



Iran's Day of Terror?

[Robert Spencer](#)

Colaboraciones n° 1152

August 21, 2006

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has frustrated Western officials by refusing to reply to their offer of various incentives in exchange for Iran's discarding its nuclear program [until August 22](#). The Western governments had asked Ahmadinejad to reply by June 29; why would Tehran need two extra months?

Farid Ghadry, the president of the Reform Party of Syria, [has offered](#) a provocative explanation for this delay. He asserts that the Supreme National Security Council of Iran chose the August 22 date "for a very precise reason. August 21, 2006 (Rajab 27, 1427) is known in the Islamic calendar as the Night of the Sira'a and Miira'aj, the night Prophet Mohammed (saas) ascended to heaven from the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem on a Bourak (Half animal, half man), while a great light lit-up the night sky, and visited Heaven and Hell also Beit al-Saada and Beit al-Shaqaa (House of Happiness and House of

Misery) and then descended back to Mecca...."

The Night Journey, or Miraj, is central to Islam's claim to Jerusalem as an Islamic holy city. According to Islamic tradition, Muhammad was carried on a Buraq, a miraculous horse with a human head, from Mecca to Jerusalem, where he ascended into heaven and met the other prophets. The only thing the Qur'an has to say about it is this: "Glory to (Allah) Who did take His servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the farthest Mosque, whose precincts We did bless, in order that We might show him some of Our Signs: for He is the One Who heareth and seeth (all things)" (17:1). There is no identification of the "farthest Mosque" with any mosque in Jerusalem in this, but the Hadith is very clear on the identification of its location with Jerusalem.

The traditions say that Muhammad and the Buraq, along with the angel

Gabriel, went to the Temple Mount, and from there to heaven itself, where Muhammad encountered various prophets. In the sixth heaven was Moses, occasioning a dig at the Jews. "When I left him," Muhammad says, "he wept. Someone asked him, 'What makes you weep?' Moses said, 'I weep because after me there has been sent (Muhammad as a Prophet) a young man, whose followers will enter Paradise in greater numbers than my followers.'"

Evidently, however, Muhammad's stories of his journey were not altogether convincing: even some of the Muslims abandoned their faith and challenged Muhammad's most faithful follower, Abu Bakr, to do the same. Abu Bakr was contemptuous: "If he says so then it is true. And what is so surprising in that? He tells me that communications from God from heaven to earth come to him in an hour of a day or night and I believe him, and that is more extraordinary than that at which you boggle!" The world has continued to witness such unshakeable devotion from Muslims to this day.

Did Muhammad really go anywhere? According to his favorite wife, Aisha, he did not: "The apostle's body remained where it was but God removed his spirit by night." Nevertheless, the Night Journey has become firmly embedded in the Islamic consciousness, such that Muslims today celebrate it as one of the central events of Mu-

hammad's life. And now, according to Ghadry, Ahmadinejad is planning an illumination of the night sky over Jerusalem to rival the one that greeted the Prophet of Islam on his journey. What the Iranian President, he says, is "promising the world by August 22 is the light in the sky over the Aqsa Mosque that took place the night before. That is his answer to the package of incentives the international community offered Iran on June 6."

Certainly a nuclear attack on Jerusalem or even an all-out conventional assault against Israel by Iran would be consistent with Ahmadinejad's oft-repeated denials of Israel's right to exist and recent predictions that its demise was at hand. He hinted at the use of nuclear weapons in his phrasing [when he said](#) that Israel "pushed the button of its own destruction" by finally retaliating against Hizballah's relentless rocket barrage from south Lebanon.

"Arrogant powers," Ahmadinejad said, "have set up a base for themselves to threaten and plunder nations in the region. But today, the occupier regime" - that is, Israel - "whose philosophy is based on threats, massacre and invasion, has reached its finishing line."

Will he attempt to make good on these threats this year on the anniversary of the Miraj, illuminating the night sky over Jerusalem? Will Western powers heed Farid Ghadry's words and move to stop Iran before it is too late?

Robert Spencer is a scholar of Islamic history, theology, and law and the director of [Jihad Watch](#). He is the author of five books, seven monographs, and hundreds of articles about jihad and Islamic terrorism, including [Islam Unveiled: Disturbing Questions About the World's Fastest Growing Faith](#) and [The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam \(and the Crusades\)](#). He is also an Adjunct Fellow with the Free Congress Foundation.