

Sunday, January 15, 2006

To: AP Editor [info@ap.org]

From: Steve Lee, Organizer--Wilmington Peace Meetup

Copy: To AP Clients--Washington Post, Wilmington Star-News

Subject: **EGREGIOUS ERROR SIMILAR TO THE WMD LEAD-UP TO THE IRAQ WAR**

The following article contains an egregious error—please see the underlined text for errors. An explanation follows your article:

Iran's Nuclear History

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/10/AR2006011000854.html>

By The Associated Press
The Associated Press
Tuesday, January 10, 2006; 1:57 PM

-- Key dates in the West's standoff with Iran over its suspect nuclear program:

_ February-May 2003: International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors examine nuclear facilities in Iran, which the United States accuses of running a covert weapons program.

_ June 2003: IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei says Iran kept certain nuclear materials and activities secret.

_ November 2003: The U.N. nuclear watchdog agency says Iran acknowledged it produced weapons-grade uranium but there is no evidence a weapon was built.

_ December 2003: Iran formally signs the Additional Protocol to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty to allow more intrusive inspections.

_ February 2004: Media reports say Pakistani nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan delivered atomic weapons technology to Iran.

_ March 2004: The IAEA praises Iran's cooperation but criticizes past efforts to mislead the U.N. and urges Tehran to disclose all information concerning its nuclear program by June.

_ September 2004: Then-Secretary of State Colin Powell says Iran's nuclear program is a growing threat and calls for international sanctions.

_ November 2004: Iran announces the suspension of uranium enrichment and related activities amid fragile negotiations with European nations.

_ August 2005: Iran rejects a European Union offer of incentives in exchange for guarantees it will not pursue nuclear weaponry. Tehran announces it has resumed uranium conversion at Isfahan, and the IAEA calls an emergency meeting to deal with the crisis.

_ Sept. 17, 2005: President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad tells U.N. Security Council it is Iran's "inalienable right" to produce nuclear fuel and rejects European offer of economic incentives to halt enrichment program.

_ SEPT. 24, 2005: IAEA PASSES RESOLUTION CALLING IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM "ILLEGAL AND ILLOGICAL" AND PUTS TEHRAN ONE STEP AWAY FROM SECURITY COUNCIL ACTION ON SANCTIONS.

_ Nov. 11, 2005: Plans emerge for Russian offer to enrich uranium for Iran on Russian soil.

_ Nov. 24, 2005: The European Union accuses Iran of possessing documents used solely for the production of nuclear arms, warns of possible referral to Security Council.

_ Jan. 8, 2006: Iran removes U.N. seals from nuclear enrichment facility at Natanz, effectively ending a freeze on the process that can produce fuel for nuclear weapons.

The error?

1. The IAEA resolution of September 24, 2005 never calls Iran's nuclear program "illegal and illogical." See the IAEA's September 24th resolution: <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2005/gov2005-77.pdf>
2. On September, 26, 2005, however, "the Iranian foreign minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, nevertheless rejected the IAEA's September 24th resolution as 'illegal, illogical and politically motivated.'" See quote in the (UK) News-Telegraph: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2005/09/26/wiran26.xml>

What are your readers to make of this error? Here's what I come away with:

1. You have reported something that is untrue.
2. You have used plagiarized language without attribution.
3. You have used the plagiarized language to characterize the IAEA's September 24th resolution while failing to even report Iran's response to the IAEA resolution.

Why is this significant?

In the run-up to the invasion of Iraq, major news organizations—including the AP—made major errors in reporting on the issues surrounding Iraq’s nuclear program. These errors, in combination with the Bush administration’s propaganda, helped convince the American people to support the invasion of Iraq, a country that posed no threat to the United States.

Your January 10, 2006 time-line article on Iran’s nuclear history contains the same sort of errors that helped to convince a nation to support an unnecessary war. Given the mistakes you made three short years ago, it seems to me that you would be especially vigilant these days.

It took me about 45 minutes to gather this information, and I am no professional. I simply read your article with a healthy dose of skepticism and followed a few links to get at the truth. At this point in my life—as an observer of both politics, foreign affairs, and the media *and* as a peace activist—I feel compelled to verify what I read regarding the Bush administration claims of “grave threat.”

So should you.

Sincerely,

Steve Lee

Wilmington Peace Meetup: <http://peace.meetup.com/96>

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