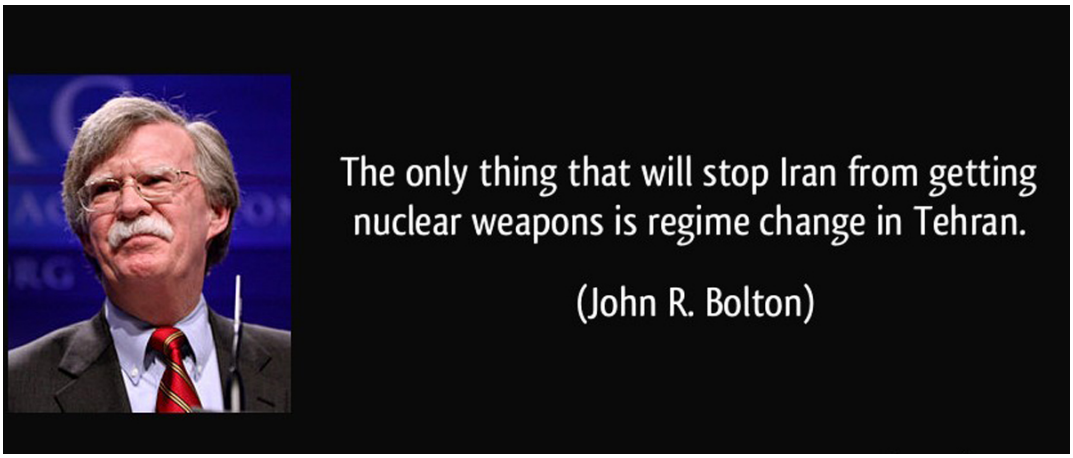
JOHN BOLTON AND A REAGAN DOCTRINE FOR IRAN



Dear John,

You're going to preside over the imminent Iran policy debate, and I'm sure you'll do it the way we used to do it in the Reagan White House: bring the president the fullest possible picture of the disagreements among the Cabinet secretaries, and then he decides.

He'll undoubtedly ask what you think, and I hope you tell him that the Iran deal is beside the point -- that we need a real policy to bring down the regime of the Islamic Republic.

Many smart people think the deal can be fixed, but we know based on past experience that this is highly unlikely. They are full of surprises.

The Iranians and their allies have a long history of successful deception when it comes to nuclear weapons. As the *Washington Post* said some years ago, if you want to stop the Iranian nuclear weapons program, you need regime change – as you know.

We should not expect to know what's going on at the Iranian nuclear sites. Or at sites in Syria, for that matter.

As luck would have it, the Israelis have just confirmed that they bombed a nuclear site in Syria a decade ago. Dan Raviv and Yossi Melman have written an excellent account of how Israeli intelligence, which is as good as it gets on such matters, came by the information that confirmed their worst fears: The Israelis *stumbled* on to it.

It was not the result of their own brilliance, brilliant though they may be. You can take it from Tamir Pardo, who was involved in the project, and who was later the head of Mossad:

"For years, Syria was building a nuclear reactor under our noses, and we did not know about it,"

Pardo says today. “It was not built on the dark side of the moon, but in a neighboring country we always thought we knew almost everything about.”

They had plenty of help in their ignorance. Allies -- yes, including the CIA -- didn’t know anything.

Indeed, until Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi panicked when we invaded Iraq and revealed that he had a nuclear weapons project of his own, the Israelis didn’t know about *that*, either:

Based on foreign reports that have not been confirmed by Israel, Mossad operatives got lucky in March 2007. They broke into an accommodation where Othman (the head of the Syrian nuclear program), had been staying in Europe and found a gold mine: a digital device belonging to Othman packed with information. All its data was collected and sent to Israeli intelligence laboratories.

However surprising this may seem in retrospect, nobody believed initially that vital information had been obtained, and so deciphering the material was not deemed an urgent priority. The data actually sat around for a few days until it was deciphered.

“My intelligence officer entered my room,” recalls Ben-Barak (a Mossad operations officer) “and showed me the photos taken from the device.” He pauses and smiles. “Sometimes intelligence operations need luck.”

So the Israelis -- as good as it gets at this sort of thing -- needed luck to confirm the Syrian/North Korean/Iranian project. Just think of how much luck we might need to confirm what the Iranians are up to now.

If you think it through, and I know you have, I think you must conclude that the only way to fulfill the promise made by a series of American presidents -- that Iran will not be permitted to become a nuclear power -- is to focus on the regime, rather than fixing or nixing the Deal.

We can’t reasonably expect to know what they are actually doing in their secret places. We can’t expect the technologically advanced Western countries to effectively enforce sanctions (just look at the relentless flow of murderous material and know-how from the likes of Germany).

We can’t starve the Iranian regime out of their dream of obliterating Israel, and us. When they say “Death to America!” and “Death to Israel!” that is precisely what they intend to do.

If millions of Iranians go hungry, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei could care less.

Our winning strategy is to subvert the regime and to support its internal enemies. It’s what we did to the Soviet Empire -- a far more formidable enemy than the Islamic Republic.

You can draw on the skills and wisdom of those who worked with President Reagan to relegate

comrade Gorbachev to the ranks of the world's overpaid lecturers. Back then, we were surprised by the speed with which the Empire imploded. I am confident a similar outcome can be accomplished in Iran.

Give a Reagan Doctrine for Iran a try. We're here to help.

Your friend, Michael.

Michael Ledeen is a Freedom Scholar at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.