By Chris Floyd

From Empire Burlesque | Original Article

This week, the warlords of the West took yet another step toward their long-desired war againt Iran. (Open war, that is; their covert war has been going on for decades -- via subversion, terrorism, and proxies like Saddam Hussein.) On Monday, the European Union obediently followed the dictates of its Washington masters by agreeing to impose an embargo on Iranian oil.

The embargo bans all new oil contracts with Iran, and cuts off all existing deals after July. The embargo is accompanied by a freeze on all European assets of the Iranian central bank. In imposing these draconian measures on a country which is not at war with any nation, which has not invaded or attacked another nation in centuries, and which is developing a nuclear energy program that is not only entirely legal under international law but is also subject to the most stringent international inspection regime ever seen, the EU is "targeting the economic lifeline of the regime," as one of its diplomats put it, with admirable candor.

The embargo will have serious, perhaps disastrous effects on many of Europe's sinking economies, which are heavy users of Iranian oil. This is particularly true in Greece, the poster boy for our modern "Shock Doctrine über alles" global economic system. For even as Greece writhes beneath the blows of European bankers determined to bleed the country dry to avoid the consequences of their own knowingly corrupt loan policies, the Iranians have been giving the Greeks substantial discounts on oil, which has helped ease -- at least in some measure -- the economic ruin being imposed on the "birthplace of democracy."

Now this slender lifeline is being cut, leaving Greece -- and other nations under assault by the plutocrats and their political lackeys -- to seek a replacement for discounted Iranian oil in what will be a seller's market, thanks to the shortages caused by the embargo. The result will be higher prices across the board, leading to more economic ruin for all those beyond the golden penumbra of the One Percent.

And of course, the effects will be even more catastrophic for millions of innocent people in Iran. Already the lives of these innocent people -- including all of the dissidents supposedly so cherished by the West -- are being diminished and degraded by the series of sanctions imposed by the United States and its pack of tail-wagging Europuppies. But who cares about that? After all, it is glaringly obvious that our Euro-American elites are more than happy to see their *own* rabble go down the shock-doctrine toilet; it is inconceivable that the ruin of a bunch of dirty Mooslim furriners would disturb them for even a nano-second.

The ostensible aim of all these sanctions, we are told, is to "force Iran back to the negotiating table" on its nuclear program. This is patent nonsense. Innumerable "negotiations" -- including major concessions by Iran -- have been rejected by Washington and the puppies. For example, who can forget Barack Obama's "major diplomatic initiative" in 2010, when he proposed a solution to the impasse: Iran should ship its nuclear fuel to Brazil and Turkey for processing. What happened? Well, as we noted here at the ti me:

Obama puts forth what is purported to be a major "diplomatic" solution to have Iran ship its nuclear fuel to Brazil and Turkey for processing. This was, of course, a hollow gesture, meant to show how intransigent and untrustworthy Iran really is; the nuke-hungry mullahs would naturally reject the deal. But when Iran made an agreement with Brazil *to do exactly what Obama requested* , this was immediately denounced -- by Obama -- as .... a demonstration of how intransigent and untrustworthy Iran really is. Meet a benchmark, and the masters simply change the rules. That's how it works until they get what they want: regime change in strategic lands laden with natural resources.

The latter statement is the key. The aim of this endless string of sanctions, this constant tightening of the noose, is not more "negotiations." It is regime change, by any means necessary. The Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, laid out one possible school of thought motivating the Western warmongers: "[The sanctions have] nothing to do with a desire to strengthen the nuclear nonproliferation. It's aimed at stifling the Iranian economy and the population in an apparent hope to provoke discontent."

That is a scenario often touted by our high and mighty mongerers: squeeze an enemy regime until the people rise up and get rid of a ruler you don't like. Of course, as we saw in Iraq, a people driven to their knees by murderous sanctions rarely have the strength or capability to overturn a regime. In fact, the leaders of sanctioned

regimes are almost always strengthened (and enriched) by sanctions.

But unlike some bitter cynics, I happen to have great faith in the abiding intelligence of our betters. I believe they know perfectly well that sanctions will not drive the Iranian regime from power. Instead, I think the current strategy here is two-fold.

First, while long-running sanctions do not in themselves overturn a regime, they do make the entire country much weaker. Infrastructure falls apart, society crumbles, communities wither, families fray, the people themselves become physically weaker -- indeed, they can die in droves, in multitudes, as in Iraq. All of this makes for a much softer target when you finally decide to pull the trigger on military action.

Second -- and I think much more relevant to this case -- there is the hope that ever-tightening sanctions will provoke a violent response from the victim, thereby "justifying" a war of "self-defense" against the "unprovoked" attack. The series of escalating provocations being carried out by Washington and its allies, chiefly Israel -- including an increasingly open program of assassinations -- is clearly designed to goad the Iranians into a *casus belli* retaliation.

So far, the Iranians have resisted -- a forbearance that has driven the Western warmongers into ludicrous attempts to manufacture *casus belli* incidents. such as the recent "Gleiwitz gambit": the story that the super-duper Iranian spymasters tried to hire a goofball car dealer to kill a Saudi diplomat on the streets of Washington. But the matches our masters keep throwing at this bone-dry pile of tinder are getting closer and closer to sparking the desired conflagration. The Iranians have already threatened to close the Straits of Hormuz if the EU goes through with its embargo. This, of course, would likely be
the "Pearl Harbor" moment
the war-whoopers are waiting for: an "unprovoked" attack aimed at -- what else? -- "targeting the economic lifeline" of the West. (Targeting economic lifelines is a tactic reserved solely for God's good eggs, you understand; it's an unmitigated evil when those heathen devils try it.)

The Iranians might back down on this threat, of course; the wily Persians tend to play the long game, and usually with more subtle calibration than the Western elites, who, like spoiled children, like to have their loot and power *now now now*! But if this latest provocation doesn't do the trick, rest assured there are more coming in the, er, pipeline. For the bipartisan goal, as noted above, remains the same: "regime change in strategic lands laden with natural resources." And our masters have already demonstrated that they do not care how many

people are ruined -- or are killed -- in pursuit of this aim.

UPDATE: Arthur Silber offers some powerful amplification of these observations in his latest post. As always, you should read the whole thing, but here is one particularly piercing -- and tragically true -- insight from his piece:

After Iraq, after Afghanistan, after Libya, after all of these horrors and many more, can the American people be led into another war? Why, it's the easiest thing in the world.