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NIE Report: Inventing Facts

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Many have been quick to characterize yesterday's National Intelligence Estimate [report](#) [1] on Iran's nuclear program as a long overdue "[Honest Intel](#)" [2] that will suck the air out of warmongers' sails because it clearly states "with high confidence that in fall of 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program".

Forgive this writer for being a spoiler, but haven't report after report issued by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the many years since repeatedly confirmed non-existence of such nuclear weapons program in Iran?

For those who have not read this latest 9-page [NIE report](#), it begins with five pages of processes, notes, and disclaimers including the following statement printed in bold on page 4:

"This NIE does not assume that Iran intends to acquire nuclear weapons. Rather, it examines the intelligence to assess Iran's capability and intent (or lack thereof) to acquire nuclear weapons, taking full account of Iran's dual-use uranium fuel cycle and those nuclear activities that are at least partly civil in nature."

Followed by an explanation of the "Estimative Language" used in the report on page 5:

"We use phrases such as judge, assess, and estimate – and probabilistic terms such as probably and likely—to convey analytical assessments and judgments. Such statements are not facts, proof, or knowledge."

So there you have it – An analytical assessment not based on any facts, proof, or knowledge which for the time being allays fears of an imminent threat from Iran, but cleverly transforms what was once pure hearsay into an established fact that Iran did at one point have a clandestine nuclear weapons program.

Serious implications and underlying dangers from such a supposition can not be understated since the report confirms Iran has already mastered what Mr. Bush warned the world to stop her from acquiring -- "the [knowledge necessary to make a nuclear weapon](#)"[3]. Add to that the assertions on page 7 paragraph D that "Iranian entities are continuing to develop a range of technical capabilities that could be applied to produce nuclear weapons if a decision is made to do so" and that leaves the door wide open for administration hawks like Mr. Cheney to abruptly accuse Iran of resurrecting its "nuclear weapons program" much as he did back in 2002, claiming that Saddam Hussein had "[resumed his effort to acquire nuclear weapons](#)." [4]

This report will no doubt create an avalanche of commentaries and analysis with different spins from both sides but the following concluding "key judgment" provides a hint to the timing of its

release:

"Our assessment that Iran halted the program in 2003 primarily in response to international pressure indicates Tehran's decisions are guided by a cost-benefit approach rather than a rush to a weapon irrespective of the political, economic, and military costs. This, in turn, suggests that some combination of threats of intensified international scrutiny and pressures, along with opportunities for Iran to achieve its security, prestige, and goals for regional influence in other ways, might prompt Tehran to extend the current halt to its nuclear weapons program."

"International scrutiny and pressure" are of course synonyms for more UN sanctions just as the five permanent members of the UNSC plus Germany meet to convince Russia and China to go along with imposing tougher sanctions in order to enforce the status quo of nuclear apartheid by denying Iran its right under the NPT to enrich uranium for peaceful use.

[1] http://www.stratfor.com/events/freepdf.php?file=20071203_release.pdf

[2] <http://www.antiwar.com/mcgovern/?articleid=12001>

[3] <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/10/20071017.html>

[4] <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/08/20020826.html>

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