

INTELLIGENCE PUTS A CRIMP IN DICK'S WAR-MONGERING

You've no doubt heard the news that the NIE on Iran's nuclear ambitions judges (with moderate certainty) that Iran has no active nuclear weapon program.

That's great news. But I'm just as interested in the back story of why we got this news in the first place. As the NYT reveals (h/t Danger Room), the Deputy Director of National Intelligence released the NIE to make sure it was accurately represented.

In a separate statement accompanying the N.I.E., Deputy Director of National Intelligence Donald M. Kerr said that given the new conclusions, it was important to release the report publicly "to ensure that an accurate presentation is available."

Shorter Mr. Kerr: Stephen Hadley's already madly spinning this result wildly, and I wanted to make sure he didn't do worse.

But that makes me mighty curious about the timing of this decision. Take a look at the timing in this key judgment.

We assess with moderate confidence Tehran had not restarted its nuclear weapons program as of mid-2007, but we do not know whether it currently intends to develop nuclear weapons. [my emphasis]

In other words, the most important key judgment in this NIE (in terms of impeding Dick's war-mongering, at least) comes from mid-2007. That's pretty fascinating timing, given the time line of Dick's attempts to stifle the key judgments on Iran. Here's a time line taken excerpted from

this article.

November 2006: NIE "completed."

January 5, 2007: John Negroponte resigns as DNI, reportedly because of fight over NIE.

February 2007: NIE completed; Cheney objecting to content.

April 26, 2007: Thomas Fingar **announces** NIE will be delayed due to Ahmadinejad's demagoguery.

June (?) 2007: Information collected that supports claim Iran's nuclear program remains suspended.

Early October 2007: BushCo considers spiking the NIE.

October 27, 2007: David Shedd reveals Mike McConnell has made it harder to declassify NIE judgments—leading most observers to believe the Iran NIE would not be released.

Early November 2007: Administration decides to release NIE, but not publish judgments.

November 22, 2007: Mohammed el Baradei **states** Iran is cooperating, though IAEA still has questions about its nuclear program.

December 1, 2007: Mohammed el Baradei **states** that bombing Iran would ensure it gets the bomb more quickly.

December 3, 2007: NIE key judgments released.

Now, I don't know what to make of that timeline. How is it, after over a year of squabbling, the DNI suddenly releases a report that absolutely guts all of Dick's warmonger claims? Did the mid-2007 information verifying Iran still had no active program come in response to Ahmadinehad's

demagoguery, or was it an attempt to shut Cheney up? In any case, how did DNI decide not only not to kowtow to Cheney's attempts to politicize intelligence (again), but even release these results? Kudos to the IC.

Kevin Drum thinks it might be pressure from Congress. But I wonder whether Baradei wasn't able to mobilize pressure internationally that gave some folks in this country more room for leverage?

Update: Amanda collects all the war-mongering Bush and Cheney have been doing in recent months, after the mid-2007 intelligence proved that they were wrong.

"So I've told people that if you're interested in avoiding World War III, it seems like you ought to be interested in preventing them from have the knowledge necessary to make a nuclear weapon. I take the threat of Iran with a nuclear weapon very seriously." [Bush, 10/17/07]

"Our country, and the entire international community, cannot stand by as a terror-supporting state fulfills its grandest ambitions. ... The Iranian regime needs to know that if it stays on its present course the international community is prepared to impose serious consequences." [Cheney, 10/21/07]

[snip]

"We talked about Iran and the desire to work jointly to convince the Iranian regime to give up their nuclear weapons ambitions, for the sake of peace."
[Bush, 11/7/07]

"We're in a position now, clearly, especially when we look at Iran, where it's very, very important we succeed in our efforts, our national security efforts, to discourage the Iranians from enriching uranium and producing nuclear weapons." [Cheney, 11/9/07]

Any bets whether anyone besides Helen asks why they've been lying to us for six months?