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## US-Iran Program Report February-March 2005

### US-IRAN RELATIONS:

Iran rejected a US offer of World Trade Organization membership and licensing, on a case-by-case basis, of spare parts for Iranian civilian aircraft in return for the discontinuation of Iran's alleged nuclear ambitions. The offer marked a policy change by the Bush administration and a clear backing of European diplomatic efforts with Iran.

Iranian officials emphasize that Iran will not accept a permanent suspension of uranium enrichment. Iran claims its nuclear program is aimed at reducing the use of fossil fuel resources and is in compliance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty. In a rare move, Iranian President Khatami welcomed local and foreign journalists to tour two of Iran's nuclear facilities. The journalists were assured that Iranian ambitions were to provide much needed electricity and not to build a nuclear weapon. Iran recently signed an agreement with Russia to supply fuel for Iran's nuclear power plant in Bushehr. Under the agreement, the spent fuel must be returned to Russia.

Iran's presidential elections are scheduled for June 2005 and will mark the end of current reformist President Khatami's two terms. Analysts speculate that this will be a contest between conservatives, despite the large number of candidates intending to run from both the conservative and reformist camps.

### PROJECT UPDATES:

#### Astronauts:

SFCG plans to visit Iran in April 2005 with former American astronauts Rusty Schweickart and Bruce McCandless in partnership with the Zirakzadeh Science Foundation (ZSF) in Tehran. This visit will build on the success of our 1999 astronaut exchange and spring 2004 exchange to Iran of American higher education officials and science exhibit developers from San Francisco's Exploratorium Museum – also conducted in partnership with ZSF. Bruce and Rusty will meet with their Iranian colleagues in the fields of astronomy and science, and will give lectures at Iranian universities including Sharif University of Technology and Isfahan University.

#### Education:

With SFCG support, Oberlin College President Nancy Dye is working closely with the International Society for Iranian Culture (ISIC) in New York to arrange a music exchange between American and Iranian student musicians. Oberlin Conservatory proposed to send one of its student string quartets to tour and perform at Iranian universities or conservatories, and would

invite an Iranian student musical ensemble to perform at Oberlin and tour other American campuses. We are arranging details with the appropriate partner institute in Iran.

The Institute of International Education (IIE) is moving forward the Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Program (FLTA) for Iranian participants. The FLTA Program, which IIE operates in a number of countries, aims to strengthen foreign language instruction at colleges and universities throughout the US and to provide young student teachers with the opportunity to refine their teaching skills while gaining overseas experience. IIE aims to send five or six Iranian graduate students to the US for ten months in fall 2005 to teach Farsi at US colleges and universities. SFCG and the American Institute of Iranian Studies assisted IIE's initial visit to Iran in summer 2004 to build relationships and introduce the FLTA program to Iranian universities.

**Environment:**

SFCG recommended a number of American environmentalists, who had participated in past SFCG exchanges, to attend an international environmental conference in Tehran from May 9-10. The conference, organized jointly by Iran and the United Nations Environment Programme, will address "Environment, Peace and Dialogue among Civilizations and Cultures". The meeting is a follow-up to the international seminar organized by Iran and UNEP in 2001 on the subject, following President Khatami's invitation to broaden and encourage dialogue among civilizations on the environment, peace, and security.

**US-Iran Program Website:**

For information about US-Iran cultural programs, exhibits, and other Track II activities being organized by different institutions across the country, please visit the *Events* section of the US-Iran Program website at: [http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/iran/programmes\\_iran.html](http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/iran/programmes_iran.html)

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