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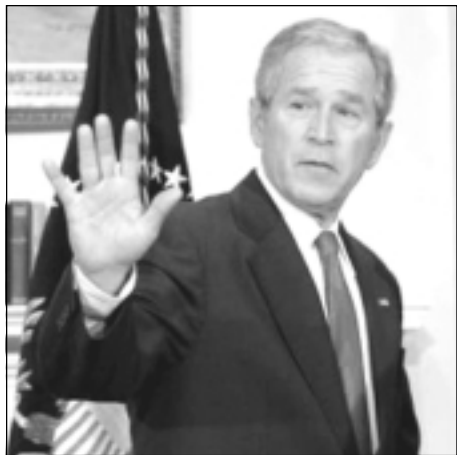
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Bush leaves office without bombing Iran!

by: Warren L. Nelson

IranTimes: President Bush left office this week without launching any military attacks on Iran despite literally hundreds of news reports in recent years insisting he would attack Iran before finishing his term. Attack stories rarely appeared in the mainstream American press, like The Washington Post and The New York Times, which said they



never found any evidence of such war plans. The stories appeared frequently in London, where a newspaper saw an "imminent" attack almost every month. Stories appearing just after the November election said Bush was rushing to strike Iran before Barack Obama took office January 20. In the end, nothing happened. In the United States, the attack scenario got serious attention only after each new article in The New Yorker magazine by Seymour Hersh, a former reporter with The New York Times. Hersh's first story was published in January 2005. "In my interviews," he wrote, "I was repeatedly told that the next strategic target [after Iraq] was Iran." He quoted an unnamed source as saying, "It's not if we're going to do anything against Iran. They're doing it." Hersh said, "The immediate goals of the attacks would be to destroy, or at least temporarily derail, Iran's ability to go nuclear." Altogether, Hersh wrote six articles talking about war with Iran. In the second, he quoted a former senior intelligence official as saying, "Now we have the green light to do everything we want." In the third article, he said that senior military commanders "have increasingly challenged the President's plans," arguing that the bombing campaign that was laid out "will prob-

ably not succeed in destroying Iran's nuclear program." In that article he also said the military had gotten the White House to drop "its insistence" that the plan include provisions for a nuclear bomb attack on Natanz, where Iran's centrifuges enrich uranium. In the fourth article, published in November 2006, just after the GOP lost control of the Senate and House, Hersh said the White House had slowed the pace of military planning and shifted its focus more to covert operations. That article said Washington was backing the Party for Free Life In Kurdistan (PEJAK), an Iranian Kurdish offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a terrorist group that has long fought Turkey. In March 2007, Hersh wrote, "The Bush Administration... has significantly shifted its Middle East strategy ... [and] has brought the United States closer to an open confrontation with Iran." He said American combat units from Iraq were already operating inside Iran to pursue Iraqi militiamen killing Americans. Hersh also said, "The Pentagon is continuing intensive planning for a possible bombing attack on Iran, a process that began last year, at the direction of the President." The New York Times recently said President Bush never ordered any planning for an attack on Iran. Hersh said ominously, "The former senior intelligence official said that the current contingency plans allow for an attack this spring." But a contingency plan by definition is done on military initiative and not at presidential direction. And a contingency plan allows for an order to execute at any time. There are dozens of contingency plans in Pentagon files. In his sixth and final story, published in October 2007, Hersh backed away from his earlier stories—but not from the underlying Bush scheme to bomb Iran. Hersh said Bush ended plans to bomb nuclear installations, in part because he concluded he lacked public support for such an attack. "Now, Hersh wrote, "the emphasis is on 'surgical' strikes on Revolutionary Guard facilities in Tehran and elsewhere, which, the Administration claims, have been the source of attacks on Americans in Iran." Hersh's stories often attributed information to Pentagon contractors, who don't have access to war plans, and to intelligence officers, who are supposed to know a lot about what other countries are doing but who are excluded from U.S. military planning.

Nafisi publishes new memoirs that open up about her parents

IranTimes: Azar Nafisi has published a new memoir entitled, "Things I've Been Silent About," describing her childhood growing up in Iran and her complex relationship with her late parents. Her father was once mayor of Tehran. Nafisi, a former Western literature professor at the University of Tehran, is currently a visiting fellow and lecturer at the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at Johns Hopkins University in Washington, D.C. The Iranian literature professor emigrated from Iran and permanently settled in the United States in 1997. Six years later, Nafisi, 53, came out with her first bestselling memoir, "Reading Lolita in Tehran," which documented her 1981 expulsion from Tehran University—for refusing to wear the veil, her resumption of teaching in 1987 and the formation of a private book club in her home. That memoir wove her personal stories with those of her former students, using as a touchstone their two years of shared experiences in a secret reading group discussing banned authors like Vladimir Nabokov and F. Scott Fitzgerald.



Years later, Nafisi has come out with a second—and much more personal—memoir, telling the story of her private and often complicated family life; her personal narrative is set against the background of a turbulent Iran. The memoir, published by Random House, tells the story of

Oscar nomination goes to Iranian for ninth time

IranTimes: An Iranian-American animated film director and his team have been nominated for an Academy Award for their short film "Oktapodi." This is the ninth time in the last 13 years that an Iranian has received an Oscar nomination. None, however, has yet won the Oscar itself. "Oktapodi" will be competing in the Short Animated Film category against "La Maison en Petits Cubes," "Lavatory," "Presto" and "This Way Up." The nominations were announced last week. The Oscars will be awarded February 22. The film, which has already won 10 festival awards, was created by a team of students from the Paris-based animation school Gobelins. The team includes: Julien Bocabeille, Francois-Xavier Chanioux, Olivier Delabarre, Thierry Marchand, Quentin Marmier and Iranian-American Emud Mokhberi. Mokhberi, 36, explained that working on an animated film in France came together unexpectedly. Two years ago, Mokhberi didn't speak any French and up until a few years before that, he had never considered animation as a possible career. "It's not like this was a passion that I worked toward.... It was unintentional," he told the Society of Digital Artists (SDA). But now Mokhberi and his French teammates have been nominated for an "I went to my first SIGGRAPH [Special Interest Group on GRAPHics and Interactive Techniques] in 2001," Mokhberi said. "I liked CG [Computer Graphics], but, until then, I really knew nothing about computer graphics." At the time, the Iranian-born programmer had just graduated from UCLA with a degree in computer science. "I went to a presentation given by Doug Roble [the creative director of software at Digital Domain], and loved him so much I decided to apply for a job at Digital Domain." But once he began working there, Mokhberi found that he was dealing with technical computer problems rather than with programming. "I didn't do any programming at all," he told SDA. "I felt like I wasn't living up to my potential. But, in hindsight, it was the best thing I could have done.... When I went back to UCLA, I knew what I needed to do to be successful in the industry. I understood that they wanted people who were strong technically and artistically." When Mokhberi went back to UCLA to pursue his Masters in computer science, he registered for art classes and also signed up for an introductory animation class at the university's film school. "The point was to get an introduction and move on. But, I liked it so much, I took another class." When he finished his masters in computer science, he transferred to UCLA's film school to work on a master's in fine arts (MFA). At the time, Mokhberi's wife—a French history student—needed to live in Paris for a year. "I advanced my candidacy so that all I needed to do was finish a film, and I could do that anywhere," Mokhberi said. "So, the original idea was that I would work on my film in Paris." Instead, Mokhberi applied to Gobelins. But the Paris-based program required that students be able to understand French, which Mokhberi did not know at all. Mokhberi applied for the program and then began taking intensive French classes back at UCLA. When he flew to Paris in June 2007 for the formal application process—which involved three days of tests and an interview—the school accepted him. Three months later, he and his wife moved to Paris. Mokhberi, whose parents are both Iranian, was born in the

United States. But when his father completed his studies just a few months after Mokhberi was born, they moved back to Iran. Several months later Iran was transformed by the 1979 revolution, and six years later, the family moved to Stockholm, Sweden. Then, in 1993, when Mokhberi was a sophomore in high school, Mokhberi's family settled in southern California. "Oktapodi," which was the Gobelins team's graduation project, is a story set on a Greek island about octopi who fall in love. The team finished the film in July and it immediately began winning film festival awards. But Mokhberi wasn't the only Iranian whose film was submitted for an Academy Award. "The Song of Sparrows," directed by the award-winning Majid Majidi, was Iran's 2009 Academy Award entry for best Foreign Language Film. But the film was not among the five nominated for an Oscar. "Avaz-e Gonjeshkha" (The Song of Sparrows), tells the tale of Karim, a man who works on an ostrich farm. When an ostrich escapes on Karim's watch, Karim is fired. He finds a new job in Tehran, but faces a new set of problems as the film explores how capitalism and technology can be corrupting factors, weakening the bonds between Karim and his family, friends, nature and spirituality. A record 67 foreign film



submissions has been whittled down to five nominees: "The Class," from France; "The Baader Meinhof Complex" from Germany; "Waltz with Bashir," from Israel; "Departures" from Japan and "Revanche" from Austria. "The Class" is a semi-autobiographical account of François Bégaudeau's experiences as a literature teacher in an inner city middle school in Paris. "The Baader Meinhof Complex" tells the early years of the West German terrorist group, the Red Army Faction (RAF). Ari Folman's "Waltz with Bashir" is about the 1982 massacres that took place at Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila in Lebanon. The film, which is directed by a former Israeli soldier who took part in the 1982 invasion, is an animated, autobiographical documentary that won the Golden Globe for best foreign film. In "Departures," a young married cellist who has recently become jobless takes up work as an undertaker; through his relationship with death, he begins to understand what life is really about. "Revanche," an Austrian thriller, centers on the ill-fated love of a Viennese ex-con and a Ukrainian prostitute. Since 1997, eight Iranians have been nominated for nine Oscars; Habib Zargarpour was nominated twice in the Special Effects category. Iranians have been nominated in eight of the 24 Oscar categories, showing the breadth of Iranian involvement in the film industry. All the nominees have been expatriate Iranians, except for Majid Majidi, whose film "Children of Heaven" won Iran's sole Best Foreign Language Film nomination in 1999.

Nafisi's childhood in Iran, her complex and demanding mother Nezhat—a beautiful but demanding woman who lost her own mother at an early age and finds it hard to love and be loved in return, her close relationship with her father Ahmad—who later became the youngest mayor of Tehran at 42—and the period leading up to the Islamic revolution. The author

said she got the idea for her second memoir in large part from a list she began compiling in her diary sometime after the 1979 revolution, entitled "Things I've Been Silent About." The book includes writings her father began when she was four years old and addressed to her plus old fam-

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