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Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

TOPLINE TAKEAWAYS

- *Iran deal opponents are using a misleading report to spread lies about the agreement.*
- *Trump says climate change isn't a national security issue. The U.S. military begs to differ.*
- *Congress is continuing to turn the screws on Saudi Arabia and the UAE over its war crimes in Yemen.*

NEOCONS ARE SPREADING LIES ABOUT THE IRAN DEAL...AGAIN

Last Sunday, Politico [published](#) what seemed like on its face a huge story about the Iran nuclear agreement: President Obama purportedly quashed U.S. efforts to prosecute Iranian-backed Hezbollah agents for fear of angering Iran and ruining the nuclear talks.

While Iran deal opponents gleefully amplified the “news,” a closer look at the story revealed a number of problems that call its veracity into question:

1. The story's author penned a similar piece back in April with a similar thesis, but the reality is that **they're both just stories about how the government makes national security decisions.**
2. Experts said the piece has “**many, many holes,**” calling it “**bullshit**” and “**a disgusting hit job.**”
3. The Obama administration had actually [cracked down pretty hard](#) on Hezbollah both during the talks and after the Iran deal was agreed to.
4. The newest Politico story is **a rehash of a piece that ran on an anti-Iran deal right-wing website** back in June. What's more, some of the author's sources work for anti-Iran deal think tanks, points that were not disclosed.

The Politico reporter who wrote both pieces, Josh Meyer, has defended what he calls “[smears](#)” against his piece, [saying](#) that no one has challenged any of the facts in the story.

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But the issue with the article is the false narrative it presents. Washington Post media critic Erik Wemple [took a look into it](#) and agreed, finding that “the piece lacks a smoking gun.” Wemple also quoted other former officials:

- **“The allegations in the Politico story are so ludicrous** and the sourcing so nebulous that one can only conclude that the reporter was misled by those who clearly had a political agenda in getting him to write this story.” -- Nick Shapiro, former deputy chief of staff to former CIA Director John Brennan.
- “The narrative presented in this report in no way resembles reality. ...**we aggressively countered Hezbollah’s terrorist plotting** and other malign activities before and after the Iran deal came to fruition and while it was being negotiated.” -- Former National Security Council spokesman Ned Price.
- **“I never once heard anyone suggest we should back off on Hezbollah** or anyone associated with Hezbollah.” -- Former Treasury and CIA official David Cohen.

For more details and sourcing, read our analysis [here](#) [and retweet [here](#)]. NIAC’s Trita Parsi [has more too](#).

TRUMP’S NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY: WHAT CLIMATE CHANGE?

Team Trump released its National Security Strategy document this week. While it was generally widely panned in the press -- not “[much of a strategy](#),” a “[farce](#),” “[deserves to be ignored](#),” “[strategic confusion](#),” “[magnifies small threats and minimises big ones](#),” etc. -- what was most troubling is that Trump’s NSS omitted climate change as a national security threat.

Here’s the reality:

- The Department of Defense has [said](#) that climate change is a national security “[threat multiplier](#)” and military leaders have [urged](#) Trump to declare it as such.
- Trump’s own Defense Secretary James Mattis [said](#) as recently as March of this year that “climate change is impacting stability in areas of the world where our troops are operating today.”
- The Republican-led House [passed](#) a defense policy bill in July that declared climate change a national security threat.

See Global Progressive Hub’s statement on the issue [here](#).

Trump’s NSS also steps one foot into the theatre of the absurd by including a promise to defend the country against a so-called “Electromagnetic Pulse” attack, or EMP -- a “threat” [cooked up](#)

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by [right-wingers](#) who say that terrorists or a rogue regime will detonate a nuclear device over the U.S. and take out the entire electric grid.

An analyst once [noted](#) that this supposed threat is about as likely as “building an enormous, space-bound vacuum cleaner and sucking up all of America’s oxygen.” This is just the latest evidence of the Trump Administration’s willingness to engage in conspiracy theories and reckless disregard for anything approaching a serious effort to protect America against actual threats to our security.

CONGRESS CONTINUES TO PUSH SAUDI ARABIA/UAE ON YEMEN

A bipartisan group of lawmakers [sent a letter](#) to the ambassadors from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates this week urging them to end the blockade on Yemen, which is in the midst of one of the worst humanitarian crises in history. The members wrote:

Unless a humanitarian plan of action is implemented immediately – including ending restrictions on vessels carrying fuel and commercial goods that are essential to the humanitarian response – **millions of Yemeni civilians could die from famine** [emphasis added].

The letter comes weeks after the House [passed a resolution](#) declaring the U.S. role in the Saudi-led war in Yemen unauthorized. [[Retweet](#)]

Meanwhile in the Senate, Republican Todd Young of Indiana has [vowed](#) to closely monitor Saudi Arabia’s compliance with an agreement to allow some humanitarian assistance into Yemen. [[Retweet our thanks for Sen. Young here.](#)]

Also this week, because of Young and Sen. Chris Murphy’s efforts, Trump’s pick “for the top legal advisor at the State Department has [acknowledged](#) that Saudi Arabia could be violating U.S. and international law by restricting the flow of humanitarian aid in Yemen.”

BURIED LEDES

The United States is **sleepwalking toward war with North Korea**. “And there seems to be virtually [no serious public debate](#) going on over how to stop things from going wrong.”

Speaking of recklessly moving toward [war with North Korea](#), **the Brookings Institution seems to want to mainstream the idea of a military strike**.

Counterterror airstrikes have doubled under Trump, while the rules governing them [have loosened](#).

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Under Rex Tillerson's leadership, the State Department [is doing](#) "exactly what Russian and Chinese propaganda says we do -- use human rights as a weapon to beat up our adversaries **while letting ourselves and our allies off the hook.**"

One Republican Senator threw cold water on Trump allies' attempts to [delegitimize](#) Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 election.

Meanwhile, **organizers are preparing** for Trump to [fire Mueller](#).