



Have You Demanded a “Right to Kill” Recently?

By Jim Yardley

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The Cato Institute publishes a regular, and regularly interesting, newsletter called *Cato at Liberty*.

In yesterday’s newsletter, the institute included a piece authored by Doug Bandow, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, specializing in foreign policy and civil liberties, who wrote the article titled: [“America Should Say No To War Against Iran: U.S. Has No Right To Kill At Will”](#).

Mr. Bandow leads off his article by saying:

War has become Washington’s panacea for any international problem. Since the end of the Cold War, no other state has attacked as many countries or threatened as many countries as has the United States.

Sadly, and providing a healthy dose of frustration, Mr. Bandow offers no facts to substantiate such a statement. He doesn’t even define the terms. As for myself, I’d feel a lot better if I knew exactly how it has been that the United States “threatened” other nations.

He continues in the piece by being very selective in describing what he apparently feels is one of those threats:

In 1953, Washington supported a coup against the democratic Iranian government. Through 1979, every American administration backed the repressive Shah. In the 1980s, the United States supported Iraq’s aggressive war against Iran. Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama ostentatiously kept “all options on the table.”

Military threats continue to rain down on Tehran. For instance, since Iran will not negotiate away its bomb, in the view of Bush administration aide, John Bolton the United States must attack: “Time is terribly short, but a strike can still succeed.”

In the first paragraph, Mr. Bandow cites the support for the Iranian government led by the Shah and moves on to imply that the very same nation was aggressively attacked by Iraq. He glosses over the fact that the Shah had fled Iran and the governance of the nation became one of a theocratic dictator, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Iran was no longer the same nation that it had

been at all, a circumstance that Mr. Bandow seems to expect the reader to recall without prompting.

He also seems to rely on the reader of his article to recall the Iranian attack on the American embassy, and the fact that several dozen diplomats and citizens were captured and held prisoner for a total of 444 days. This sundered any and all diplomatic relations with the Iranian government. President Carter, even dealing with what most would view as extreme provocation, did not act against Iran militarily, although he did send in a task force to try and free the prisoners.

Again, Mr. Bandow offers no details regarding the explicit nature of the “military threats [that] continue to rain down on Tehran.”

Since Mr. Bandow refers to several comments from individuals such as John Bolton (who was the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, although Bandow referred to him only as a Bush administration aide), Joshua Muravchik of the SAIS (School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University) and Senator Tom Cotton (R-Arkansas). Their comments, that he quotes out of context, to his mind at least, illustrate that since they do not agree with his view of the situation, they are war-mongering zealots. He moves on to state:

The belief that war would be quick, simple, and sure reflects either simple-minded naiveté or criminal arrogance.

No person who reached any of these positions that these men held, or still hold, ever mentioned that any war, ANY WAR, would be just “a walk in the park.”

In stating his rationale against even considering the use of any military effort, he notes that Iran’s neighboring states agree that a bomb wielding Iran is not something that we would prefer, he states:

*American actions also should be constrained by morality. War can be justified in self-defense, but Iran poses no meaningful **threat** to the United States. For instance, Sen. Cotton noted that Tehran “can’t **challenge** us,” including America’s Mideast allies.*

Mr. Bandow holds a J.D. degree, which to us common folk means that he’s a lawyer. He talks like a lawyer in this passage. There is a significant difference between a **threat** and a **challenge**. If you say to someone that you’ll fight them *mano-a-mano*, that statement is a challenge. If you say you’ll shoot another man’s children, then that statement is a threat. See the difference? If Mr. Bandow didn’t see the difference, I’d be surprised. If he could see the difference, then he is purposely misleading the reader.

Mr. Bandow later states:

*The region’s Muslim leaders also oppose an Iranian bomb and other nations conceivably could join Tehran in a nuclear race. An undesirable outcome, no doubt, **but one not warranting***

America to initiate war against a state which has not attacked or even threatened to attack the United States. [emphasis added]

“...a state which has not attacked or even threatened to attack the United States...”? This is the same Iran which is listed as a sponsor of terrorism is it not? This is the same Iran, just chock full of extremely zealous religious leaders and followers who follow prayers on Fridays with these very same leaders of their “religion of peace” with a final prayer that reads “Death to America”. Although I don’t have Mr. Bandow’s educational pedigree, that sounds like a threat to me.

Between terrorism and verbalized threats, I think Mr. Bandow’s justifications need a little more work before people actually listen to him, or assign any value to his opinions.