Checking over the crib notes: No, it's all still true. Officials sputter simultaneously at cross-purposes, all contradictions. *Israel could attack Iran in the spring over fears Iran has nuclear weapons. No, hang on -- no, not any right now -- but they might have nukes, someday. You never know. It could happen. It could be.*

If another war's on the line, you think there'd be an effort to get the story straight. Oh -- wait: Sorry, that rule doesn't apply for countries starting with the letter "I."

News reports come and go. Some are wisps and go nowhere. Others stick. One such sticky report came from Pentagon officials upping the ante in this card game, requesting an even more powerful bunker-busting bomb, stronger still than the newest, largest, punchiest ones, the huge monsters delivered in November.

Those Iranian nukes -- phantom, invisible, or to build in who-knows-how-long -- could be deep in a hole, down a well, don't you know. Welcome to the Land of the Looking Glass, where just saying something could very well make it all so!

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The UN's chief nuclear agency, the IAEA, has said there is no evidence Iran's making nukes. You might remember the group as the agency who found no WMDs next door in Iraq -- something we painfully confirmed later, much poorer in body and soul, blood and treasure.

War Secretary Leon Panetta said January 29 he thought Iran might have nuclear weapons in 2 or 3 years. Director of National Intelligence James Clapper told the Senate Intelligence Committee that Iran is not building nuclear weapons: "There is dissension and debate in the political hierarchy of Iran" regarding any go-ahead on them making nuclear weapons. Undecided, right now. They themselves do not yet know to go, or no-go.

Everything all clear, now? Can we pull the trigger now -- can we, can we, huh?

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Our CIA tells us that Iran has the forth largest proven reserves of oil in the world, more than Iraq -- but, less than, in order, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, and Canada.

Once Iran's been all played out, who do you think is next on the hit list? Or, more precisely, how far are you willing to play out a behemoth oil junkie -- one bristling with more weapons than all other nations on Earth combined -- on its next hit of sweet crude, down the line?

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Microphones are our friends. They continue to tell the truth even when the people nearby think they've quit for the day. Microphone gaffes let us see the real people, to check out the wizard at the controls behind the curtain, after their bluster and thunder's all done.

You decide: cheap thrill or deep chill, watching boneheads joke around about war, about death, about killing, about blasting apart people and their lives, just like yours, into pieces.

John McCain sprang to mind as we are all being prepped for our latest war. He had his moment of open-mic fame when he dropped this one into the microphone pattern: "Bomb, bomb, bomb -- bomb, bomb Iran." He got offended we'd noticed, told us all to lighten up.

Ronald Reagan joked near an open mic, too, "My fellow Americans, I'm pleased to tell you today that I've signed legislation that will outlaw Russia forever. We begin bombing in five minutes." Those two lines were spoken in 1984, way too Orwellian for anyone's good.

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Where did it go, the country where we all grew up -- or was it ever really here? It wasn't Bedford Falls, maybe -- but, how in hell did we plunge into Pottersville so unnoticed, so fast?

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The IAEA's former head, Mohammed ElBaradei, stated a million civilians in Iraq were killed for no reason, in an act where accountability under international law is due. He is speaking about war crimes. He has named Bush and named Blair, and the rest of that pack. In his mind, they should all be hauled into international court, get a whole library of law books thrown at each one of them.

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Whaddya say? Wanna go on that ride, just one more time? We still got a few bucks to blow, still got some new meat in uniform, you know! C'mon, whaddya say? Just another million wiped away on the ground -- another trillion or two cleaned from the kitty? C'mon -- whaddya say?

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There has never been a weapon invented by humans that humans did not want to use immediately, now, right this minute. We are more patient with tools, but not weapons: Good thing to remember, in teaching moments like this.

More and more, all human history boils down to one questioning phrase, over and over:

Just because we can, does it mean that we should?

So far, in our short American history and lives, all along on this ride, the technical ability to do something has always meant a mandate it be done -- automatically, reflexively, imperiously, no thinking required, and no questions asked.

Hold on and strap in: Here we go again, on that damnable ride.