the US or Israel with a

Iran's Terrorist Proxy

nuclear-tipped ballistic missile? This question can be answered as almost nil for the foreseeable future.

Militarily, Iran recognizes it does not possess the troop strength, equipment or current knowledge base to consider upsetting the global community and enduring the wrath of an offensive onslaught by a coalition of militaries. Iran has no relevant history of planning experience, either, in this regard dating back at least two-and-a-quarter centuries. Some people would argue that the Iran-Iraq war gave this country the necessary skills to initiate an attack against another country; however, this argument is as misplaced as the current thinking that Iran has the capability, capacity and willpower to execute a "first strike." This thinking blinds the global community to other possibilities by continuously presenting the most dangerous option, yet factually, the least likely. The idea of focusing on this one option goes against Sun Tzu's infamous historical perspective of "know thy enemy." The United States must begin to factor into its decision matrix the historical perspective of Iranian warfare and discontinue building global credibility in the Iranian "first strike" idea. Ignoring the twenty-first century guerilla-warfare tactics already demonstrated time and again will expose citizens presumably to another successful catastrophic terrorist event occurring on United States soil.

Nuclear Program

The item of greatest concern within the Iranian nuclear program in the context of this paper is simply the excessive supply of uranium in Iran's possession. The ability of the world to monitor this alleged supply is outlined in the following excerpt from the World Nuclear Association's website: "In February 2013 AEOI announced that uranium resources had increased to 4000 tU from 1527 tonnes. No details were given" (sec. 3, Uranium Resources and Mining, par. 5), thus making the case for the potential loss of nuclear material. In addition, the following statistics require closer analysis regarding the reason why so much uranium is required in a peaceful electrical-generation program given other nations have offered to provide the necessary material to run Iran's nuclear reactors, wholly or partially. Expanding on the idea of excess uranium supply, a calculation using data from the World-Nuclear Organization website to approximate totals is presented as follows: One tonne of uranium is converted to approximately twenty-five kilograms of twenty percent enriched uranium. Doing the math on known inventory of uranium equates to tens of thousands of kilograms of enriched uranium which could last, presumably for hundreds of years in fueling the Tehran research reactor and others being considered for future construction. The following excerpt from the World Nuclear Association's website also highlights Iran's stockpiling: "A uranium conversion plant (UCF) at the Isfahan Nuclear Technology Centre [with a]...200 t/yr capacity and started up in 2004. It is under IAEA safeguards and the IAEA reported that to February 2009 it had produced...541 tonnes of UF₆" (sec. 4, Other Parts of Fuel Cycle, par. 1). This conversion plant manufactures the uranium chemical compound called uranium hexafluoride 6, which is then processed into enriched uranium. With current supplies of uranium in the thousands of tonnes, Iran has more than enough nuclear material to supply all of its reactors now and in the future with a surplus that could go elsewhere without the world being any wiser.

Iran's production of research reactor fuel plates requires the use of twenty percent enriched uranium ground into a powder form. This nuclear material could potentially be employed in nefarious ways. Turning the enriched uranium into powder form is a necessary step in the production of fuel plates but there is also room for concern. This powder is extremely

difficult to manage as a known quantity and thus can easily go missing. Iran's continued growth of its nuclear program in expanding its requirement for fuel plates, thus more powdered enriched uranium as outlined by the World Nuclear Association's website in the following excerpt: "In June 2010 the AEOI announced that... [Iran] planned to build four new research reactors for production of medical isotopes.... This plan would justify production of more 20%-enriched uranium at Natanz, which gives rise to international concern" (sec. 5, Research and Development, par. 5). A potential deception plan may exist; the perception of peaceful nuclear operations appearing to be the real situation yet the current uranium supply just does not make sense. This conflicting information creates a gap in the global understanding of a peaceful nuclear program and clouds the insight of experts, leading the media to mimic the sensationalistic ideas being presented. Iran is forging ahead with additional research reactors requiring more fuel plates, which means more uranium and thus more enriched uranium powder, continuing to increase the potential for greater loss of nuclear material. Iran has the supply of uranium ore from its own mining efforts and its processing plant to make yellowcake by powdering this ore. Either the powdered uranium ore or the powdered enriched uranium used in the production of fuel plates will be suitable for creating an untenable environment in the United States if any of this material is able to be distributed across any part of the country. Transport method of either material is beyond the scope of this paper; although technology exists to perform it safely, it is potentially the only obstacle preventing an immediate attack on the United States.

The world recognizes that Iran is undertaking a concerted effort to develop a nuclear program. As Iran has stated consistently, its nuclear program exists for peaceful purposes. The country's rhetoric has held to this theme, and perhaps Iran is equating peaceful purposes with having no intention of initiating a direct nuclear attack. The enrichment process as described in the following excerpt from The Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation website presents the case for confusion: "The IAEA has noted in successive reports since 2010 that Iran has succeeded in enriching uranium to about 20%, far above the 3-5% necessary to fuel a civilian reactor, but still below the 90% needed for a weapon" (sec. 3, The Uranium, par. 1), allowing the media to create the perception that twenty percent enrichment eventually leads to nuclear weapons grade material thus generating fear and misunderstanding among the citizens of the world with its reporting. Because Iran enriches to twenty percent does not equate to a direct connection to nuclear weapons. Significant decision-making is required to move forward with highly enriched uranium processing as well as the science and technology required. In this stated case, "red lines" of the global community will be crossed. Enriching uranium to twenty percent is a plausible requirement given the research reactors to be used for medical isotopes. Enriching uranium to ninety percent or greater has only one purpose, to build a nuclear weapon. Given Iran's history of guerilla warfare, stonewalling the global community may simply be a strategic calculation to keep the world guessing and using the media lens to focus the world's attention on the twenty-first century developments of a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. It also facilitates small actions that go unnoticed, such as movement of nuclear material through its established terrorist network.

Global Network (HezbAllah)

The global network has been established for the purposes of continuing to inflame the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a political means to removing US influence from the region as

Iran's Terrorist Proxy

outlined in the following excerpt from the United States Institute of Peace website Peace Brief: "The Iranian weaponry used in the conflict [in Lebanon]...indicat[es] Iran's continuing interest in [HezbAllah] as a proxy militia...exert[ing] pressure on Israel. Increased interaction with the United States, given its strong alliance with Israel, could make it politically costly for Iran" (Grace and Mandelbaum, 2006, par. 10). Iran has demonstrated a willingness to gamble when it comes to fulfilling its desires, and conducting a terrorist attack on US soil would be the greatest gamble of all. The successful outcome would need to be greater than the risk; removing the United States from Middle Eastern affairs, similar to pulling out of Beirut in 1983 after the barracks bombing, would be the holy grail of successful outcomes. It is an understood fact by the global community at large that Iran has an extremely close connection with the group it helped to create and now supports. As outlined in the following excerpt from the Jewish Virtual Library website, the formation of HezbAllah is directly a result of Iranian actions:

"[HezbAllah]'s origins and ideology stem from the Iranian Revolution.... The organization itself started in 1982 as part of the Iranian government's Revolutionary Guard Corps.... [Its] doctrine included the use of terror as a means of attaining political objectives" (sec. 2, Founding and First Lebanon War, par. 1). History is replete with examples of Iran supporting HezbAllah in the conduct of terrorist attacks as the following excerpt from the Jewish Virtual Library website confirms this observation: "[HezbAllah] was suspected of involvement in numerous anti-US and anti-Israeli terrorist attacks. The organization was responsible for the suicide truck bombings of the U.S. Embassy and U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut in October 1983" (sec. 9, Activities Around the World, par. 2), which provides solid evidence that HezbAllah has the determination to conduct guerilla warfare against the United States when doing Iran's bidding.

Iran's proxy of choice is HezbAllah. Most importantly, HezbAllah provides plausible deniability as the political escape route from retribution by the global community. Iran will use a proxy to attack the US and other nation's interests if it serves the country's foreign policy objectives. The extended network of Iran is substantial as The Investigative Project on Terrorism website illustrates in the following excerpt: "In Africa and central Asia, the network [HezbAllah] has been caught red handed by authorities plotting attacks against Americans. The Shi'ite network can be directed against Western targets around the globe, should it be ordered to do so by Iran" (Lappin, 2013, par. 11), giving Iran the luxury of effectively threatening the world's superpower as it chooses. Most recently Iran has conducted an operation inside the United States. The following excerpt from The Investigative Project on Terrorism website sketches this recent bold attempt by Iran to conduct a terrorist attack on US soil: "Iran's willingness to employ violence abroad came to international attention with the arrest of an Iranian-American citizen, who was caught attempting to recruit Mexican drug cartels to blow up a Washington D.C. restaurant, and assassinate the Saudi ambassador" (Lappin, 2013, par. 31). This proof establishes Iran's global terror network as complete – now it can act with impunity. Iran created HezbAllah initially as a conduit for executing its foreign policy in the Levant and holding leverage over the Lebanese government on behalf of Iran's Syrian ally. Through HezbAllah, Iran continues to leverage the government of Lebanon to assist Syria in continuing to present a viable threat against Israel. The intent of using proxies has evolved in such a way that Iran now sees its use as furthering its efforts to establish itself as a hegemon in the Arab world as outlined by the following quote from the Jewish Virtual Library website: "[HezbAllah's] ...main goal is the establishment of an Islamic government across the Arab world that will "liberate" Jerusalem and the entire area of the present-day State of Israel" (sec.1, Introduction, par. 2). This ideology is reflective of Iran's insidious influence. If it is seen as the destroyer of Israel, it

could rally the Muslim world around it, even though the Shi'a – Sunna schism will never fully allow Iran to achieve dominance similar to that of the Ottoman Empire four hundred years ago. Iran believes the real obstacle to its possible achievement of hegemony is the United States; hence, the concept presented in this paper has very real possibilities...

Drug Cartel Connections (South America)

A number of terrorist groups have similar goals and objectives when it comes to attacking the United States, but Al-Qa'ida was the first to take devastating action against the United States. According to Levitt (2003), Al-Qa'ida has become an organization that now provides training to mid and low-level operatives. The loose cooperative relationship with groups like HezbAllah works well because these groups assume all the risk. Terrorist operations have become apparent over the past decade in the lawless tri-border area (TBA) in South America, which is comprised of the adjoining borders of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay. Levitt mentions unnamed American and European intelligence sources describing Al-Qa'ida's relationships with other terrorist organizations. HezbAllah is "increasingly teaming up with al [Qa'ida] on logistics and training for terrorist operations... [this being] the most worrisome of al [Qa'ida]'s new...tactical, ad-hoc alliances" (Policy Brief #698, p. 761, par. 4). Narco-terrorists supply the product, or the medium of barter, which could be weapons or service-for-hire. Since following the money has come to the forefront of tracking terrorist group activities, other mediums of exchange now frequently occur in deals between terrorist organizations and profit-driven crime syndicates. It's difficult to "follow the money" when money isn't being used as payment for services. The most recent example of Iran's plotting against the United States demonstrates a functioning relationship does exist between Iran's HezbAllah and narco-terrorist groups as reflected in the following idea presented by Perez (2011) in his article in the Wall Street Journal, Iran had someone very close to the Saudi Ambassador in Mansur Arbabsiar, a naturalized citizen, one of the point men identified as hiring a Mexican Cartel to carry out a plan to destroy a restaurant in Washington, D.C. frequented by the Saudi Ambassador. The explosives would most certainly have killed the Ambassador and innocent bystanders going about their normal routine. Iran was implicated in directing and funding this foiled terrorist plot that included connections to the drug cartel in the TBA (Par. 2, 4).

Another important aspect for terrorist groups like HezbAllah to gain a foothold in a country like Central or South America is legitimate recognition by a "Head of State." A hand was extended by Hugo Chavez in 2006 beginning a two-nation agreement under the guise of technological cooperation. According to Fleischman (2006), Chavez's visit to Tehran was an act of support to the Islamic Republic's opposition to the West. Under a two-hundred-million-dollar cooperative agreement, the project would build new homes and exploit petroleum reserves in Venezuela. It is also strongly suggested that Chavez was seeking to obtain nuclear weapons all the while supplying uranium to Iran for its nuclear program. Iran, for its persistence in pursuing a nuclear material enrichment program, has come under international scrutiny and now suffers debilitating sanctions. Chavez has publicly stated that Venezuela will supply Iran with the necessary petroleum which goes against the United Nations sanctions. Fleischman writes the following: "In July 2006 to demonstrate his [Hugo Chavez's] support for the Islamic Republic's opposition to the West—and to agitate for confrontation with the United States. [Chavez is quoted saying] Let's [Iran and Venezuela] save the human race, let's finish off the U.S. empire," Chávez is reported as having told Iranian leaders. (The enemy of my enemy, par. 6, p. 93).

Iran's Terrorist Proxy

Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez has established formal diplomatic relations with Iran and as a result of that relationship HezbAllah has also been welcomed into the South American country. The Washington Post (2009) addressed the misconceived notions that Hugo Chavez is no threat to the United States by outlining that Chavez has been working with military and intelligence operatives from Cuba, China, Russia, Syria, and Iran. Concern also exists that by welcoming terrorist organizations such as HezbAllah, Chavez was establishing a hub from which terrorists could operate against the United States. These operatives are being taught Spanish and given identification documents to gain access into the United States (par.1-3). Chavez had already established his reputation as a state sponsor of terrorism as reported by Fleischman (2006), the National Armed Forces of Venezuela, in the past, have entered the sovereign nation of Colombia to support FARC. The drug cartels in Columbia support FARC and claims have been made that Chavez has supplied this terrorist organization with logistical expertise and military weapons from Russia (p. 92). Opening his country to HezbAllah should come as no surprise. According to General Marcos Ferreira, "the Chávez government has issued false identities and Venezuelan passports to a large number of terrorist operatives. And news investigations have found that Middle Eastern terrorist groups—among them Hamas, Hezbollah, and Gama'a Islamiyya—are operating support cells in Venezuela and other locations in the Andean region" (p. 94). Recognition via Venezuela provides HezbAllah diplomatic status that only nation-states enjoy, allowing diplomatic immunity and confidentiality in conducting state affairs. These privileges afforded to HezbAllah provide a path of secrecy to planning and conducting terrorist plots. According to Fillingham (2013): "Maduro has dropped several indications that he plans to carry on his predecessor's [Chavez's] anti-American tone, notably by suggesting that the U.S. might be behind Chavez's illness and ...kicking out two U.S. military attaches under the accusation of trying to destabilize Venezuelan politics" (par. 3). The Venezuelan Vice President, Nicolas Maduro, since the death of Chavez, is the new president and will most likely continue with the same domestic and foreign policies Chavez had mandated.

Reports increasingly indicate a growing influence and activity in Central and South America by Islamic extremists in an effort to raise funds and import-export resources useful in terrorist plots not only in Europe but also the United States. General James Hill confirmed in a speech that the following tri-border area has been known for its illicit activities involving HezbAllah, Hamas and Islamiyya: "These groups generate funds through money laundering, drug trafficking or arms deals generating millions of dollars every year via illicit activities. These logistic cells reach back to the Middle East" (Robinson, 2003, par. 10). A final indicator reveals that Iran has found support in the tri-border area for its proxy HezbAllah and can now channel aggressive actions against the United States at will. The 2003 report conducted by the Library of Congress Federal Research Division concluded the possibilities exist of terrorist group elements, now having enough influence and the capability to threaten the United States with their newly established relationship with criminal networks.

The TBA's Islamic extremists and organized crime networks cannot be examined in isolation because they are linked to wider networks in the Latin American region and the world in general. Moreover, Islamic extremists who had been based in the TBA have been spreading out and establishing new support networks, apparently in places also popular with organized crime groups. (Library of Congress, 2003, Rev. 2010, p. 34)

The actors involved will change, but the objectives of the terrorists will remain steadfast. Hezbollah is involved procuring money as funding for its terrorist activities and for creating destruction to the United States, directly in line with their, Iran's, ideology. In a final analysis, the following quote from The Investigative Project on Terrorism website is provided as direct confirmation that Iran and HezbAllah are operating near the United States:

Iran's attempt to partner with drug gangs in Mexico follows a larger association between Hezbollah and Mexican narcotic cartels, allowing Hezbollah to use drug profits to fund its weapons purchases and attack plans. The December 2011 indictment (in absentia) of Lebanese drug smuggler and Hezbollah contact man Ayman Joumaa, for smuggling 85 tons of cocaine into the US and laundering \$850 million for the notorious Los Zetas cartel, is a case in point. (Lappin, 2013, par. 32-33)

The drug cartels have their network that would be least suspect in perpetrating a terrorist attack. Their modus operandi is much different from Iran's HezbAllah, but their objectives of money, fear and power are similar. Both groups have their reasons for organizing and conducting an attack on the United States and now that they have joined forces, the United States must take notice or suffer the consequences.

America: The Tipping Point

Many have wondered about the tipping point in global affairs that could drive Iran to such lengths as conducting a terrorist attack on US soil. Syria is the key component as Iran has been aligned with Syria for many years; Syria has been a supportive conduit to funneling weapons to Iran's HezbAllah in Lebanon maintaining instability in the region focused on Israel. This existing relationship between Iran and Syria was formalized in a mutual defense treaty that was arranged in haste during the Bush administration as outlined on The Guardian website in the following excerpt: "Iran and Syria heightened tension across the Middle East and directly confronted the Bush administration yesterday by declaring they had formed a mutual self-defence pact to confront the "threats" now facing them" (MacAskill and Campbell, 17 February 2005, par. 1). If the United States enters into a ground battle in Syria or for that matter, takes any type of offensive action, then the tables may rapidly turn. This action could potentially provide the impetus for Iran to initiate a terrorist event of catastrophic proportions. Believing that bringing a significant disaster to US interests at home, as Bin Laden had accomplished when he was alive, would create a hostile political environment for the US government, causing them to re-evaluate its reason for being in Syria in the first place and exit any future conflict in Syria as it did from Lebanon in 1983, ultimately leaving Israel vulnerable. The common invective heard on the streets of the global community asks, "Why haven't the US and other nations taken action in Syria, like they did in Libya?" To date, no good reasons have been circulated. The real geopolitical reasons are clouded by false media predictions and the current global alliance between Russia and Iran whose only ally in the Levant region is Syria. The fact that a plausible terrorist attack against the United States has become a reality, predicting potential action-reaction is a genuine chess game of intrigue. Many even consider Iraq an ally of Iran, given the government is now controlled by the Shi'a. This loose relationship could simply facilitate Iran's reach into Syria but nothing more. The world is asking when help will be offered – the US government, given their current dilemma of a right time to strike Syria, provide the media with

Iran's Terrorist Proxy

continuous story lines of predicting actions and outcomes which further exacerbates the global tension in the region. The most recent indicator of US involvement in Syria is the approval by Congress to begin supplying arms to the opposition forces in Syria. Now, after the 21 August 2013 chemical weapons attack, the US and the world are poised to take further action...and thus the United States continues to be pushed closer and closer toward physical involvement in Syria.

The Plot

The US security agencies do not appear to be seriously considering retaliation options by Iran as an adjunct to Syrian discussions. The eventful issue seems to be Russia and China threatening involvement if the US or the North American Treaty Organization (NATO) takes action. The concern of a radiological dispersal weapon constructed by Iran's proxy and being used as a real threat against the United States seems to be removed from the consciousness of Washington politicians as the government's unified message continues to focus on stopping Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. Radiological dispersal weapons must contain nuclear material, engage the will of an organization to use it, possess a network for transfer, find a select target of importance, and method of delivery to create the desired impact. The material, in great excess, resides in Iran and could move without its disappearance being noticed. The network exists from Iran to the United States; it has been tested and proven viable by HezbAllah. The will to initiate and perpetrate a plot against the United States has also seen a trial run by Iran, and its history is rich with plausible deniability cases and the target of importance is Any Town, USA. The remaining piece of the plot centers on the delivery method. The options for delivery of the radiological (nuclear) material are the most difficult to be ascertained by United States security forces. Consider the following benign delivery methods being re-purposed for use in a devious manner; pesticide trucks, city sprinkler systems, fireworks displays, and so on, all of which exist in every city in the United States.

We [the CIA] believe that al-Qa'ida has explored the possibility of using agricultural aircraft for large-area dissemination of biological warfare agents such as anthrax. ...the group [terrorists] could easily construct a radiological dispersal device, or "dirty bomb"... which, while incapable of causing mass radiation-related casualties, could result in panic and enormous economic damage. (Central Intelligence Agency Library (2013) CBRN: Materials and Affects, p. 2)

The ideas are endless and can be easily orchestrated within the US with little potential for detection, especially when used by accomplices from a US-based organization not directly related to the terrorist group planning and financing the plot. In essence, a proxy of a proxy relationship would be very difficult if not impossible to trace in advance.

Is it plausible that a holiday significant to the United States such as Independence Day could represent a time to attack? Large crowds are gathered across the United States, in every city to watch fireworks displays on that July Fourth holiday. The possibility of radioactive powder being placed inside fireworks imported from outside the country (Mexico in particular) and randomly distributed to any number of places like San Diego or Los Angeles or a small town in Texas. The threats to unsuspecting participants as the fireworks burst colorfully overhead are outlined in the following excerpts from the Department of Energy Argonne National Laboratory

website:

Several possible health effects are associated with human exposure to radiation from uranium. Because all uranium isotopes mainly emit alpha particles that have little penetrating ability, the main radiation hazards from uranium occur when uranium compounds are ingested or inhaled. (Uranium Health Effects, par. 2)

If UF₆ is released to the atmosphere, the uranium compounds and HF that are formed by reaction with moisture in the air can be chemically toxic. Uranium is a heavy metal that, in addition to being radioactive, can have toxic chemical effects (primarily on the kidneys) if it enters the bloodstream by means of ingestion or inhalation. HF is an extremely corrosive gas that can damage the lungs and cause death if inhaled at high enough concentrations. (What Are the Hazards Associated with Uranium Hexafluoride, par. 2)

The risk scenarios are as rich in opportunity as the innovative diabolical mind allows, and all are plausible. The key component to this terrorist attack is not focusing on the physical destruction aspect, which in most cases would be minimal, but on the radiological dispersal weapon's apparent long term health effects on citizens that can then be used as the trigger to the impending media explosion, the actual weapon spreading influence well beyond the borders of North America, to the world at large. To maximize the impact to the US population, the RDW incident would be followed with aggressive media claims by HezbAllah (Iran) taking responsibility for the attack and attempting to justify their actions. Consider for a moment that this initial media claim announces that random fireworks were distributed to undetermined locations containing nuclear contamination. This claim could be the impetus alone for rapidly spreading the fear, using our own self-driven information mechanisms. Feeding the beast of public awareness with incorrect reports by citizens of similar RDW attacks in other unknown locations, even if it is just a ploy, one can quickly see the way this small terrorist event could rapidly get out of control for the United States Government. The current thinking by scholars and terrorism experts must change if the United States ever hopes to confront such a diabolical plot.

Conclusion

A radiological dispersal weapon employed as outlined would potentially create the worst disaster ever experienced in US history, not because nuclear material was released into the air, but in a rush to tell the world about the incident(s), facts would become confusing and incorrect, creating global panic. Citizens would draw on their innate thinking and reference the little they know about the nuclear sciences and the devastation wrought on a population at the end of WWII. Ehrenreich and Gitlin (1993) make the point that media heads tend to swivel in the same direction. "If the flagship media have done the story, so must everyone" (par. 9). The media's responsibility lies in reporting facts from the best sources of information. However, media reports often sound the same and even use the same clips for visual effect. If the flagship rushes a story and is incorrect in its reporting, then so will all the stories using the flagship media agency as its source. There have been a number of misreports and inconsistencies in the news that perhaps can be viewed as poor reporting or investigating or downright media biases. An

Iran's Terrorist Proxy

apology for being incorrect will never be enough with a story of this magnitude, as wrong information will create the desired effect for the terrorists. The sheer force created by irrational fear, generated from ignorance and misperception would be catastrophic to the US economy, citizen's emotional and psychological security, and the overall well-being of all United States citizens. Events of this magnitude would eclipse the September 11th attacks. An old saying states, "never underestimate your enemy"; Iran is perceived as the United States' enemy. The concern of a radiological dispersal weapon being planned and delivered into the United States beginning with Iran and ending with narco-terrorists executing an attack should be brought to the forefront of everyone's thinking. Not only do the facts lend truth to this supposition but also the necessary pieces for this plot are genuinely real and positioned now to execute if directed. Iran has the nuclear material, the demonstrated will and the global network to conduct this type of guerilla attack. It will potentially use everything at its disposal to remove the US from the Middle East and away from the sphere of Israel's influence when the time presents itself. The United States should pay close attention to its foreign-policy actions, related to the Syrian conflict, HezbAllah and the peace process between Israel and Palestine. The United States' actions could set into motion an unstoppable, world changing, terrorist event.

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