

Bill Kaplan: Stage-managing the Iran War

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Trump and administration officials are stage-managing the Iran War. Whenever the news is bad, Trump distorts and downplays: “This is a short excursion (Iran War) into something that should have been done for 47 years ... and no president had the guts to do it” (Trump avoided military service). Similarly, when asked about “Russia giving Iran targeting data to attack U.S. assets” (Washington Post) Trump attacked the press for raising the issue: “What a stupid question that is We’re talking about something else.” Not talking about dead and wounded U.S. troops? Casualties perhaps inflicted by Russia?

Stage-managing extended to Dover, Delaware as Trump met the arrival of dead U.S. troops. He wore a white “USA” baseball (campaign merch) cap and never removed it to show respect . Fox News, to the rescue, showed old footage of Trump without the cap until public outrage forced Fox to apologize. Moreover, thousands are dead in Iran and elsewhere. However, Trump says the U.S. is “winning” and the war will end “soon, very soon.” But reality intrudes. The press and U.S. military officials confirmed that a U.S. Tomahawk missile struck an Iranian school, killing many children. Trump initially claimed: “It was done by Iran.” Now he dodges questions from the press. Trump is not alone in evading the truth.

Secretary of Defense Hegseth “barred press photographers from briefings on the ongoing U.S.-Israeli military conflict with Iran after they published photos of ... Hegseth that his staff deemed ‘unflattering,’ according to two people familiar with the decision ...” (Washington Post). Similar to Hegseth’s trying to muzzle reporters and limiting access. It gets worse: “White House social media videos try to turn carnage into entertainment ... (it) drafted Iron Man, Walter White and SpongeBob” (NYT). But the Iran War is all about “carnage”, delusion, domination and power.

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Moreover, Trump projects unwarranted optimism, including changing Iran's government. However, the U.S. National Intelligence Council (represents all U.S. intelligence agencies) concluded that the Iran War will "unlikely" result in regime change. Meanwhile, the war casualties keep mounting. The Strait of Hormuz is closed as Iran lays mines and attacks ships carrying oil. The price of gas at the pump is skyrocketing. But Trump said: that this "is a very small price to pay for U.S.A. and World, Safety and Peace, ONLY FOOLS WOULD THINK DIFFERENTLY!" However, mortgage interest rates are up and Wisconsin farmers worry about inflation (diesel soaring).

Long past time to listen to Wisconsin Democratic Senator Tammy Baldwin. She has called for the Senate to "hold immediate public hearings with Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and other relevant cabinet-level officials to explain to the American people why the Trump administration launched an unconstitutional war with Iran and why this expensive, escalating conflict is in America's national interest. ... (the) Trump administration must answer questions publicly under oath, in front of the American people, not just behind closed doors." Once again, Baldwin has demonstrated courageous, independent leadership.

Support the troops, bring them home.

Kaplan wrote a guest column from Washington, D.C., for the Wisconsin State Journal from 1995 - 2009.