

## Bush's World War Under Way As He Authorizes Military Actions In 10 Nations

Written by

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Report: U.S. Conducting Secret Missions Inside Iran  
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WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The United States has been conducting secret reconnaissance missions inside Iran to help identify potential nuclear, chemical and missile targets, The New Yorker magazine reported Sunday.

The article, by award-winning reporter Seymour Hersh, said the secret missions have been going on at least since last summer with the goal of identifying target information for three dozen or more suspected sites.

Hersh quotes one government consultant with close ties to the Pentagon as saying, "The civilians in the Pentagon want to go into Iran and destroy as much of the military infrastructure as possible."

One former high-level intelligence official told The New Yorker, "This is a war against terrorism, and Iraq is just one campaign. The Bush administration is looking at this as a huge war zone. Next, we're going to have the Iranian campaign."

The White House said Iran is a concern and a threat that needs to be taken seriously. But it disputed the report by Hersh, who last year exposed the extent of prisoner abuse at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

"We obviously have a concern about Iran. The whole world has a concern about Iran," Dan Bartlett, a top aide to President Bush, told CNN's "Late Edition."

Of The New Yorker report, he said: "I think it's riddled with inaccuracies, and I don't believe that some of the conclusions he's drawing are based on fact."

Bartlett said the administration "will continue to work through the diplomatic initiatives" to convince Iran -- which Bush once called part of an "axis of evil" -- not to pursue nuclear weapons.

"No president, at any juncture in history, has ever taken military options off the table," Bartlett added. "But what President Bush has shown is that he believes we can emphasize the diplomatic initiatives that are underway right now."

### COMMANDO TASK FORCE

Bush has warned Iran in recent weeks against meddling in Iraqi elections.

The former intelligence official told Hersh that an American commando task force in South Asia is working closely with a group of Pakistani scientists who had dealt with their Iranian counterparts.

The New Yorker reports that this task force, aided by information from Pakistan, has been penetrating into eastern Iran in a hunt for underground nuclear-weapons installations.

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In exchange for this cooperation, the official told Hersh, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf has received assurances that his government will not have to turn over Abdul Qadeer Khan, the father of Pakistan's atomic bomb, to face questioning about his role in selling nuclear secrets to Iran, Libya and North Korea.

Hersh reported that Bush has already "signed a series of top-secret findings and executive orders authorizing secret commando groups and other Special Forces units to conduct covert operations against suspected terrorist targets in as many as 10 nations in the Middle East and South Asia."

Defining these as military rather than intelligence operations, Hersh reported, will enable the Bush administration to evade legal restrictions imposed on the CIA's covert activities overseas.