

most intense controversies arising out of excessive assertions of state authority. Some of the most turbulent scandals he faced involved the racially charged, highly dubious use of violence by the NYPD. His paramount instinct was to defend the police reflexively, even before any relevant facts were known.

Almost uniformly, Giuliani's presidential campaign has been measured and highly disciplined, but he has had momentary lapses that expose the authoritarian impulses that New Yorkers know so well. In the midst of the September controversy over the MoveOn.org ad criticizing Gen. David Petraeus, Giuliani opined that the antiwar group "passed a line that we should not allow American political organizations to pass."

Exactly as one would expect, Giuliani has enthusiastically endorsed virtually every one of the most controversial Bush/Cheney assertions of presidential power. He wants to keep Guantanamo open and mocks concerns over the use of torture, even derisively comparing sleep deprivation to the strain of his own campaign. He not only defends Bush's warrantless surveillance, but does not recognize the legitimacy of any concerns relating to unchecked government power.

In April, Cato Institute's president, Ed Crane, asked several candidates if they believed the president should have the authority to arrest U.S. citizens, on U.S. soil, and detain them with no review of any kind. *National Review's* Ramesh Ponnuru reported Giuliani's response: "The mayor said that he would want to use this authority infrequently."

In aggressively rejecting that such a power could exist, Justice Antonin Scalia wrote, "The very core of liberty secured by our Anglo-Saxon system of separated powers has been freedom from indefinite imprisonment at the will of the Executive." Yet Giuliani's instinct was to assume that he would automatically possess that tyrannical power.

At a campaign event in New Hampshire a week later, Giuliani suggested that the president would even have what he called "inherent authority" to disregard a Congressional vote to defund the war in Iraq and could continue to prosecute it unilaterally. Not even the most radical of the Bush theorists of presidential omnipotence would endorse such an idea. In a February *New York Times* op-ed, former Bush DOJ attorney John Yoo acknowledged, "Congress has every power to end the war—if it really wanted to. It has the power of the purse."

Giuliani, when he was merely in charge of New York's garbage collec-

tion, zoning rules, and a municipal police force, developed a reputation as a power-hungry, dissent-intolerant authoritarian, obsessed with secrecy and expanding his own power. It takes little imagination to apprehend the grave dangers from vesting in such a person virtually unlimited power to control the world's most powerful military as well as a sprawling, federal bureaucracy. ■

*Glenn Greenwald is a contributor to Salon and author of the forthcoming book Great American Hypocrites: Shattering the Big Myths of Republican Politics.*

## No More Slam Dunks

A reality-based assessment of Iran's nuclear capability

By Philip Giraldi

THE BOMBSHELL National Intelligence Estimate on Iran's nuclear program asserted with a "high degree of certainty" that Tehran had abandoned its nuclear weapons in 2003 due to international pressure and as part of a negotiated agreement with the Europeans. The report stated that even if Tehran were to restart its program, it would not have enough highly enriched uranium for a weapon until 2010 at the earliest.

The NIE is widely seen as a decisive blow to the neoconservatives and Bush administration hawks who have been advocating a preemptive attack on Iran, depriving them of their principle *casus belli*. They have counterattacked, claiming that the report is based on flawed information or even Iranian disinformation, that the CIA has a history of poor analysis of proliferation issues, and that a politicized intelligence community is out to get the White House and/or Israel.

The political landscape in Washington has not yet shifted dramatically. By demonstrating that Iran has acted as a rational player, the report gives advocates of negotiations without preconditions a stronger hand. Those who still seek war have already re-written their talking points. They argue that as Iranian intentions and plans remain suspect, Teheran must be denied any ability to enrich uranium. On Dec. 4, President Bush stated that the military option remains on the table, while warning seven times that Tehran might use "knowledge" of how to enrich uranium to secretly construct a bomb. Other administration spokesmen have insisted that Iran must be denied the engineering infrastructure to manage the nuclear fuel cycle, even for peaceful purposes. The White House has asserted that it still regards Iran as its major foreign-policy problem.

An alarmed Israel, where the report's conclusions have been rejected by both

politicians and media, is considering taking unilateral action against the principle Iranian nuclear facility at Natanz. If Israel were to attack Iran, it would need Washington's help, and U.S. forces would almost certainly be involved in any Iranian retaliation.

The history of how the NIE was developed provides an effective rebuke to those attacking it. Since late 2006, the White House has been aware that the NIE would not confirm the existence of an Iranian weapons program. In January 2007, John Negroponte resigned as director of national intelligence because he backed his analysts and refused to order the rewriting of the key judgments that appeared in the NIE draft. Vice President Dick Cheney's office subsequently demanded several revisions and numerous reviews of the source material. Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell is loyal to the president, but, like Negroponte, was unwilling to alter the conclusions for the White House, and the administration eventually became resigned to a final report that it knew would contradict policy.

Contrary to administration claims, when conclusive new intelligence demonstrating that the Iranians had cancelled their weapons program became available in early summer 2007, the White House was informed. It is no coincidence that President Bush and his aides soon began to downplay Iranian nukes and started to emphasize "they're killing our soldiers" to make its case against Tehran. In November, McConnell, under pressure from Congress to finish the NIE, agreed to White House demands that it be kept classified, but when the report was finally completed a month later, an unclassified summary was prepared because of concerns that inevitable leaks by Democrats in Congress would make it appear that the administration was again deceiving the American people.

The actual NIE process makes clear how impossible it would be to cook the books in order to damage the administration. Sixteen separate intelligence agencies contribute to the report and must concur on key judgments. In the case of the Iran NIE, every detail of evidence for the report's conclusions was looked at repeatedly and from all angles. In the classified version, there are more than 1,500 footnotes describing the sources used. When the draft came to tentative conclusions, the findings were attacked by analysts acting as a "red team" to determine if there were flaws in the analysis or whether Iranian disinformation was being used to mislead CIA analysts. This process was repeated over and over again until everyone was satisfied with the results. A final no-holds-barred review took place in the White House in mid-November, attended by Bush, Cheney, Robert Gates, Condoleezza Rice, and senior staff members, where objections to sourcing and conclusions were aired. No agenda-driven judgments could possibly survive the process.

The claim that the CIA has historically had trouble reporting accurately on proliferation is based on the 2002 and 2005 Iraq and Iran NIE's. Reporting on Russia, China, India, Pakistan, and the A.Q. Khan network was also flawed. But the 2007 Iran NIE should be judged on its merits because intelligence is not a science but a process, based on the best assessment of available information.

After the fiasco of the Iraq NIE, the Agency took a hard look at what had gone wrong. It decided that there were three issues that produced bad analysis: poor information sources resulting in "garbage in, garbage out," political pressure to make the intelligence match the policy, and "groupthink" where assumptions based on past intelligence shape the current analysis.

To address the poor information problem, the Agency launched a major

operation against Iran designated the "Persian House," involving 175 case officers and 35 analysts. It also aggressively went after traveling Iranian officials and businessmen in Europe and the Persian Gulf, most particularly in Dubai, where the Iranian government actively does business to avoid sanctions enforced elsewhere. The effort was successful and, combined with improved technical collection against Iran, provided a window into the Iranian nuclear program. Key information came from Ali Resa Asghari, a general in the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, who was recruited in 2003 and jointly run by the CIA and the Turkish intelligence service, MIT. Before defecting in Istanbul in February, Asghari provided critical intelligence on the Iranian program as well as on Tehran's defense communications, permitting the NSA and CIA to obtain still more information. The intelligence available to analysts on Iran improved dramatically.

Both the Iraq NIE and the 2005 NIE on Iran suffered from White House staffers, mostly neoconservatives from Vice President Cheney's office, participating in the review process. To deal with the problem of such political pressure, Director of Central Intelligence Michael Hayden and DNI Mike McConnell isolated analysts from policymakers and also took steps to deal with the groupthink problem. In the 2002 Iraq NIE, the consensus view that Saddam Hussein must have weapons of mass destruction influenced analysis, but proved to be untrue. The Iran NIE was instead constructed from the ground up with every assumption being challenged. The critics of the NIE curiously engage in their own groupthink when they claim that the CIA's record of failures in the past mean that it has likely failed again. This time, however, the CIA has gotten it right. ■

*Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a partner in Cannistraro Associates.*

# The Paleocon Dilemma

The Ron Paul campaign illustrates the choices facing the antiwar Right.

By W. James Antle III

RON PAUL isn't just running for president. The antiwar 10-term congressman from Texas hopes that as titular head of the Republican Party, he can nudge the Right in a less interventionist direction, both at home and abroad. In fact, reviving an older, less reflexively hawkish conservatism may even be a more important motivation for Paul's long-shot campaign than actually capturing the GOP nomination.

There's just one problem: the movement Paul is trying to lead, or at least influence, is filled with people who think he is some kind of crazed left-wing radical. The popular conservative website RedState.com has effectively banned Paul supporters from signing up as commenters and promoting their candidate, partly on the grounds that such people are liberal Democrats merely pretending to be Republicans. FreeRepublic.com founder Jim Robinson, whose website was once more open to constitutionalists than Republican boosters, asserted that "Paul equals Hillary on the War." *National Review* senior editor Richard Brookhiser has opined that Paul backers are "wicked idiots."

Syndicated columnist Mona Charen dubbed Paul a "kook," saying that although he shouldn't be president, "[h]e might make a dandy new leader for the Branch Davidians." Dean Barnett of *The Weekly Standard* devoted a similar piece to taunts along these lines, calling Paul the "crank-in-chief" and "undisputed owner of the "'Don't tase me bro' vote." Averring that "Crazy people love to have a cause," Barnett observes that "America's lunatics" have

"taken such a shine to the formerly obscure Ron Paul"—since all Paul really wants is to "wear a powdered wig without being ridiculed in public."

When not dismissing Paul as too far to the Left, his conservative critics allege that he has ties to unsavory elements of the far Right. Political journalist Ryan Sager, who has described Paul's fundraising success and modest rise in the polls as a "crackpot revolution," told *New York Sun* readers, "it's also worth noting that [Paul is] pretty racist and also an anti-Semite." Ron Rosenbaum, writing on his blog for Pajamas Media, said that Paul might not be an anti-Semite, but "some of his followers exhibit some disturbing tendencies."

The feeling is mutual. Not to be outdone, Paul's proponents can be equally vitriolic in describing other Republicans and large parts of the mainstream Right. The paleolibertarian LewRockwell.com has emerged as an indispensable source of news about Paul's campaign, but few if any of the website's contributors think much of the party that Paul is trying to lead. During a Florida debate held by various social conservative groups, the site's bloggers repeatedly called the sponsors "Falwellofascists"—and then applauded when Paul placed second in the Falwellofascists' straw poll.

Although a decade ago Lew Rockwell hoped to mobilize grassroots conservatives on behalf of anti-statism, during the Bush era he has detected a whiff of "red-state fascism" among the Republican base. Other LewRockwell.com writers prefer terms like "neoonofascist."

GOP frontrunner Rudy Giuliani is often affectionately called "Benito."

Such sentiments aren't limited to Paul's supporters in the blogosphere. Attending a Paul rally, it quickly becomes clear that the other Republicans are hardly more acceptable than Hillary Clinton to most of those in attendance. At a recent GOP straw poll in Virginia (which Paul won), Paulites shouted over former Virginia governor and future U.S. Senate candidate Jim Gilmore. At other events, they have drowned out Giuliani, and some witnesses on a Mackinac Island Ferry ride claim a band of Paul supporters once threatened to literally drown Giuliani by throwing him overboard.

The mutual hostility illustrates an enduring problem for those described as paleoconservatives—an unsatisfactory but familiar term that is increasingly applied to all conservatives who reject the foreign and many of the domestic policies of the Bush administration. The paleos and their allies wish to vie for the term "conservative" while being held in contempt by many—perhaps most—Americans who understand themselves to be conservatives while also returning that contempt in equal measure. Call it the paleo dilemma.

While dissident conservatives have many disagreements, their tactical differences speak most directly to this problem. Some paleoconservatives prefer to work within the mainstream movement, hoping to take it back from those they view as squatters. Others believe that movement is either too far gone, or was fatally flawed from the