

We must bomb Iran, says US Republican guru

Contributed by The Telegraph
 Saturday, 27 October 2007
 Last Updated Saturday, 27 October 2007

The Telegraph, London.
 By Toby Harnden in New York
 Last Updated: 2:14am BST 27/10/2007

A senior foreign policy adviser to the Republican frontrunner Rudy Giuliani has urged that Iran be bombed using cruise missiles and "bunker busters" to set back Teheran's nuclear programme by at least five years.

The tough message at a time of crisis between the United States and Iraq was delivered by Norman Podhoretz, one of the founders of neoconservatism, who has also imparted his stark advice personally to a receptive President George W. Bush.

"None of the alternatives to military action - negotiations, sanctions, provoking an internal insurrection - can possibly work," said Mr Podhoretz.

"They're all ways of evading the terrible choice we have to make which is to either let them get the bomb or to bomb them."

In an interview with The Daily Telegraph, Mr Podhoretz said he was certain that bombing raids could be successful.

"People I've talked to have no doubt we could set it back five or 10 years. There are those who believe we can get the underground facilities as well with these highly sophisticated bunker-busting munitions."

Although Mr Podhoretz said he did not speak for Mr Giuliani, the former New York mayor whom he briefs daily appears to have embraced at least the logic of his hard-line views.

During a visit to London last month, Mr Giuliani said Iran should be given "an absolute assurance that, if they get to the point that they are going to become a nuclear power, we will prevent them or we will set them back five or 10 years".

Mr Podhoretz said: "I was very pleased to see him say that. I was even surprised he went that far. I'm sure some of his political people were telling him to go slow ... I wouldn't advise any candidate to come out and say we have to bomb - it's not a prudent thing to say at this stage of the campaign."

But Mr Podhoretz's 77 years and his position as a pre-eminent conservative foreign policy intellectual means he can not only think the unthinkable but say the unsayable.

"My role has simply been to say what I think," he said, explaining that he takes part in weekly conference calls and is in daily email contact with the Giuliani campaign.

He is the most eminent of a clutch of uncompromisingly hawkish aides assembled by Mr Giuliani. They include Daniel Pipes, who opposes a Palestinian state and believes America should "inspire fear, not affection", and Michael Rubin, a former Pentagon official who has argued that Condoleezza Rice's diplomacy is "dangerous" and signals American "weakness" to Teheran.

"Does Rudy agree with me?" Mr Podhoretz asked rhetorically. "I don't know and I don't wish to know." But he added that "Rudy's view of the war is very similar to mine."

Mr Podhoretz's thesis is that the war on terror is in fact World War Four and that the 42-year-long Cold War should be more properly described as World War Three.

Awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, America's highest honour, by President George W. Bush in 2004, Mr Podhoretz later sought a rare one-on-one audience with the US commander-in-chief. They met in New York's Waldorf Astoria hotel in the spring.

The author of the recent World War IV: the Long Struggle Against Islamofacism spent about 35 minutes outlining his case for air strikes against Iran as Mr Bush's then chief adviser Karl Rove took notes.

"Whether I had any effect on him I truly don't know but I sure tried my best to persuade him," he said.

"He was very cordial. He was warm. He listened. He occasionally asked a question as I made the case but he was truly poker faced."

Mr Podhoretz left the meeting unshaken in his belief that Mr Bush would attack Iran before he leaves office.

"The spirit of the questions was not to try to refute or contradict what I was saying. I didn't get any negative vibes."

He said that now "the debate [over Iran] is secretly over and the people who are against military action are now preparing to make the case that we can live with an Iranian bomb".

Neither Mr Bush nor Mr Giuliani, however, would countenance Teheran acquiring a nuclear weapon and either one would authorise military action once they were convinced Iran had passed the point of no return with its uranium enrichment programme.

"Unlike a ground invasion where you've got to mass hundreds of thousands of troops, it takes six months and everybody knows you're mobilising, with air strikes, we've got three carriers in the region and a lot of submarines," Mr Podhoretz said.

"I would say it would take five minutes. You'd wake up one morning and the strikes would have been ordered and carried out during the night. All the president has to do is say go."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/10/27/wbomb127.xml>