

The K.F. Stone Weekly

(Formerly "Beating the Bushes")



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INSPECT THIS!

Question: When is a fact not a fact?

Answer: When it is either presented by a person or source with whom one disagrees, or goes against one's preconceived notion of what is true.

Question: When is a falsehood not a falsehood?

Answer: When it is either presented by a person or source with whom one agrees, or bolsters one's preconceived notion of what is true.

Welcome to the new world of fact and fiction, of truth and fable, wherein what



Parchin

one group or side objectively presents as fact, the other group or side subjectively declares to be fable – which thereby turns that fable into an objective fact.

Say what? Want a terse, two-word example of this new twist on reality? Think "death panels." I first wrote about this "fact-as-fable-and-fable-as-fact" phenomenon back in

July 2010 in a piece entitled [Facts Be Damned](#). In that piece I presented a plethora of objective - and well-documented - facts proving that the Affordable Care Act *absolutely did not* contain anything about "death panels." Rather, what it did contain, was a provision ". . . which would permit physicians . . . to charge Medicare for their time and expertise in discussing end of life issues with terminally ill patients. Period." Despite all the objective, documented facts I managed to present, I was nonetheless accused of lying through my teeth; that indeed, the Affordable Care Act *did* mandate "death panels." And what proof did they offer of my mendacity? Only that I was a liberal citing "liberal sources" which, by definition, are incapable of presenting the truth.

In other words, a subjective belief turned into an objective fact.

A far more crucial example of this phenomenon is a [story](#) run by the AP this past Wednesday (Aug. 18) under the chilling headline "AP Exclusive: UN to let Iran inspect alleged nuke work site." As can be expected, the headline -- if not the story which followed -- caused a tidal wave of disgust, as well as charges against President Obama and Secretary of State Kerry. Political pundits and commentators declared the deal to be deadlier than a mummy, one of history's most deranged diplomatic disasters, and therefore must - MUST - be defeated. And yet, in succeeding stories, the AP, in the words of Vox's Max Fisher, "scrubbed many of the most damning details . . ." thereby becoming ". . . itself part of this increasingly bizarre story."

Shorn of its glaring headline, the original AP story dealt with a place called Parchin (an Iranian military base about 20 miles southeast of Tehran), something called PMD ("potential military dimensions") and what they mean for the nuclear deal. The headline the AP editor chose to run gave the impression that *all* nuclear inspections would be carried out by the Iranians themselves . . . which if true, would be dumber than dirt. However, it turns out the issue at hand is the result of "a mild and widely anticipated compromise" on a single set of inspections at a single site (Parchin), which intelligence gathered by the I.A.E.A. (International Atomic Energy Agency) shows has been long dormant.

How's that?

In the early 2000s, Iran conducted specialized explosive tests at a building in Parchin with the help of a former Soviet nuclear scientist. It is [widely believed](#) that these tests were related to developing a nuclear bomb. This work appears to have ceased more than a decade ago (the building is under constant satellite monitoring), and it seems highly likely that Iran has since scrubbed it.

Under the present nuclear deal, the UN-run IAEA is empowered to investigate what experts call "possible military dimensions" (PMD) of Iran's past nuclear work. The idea is just that the world should know what happened. That means looking into Parchin; it

is meant to give the IAEA an opportunity to try to verify whether or not its suspicions are correct. To wit, that Parchin *was* the site of nuclear experimentation, and has long since been shut down.

Far down in the AP report one learns that "*in a one-time set of inspections at one military facility known as Parchin, Iranians, rather than nuclear inspectors, would take 'environmental samples' (such as soil samples).*" It further said that nuclear inspectors "*would not be permitted to visit, and that Iran would not provide photos or videos of the site.*" At this point, two facts must be introduced:

1. The report was not based not on the actual agreement, but rather on a *copy of a draft agreement*. The anonymous source who showed AP the document said there was a final version that is similar, but conspicuously refused to show AP the final version or go into specifics.
2. A couple of hours after first publishing its piece with the earth-shattering headline, the AP added in a bunch of quotes from Republicans furiously condemning the revelations. At the same time, the AP [*removed*](#) *most of the actual revelations*. The information in the updated article was [*substantially altered*](#), with some of the most damning details scrubbed entirely. (For instance, the news agency removed from its report the claim that it was Iranian scientists themselves who would be inspecting the air and soil samples at Parchin, rather than UN inspectors. It also removed the claim that the number of air and soil samples taken from within suspected nuclear sites would be limited to seven.) No explanation for this was given.

Less than 24 hours after the initial AP story with its glaring, essentially misleading headline, I.A.E.A. Director General [Yukiya Amano](#) issued a response in which he labeled it "a misrepresentation," further stating "*I am disturbed by statements suggesting that the IAEA has given responsibility for nuclear inspections to Iran. Such statements misrepresent the way in which we will undertake this important verification work.*"

Shortly after Director General Amano had his say, AP ran the updated piece which removed the claim that it was Iranian scientists themselves – and not UN inspectors – who would be inspecting the air and soil samples at Parchin. The new version of the story said that Iran *will* provide photos and videos of the site, as well as mechanisms by which the IAEA can verify that these are authentic.

A key point here: The Parchin inspection is *not* part of the nuclear deal that was negotiated between the US and other world powers and Iran. Rather, this is something the IAEA negotiates directly with the country it's inspecting -- in this case Iran.

The actual information on inspections was buried under 700 words of (mostly) Republican condemnations of the deal, based, presumably, on information from the

first draft of the story that, as noted above, has since been scrubbed. Despite this tacit "admission-via-omission" that the original story was likely incorrect and perhaps even irresponsible, those seeing dastardly evil in the pact found nothing to change their minds; they have continued spreading the word that the Iranians will be responsible for inspecting themselves.

One could go on and on, inspecting what the agreement really says. However, the deeper we delve, the more intricate the factual minutia becomes, the less fascinating and sensationalized the topic. And even if, for argument's sake, all the objective facts of what is -- and is not -- in the agreement are listed, explained and discussed, those who oppose it will not likely change their minds; they *know* that the sources for those "facts" are highly questionable and thus are fables; they *know* that Obama and Kerry are going to let the Iranians inspect themselves. Hey, when Fox and friends say the Iranians are going to be doing their own inspections, it's the truth. But when professional international nuclear inspectors say "here are the facts proving that what you believe simply is not the case," it cannot be possibly be true, because after all, *they* are a bunch of treasonous, America-hating liberals.

Oy veh!

When the definition of what is true depends far more on the *source* that produces and provides the facts than the facts themselves, we're all in trouble.

Similarly, those whose subjective beliefs become the source for their objective truth - they are inhabiting a fool's paradise.

One can be in favor of - or against - the Iran nuclear deal as they will. But please, let the decision be based on objective fact rather than subjective fear.

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