

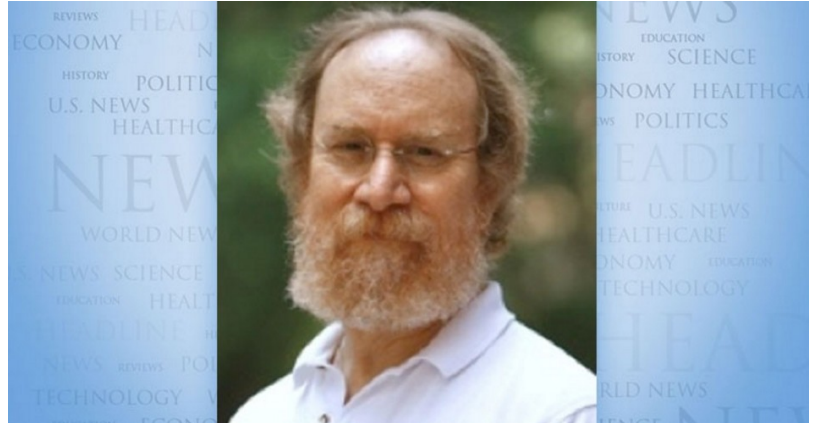


Written by [Sheldon Richman](#) on October 16, 2014

The Politicians Are Scaring You Again

They are doing it again. “They” are the war-party politicians, Democrats and Republicans. “It” is scaring you into supporting another war in the Middle East.

When will the American people learn? If in a republic the people are the ultimate check on government power, a gullible, easily frightened public is a disaster waiting to happen. Where is the derisive skepticism Americans are reputed to feel toward politicians? A high-ranking official and, say, CNN’s Christiane Amanpour need only say “Boogeyman!” and Americans line up for orders.



“Americans are increasingly concerned that ISIS represents a direct terror threat, fearful that ISIS agents are living in the United States, according to a new CNN/ORC International poll. Most now support military action against the terrorist group,” CNN [reported](#) in September. “Seven in 10 Americans believe ISIS has the resources to launch an attack against the United States.”

Administration officials leave the impression that the Islamic State (ISIS), which holds territory in Iraq and Syria, directly threatens Americans at home, although when pressed, these officials won’t say this outright. In interviews President Obama says there is no “immediate intelligence” concerning a threat, but he insists the U.S. military must strike ISIS now or else.... Obama wants it both ways: to scare the people into supporting a new American war in Iraq and Syria, without creating a panic. “We will not tolerate safe havens for terrorists who threaten our people,” Obama [said](#).

Obama’s Republican critics show no restraint. Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC), for example, goes to absurd lengths to frighten Americans. “This president needs to rise to the occasion before we all get killed back here at home,” Graham [said](#). He forecast the deaths of hundreds of millions of Americans if something drastic is not done.

Thirty thousand ISIS fighters are going invade and kill 319 million Americans?

What about terrorism?

Veteran foreign correspondent Reese Erlich, who has been in northern Iraq recently, debunks the fearmongers in “[10 Myths about Obama’s Latest War](#)”:

IS [ISIS] is a vicious, un-Islamic, ultra-right-wing group that poses a real threat to the people of Syria and Iraq. But those people will defeat IS, not the U.S., whose motives are widely questioned in the region. IS poses no more of a terrorist threat to the American people than al-Qaida and its offshoots.

Clearly, ISIS has its hands full fighting Syrian, Iraqi, and Kurdish forces, so why the hysteria that some new and unprecedented threat faces the American people? Because irresponsible politicians know that public fear breeds public acquiescence.



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Yet the Obama administration must have thought that ISIS wasn't threatening enough, because during the first airstrikes in Syria, U.S. bombs also hit a hitherto unknown group said to be planning an imminent attack on America, the Khorasan Group. The first reason for skepticism is that the administration has [redefined imminent also to mean not imminent](#).

A second reason is that hardly anyone had heard of the Khorasan Group, and it seemed to disappear as quickly as it arose. Glenn Greenwald [wrote](#) in the *Intercept*,

But once it served its purpose of justifying the start of the bombing campaign in Syria, the Khorasan narrative simply evaporated as quickly as it materialized....

Literally within a matter of days, we went from "perhaps in its final stages of planning its attack" (CNN) to "plotting as 'aspirational'" and "there did not yet seem to be a concrete plan in the works" (NYT).

It turns out that the Khorasan Group was just an al-Qaeda cell, not some unique new threat against the American people, as it was presented. "There are serious questions about whether the Khorasan Group even exists in any meaningful or identifiable manner," Greenwald writes.

This does not mean that ISIS-inspired terrorism inside the United States is inconceivable. But the threat does not remotely approach the existential, and ISIS has no need to dispatch agents to, or set up sleeper cells in, America. Indeed, the Department of Homeland Security warns that "lone wolf" terrorism by "self-radicalized" Americans is more to be feared than an ISIS plot.

The best way to avoid terrorism is to stop dropping bombs on Muslims. Meanwhile, everyone should take a deep breath. The risk of being a victim of terrorism is [miniscule](#).

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