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Categories: Huckabee

Huckabee not aware of NIE report on Iran

My colleague David Paul Kuhn attended an on-the-record dinner with Mike Huckabee and a group of reporters tonight in Des Moines.

The transcript speaks for itself:

Kuhn: I don't know to what extent you have been briefed or been able to take a look at the NIE report that came out yesterday ...

Huckabee: I'm sorry?

Kuhn: The NIE report, the National Intelligence Estimate on Iran. Have you been briefed or been able to take a look at it —

Huckabee: No.

Kuhn: Have you heard of the finding?

Huckabee: No.

Kuhn then summarized the NIE finding that Iran had stopped work on a clandestine nuclear program four years ago and asked if it "adjusts your view on Iran in any sense."

Kuhn: What is your concern on Iran as of now?

Huckabee: I've a serious concern if they were to be able to weaponize nuclear material, and I think we all should, mainly because the statements of

Ahmadinejad are certainly not conducive to a peaceful purpose for his having it and the fear that he would in fact weaponize it and use it. (He pauses and thinks) I don't know where the intelligence is coming from that says they have suspended the program or how credible that is versus the view that they actually are expanding it. ... And I've heard, the last two weeks, supposed reports that they are accelerating it and it could be having a reactor in a much shorter period of time than originally been thought.

Kuhn: Does the United States face a higher burden of proof on Iran in light of Iraq, in the international community?

Huckabee: Probably so. First time I've been asked a question like that. But I think probably so because there is going to be a real anxiety for us to take any type of action without there being some very credible and almost irrefutable intelligence to validate our decision.

Kuhn: And then on the flip side of that. a conservative concern might be, does the United States, might they hedge, might they be timid from taking necessary aggressive action due to the failures of intelligence on Iraq, and our failures in Iraq itself?

Huckabee: I think that's a possibility as well. And that would be unfortunate if we actually knew we needed to take action but were fearful of doing so because of getting burned in the Iraq situation. That would be a serious challenge for us.

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