

# IRAN

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BRIEFING AND HEARING  
BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS  
FIRST SESSION

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JANUARY 11 AND JANUARY 31, 2007  
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## UNDERSTANDING THE IRAN CRISIS

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 31, 2007

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 o'clock a.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Tom Lantos (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Chairman LANTOS. The Committee on Foreign Affairs will come to order. This is our second hearing on Iran in a series of hearings during the course of which we will combine practical, political decision makers in the field as we had last week with former Under Secretary of State Pickering and former director of the CIA, James Woolsey.

Today, we are fortunate to have two outstanding academicians who have made the study of Iran the central focus of their scholarly pursuit. And we are delighted to welcome them.

Having just returned from a trip to the Middle East with Speaker Pelosi and the Democratic National Security leadership, it is clear to me that Iran and its nuclear ambitions are central to our interests and concerns in this vital region.

The intentions and possible future actions of Iran are very much on the minds of top leaders in Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan, with whom we met.

They shared their great concern regarding Iran's growing influence in the area and what everyone believes to be its quest for nuclear weapons.

A world with a nuclear armed Iran would be a very different world. It would be a world in which Tehran, without firing a shot, would be able to intimidate and bully its neighbors, including many today who are allies of the United States.

It is clear that Iran's neighbors know this, and for the most part, they are terrified by the prospect.

We must know all we can about Iran's capabilities and intentions because we must prevent a development of a nuclear armed Iran.

At the same time, we must act very carefully in this sensitive and important region which is already in deep upheaval because of our Iraq policy.

Iran is growing increasingly arrogant about its ability to act with impunity.

Last June, the permanent five members of the United Nations Security Council and Germany offered the very generous package of incentives to Tehran to suspend its nuclear program. Iran merely shrugged it off.

In July, the Security Council issued an ultimatum to Tehran, suspend uranium enrichment activities within 1 month, or face sanctions. Iran blithely ignored that threat as well and continued with enrichment.

Nothing that happened subsequently shook Tehran's faith in its ability to continue its cynical kabuki dance.

Russia and China raised one road block after another. The Security Council failed to impose sanctions within 1 month or even 2. Instead, it wrangled for 5 long months before producing a pathetic set of sanctions that will do little or nothing to deter Iran's reckless pursuit of nuclear arms.

Meanwhile, the Chinese and Iranians announced a preliminary agreement worth some \$16 billion for Chinese investment in an Iranian natural gas field. On Monday of this week, Royal Dutch Shell announced the signing of a preliminary multibillion-dollar deal with Iran to develop adjacent gas properties.

The recently announced \$16 billion oil and gas deal between Iran and Malaysia is equally abhorrent. That is why today I am sending a letter to our Trade Representative, Susan Schwab, requesting that all negotiations between the United States and Malaysia on a free trade agreement be suspended until Malaysia renounces this proposed deal.

At a time when we and the United Nations should be imposing sanctions on Iran for its nuclear activities, Asian and European companies are signing lucrative contracts to provide massive additional revenues to fuel Iran's search for nuclear weapons. If we permit this kind of heedless and mindless avarice, it will be at the world's peril.

This past week, Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, revealed that, within a few weeks, Iran intends to begin construction of a new underground plant for uranium enrichment.

Once again, Iran has thumbed its nose at the international community.

Given the urgency of our concerns with Iran, we must use every tool in our diplomatic arsenal. The most basic is dialogue. I am passionately committed to dialogue with those countries with which we disagree.

Dialogue does not mean appeasement or defeat. Dialogue represents our best opportunity to persuade as well as our best opportunity to determine if we have failed to persuade.

For over a decade I have sought opportunities to meet with the Iranian leadership in Tehran. My friend, Kofi Annan, the former U.N. Secretary General, and Jan Eliasson, the last president of the U.N. General Assembly and foreign minister of Sweden, have both attempted to persuade the authorities that an open dialogue with Members of Congress is in our mutual interest.

All of our approaches have so far been rebuffed.

The Iranian people deserve leaders who are worthy of Iran's noble traditions and their country's importance.

I am cautiously encouraged that Ahmadinejad has recently suffered a triple whammy, a resounding defeat of his party in local elections, a harsh letter of rebuke from the majority of the Iranian parliament and the denunciation of his diplomacy by the news-

paper considered as the mouthpiece of Iran's Supreme Leader Khamenei.

In short, it is a critically important time for us to make progress in dealing with the nuclear ambitions of Iran. And it may be that conditions in Iran are ripe to make steps forward.

Now I urge all of my colleagues to read very carefully the submitted testimony of our three distinguished witnesses in total.

These three papers represent a kaleidoscope of views concerning this unbelievably complex country. We are cautioned in their statements about falling victim to the Chalabi syndrome, the experience we had with respect to Iraq. They are cautioning against a grand bargain with the mullahs whereby we would overlook the human rights abuses, the nuclear plants, for the appearance of a surface relationship. They correctly point out that Iran is a despotic theocracy, and here I quote: "A theocracy despised, incompetent, morally bankrupt and bereft of legitimacy."

They are cautioning about the presence of a messianic clergy. And some of their leadership believes in the imminent return of the Mahdi, the 12th imam of Shi'a, who got into occultation 1,000 years ago.

Yet at the same time, they correctly point out that the vast majority of the Iranian people despise the theocratic rulers and show their distrust through both capital flight and an enormous brain drain. And one of our witnesses calls for dramatic changes in our public diplomacy policy, vis-a-vis that country.

I am deeply grateful for their three powerful papers and I am now delighted to turn to the distinguished chairman of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, who may have to leave because of votes in the banking committee, Mr. Ackerman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank the distinguished ranking member for her collegiality.

Even as American troops are now engaging in seizures of Iranian agents in Iraq, and an additional carrier battle group is being dispatched to the Persian Gulf, the Bush administration remains stuck behind the idea that diplomacy is equivalent to appeasement and that negotiation is akin to surrender. Consequently, with regard to Iran, we seem determined to achieve the worst of all policy outcomes.

While the White House intones that "all options are on the table," the military facts of life argue otherwise. Our armed forces, especially our Army and Marine Corps, are operating on the edge of their capacity, while the Air Force and Navy remain capable of conducting a robust conventional bombing campaign. I remain skeptical that the key would be able to strike all the key components of Iran's nuclear program.

Many facilities are extremely well protected. Some are buried. Others are hardened. Some have all of these features. More troubling, based on recent history, I think prudence demands that we assume that there are both facilities we have not yet identified and facilities we have misidentified.

More over, we have scarcely considered the full nature and extent of Iran's presence in Iraq and what capabilities it has to make mischief in other parts of the Middle East or the rest of the globe.

Although our military options are dismal, the Bush administration seems intent on charging full speed ahead toward confrontation. If we had a credible diplomatic alternative that we were pushing the Iranians toward, such gambling might make sense. Without a diplomatic backstop, however, it is merely reckless. Without question, face-to-face dialogue, as the chairman has suggested, with the Iranians would be difficult, unpleasant and I believe also likely to fail.

However, if there are no talks, a negotiated resolution of either the Iranian nuclear problem or the instability and violence in Iraq is essentially impossible.

I would add here that this administration's incessant practice of subcontracting to other countries the most vital question of our national security represents one of the most egregious and shameful failures in the history of American foreign policy. Achieving success in negotiations with Iran may not be possible, but without making the attempt, without demonstrating that America is doing its utmost to resolve these regional crises—apart from applying more and more force—our ability to attract and hold allies will be greatly diminished.

Other nations expect us to lead, not to lecture. Painful as it may be for some to acknowledge, the United States has a credibility problem.

There once was a Republican President who warned us to speak softly but carry a big stick. Instead of blustering about Iran while hollowing out our military in Iraq, we need to get serious about achieving some of the very simple but difficult goals: First, bringing our catastrophic adventure in Iraq to a conclusion that will not turn Iraq's civil war into a regional war; second, restoring the strength and credibility to our already overextended armed forces; and third, engaging our European allies in a strategic plan to convince Iran that its best interests require a satisfactory resolution to the nuclear issue. Anyone who believes we can achieve any of this agenda without engaging the Iranians ourselves on the fundamental question of regional security is fooling themselves.

I hope today's panel will illustrate for us how Iran sees the world, where its vulnerabilities lie and how we can best achieve security in the Persian Gulf region for ourselves and our allies in and around the world.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you, Mr. Ackerman. It is now my great pleasure to turn to my good friend, the distinguished ranking member of the committee, Congressman Ros-Lehtinen. She is the author of the Iran Freedom Support Act which Congress adopted last September. I was very pleased to work with her in developing that important legislation. She has been one of the foremost leaders in the Congress in our effort to deal with Iran, Mrs. Ros-Lehtinen.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Lantos, and I congratulate you on the trip that you took, just came back yesterday, with Speaker Pelosi, and the chairman, Chairman Skelton, and Mr. Murtha and others, and we in our committee look forward to getting briefed by you on that trip to Iraq, to Pakistan and Afghanistan.

And I would like to also thank our distinguished panelists for appearing before us today.

Creating an effective long-term strategy regarding Iran is one of the highest priorities in the United States. The regime has called, as all of us know, for Israel to be wiped off the map. It continues to refer to the United States as the great Satan, and it hosted a conference that was so appalling aimed at denying the Holocaust. Iran's aggressive words, however, are not mere rhetoric. Iran is the number one state sponsor of terrorism, enabling the murder of countless innocent civilians, endangering international security by supplying weapons, funding, training and providing sanctuary to terrorist groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas. Iran continues to supply the Shiite Islamist groups in Iraq with money, training and weapons, such as the improvised explosive devices, IEDs, that are used to target United States coalition troops in Iraq. Iran's support for these extremist groups is a major factor in the sectarian strife and attacks taking place in Iraq.

If we fail in Iraq, Iran will be liberated to dominate the oil-producing Persian Gulf and increase its support for Islamist militant extremists, thereby spreading instability throughout the region.

Iran's self proclaimed goal is the promotion of an Islamist revolution worldwide.

Ahmadinejad made the following statement just a few weeks ago: We must believe in the fact that Islam is not confined to geographical borders, ethnic groups and nations. It is a universal ideology. We do not shy away from declaring that Islam is ready to rule the world; we must prepare ourselves to rule the world.

As the entire world knows, Iran has embarked on a major program to develop nuclear weapons which threatens to radically transform the balance of power in the Middle East.

Iran's nuclear capabilities would change perceptions of the military balance in the region and could pose serious challenges to the United States in terms of deterrence and defense.

But the threat posed by Iran goes beyond its sponsorship of terror or its pursuit of nuclear weapons. Iran's leadership has already expressed its willingness to assist other problem countries in obtaining nuclear capabilities. With respect to cooperation between Iran and other terrorist nations, former CIA director Tenet noted in a February 2004 threat assessment when he briefed Congress: Iran appears to be willing to supply missile related technology to countries of concern and publicly advertises its artillery rockets and related technologies including guidance instruments and missile propellants. On chemical weapons, government, private and intelligence sources report that Iran is pursuing a program to develop and stockpile these weapons. Reports state that Iran already may have stockpiled blister, blood choking and nerve agents and the bombs and artillery shells to deliver them, which they had previously manufactured.

With respect to the biological weapons, it has been reported that Iran probably has an offensive biological weapons program, that it continues to seek dual-use material, equipment and expertise which can be used in that program, and that it has the capability to produce at least small weapons of BW agents and a limited ability to up-weaponize them.

Some have argued that the solution to the Iranian threat is to engage in direct talks with the Iranian regime. I strongly disagree, Mr. Chairman. We must not abandon the longstanding U.S. policy of not negotiating with terrorists. I believe that engaging Iran without preconditions would embolden our enemies, would legitimize the extremist regime and would allow the Iranian radicals to buy even more time to develop weapons of mass destruction.

Instead, we can persuade our allies to reduce or even halt the range of commercial ties with the Iranian regime. We could deprive Tehran of the revenues it needs to continue its destructive policies.

I call upon our European allies and all of the responsible nations to take immediate steps to end investments in Iran's energy sector and to adopt other sanctions to deprive the tyrannical regime of the revenue necessary to pursue their nuclear weapons program.

As part of this effort, my distinguished colleague, Chairman Lantos, and I authored, as the chairman pointed out, the Iran Freedom Support Act signed into law in November, and it is already being used to great effect.

I also plan to introduce another bill that targets the Iranian elite, which is a critical component of the Iranian economy, its energy sector. Among other provisions, the bill calls for public and private pension and thrift savings plans to divest from U.S. and foreign companies that have invested \$200 million or more in that energy sector.

I have been working with Chairman Lantos on this measure and hope that we will have an agreement soon so that we may introduce the bill.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to secure passage of this and other measures to weaken the regime in Tehran, compel it to permanently cease those activities that pose a threat to U.S. national security, our interests and our allies. I would like to thank once again our witnesses and thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, for the time.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you, very much.

I am pleased to recognize Mr. Payne for 1 minute.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and as we all know, this is a very extremely important hearing today. We realize the importance of our policy toward Iran and for us to try to come up with some solutions to that problem, so I look forward to hearing from the witnesses. I, too, though feel that negotiations and discussions are necessary. I think the people of Iran have a positive feeling toward United States by and large. And if there was some way that we could reach the people, I think many of them really reject the hard line, and so before all is lost on aggressive military movement, I would hope that we would have some dual strategies.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you.

Thank you very much. I am pleased to recognize the distinguished ranking member of the Middle East and South Asia Subcommittee, my friend from Indiana, Mr. Pence.

Mr. PENCE. I thank the chairman for yielding, and I want to commend the chairman for making this issue and this distinguished panel and hearing a priority for this committee in the 110th Congress.

Like many on this panel, I believe that Iran is the greatest diplomatic challenge facing the United States. And I am anxious to hear and have appreciated reading the testimony that has been submitted.

President Bush's national security strategy for March 2006 I believe correctly stated, and I quote, "that we may face no greater challenge from a single country than from Iran." I believe this is a destabilizing rogue state that richly deserves the moniker "Axis of Evil" that it was awarded during the State of the Union Address years ago.

The issues that interest me the most about this panel have to do with the nature of the threat and the nature and the wisdom of what leverage we might bring to confronting that threat. And I hold to the view that when President Ahmadinejad called for Israel to be "wiped off the map" and described the Holocaust as a "myth" and has openly advocated resettling the population of Israel in Europe, that I hold that history teaches that, when a tyrant speaks violence against his neighbor, the world is wise to take him at his word. And I am very interested in this expert panel's view of the intentions of President Ahmadinejad as well as the government.

Secondly, I am very interested in recent revelations and news reports that suggest that Iran has been involved in providing technology and improvised explosive devices to personnel in Iraq.

And lastly, with regard to the leverage that we might have, an important editorial this morning by Thomas Friedman uses the term leverage; the Secretary of State said that, before we should sit down—as the ranking member from Florida just stated, the Secretary of State said we should not sit down until we have leverage, believing that stability in Iraq would represent the strongest leverage in addition to our military presence in the region that could move us toward a diplomatic solution.

I am very interested, having read Mr. Friedman's comments today, having read the testimony of this panel's view on that.

And lastly, what we might be able to do consistent with Mr. Payne's comments about, from the important legislation, the Iran Freedom Support Act, other legislation that is considered, I think it is imperative that this Congress consider ways that we can further catalyze forces of liberalization and democracy and human rights within Iran itself.

And so I commend this panel whose credentials cannot be challenged. I look very much forward to the hearing, and I am grateful to the chairman for arranging this so early in the context of this Congress.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you very much, Mr. Pence. I am pleased to recognize Mr. Sherman for 1 minute.

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you. Preventing a nuclear Iran should be our top foreign policy objective. An Iranian Government that thought it was about to be overthrown could very well smuggle a nuclear weapon into an American city. The outcome in Iraq will have a modest impact on America's long-term national security and cannot be allowed to distract us from the Iranian threat. Talking about talks to Iran may also be a bit of a distraction.

We cannot solve the problem with Iran so painlessly as to simply say, oh, well, we will open discussions, and then we will achieve a nonnuclear Iran.

Instead, we must be willing to sacrifice other diplomatic and economic priorities if we are to achieve what is most important to us, which is an end to the nuclear program in Iran.

We must put ILSA and other economic pressure from Europe on Iran as our number one policy concern with Europe.

And most importantly, in dealing with Russia, from Jackson-Vanik to Chechnya, the Iran issue must be placed first. Those who think that we can achieve a nonnuclear Iran without mobilizing all of our diplomatic strength and without sacrificing less important diplomatic objectives I think are deluding themselves. Thank you.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you.

Mr. Rohrabacher.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you, very much and I want to commend Mr.—I guess Mr. Royce isn't here. I was going to suggest that, and also Ms. Ros-Lehtinen, but also my friends on the other side of the aisle who are taking this issue very seriously. Mr. Sherman has again demonstrated that he has the focus on this particular challenge to our security, and I paid close attention to what he just had to say. Let me just note, and I won't be repetitive, just we shouldn't be negotiating from weakness. We must start doing those things that will give us leverage on Iran. Then we can have negotiations. Negotiating from weakness never got us anywhere.

I would suggest, however, that doesn't mean we shouldn't be talking to the Iranians, and I would like the panel's impression of an idea; perhaps this President, instead of having bilateral negotiations with Iran and Syria, should we have—should this President call for a regional summit with the leaders from all of these countries in that region, the region, and sit down and see what would come out of a meeting like that? I am looking forward to hearing from you. Thank you very much for listening while we express our opinions.

And thank you to Mr. Lantos for calling this hearing.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you, very much.

Ambassador Watson.

Ms. WATSON. I want to thank the chairman also for bringing these distinguished gentlemen here.

I think dialogue is very much called for at this point.

From what I am gathering, a military success will do nothing—nothing to settle the cultural issues that are creating much of the conflict in Iraq.

And it has been said that much of the violence is being instigated now by Iran. So I sense a creeping effect that we are creeping in closer to conflict with Iran.

We have ships over in the water. We have submarines over off the coast. Anyone who does not know that has been from that place called Pluto.

This creeping approach is very, very dangerous, because I see what happened in Korea happening in Iran. So what we need, Mr. Chairman, is a multilateral discussion with all of the countries surrounding and attached to the border to Iraq, because what happens in Iraq affects all of that region.

And these talks must—must—include Syria and Iran. It is short-sighted not to sit down and talk with them. Oh, we can think and try to project what they are thinking. And we don't do it from weakness.

Chairman LANTOS. Gentlelady's time has expired.

Mr. Royce.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you, very much. Mr. Wimbush has been a withering critic of Radio Farda, our efforts to communicate with the Iranian people, and he makes a very strong case that these efforts frankly are becoming counter-productive as he says, filling up the airwaves with Britney Spears says that America has no ideas of value and that we don't trust the Iranian listeners to distinguish intelligent debate from pop culture. And I know that you Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Ros-Lehtinen have shown leadership on Iran.

And I think we all agree that we need to be making our best efforts on public diplomacy when it comes to Iran. And I would hope that this committee would give a very hard look at this broadcasting, getting a better read if this is how we should be doing business.

I also agree with many of the other comments about keeping the financial pressure up on Ahmadinejad's government. It is having a positive effect.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you.

Mr. Inglis.

Mr. INGLIS. Mr. Chairman, I am looking forward to hearing the witnesses and happy to yield back.

Chairman LANTOS. Mr. Poe.

Mr. POE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

All of the options before us are mainly dealing with talk, talk and more talk and more talk on different fronts. Although talking is important mean while the Iranian Government progresses into being a nuclear power.

I would like to know when the talks are going to end and we get a solution. I know all the options are difficult for us. But we need some kind of timetable on when are we going to reach some kind of consensus on how are we going to deal with the nuclear threat. Meanwhile, I hope the Iranian people see the error of the ways of their President and try to put him into some kind of control that only the people of any nation can do. And I look forward to all of your testimony. Thank you, very much.

Chairman LANTOS. Any other members?

If not, we have an exceptionally talented, respected and widely published group of Iran experts with us today to explain contemporary Iran's domestic politics and foreign policy dynamics.

Dr. Ray Takeyh is a senior fellow for the Middle East Studies Council on Foreign Relations here in Washington. He earned a doctorate in modern history from Oxford and is the author most recently of the book entitled, *Hidden Iran: Politics and Power in the Islamic Republic*.

Dr. Abbas Milani is the director of Iranian Studies and professor of political science at Stanford. Along with Larry Diamond and Michael McFaul, he is also co-director of the Hoover Institution's Iran

Democracy Project which produced the policy paper a little over a year ago entitled, "Beyond Incrementalism: A New Strategy for Dealing With Iraq."

Mr. Enders Wimbush is senior fellow and director of the Center for Future Security Strategies at the Hudson Institute. Before joining Hudson, he spent 10 years in the private sector as an officer with Booz Allen Hamilton, prior to which, he served as director of Radio Liberty in Munich from 1987 until 1993.

We want to thank all our witnesses for taking the time to join us. And we will begin with Dr. Milani.

**STATEMENT OF ABBAS MILANI, PH.D., CO-DIRECTOR OF IRAN DEMOCRACY PROJECT, HOOVER INSTITUTION, STANFORD UNIVERSITY**

Mr. MILANI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am very honored to be here. I think there is no doubt in anyone's mind that the United States does need to have a strategy for dealing with Iran.

Iran is a key player in the Middle East. But I also think there is little doubt that the United States, unfortunately, has not had a strategy for dealing with Iran in the last 25 years. The United States has been in a reactive mode and has been going from one tactical response to another, and as a consequence, it is now forced to play a catch-up game.

And discussing Iran now I think comes at a very important juncture because we have two Presidents both under pressure at home. Both Presidents have gone from heights of popularity to serious political problems at home. Both President Bush and Mr. Ahmadinejad now face problems within their own constituency, within their own country, and we have two countries that are certainly divided in terms of what to do with the other one. The political leadership in Iran is certainly not one view.

I think it would be gravely mistaken to assume that there is a monolithic Iranian ruling elite that has one opinion about what to do. It is even a graver mistake I think to assume that Mr. Ahmadinejad is the one that calls all the shots. Mr. Ahmadinejad's popularity in the West is far more than his power at home. By constitution, by practice, in Iran, he holds little power. But the popularity, the rock star treatment that he was afforded when he came here, in fact, enhanced his power in Iran. But that enhancement was fortunately temporary.

There are those in Washington that think that the nuclear issue in Iran has a military solution. There are also some who think—and most of them are in the same camp—that the regime in Iran has a military solution as well, that this is a regime on the brink of collapse, and all the United States has to do is push it a little bit and this regime will fall.

The Chalabi syndrome unfortunately has helped some of the advocates of this policy to get a hearing for their wrong-headed and dangerous suggestion.

There are also those who have long argued that this regime is here to stay; there is no way to move it; the United States has to just forget about the human rights issue, make a deal with this re-

gime, give it what it wants and go on with the business of America. I think that, too, is wrong.

This regime is strategically extremely vulnerable, but tactically extremely nimble. It is tactically entrenched but it is strategically on its way out because it does not have answers for fundamental problems of the Iranian people. This is a deeply incompetent, corrupt regime.

The idea that dialogue with this regime will enhance its power I think is partly true. It depends what kind of dialogue the United States decides to have. The United States was very capable of having dialogues with the Soviet Union and not allowing those dialogues to become forced in the hands of the Soviet Union. The reason that that dialogue did not allow the Soviet Union to spin it in its own favor is because the issues of human rights were always on the table, never off the discussion.

The grand bargainer who wants to make peace with this regime wants precisely that option off the table. They say, if you bring this issue to the discussion, they, Iranians, will not show up. Well, my suggestion is that, even if they don't show up, still the attempt to offer to have a dialogue will have very, very positive impacts.

It will have positive impacts because I think the Iranian regime is deeply fractured at this moment. Mr. Ahmadinejad has helped bring these fractures to a new level of intensity. Ahmadinejad has come to power—I think it is important to understand—with the help of the very powerful cabal of Revolutionary Guards, and some of the leaders of the Basij, these are street gangs cum militia that are the muscles of the regime that the regime uses when it wants to oppress, suppress demonstrations.

And over the last year, Mr. Ahmadinejad has tried to further entrench himself by giving these people much more in terms of economic windfall, multibillion dollar, no-bid contracts have been given to these people. Nevertheless, because of his odious comments on the Holocaust, for example, because of his odious comments on Israel, because of the success of the United States and its allies to pass the U.N. resolution, Ahmadinejad now finds himself in a deeply isolated position. As Mr. Chairman referred to the letter, 150 people have signed this letter. There is talk of trying to curtail his presidency.

If the United States continues on a path of confrontation, if Iran and United States come to blows within the next few weeks or months, that would be the greatest bonanza for Mr. Ahmadinejad.

A policy that will enhance the hands of the intransigent radical elements identified with and allied with Mr. Ahmadinejad would be a very, very, I think, detrimental policy.

My assumption is that there will not be peace and democracy in the Middle East unless there is peace and democracy in Iran; in other words, unless this region is gone. So long as this regime is in power, I think there cannot be peace in the Middle East, and there cannot be democracy because this regime is the source of so much of what is wrong and what is going on in the Middle East. But that democracy will have to come from inside Iran. And I think it is extremely dangerous and folly, to be honest, to assume that the Iranian democratic movement is dead and that it is no longer capable of challenging this regime.

The policy that the United States, the strategy that the United States adopts will be successful if and to the extent that it allows these forces, now in retreat, to more openly directly challenge the United States.

There is a large number of Iranians—and we have empirical evidence for this, we have polls, we have anecdotal evidence for this, who are very favorably disposed to the United States. An attack on Iran I think will fundamentally change that and will change the sentiments of the people and will allow the regime to further consolidate its despotic hold on power.

The United States does have leverage now, and it has had leverage in the last few years. When the war with Iraq began, the United States had an enormous amount of leverage over this regime. The regime in Iran in the first weeks after the fall of Saddam Hussein was the weakest it had been in 27 years. It was very willing at that time to try to find a negotiated solution to its problem. It was willing to make a great number of concessions. But the United States decided not to take that opportunity, not to use their leverage it had then.

Every time, every delay in this attempt to negotiate I think will further complicate the role of the United States, further limit the leverage that the United States has because, as Mr. Chairman pointed out, the regime was very successful in using the Europeans, using China, using Russia, in buying itself time. Mr. Rowhani, who was Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, gave a very revealing speech that did not get the attention that I think it deserved. He said, "Our plan was to do a North Korea on the world. We wanted to quietly develop a program, and once we had a fully developed nuclear program, allow the world to face a fait accompli. Libya and the discovery of the A.Q. Kahn," he said, "destroyed this program."

But they were helped in those years precisely by, unfortunately, Europe's insistence on putting economic interests over diplomatic long-term strategic interests over human rights interests, over the economic—the democratic future of Iran.

Even today we see already signs that Europe is beginning to crack, that Europe is beginning to talk about changing its tactic.

But the United States' ability to create this coalition, this international coalition, that has brought some pressure; and the pressure is beginning to have some impact in Iran—the Iranian regime is worried about these resolutions. You can read the Iranian leaders; Rahsanjani just last week said very pointedly that these resolutions are having more damage, and they might do more damage than in fact an invasion will do on Iran.

So very serious concentrated pressure on the regime, at the same time with the offer, with the offer to talk about these issues, about all the outstanding issues, including and always including the human rights issue of the Iranian people I think will further weaken Ahmadinejad and his camp and further strengthen the majority, the silent majority in Iran who wants normalized relations with the world, who want to be part of the international community, who are embarrassed by Mr. Ahmadinejad and his anti-Semitism.

I think, if you look in the history of the 20th century, Iran has probably one of the best records as a nation in dealing with Israel,

in dealing with its Jewish population. Iran as a nation made a very successful attempt to save all of its Jews from the Holocaust. Iran was the first country to establish relations with Israel. And that reflects the sentiments of the Iranian people.

And obviously, they are embarrassed by a leadership who talks in this irresponsible manner. Ahmadinejad and his camp will be the only winners of a confrontational policy with the United States. If there is an invasion of Iran, if there are surgical attacks on the nuclear sites—and as one honorable member said, there is serious doubt that such an attack will be successful in taking out these sites because there are so many of them and because they are fortified—but if any of these attacks come, I think the power of Ahmadinejad and his cabal will be extremely consolidated.

And Ahmadinejad does have a policy on where he wants to take Iran long-term. Not only does he want to confront the United States and Middle East at every turn, but he also wants to fundamentally realign Iran away from the Western look, so to speak, toward Asia. There is talk of building a pipeline that will connect Iran to China, the multibillion-dollar deal that Mr. Chairman pointed to. There is something called—about the Asia onlook that is bandied about in Iran. And if that happens—and this is very much the talk of Ahmadinejad. Ahmadinejad went to China, tried very actively to join the Shanghai discussions, if that alternative comes to pass, there we are talking about a major strategic change in terms of the balance of forces.

And what will help bring that about I think is an ascendant Ahmadinejad, an ascendant radical group that is now isolated and is pining for a confrontation with the United States. And the fact that the forces are now so closely face-to-face, the fact that the United States now has a policy of going after them publicly makes the likelihood of an unfortunate incident that will bring about, I think, a much larger confrontation.

I completely understand Mr. Bush's point that the Iranian network in Iran has to be stopped. Obviously, the Iranian regime has to be stopped from its shenanigans in Iraq, but I think a much more fruitful policy would be to make this the responsibility of the Maliki government. The United States should expect of the Maliki government to disrupt the flow of foreign forces inside Iraq. This will have not only the advantage of showing the rest of the Sunnis in Iraq and the rest of the Middle East that Maliki is not a mere puppet of Iran, but it will also lessen the possibility of military, inadvertent or desired military confrontation with the United States.

So, I think a wise strategy that includes a very credible possibility of using pressure, military pressure if need be, but at the same time, combined with it, a willingness to negotiate, a willingness to talk with the Iranians is the path that can be most conducive and is a path that reflects the realities in Iran.

And let me add by saying, I know of not a single Iranian democrat inside Iran who is fighting this regime on a daily basis, whose lives are on the line, who does not favor a dialogue with the United States.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Milani follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ABBAS MILANI, PH.D., CO-DIRECTOR OF IRAN DEMOCRACY PROJECT, HOOVER INSTITUTION, STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Mr. Chairman: When in an interview with Mr. David Ignatief, of *Washington Post*, President Bush declared that "one of the dilemmas facing American policymakers is to understand the nature, the complex nature of the Iranian regime," he was grievously right.

There can, I submit, be little disagreement with the proposition that the question of what do with Iran looms as the most serious challenge facing this administration, and arguably the next. Policy formed on ignorance is a sure recipe for disaster. A number of additional factors here in American and back in Iran add to the possibility for just such a disaster. The continuing crisis in Iraq has created in the Bush administration the need to find something to redeem its hitherto unsuccessful Middle East policy. A halt to Iran's nuclear program through the use of military force might be seen by some as just such a redemption.

There are those in the foreign policy establishment in Washington who still harbor the illusion that problems in the Middle East and Iran can and should be solved solely through the use of American military power. The surprising shrinkage of centers for the serious and academic study of Iran in American universities in that last quarter of century helped create a dangerous knowledge and expertise vacuum that has been filled with policy wonks with little experience in Iran, or with members of the Iranian-American Diaspora, who besotted with the new "Chalabi syndrome," and understandably desperate in their attempt to get rid of the despotic mullahs in Iran, are trying to goad the United States into a war with the Iranian regime.

Another group trying to fill this epistemic gap are those experts who sometimes seem to behave as de facto agents of the Islamic Republic and suggest that the regime in Tehran is here to stay, the opposition and the democratic movement is dead, and it is in America's best interest to simply make a "grand bargain" with the mullahs, and forget and forego the idea of helping the people of Iran actualize their democratic aspirations. Neither those who see the regime as teetering on the edge of the abyss, nor those who say it is irremovably entrenched take into account the complicated and dynamic realities inside Iran. The regime in Tehran is tactically strong and nimble, but strategically daft and vulnerable.

In Tehran, too, there are factions within the Islamic Republic of Iran who seek the dogs of a war with the US. For them, even the howls of such a war helps consolidate their power and further strangle the Iranian people and their hundred-year old dream of a secular democratic polity. To some of them, America is an empire in decline, bereft of the desire or resolve to fight. Still others in this camp simply welcome a war as a sure way to grab and consolidate more power.

The challenge facing America today is formulating a policy that avoids the discredited (even delusional) optimism of the militarist camp as well as the appeasing pessimism of proponents of compromise with the mullahs who rule Iran. Moreover, doing nothing is about Iran is also not an option; with every passing day, inaction no less than a flawed policy, will allow the mullahs to become all but impervious to domestic or international pressures. And to some in the regime, only a nuclear bomb will afford them the security of such imperviousness. In the looming confrontation with the US, some of them believe, they can get, "a North Korean treatment" rather than the one afforded Saddam Hussein, only if they are part of the nuclear club.

Iran is singularly important for the US by accidents of Nature, actions of Iranians, and dictates of History. Nature made the country sit on huge deposits of gas and oil, and allowed it to have a commanding position over the Strait of Hormoz, one of the most crucial waterways in the world. History rendered Iran important when it became (like Egypt) one of the only two countries whose existence and boundaries were not figments of colonial machination. These facts of History and Nature combined to make Iran, with Egypt, the two bellwether states for the entire Middle East (Egypt for the Sunnis and Iran for Shiites.) Finally, Iranians made the Revolution of 1979, hoping for democracy, but Ayatollah Khomeini and his cohorts turned the country instead into a despotic theocracy and a model and magnet for radical Islamists around the world. The regime's increasingly overt and aggressive support for the Hezbollah in Lebanon and for Hamas in the Palestinian Authority, and Ahmadinejad's inexcusable threats against the state of Israel are only some of the examples of these actions. And if all of these factors were not enough, the mullah's nuclear adventurism has afforded Iran singular significance not just for the region and the United States, but for Israel and the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Nevertheless for over a quarter of century, the US has not had a coherent strategic policy on Iran. It has, as a result, been forced in a tactical, reactive mode. For

years, US and the EU were unable to agree on a common policy on Iran (with EU often pursuing its immediate economic interests in the guise of insisting on “constructive dialogue” with the regime in Tehran.) The absence of a common Western policy allowed the mullahs to pit the US against Europeans, and use the crucial interregnum to further develop their nuclear plans. As Mr. Rouhani, Iran’s leading negotiator on the nuclear issue for several years declared in a key speech, the regime wanted to “do a North Korea” on the world and force it to face a fait accompli on the country’s nuclear program. Libya’s decision to come clean on its nuclear plans and the discovery of A Q Khan’s supermarket of terror thwarted this effort.

When the US and EU finally did agree on a common Iran policy—pressuring Iran through the UN—Iran had by then developed closer ties with China (an almost one hundred billion dollar oil and gas deal) and with Russia (multi-billion dollars in trade, military sales and future options for construction of new nuclear reactors.) Moreover, by this time, both China and Russia, for different reasons were bent on a more assertive, if not more muscular policy towards the United States. These new allies bought the mullahs still more time by delaying the passage of the UN resolution. When China and Russia finally agreed to a watered-down UN resolution, the reality was that the international community was playing “catch up” with the mullahs—and in poker as in diplomacy playing catch up is a recipe for disaster.

Now that the Congress, as a co-equal branch of the government, is willing to play its role in formulating the contours of US foreign policy, it will hopefully take into consideration a number of crucial facts about Iran.

As nearly every scholar, expert, and observer of Iran concurs, and as the majority of Iran’s population have repeatedly shown the theocracy in Iran is politically despised by its own people, economically incompetent, morally bankrupt and bereft of legitimacy. Ahmadinejad, for example, came to power in an election where he, and every other presidential candidate, ran against the status quo. Even pillars of that status quo—men like Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani—tried to reinvent themselves as critics of the very regime they had built and maintained—often with bloodshed and brutality.

But there is yet another key fact about the Iranian regime: It is not a monolith but instead riven by sometimes serious rifts between different factions. Everything from turf wars over a bigger share of the oil money to matters of ideology, tactics and personal rancor account for these rifts. The new more muscular approach by the Bush administration—sending new ships to and a much publicized presidential order to kill or arrests the regime’s agents and operatives in Iraq—come at a crucial moment in Iranian politics when the balance of forces between different factions is rapidly changing. Ironically, the commendable success of the Bush administration in hitherto marshalling an international coalition against the regime’s nuclear ambitions has exacerbated these tensions. The threat of war, and even more an act of war, is certain to reverse this process, lessen the factional feuds, solidify the regime and help the warmongers in Tehran increase their power.

Ahmadinejad came to power because of a populist message: ending corruption and improving the economic lot of the people. Moreover, there was considerable evidence that his victory, particularly in the crucial first round, was made possible because of “support” from the Spiritual Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei.

Though by the existing constitution, a disproportionate part of actual power rests with the office of the Spiritual Leader, nevertheless Ahmadinejad’s ascent was seen as the last step in Khamenei’s attempt to complete his power grab. The judiciary was already in his control. In Parliamentary elections of that year, Khamenei had ensured that a majority of his most trusted allies, particularly from the ranks of the Revolutionary Guards and intelligent agencies win seats in the Majlis. By putting the presidency in the hands of Ahmadinejad, a young man, with no experience in national or international politics, Khamenei hoped to finally dominate the third and last remaining branch of the government. But things certainly did not work out as planned.

Once elected, it became clear that Ahmadinejad was in fact part of a powerful cabal: Revolutionary Guard commanders, leading members of the *Basij* (the militia-cum-street gang that is the regime’s “enforcer”), and stridently messianic clergy expecting the imminent return of the *Mahdi*—Shiism’s twelfth Imam believed to have gone into occultation a thousand years ago. One of the newly elected president’s closest aides announced that there was nothing “accidental” about the election, but that it had in fact come as a result of two years of a dynamic, complicated, and multi-faceted planning. Events in the first few months of the new administration certainly confirmed this surprising claim.

Moreover, Ahmadinejad’s religious guru—the ayatollah he “emulates” in the Shiite tradition wherein humans are either emulated, as in the case of a few Ayatollahs, or “emulators” as in the case of everyone else—was Mesbah Yazdi, a defi-

antly despotic advocate of absolute power for clergy and of the inherent incompatibility between Islam and any notion of democracy. Like Ahmadinejad, Mesbah Yazdi, too turned out to be a fervent advocate of the idea that the pious must help the return of the Twelfth Imam, or the Mahdi. On more than one occasion, Ahmadinejad has suggested that the main function of his administration is to facilitate the return of the hidden messiah.

The messiah's return, according to some Shiites, is preceded by cataclysms of apocalyptic proportions. The suffering and mayhem that accompanies the return—and religious sources describing the results of this return make images of a Bosch painting seem tame and peaceful—will be followed by an eternity of salvation. More importantly, the Shiite narratives on this (what they call *hadith*) are tales eerily similar to the stories favored by Christian fundamentalist reading of the *Bible*, and their jubilation over what they believe is the coming of Armageddon. There is, in fact, a worrisome similarity between this Christian vision, and Ahmadinejad's radical brand of Shiism. If either vision becomes policy, then Iran and the US, will be in for a long night of millenarian machinations. Fortunately in Iran many in the regime's hierarchy of power, don't share the hopes for this dangerous "rapture," while in the US, the Madisonian mechanisms for checks and balances and for taming the seething passions of factions and mobs offer a safety net against such extremism.

In the first few weeks of his presidency, Ahmadinejad and his supporters took the Iranian political scene by storm. Ahmadinejad's opponents, and even many of his allies, including the Spiritual Leader, Mr. Khamenei, were surprised by his ideological intransigence, his dangerous international brinkmanship, particularly in the nuclear negotiations, and his many verbal faux pas that crippled the economy domestically and embarrassed or isolated the regime internationally (most famously his odious anti-Semitic denial of the Holocaust). Most important of all, they were surprised by the number of allies and cronies Ahmadinejad appointed to important posts in the government. Nearly the entire diplomatic corps was changed, and even the last important survival of that foreign policy purge, Iran's ambassador to the UN is soon scheduled to leave his post.

But as the Iranian people, and even many of the clergy who rule over them, and as the world soon came to realize, Ahmadinejad's rhetoric was no slip of the tongue but in fact part of a new strategy, or paradigm of domestic and international policy for the Islamic Republic. The more people and even many of the ruling mullahs learned about this paradigm, the more frightening the prospects of a regime dominated by Ahmadinejad came to look.

Domestically, the new paradigm is a reversion to the bankrupt, pseudo-socialist, state-dominated, market-deprived, and subsidy-driven economy and polity of the first feverish years of the revolution. More than hundred papers and magazines, including *Sharg*, easily the most powerful voice of moderation in the country, have been closed down. The universities are being purged of all "secular" and "Western" influences. Pressures on the already anemic private sector have brought to a virtual stand-still most new investments.

Internationally, the new paradigm has three key components. First is the idea of reviving the "revolutionary" spirit of the early days of the revolution, when Ayatollah Khomeini often defended the idea of exporting the Islamic revolution and creating a "Shiite revolutionary arc" in the Moslem world. An over-looked fact of the Islamic Revolution has been what it shares with the experience of the Bolshevik Revolution in Soviet Union. As in the Soviet Union—and the argument of those like Trotsky that the revolution in Russia can only survive and win if it is exported to the rest of the world to what he considered the "moribund world of capitalism,"—in Ahmadinejad's vision, the Islamic revolution in Iran too can survive only if it helps lead the other Muslims in the fight against the weak, vacillating and declining West. Iran, Ahmadinejad argues, must be the ideological leader, military supplier and financial supporter of this international brotherhood (a "Shiite or Shiite-Sunni Commintern!")

Ahmadinejad's rhetoric, hand in hand with the increasing assertiveness of the Shiites in some of the countries in the Middle East, and the belief of many of these Sunni-dominated Arab states that Iran is developing a nuclear bomb has made them seriously concerned about a new emerging Iranian hegemony in the region.

A second corollary of Ahmadinejad and his cabal's paradigm is the proposition that on the nuclear issue, only by forcefully continuing enrichment activities, and by ignoring Western threats can the Islamic regime of Iran maintain its "dignity" (*ezat*) and achieve its goals. If Iran continues to pursue its nuclear program, Ahmadinejad and his supporters often declared, the West would "do nothing." A few days after Iran announced that it had enriched uranium successfully, Ahmadinejad and his allies declared, in jingoist jubilation, that "as we said, the West can do

nothing,” adding that Iran must aggressively push forward with all aspects of its nuclear program. Nothing short of a full fuel cycle is the right of Iran under the current NPT, he declared. Ironically, as Ayatollah Montezari, Iran’s leading living cleric, and a critic of the regime, recently reminded his audience, the mullahs trample upon every right of the Iranian people, yet they staunchly safeguard its nuclear rights!

The third component of the new paradigm of foreign policy is intimately interlinked with the second. It is called, in the jargon of Iranian policy establishment the “Asia Look.” According to this notion, Iran’s future no longer rests with the declining West, but with the ascendant East—particularly China, and India. Multi billion dollar oil and gas agreements with both China and India, and negotiations for the construction of a new pipe line connecting Iran to India through Pakistan, and eventually China will allow Iran to have a rapidly growing market for the country’s oil and gas. Moreover, both countries have nuclear technologies they could share with Iran, and both countries are unlikely to raise issues like human rights and the democratic rights of the Iranian people. North Korea is another element of this new “Asia Look.” There are increasing reports about cooperation between North Korea and Islamic Republic of Iran, particularly in the field of military, missiles and nuclear technologies. Aside from regional rivalries between India, China and Pakistan, and aside from the problem of the vast sums needed to build the pipeline, a more recent obstacle to the Asia dream has appeared in the form of a powerful, seperatist movement of Baluchis in Iran and Pakistan’s Baluchestan provinces.

Ahmadinejad and his allies were convinced that the world’s fear of another sharp increases in the price of oil, and the expected help of China and Russia, will render the US unable to push through a sanctions resolution in the UN. When Europe and the United States did in fact unite to forge ahead on a UN resolution, and when much to Ahmadinejad’s chagrin, Russia and China joined the vote, Ahmadinejad’s star began to fall. Signs of his fall from grace have been many.

The first sign of his decline was an increasingly vocal chorus of critics who declare he has not delivered on his campaign pledges to fight corruption and improve the lot of the poor. In recent elections for local councils as well as for the powerful eighty-man Council of Experts (entrusted with the task of choosing the next spiritual leader) Ahmadinejad and his allies suffered a humiliating defeat.

The economy has afforded Ahmadinejad’s critics easy ammunition. In spite of record earnings from oil, in recent months there has been a massive flight of capital from Iran. The country also has the infamous honor of topping the list of countries suffering from a brain drain and losing their best and brightest to exile. A shrinking private sector, a crisis in the banking sector, an increase on oil dependency and an increase in subsidies paid by the regime are other problems facing the regime. Any serious reduction in oil prices will force the regime to face an almost immediate economic crisis. The current double-digit unemployment (some sources putting it as high as thirty percent) has not improved, and Ahmadinejad’s habit of recklessly throwing money to disgruntled cities and provinces—without legitimate budgetary authority and sometimes even without the funds—has created for the regime the enigma of stagflation—high inflation rates and rapidly rising prices and a depression-like “recession.” So worried are elements within the regime that there is now talk of impeaching the president, or limiting his years in office through a legal maneuver about the timing of presidential and parliamentary elections. A letter signed by more than one hundred fifty members of the parliament boldly questions the ability of the once-Teflon president to steer the ship of state,

In foreign policy the counter-attack by Ahmadinejad’s foes and critics began with Hashemi Rafsanjani’s decision to publish a hitherto classified letter by Ayatollah Khomeini. In the letter, written in 1988, and addressed to the leadership of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Khomeini describes the reasons why, after eight years of continuing the war with Iraq, he was left with no choice but to reluctantly sign a ceasefire. The letter explained this exigency by the fact that the Revolutionary Guards had demanded amongst other things nuclear bombs to win the war. The implied message of the letter’s publication seems clear: Iran was gradually put in a corner and had no choice to sign a peace agreement with Iraq, and Ahmadinejad’s intransigence in the nuclear issue today is likely to lead Iran into a similarly costly and humiliating situation. The letter was also important in that it was the first official confirmation that as early as 1988, Revolutionary Guards wanted to have nuclear weapons.

The last example of conflict and criticism of Ahmadinejad’s handling of foreign policy has been over his attitude towards the passage of the UN Security Council resolution against Iran. Ahmadinejad continues to downplay the significance of the resolution, insisting it has no significance, and must not be taken seriously. It is nothing but a piece of paper, he declared. But other members of the leadership—

from Khamenei to Rafsanjani—have all insisted that the resolution is in fact very serious and must be treated with utmost urgency. The resolution, Rafsanjani declared in a Friday Sermon last week, will be even more damaging than an invasion of Iran. The hostile crowds Ahmadinejad faced recently at college campuses and the mounting parliamentary criticism of his actions show that even Ahmadinejad's populism can no longer protect him.

In the course of last year, Ahmadinejad has tried to help insure himself against this rising opposition by consolidating his relations with the Revolutionary Guards. Multi-billion dollar no-bid contracts have been given to Revolutionary Guards and their leaders and their companies. But even that has not silenced some in the ranks of the Guards who are also worried about the future of the regime. The website *Baztab*, supported by one of longest serving top commander of the Revolutionary Guards, has become increasingly and openly critical of Ahmadinejad.

There is only one thing that can now save Ahmadinejad and his cabal's declining political fortune, and that a military confrontation with the United States or attack on Iran's nuclear facilities by either Israel or the United States. The fact that Mr. Khamenei is reportedly in ill-health (lymphoma, according to critics of the regime and a bad flu according to the regime) and a power struggle is likely to take place over deciding his replacement make US foreign policy in the next few months of particular import. Military confrontation with American forces will strengthen the regime hardliners and weaken their opponents and critics who are already limited in their ability to operate.

If Ahmadinejad and his cabal do consolidate power, Iran will become more of a serious problem for the United States, Israel and the region. Iran's nuclear problem does not have a military solution. It is certainly true that so long as the Islamic Republic of Iran is in power, there will not be peace or democracy in the Middle East. But it is no less certain that this solution can and will come only if there is democracy in Iran. An attack on Iran will not only help the Ahmadinejad cabal consolidate its waning power, but elevate his status as a hero and martyr for Muslims around the world.

A sustained American bombing campaign might temporarily disrupt or delay Iran's nuclear programs. The fact that the regime, in anticipation of such an attack has dispersed these sites throughout the country, placing many of them in heavily populated cities makes the success of the attempt at delaying or disrupting the program less likely. Moreover, the newly consolidated hard-line regime in Tehran that is the likely to be the consequence of such an attack would be even more emboldened to openly acquire nuclear weapons, and it could count on a new degree of popular support for the program both inside Iran and around the Muslims around the world. A preemptive attack, which would lack international legitimacy, would also prompt Iran to withdraw entirely from the nuclear non-proliferation regime, as some of Ahmadinejad's allies have already threatened, while inducing Russia and China to abandon the crucial international coalition against the Islamic regime's nuclear adventurism.

There is an alternative. Rather than throw the reactionaries in Tehran a political lifeline in the form of war, the United States should pursue a more subtle approach: In Iraq, instead of giving US soldiers the potentially incendiary task of containing Iranian agents in the country, America must demand of the Iraqi government to perform its duties of protecting the country from foreign interference. If the Maleki government does indeed follow this request and performs its duties, it will also help convince Sunnis in Iraq and other Arab countries that his government is more than a tool of Iranian hegemonic design. A few weeks after the studied silence of the Islamic Republic about the arrest of its operatives in Iraq, the Iranian regime just announced that with the consent and agreement of the Iraqi government, it is increasing its economic, military and intelligence presence and role in that country.

Moreover, the US should offer to negotiate with Iran on all the outstanding issues. Comprehensive negotiations are not a "grand bargain." Instead such negotiations can offer mullahs powerful inducements, such as a lifting the economic embargo and even establishing diplomatic ties. But contrary to the "grand bargain" suggestion, central to such negotiations must be the issue of the human rights of the Iranian people. Contrary to the masses of nearly all other Muslim nations, and contrary to the declining popularity of the US in the world, Iranian people are favorably disposed towards the United States. An offer of serious, frank discussions with the regime on all of these issues will, regardless of whether the regime accepts or rejects the offer, be a win-win situation for the United States, for the Iranian democrats and for the existing UN coalition against the regime's adventurism. If the regime accepts the offer, anti-Americanism, as one of the regime's most important ideological foundations will have dissipated, weakening the regime's position among the radical Islamists. Such a negotiation will also clearly undermine the power of

Ahmadinejad and his cabal. Finally normalized relations with Iran will deprive the regime of its favorite excuse to cover its incompetence. If they reject such an offer, again the inner tensions within the regime on the one hand and between the regime and the people of Iran, who overwhelmingly want normalized relations with the US, will increase. The regime's rejection of such talks will also lead to more unity in the UN coalition on more serious sanctions against the regime. China and Russia will also find it harder to sit on the fence.

Such negotiations, if they take place, are ultimately temporary cures for the problem of Iran and its nuclear adventurism. The regime in Tehran might in fact negotiate but it is sure to break its promise—as it has done so often in the past—and proceed with its nuclear program even more covertly. Only with the advent of democracy in Iran can a strategic solution to Iran's nuclear problem be found. Democracy in Iran is also likely to have a democratic domino effect in the region. In Iran, an often silent majority wants democracy, normalized relations with the world, and avoid nuclear adventurism. Any policy that curtails the contributes to the continuous silence of this majority, derails or delays their democratic aspirations is detrimental to the long term interests of both the US and Iran.

Moreover, if it is true that the war in Iraq and the confrontation with Iran are both parts of the international war on terror, and if it is true, that Iran is a bellwether state for the entire Muslim Middle East, then it is also true that US policy on Iran will have serious ramifications for that war and for the entire region. The war on terror, like Iran's nuclear problem, does not have a military solution. Both require military might and the credible resolution to use it, but both ultimately have a political solution. Only a large, active coalition of Muslim moderates, Shiite and Sunni—who in spite of recent bloodshed amongst them have for centuries shown they can live together in relative harmony and amity—can defeat radical Islam and its *Jihadist* terrorist arm. The battle for the soul of Islam is less between reviving Shiite and a frightened Sunnis, but between the hitherto silent majority of Muslims, keen on a spiritual reading of Islam and *Jihadists* who want to turn Islam into an ideology for terror. That silent majority, in Iran as well as the rest of the Muslim world, is the natural ally of America and of the West, and a foe of the kind of dogma, intransigence and nuclear adventurism Ahmadinejad and his allies promote. Prudent American policy must strengthen the position of these majorities. Dogs of war with Iran, or even the howls of such dogs helps the likes of Ahmadinejad, and in spite of what results such tactics might bear in the short run, they will in the long run reap nothing but calamity and a nuclear, entrenched and despotic Iran.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you very much. Dr. Takeyh.

**STATEMENT OF RAY TAKEYH, PH.D., SENIOR FELLOW FOR MIDDLE EAST STUDIES, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS**

Mr. TAKEYH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Over the past couple of years, when I have come to various congressional committees, I have sort of been adept at keeping my remarks to the time allotted time, another occasion for me to demonstrate that virtuosity today.

Chairman LANTOS. We will help you attain that virtuosity.

Mr. TAKEYH. Thank you. I think, as was mentioned, from proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to terrorism to human rights to democratization, Iran runs across a wide range of American concerns—meddling in Iraq, nuclear ambitions and so forth.

I will refrain my comments to two issues, namely Iran's policy toward Iraq as I understand it, and its nuclear ambitions as I understand it, complementing some of the things that Mr. Milani said regarding the internal developments of the country.

As Iraq settles into a sort of a disturbing pattern of violence and disorder, the Islamic republic has conflicting and at times contradictory ambitions next door. I think the over-arching goal and priority for Tehran is to prevent Iraq from once more emerging as a military or ideological threat. Since the end of the Iran-Iraq war between 1980 and 1988, an uneasy consensus has evolved within

Iran that the cause of Iraq's aggressiveness was the Sunni domination of its politics. Thus the empowerment of the more friendly Shi'a regime is an essential objective of Iran strategy.

Given the fears of the spillover of the ongoing civil war and the fragmentation of the country, the Iranian leaders also seek to maintain Iraq's territorial integrity.

Finally, there is a menacing United States presence in Iraq, and contrary to many analyses, I don't believe that Iranians want the Americans to stay and bleed in Iraq as a means of detaching them from attacking its own suspected nuclear facilities. I think at this point they want the Americans to leave, on a gradual timetable or what have you, because they seem to feel that the beast has bled enough and whatever empirical ambitions the Americans might have had has already been beaten out of them so American presence is relatively superfluous.

Tehran appreciates that a stable Iraq therefore in many ways is the best way of ending the American occupation. These competing objectives have yielded alternative tactics. Iran has been active in subsidizing the Shi'a allies, arming their militias and agitating against the American presence yet also dispatching economic assistance and calls for stabilization of the country.

I am not quite certain that achievement of Iranian objectives are contingent on the insurgency or violence but, frankly, on the unfolding democratic process.

In a strange paradox, the Iranian clerical hardliners, who, as Mr. Milani said, have done much to suppress the reform movement at home, have emerged as forceful advocates of democracy next door. Indeed, a democratic Iraq offers Iran political and strategic advantages.

It certainly will empower the Shi'a community, particularly at the time when that Shi'a community is largely represented by those with close associations and intimate ties with Iran.

It will also yield an Iraq that is weak with a weak central government and strong promises, and such an Iraq is unlikely to contest Iran's emerging hegemony in the Gulf.

In essence, a democratic Iraq will produce an arrangement that will empower the congenial Shi'a population, contain the unruly ambitions of the Kurds and marginalize Iran's Sunni foes.

To some extent, actually, Iran's model of expressing its influence in Iraq is similar to the way the Iranians behaved in Lebanon in the early 1980s, another multi-confessional society with a Shi'a population that was largely left out of the spoils of power.

Iran's strategy in Lebanon, as we know, was to dispatch financial and military assistance to Shi'a allies as a means of winning hearts and minds and also preparing that Shi'a community for a potential conflict. And from that potential strategic design, of course, Hezbollah was born.

Iran today is, as in the past, seeking to mobilize and organize the diverse Shi'a communities' forces in Iraq while not necessarily getting entangled in an altercation with a more powerful United States. That is a very difficult balancing act, as we have seen in the past couple of weeks.

But our concerns with Iran of course are not limited to Iraq. And I will briefly touch on the nuclear issue, which is sort of like quick sand. Every time you think you understand it, it changes.

First of all, the notion of a debate, disagreement and dissent within the Islamic republic's corridors of power is not necessarily new. I mean, some of the disagreements and editorials and so forth are being presented as fracturing the Iranian political system.

The Islamic republic has been fractured since 1979. Factionalism, competing centers of power, is just the way this country behaves.

However, today, I believe beyond the evidence of fracturing, there is a consensus that has evolved within the regime, namely that Iran should have an advanced nuclear capability with a rather sophisticated infrastructure that will offer an opportunity to cross the nuclear threshold should it make that decision when it reaches that point. Whether Iran will remain satisfied with presumed capability short of actual breakout, as India did prior to 1997, will depend on the range of domestic, international and regional developments.

Certainly Iran's nuclear ambitions, which predated the rise of President Ahmadinejad, go back to the times of the 1970s. Nevertheless, they have been hardened as we begin to see the rise of a war generation coming to power, and the defining experience for the many of the younger conservatives is not necessarily the revolution itself but the Iran-Iraq War, the international indifference to Saddam's war crimes. Tehran's lack of effective response to Iraq's employment of chemical weapons has led the war generation to perceive that the security of their country has to be predicated on what they do as opposed to global opinion and international treaties.

The legacy of the war reinforces a nationalist narrative that sees America's demands for relinquishing of Iran's fuel cycle, an implied right at least under the NPT, as historically unjust. This is a country that has been historically subject to foreign intervention and imposition of various capitulation treaties. Therefore, it is inordinately sensitive of its national prerogatives and perceived sovereign rights.

Iran's rulers today perceive that they are being challenged not because of their provocation or treaty violations but because of super power bullying. So in a rather peculiar manner, the nuclear program and Iran's national identity have become fused in the imagination of the hardliners. Thus the notion of compromise and acquiescence has rather limited utility to Iran's aggrieved nationalists.

Despite their bitterness and cynicism, the Iran theocratic hardliners are also eternal optimists when it comes to the assumption of the international community and its power.

Many conservatives often say that Iran will follow the model of India or Pakistan, namely initial imposition of sanctions of international outcry will soon be followed by acceptance of this new status. Thus Tehran would regain its commercial status, which may be lost, commercial treaties which may be suspended, while maintaining its nuclear program as well.

That right and the notion that Iran's mischievous past and its tense relationships with the United States will somewhat militate

against international community's acceptance of its nuclear status is lost upon them. However, should that anticipation prove misguided, they are willing to suffer the consequences—to some extent—of their conduct.

So what is to be done is the question that is often posed, and it is never answered satisfactorily. It is not going to be answered satisfactorily now. It is a rather curious proposition to me for those who suggest that the American containment policy has succeeded and should continue while at the same time suggesting that Iran's behavior on the nuclear issue, terrorism, human rights, and regional activities is becoming worse. Well, if the containment policy has succeeded, it obviously hasn't succeeded on those issues. Will a policy of dialogue engagement work? I don't think there is an alternative to it.

It is not going to be easy to negotiate with the Iranian Government when it feels itself as empowered and the United States is at the position of strategic disadvantage that it is today. Twice Secretary Rice and Secretary Gates have suggested that, if we negotiate with Iran today, we do so from a position of a supplicant. It is a remarkable statement to be made by the Secretary of Defense and Secretary of State of a country that routinely calls itself a super power. Well, if you are a supplicant, we are not a super power. And before that, in another context, National Security Adviser Hadley said in the *New York Times* that we cannot impose red lines on North Korea because they keep violating them. If as thought, we have been debilitated, demoralized, demystified by Iraq, then we should go one step further and relinquish our status as super power and what Madeleine Albright at another time used to call the indispensable power because, obviously, we have become rather indispensable by the acknowledgments of the administration itself.

The only matter of reversing Iran's misbehavior and tempering its design may be through a negotiated platform. It is not going to be easy. But the alternatives are hard to come by, and I think I will stop there, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Takeyh follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RAY TAKEYH, PH.D., SENIOR FELLOW FOR MIDDLE EAST STUDIES, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

From the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to terrorism, from human rights to democratization, the Islamic Republic of Iran cuts across a wide range of American concerns. The American leaders routinely characterize Iran's meddling in Iraq and its nuclear ambitions as a grave threat, while often musing about the eventual necessity of using military force against the recalcitrant theocracy. To properly contemplate the Iranian challenge, I shall focus on two areas of contention: Iran's Iraq policy and its ambitious nuclear program. Through a better understanding of Iran's motivations, one can best assess how to address its essential goals and objectives on these two critical issues.

REVOLUTION VERSUS STABILITY: IRAN IN IRAQ

On July 7, 2005, a momentous event took place in Tehran. Saadun al-Dulaimi, Iraq's then-defense minister, arrived in Iran and formally declared, "I have come to Iran to ask forgiveness for what Saddam Hussein has done." The atmospherics of the trip reflected the changed relationship, as Iranian and Iraqi officials easily intermingled, signing various cooperative and trade agreements and pledging a new dawn in their relations. In yet another paradox of the Middle East, it took a

hawkish American government with its well-honed antagonism toward the Islamic Republic to finally alleviate one of Iran's most pressing strategic quandaries.

Since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, the Bush administration has periodically complained about Iran's mischievousness and intervention in Iraq's politics. The question then becomes, what are Iran's priorities and objectives in Iraq? Does Iran seek to export its revolution next door and create another Islamic Republic? Is it in Iran's interest to intensify the prevailing insurgency and further entangle America in its bloody quagmire? Do Iran and the United States have common interests in the troubled state of Iraq?

As Iraq settles into its disturbing pattern of violence and disorder, the Islamic Republic has contending and at times conflicting objectives next door. The overarching priority for Tehran is to prevent Iraq from once more emerging as a military and ideological threat. Since the end of the Iran-Iraq war an uneasy consensus has evolved among Iran's officials that the cause of Iraq's aggressive behavior was the Sunni domination of its politics. Thus, the empowerment of a more friendly Shiite regime is an essential objective of Iran's strategy. However, given the fears of a spillover from a potential civil war and the fragmentation of the country, Iran's leaders also seek to maintain Iraq's territorial integrity. Finally, there is the menacing U.S. military presence in Iraq. Contrary to the notion that Iran seeks to fuel the insurgency as a means of deterring the United States from attacking its suspected nuclear facilities, Tehran appreciates that a stable Iraq is the best means of ending the American occupation. These competing aims have yielded alternative tactics, as Iran has been active in subsidizing its Shiite allies, dispatching arms to friendly militias, and agitating against the American presence.

Although Iraq's Shiite political society is hardly homogeneous, the two parties that have emerged as the best organized and most competitive in the electoral process are the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and the Dawa Party. Both parties have intimate relations with Tehran and allied themselves with the Islamic Republic during the Iran-Iraq war. SCIRI was essentially created by Iran, and its militia, the Badr Brigade, was trained and equipped by the Revolutionary Guards. For its part, Dawa is Iraq's longest surviving Shiite political party, with a courageous record of resisting Saddam's repression. Under tremendous pressure, Dawa did take refuge in Iran, but it also established a presence in Syria, Lebanon and eventually Britain. However, despite their long-lasting ties with the Islamic Republic, both parties appreciate that in order to remain influential actors in the post-Saddam Iraq they must place some distance between themselves and Tehran. The members of SCIRI and Dawa insist that they have no interest in emulating Iran's theocratic model, and that Iraq's divisions and fragmentations mandate a different governing structure. Their persistent electoral triumphs reflect not just superior organization, but a successful assertion of their own identity. Still, Dawa and SCIRI do retain close bonds with Iran, and have defended the Islamic Republic against American charges of interference and infiltration. In the end, although both parties have no inclination to act as Iran's surrogates, they are likely to provide Tehran with a sympathetic audience, and even an alliance that, like all such arrangements, will not be free of tension and difficulty.

Although less well-publicized by Tehran, it does appear that Iran has established tacit ties with Moqtada al-Sadr and has even supplied his Mahdi army. In a sense, unlike their relations with SCIRI and Dawa, Iran's ties to Sadr are more opportunistic, as they find his sporadic Arab nationalist rhetoric and erratic behavior problematic. Nonetheless, given his emerging power-base, strident opposition to the American occupation and his well-organized militia group, Tehran has found it advantageous to at least maintain some links with Sadr. Among the characteristic of Iran's foreign policy is to leave as many options open as possible. At a time when Sadr is being granted an audience by the Arab leaders and dignitaries across the region, it would be astonishing if Iran did not seek some kind of a relationship with the Shiite firebrand.

Finally, there is Iran's relation with Iraq's most esteemed and influential Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. The Grand Ayatollah stands with traditional Shiite mullahs in rejecting Khomeini's notion that proper Islamic governance mandates direct clerical assumption of power. As we have noted, Khomeini's innovation contravened normative Shiite political traditions, making its export problematic, if not impossible. Thus far, both parties have been courteous and deferential to one another, with Sistani refusing to criticize Iran, while Tehran has been generous with crediting him for the Shiite populace's increasing empowerment. Rafsanjani made a point of emphasizing Sistani's role after the elections of the interim government, noting, "The fact that the people of Iraq have gone to the ballot box to decide their own fate is the result of efforts by the Iraqi clergy and sources of emulation, led by Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani."

For his part, Sistani maintains close ties to Iran's clerical community and routinely meets with visiting Iranian officials—a privilege not yet granted to U.S. representatives. Moreover, even though Sistani has not pressed for a theocracy, he still insists that religion must inform political and social arrangements.

The professions of the region's Sunni elite notwithstanding, as clerical regime plots its strategy toward Iraq, it does not seem inordinately interested in exporting its failed governing model to an unwilling Shiite population. As an influential Iranian politician, Muhammad Javad Larijani, plainly noted, "Iran's experience is not possible to be duplicated in Iraq." As such, Tehran's promotion of its Shiite allies is a way of ensuring that a future Iraqi government features voices who are willing to engage with Iran. The clerical rulers have no delusions about the Iraqi Shiite community subordinating its communal interests to Iran's prerogatives; they merely hope that promotion of Shiite parties will provide them with a suitable interlocutor. It is important to note that Iran's policy toward Iraq, as elsewhere in the Gulf, is predicated on carefully calibrated calculations of national interest, as opposed to a messianic mission of advancing the revolution.

Today, the essential estrangement of the Iraqi Shiites from the larger Arab world, and the Sunni dynasties' unease with their empowerment makes the community more attractive to Iran. The ascendance of the Shiites maybe acceptable to the Bush administration with its democratic imperatives, but the Sunni monarchs of Saudi Arabia and Jordan and the presidential dictatorships of Egypt and Syria are extremely anxious about the emergence of a new "arch of Shiism." At a time when the leading pan-Arab newspapers routinely decry the invasion of Iraq as an U.S.-Iranian plot to undermine the cohesion of the Sunni bloc, the prospects of an elected Shiite government in Iraq being warmly embraced by the Arab world seems remote. Iraq's new Shiite parties, conservative or moderate, are drawn to Iran, as they look for natural allies. It is unlikely that this will change, as the political alignments of the Middle East are increasingly being defined by sectarian identities.

Although it is customary to speak of Iran's ties to the Shiites, it should be noted that the Islamic Republic has also sought to cultivate relations with the Kurdish parties, particularly Jalal Talibani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. Iran's own history with the Kurdish population is contentious, as the Shah mercilessly exploited the Kurds, and then casted them aside when they proved inconvenient. Soon after assuming power, the Islamic Republic itself confronted Kurdish separatism and one of its first challenges was the suppression of a determined Kurdish rebellion. However, during their long years of common struggle against Saddam, the two sides often cooperated with each other, and eventually came to establish relatively reasonable relations. For the past two decades, Iran not only sustained those ties but often housed substantial Kurdish refugees whenever they had to flee Saddam's war machine. Today, Iran's relations with Talibani are cordial and correct, as Tehran hopes that a degree of Kurdish autonomy will persuade them to remain within a unitary Iraqi state.

Contrary to Washington's presumptions, the realization of Iran's objectives is not predicated on violence and the insurgency, but on the unfolding democratic process. In a strange paradox, the Iranian clerical hardliners who have been so adamant about suppressing the reform movement, have emerged as forceful advocates of democratic pluralism in Iraq. Indeed, a democratic Iraq offers Iran political and strategic advantages. After much deliberation, Iran's theocrats have arrived at the conclusion that the best means of advancing their interests is to support an electoral process that is increasingly constructing a state with strong provinces and a weak federal structure. Such an arrangement would empower the more congenial Shiite populace, contain the unruly ambitions of the Kurds, and marginalize Iran's Sunni foes.

Moreover, Iran's stratagem is not devoid of *realpolitik* considerations. A pluralistic Iraq is bound to be a fractious, divided state too preoccupied with its internal squabbles to contest Iran's aspirations in the Gulf. At a time when Iraq's constitutional arrangements are ceding essential authority to the provinces, and privileging local militias over national armed forces, it is unlikely that Iraq will once more emerge as a powerful, centralized state seeking to dominate the Persian Gulf region, if not the entire Middle East. It would be much easier for Iran to exert influence over a decentralized state with many contending actors, than a strong, cohesive regime.

Given Iran's interest in the stability and success of a Shiite-dominated Iraq, how does one account for the credible reports indicating that Tehran has been infiltrating men and supplies into Iraq? To be sure, since the removal of Saddam, the Islamic Republic has been busy establishing an infrastructure of influence next door that includes funding political parties and dispatching arms to Shiite militias.

Iran's model of ensuring its influence in Iraq is also drawn from its experiences in Lebanon, another multi-confessional society with a Shiite population that was

traditionally left out of the spoils of power. Iran's strategy in Lebanon was to dispatch economic and financial assistance to win Shiite hearts and minds, while making certain that its Shiite allies had sufficient military hardware for a potential clash with their rivals. As such, Iran's presence was more subtle and indirect, and sought to avoid a confrontation with the United States. Not unlike its approach to Lebanon, Iran today is seeking to mobilize and organize the diverse Shiite forces in Iraq, while not necessarily getting entangled in an altercation with the more powerful United States.

#### THE NUCLEAR CONUNDRUM

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a regime continuously divided against itself. Even in the era of conservative political hegemony, there are factions, as on issues of economic reforms, regional priorities and even relations with America, conservative frequently find themselves at odds with one another. However, today, a unique consensus has evolved within the regime on the nuclear issue. Iran's cantankerous conservatives seem united on the notion that the Islamic Republic should have an advanced nuclear infrastructure that will offer it an opportunity to cross the nuclear threshold at some point. Whether Iran will take that step or will remain satisfied with a presumed capability just short of an actual breakout, as India did prior to 1997, will depend on a range of domestic and international developments.

From the outset it must be emphasized that for all the factions involved in this debate, the core issue is how to safeguard Iran's national interests. The Islamic Republic is not an irrational rogue state seeking such weaponry as an instrument of an aggressive, revolutionary foreign policy. This is not an "Islamic bomb" to be handed over to terrorist organizations or exploded in the streets of New York or Washington. The fact is that Iran has long possessed chemical weapons, and has yet to transfer such arms to its terrorist allies. Iran's cautious leaders are most interested in remaining in power and fully appreciate that transferring nuclear weapons to terrorists could lead to the type of retaliation from the United States or Israel that would eliminate their regime altogether. For Iran this is a weapon of deterrence and power projection.

The primary supporters of the nuclear program are now officials in command of key institutions such as the Revolutionary Guards and the Guardian Council. A fundamental tenet of the hardliners' ideology is the notion that the Islamic Republic is in constant danger from predatory external forces, necessitating military self-reliance. This perception was initially molded by a revolution that sought not just to defy international norms but also to refashion them. The passage of time and the failure of that mission have not necessarily diminished the hardliners' suspicions of the international order and its primary guardian, the United States. *Jumhuri-ye Islami*, the conservative newspaper and the mouthpiece of the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, sounded this theme by stressing,

The core problem is the fact that our officials' outlook on the nuclear dossier of Iran is faulty and they are on the wrong track. It seems they have failed to appreciate that America is after our destruction and the nuclear issue is merely an excuse for them.

In a similar vein, *Resalat*, another influential conservative paper, sounded out the themes of deterrence and national interest by claiming, "In the present situation of international order whose main characteristics are injustice and the weakening of the rights of others, the Islamic Republic has no alternative but intelligent resistance while paying the least cost." Given its paranoia and suspicions, the Iranian right does not necessarily object to international isolation and confrontation with the West. Indeed, for many within this camp, such a conflict would be an effective means of rekindling popular support for the revolution's fading élan.

Iran's nuclear calculations have been further hardened by the rise of war veterans, such as President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, to positions of power. Although the Iran-Iraq war ended nearly twenty years ago, for many within the Islamic Republic it was a defining experience that altered their strategic assumptions. Even a cursory examination of Ahmadinejad's speeches reveals that for him the war is far from a faded memory. In his defiant speech at the UN General Assembly in September 2005, Iran's president pointedly admonished the assembled dignitaries for their failings:

For eight years, Saddam's regime imposed a massive war of aggression against my people. It employed the most heinous weapons of mass destruction including chemical weapons against Iranians and Iraqis alike. Who, in fact, armed Saddam with those weapons? What was the reaction of those who claim to fight against WMDs regarding the use of chemical weapons then?

The international indifference to Saddam's war crimes and Tehran's lack of an effective response has led Iran's war-veteran president to perceive that the security of his country cannot be predicated on global opinion and treaties.

The impact of the Iran-Iraq war on Tehran's nuclear calculations cannot be underestimated. Iraq's employment of chemical weapons against Iranian civilians and combatants has permanently scarred Iran's national psyche. Whatever their tactical military utility, in Saddam's hands, chemical weapons were tools of terror, as he hoped that through their indiscriminate use he could frighten and demoralize the Iranian populace. To a large extent, this strategy did succeed, as Iraqi attacks did much to undermine the national support for the continuation of the war.

Beyond the human toll, the war also changed Iran's strategic doctrine. During the war, Iran persisted with the notion that technological superiority cannot overcome revolutionary zeal and a willingness to offer martyrs. To compensate for its lack of weaponry, Iran launched human wave assaults and used its young population as a tool of an offensive military strategy. The devastation of the war and the loss of an appetite for "martyrdom" among Iran's youth has invalidated that theory. As Rafsanjani acknowledged, "With regards to chemical, bacteriological and radiological weapons, it was made clear during the war that these weapons are very decisive. We should fully equip ourselves in both offensive and defensive use of these weapons." Moreover, the indifference of the international community to Saddam's crimes also left its mark, leading Iran to reject the notion that international agreements can ensure its security. As Mohsen Rezai, the former commander of the Revolutionary Guards, said in 2004, "We cannot, generally speaking, argue that our country will derive any benefit from accepting international treaties." Deterrence could no longer be predicated on revolutionary commitment and international opinion, as Iran required a more credible military response.

The legacy of the war only reinforces a nationalistic narrative that sees America's demands for Iran to relinquish its fuel cycle rights under the Nuclear non-proliferation Treaty as inherently unjust. As a country that has historically been the subject of foreign intervention and the imposition of various capitulation treaties, Iran is inordinately sensitive of its national prerogatives and sovereign rights. The rulers of Iran perceive that they are being challenged not because of their provocations and previous treaty violations, but because of superpower bullying. In a peculiar manner, the nuclear program and Iran's national identity have become fused in the imagination of the hardliners. To stand against America on this issue is to validate one's revolutionary ardor and sense of nationalism. Ali Hussein Tash, the Deputy Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, stressed this point, saying, "A nation that does not engage in risks and difficult challenges, and a nation which does not stand up for itself can never be a proud nation." Thus, the notion of compromise and acquiescence has limited utility to Iran's aggrieved nationalists.

Despite their bitterness and cynicism, the theocratic hardliners are eternal optimists when it comes to their assessment of how the international community will respond to Iran's nuclear breakout. Many influential conservative voices insist that Iran would follow the model of India and Pakistan, with the initial international outcry soon followed by an acceptance of Iran's new status. Thus, Tehran would regain its commercial contracts and keep its nuclear weapons. The former Iranian foreign minister Akbar Velayati noted this theme when stressing, "Whenever we stand firm and defend our righteous stands resolutely, they are forced to retreat and have no alternatives." The right thus rejects the notion that Iran's mischievous past and its tense relations with the United States would militate against the international community's accepting Iran's nuclear status.

However, should their anticipations prove misguided, and Iran becomes the subject of sanctions, it is a price that the hardliners are willing to pay for an important national prerogative. Ahmadinejad has pointedly noted that even sanctions were to be imposed, "the Iranian nation would still have its rights." In a similar vein, Ayatollah Jannati has noted, "We do not welcome sanctions, but if we are threatened by sanctions, we will not give in." The notion of the need to sacrifice and struggle on behalf of the revolution and resist imperious international demands is an essential tenet of the hardliners' ideological perspective.

For the foreseeable future, the United States confronts an Iranian state whose strategic vulnerabilities, regional ambitions and internal political alignments press it in the direction of nuclear capability. Moreover Iran's nuclear empowerment comes at a time when it is bound to be the leading state in the strategically critical Persian Gulf region. These trends can neither be easily reversed through a policy of coercion or pressure, as in the end, a diplomatic engagement between the United States and Iran maybe the only manner of tempering the theocracy's more troublesome designs.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you very much.  
Mr. Wimbush.

**STATEMENT OF MR. ENDERS WIMBUSH, DIRECTOR OF CENTER FOR FUTURE SECURITY STRATEGIES, SENIOR FELLOW FOR THE HUDSON INSTITUTE**

Mr. WIMBUSH. Mr. Chairman, Representative Ros-Lehtinen and members of the committee, I am honored to be able to testify before you today on this very important issue.

From my perspective, as someone who has spent a great deal of his professional life trying to understand how nuclear weapons will figure in the future strategies of states that currently do not possess them, I have concluded, Mr. Chairman, that under no circumstances—under no circumstances—should Iran be allowed to acquire them.

A nuclear Iran can neither be managed, as some of our European allies believed, nor deterred in the traditional sense, as advocates of stronger non-proliferation treaties hope will be the case.

As you noted, Mr. Chairman, Iran is fast building its position as the Middle East political and military hegemony, a position which will be largely unchallengeable if it acquires nuclear weapons.

A nuclear Iran will change all of the critical strategic dynamics of this volatile region in ways that threaten the interests of virtually everyone else. The outlines of some of these negative trends are already visible as other actors adjust their strategies to accommodate what increasingly appears to be the emerging reality of an unpredictable unstable nuclear power.

The opportunities nuclear weapons will afford Iran go far beyond the prospect of using them in a military conflict. First, nuclear weapons will empower strategies of coercion, intimidation and denial that go far beyond purely military considerations. Second, acquiring the bomb as an icon of state power will enhance the legitimacy of Iran's mullahs and make it harder for disgruntled Iranians to oust them. Third, with nuclear weapons, Iran will have gained the ability to deter any direct American threats as well as the leverage to keep the United States at a distance and discourage it from helping Iran's regional opponents. If it succeeds in this, a relatively small nuclear outcast will therefore thus be able to deter a mature nuclear power.

This means that, fourth, Iran will become a billboard advertising nuclear weapons as the logical asymmetric weapon of those choice for nations that wish to confront the United States.

This leads logically to a fifth point: International proliferation to state and non state actors is virtually certain as newly capable states seek to empower friends and sympathizers. Iran, with its well-known support of Hezbollah, is a particularly good candidate to proliferate nuclear capability beyond the control of any state as a way to extend the coercive reach of its own nuclear politics.

The diffusion of nuclear know-how is on the verge of becoming impossible to impede any way. Just yesterday I listened to former Senator Sam Nunn describe the chances of success of his nuclear threat initiative which seeks to put barriers on the pathway of nuclear proliferation. And he described the chances of success as a 3 on a scale of 10 and getting worse. Finally and sixth, small arse-

nals of just a few weapons will mean that nuclear use will become more likely as deterrence disappears. If it appears easy to destroy an adversary's nuclear weapons in a single blow, small arsenals will increase the incentive to strike first. But some nuclear actors will be less interested in deterrence than in using nuclear weapons to annihilate their enemies. Iran's leadership has spoken of its willingness, in their words, to martyr the entire Iranian nation, and it has even expressed the desirability of doing so as a way to accelerate an inevitable apocalyptic collision between Islam and the West that will result in Islam's final worldwide triumph.

Iran's President Ahmadinejad is the poster child of this idea. He is the product of the most reactionary parts of Iran's clerical regime, the support structures and security intelligence and the paramilitary vigilante Basij forces and their hardline Islamic mentors. The zealots he represents and their views are more extreme in virtually all respects than those of the regime's house clerics. According to them, the inevitable clash between Islam and the West, as you noted, will accelerate the appearance of the hidden imam, also known as the Imam Mahdi, the Messianic core of Shia Islam.

Is Iran's quest for nuclear weapons connected to Ahmadinejad and his followers' plans for martyring the entire Iranian nation to speed the return of the hidden imam? I think we should be clear, Mr. Chairman, that we have no idea, no idea how to deter an ideological actor who might seek to annihilate others and then to be annihilated himself gloriously in return.

If we wish to avoid having to confront Iran militarily at some point in the near future, we need to unleash other influences and instruments that can help shape Iran's emerging landscape in ways that give Iranians a chance to step back, rethink the dangerous path they are now on, and understand the consequences of going there. Constrain the radicals among them, and recalibrate their strategies in a direction toward rejoining the world community. I strongly believe—and I echo Dr. Milani on this—I strongly believe that this is possible by going directly to Iran's people, especially to its young educated men and women, its intellectuals, its labor unions and its business communities and its other key agents of change. Yet while these diverse groups may share visions of pushing the ruling mullahs into retirement, to date little critical mass has developed amongst them that might eventually coalesce to make this happen.

During the Cold War, as you know, we faced similar challenges in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union where unconventional ideas and intense debate were considered offenses against the state. Into this void of ideas, we directed America's powerful international broadcasting stations, especially Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, now acknowledged by virtually everyone as perhaps the most important influences in shaping and accelerating change in the East. Iran is easily as resonant a milieu for idea-induced change as say Poland or Russia and perhaps more so. But unfortunately both the war of ideas and the instruments that gave them life had been largely ignored by this administration, and there is no better illustration of this than America's principal broadcast service to Iran, Radio Farda, which the broadcasting board of governors describes, and I quote, "a youth-oriented 24/7

Persian language radio service that broadcasts political, social, economic news, information, public affairs and music to Iran.”

Unfortunately, Mr. Chairman, the youth orientation of Radio Farda means that the broadcasts are mostly music. It has moved far from the successful Radio Free Europe radio model. The Radio Free Europe gave its listeners a little bit of music, but primarily it enlivened their critical thinking with analysis and context, history, culture, religion, economics, law, human rights, labor, and cross reporting from many perspectives, all mostly missing from today’s Radio Farda broadcasts. Radio Liberty’s broadcast to the former USSR never used music, and yet boasted a substantial youth audience.

Radio Farda’s confusion, I believe, is elementary. The confusion is between public diplomacy, which features telling America’s story, advocating for America’s position, and promoting American culture, very useful in some respects. And strategic communications, which is very different and which was practiced by the radio frees. The Voice of America, the official voice of the U.S. Government, has always been part of the public diplomacy architecture, but the radio frees, better known as surrogate radio stations, have not. Their mission is fundamentally different. While public diplomacy is all about us, the surrogate radios are all about them. The surrogate radios were successful in the Cold War because they were less concerned with how or why people disliked us or with advocating for America than in spurring intelligent listeners to think about the cost to their nation of runaway ideologies and isolation from critical globalizing trends. They were intended to stir debate within societies like Iran in ways that weaken the ability of oppressive regimes to monopolize information and ideas, enhance power.

What eventually became Radio Farda was created for exactly this purpose. In the unadopted Radio Free Iran Act of 1995, Congress called for additional broadcasts to further open the communications of accurate, in their words, about Iran to the people of Iran. The language of the bill is crystal clear in its intent to create a new surrogate broadcast entity. In 1998, Congress appropriated \$4 million to fund Radio Free Iran to be run by Radio Free Liberty, the nation’s premiere surrogate broadcaster. At no point did Congress envision or approve creating another public diplomacy instrument that focused on America and pumped out popular music.

In the beginning this worked well. Radio Free Iran, renamed Radio Azadi, was run as a real surrogate station until 2002. It was an effective operation. By 2002 after 4 years of operation, Azadi had become the most popular foreign broadcaster to Iran, outpacing the better Voice of America and the BBC in the size of its elite audience, and anecdotal evidence that we have from this period suggests incidentally that even current President Ahmadinejad was a regular listener, reminiscent of the success of RFE–RL in drawing most of the critical elites in their broadcast areas during the Cold War.

Chairman LANTOS. We didn’t do very well with Ahmadinejad, did we?

Mr. WIMBUSH. We did not do very well with him.

But in 2002 unfortunately the station was abruptly morphed to Radio Farda and programming that changed it from the successful

surrogate service, aimed at critical elites and the populations that support them as Congress had envisioned, to the airy music station aimed at kids took place. Today what passes for broadcast strategy at Radio Farda features an indiscriminate audience-maximizing formula that measures success by the number of listeners tune in, not by the quality of those listeners or by the critical positions and influence and authority they occupy.

If that metric had been applied to Radio Liberty, it would have been abolished before it came into its own in the 1970s, becoming a powerful instrument of change. This dumbing down, dumbing down respects the needs and intelligence of neither the traditional agents of change nor the critical younger audiences, especially Iran's powerful student movement. In Farda's defense its managers insist that without music Iranians will tune Radio Farda out because it will cease to be, in their words, believable. As you know, Mr. Chairman, credibility is indeed the currency of strategic communications, which is why substituting music for powerful ideas is so confused. Any sentient Iranian can see that it is the music that lacks credibility. It is a trick, it is a gimmick. They also see that filling up the airwaves with Britney Spears and Shania Twain says that America has no ideas of value and that we don't trust Iranian listeners to distinguish intelligent debate from pop culture pap. America is trying to make us like them; it is public diplomacy all over again. A far better and tested strategy would be to level with them and help them level with each other. The notion that we must not offend Farda's Iranian listeners throws the station for existing into question.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, while stressing balance, these radios have never been neutral. To the contrary, they were created to help shape political landscapes in ways that favor our desired outcomes, and our listeners have always known it.

Chairman LANTOS. Mr. Wimbush, can you wrap up because I think we have sort of run out of time.

Mr. WIMBUSH. My recommendation, Mr. Chairman, is that as a very strong priority that this committee take it on itself to reexamine our strategic communication instruments, starting with Radio Farda, scrubbing them of their music and replacing it with serious programming. This may draw smaller audiences in the beginning, but they will be audiences that count for something. It is with some urgency, Mr. Chairman, that I urge you to go in that direction because we are in late innings with Iran, and the time has come to do this. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wimbush follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MR. ENDERS WIMBUSH, DIRECTOR OF CENTER FOR FUTURE SECURITY STRATEGIES, SENIOR FELLOW FOR THE HUDSON INSTITUTE

Mr. Chairman, Representative Ros-Lehtinen, Members of the Committee, I am honored to be asked to testify before you today on this important issue. By way of identification, I am currently Senior Fellow and Director of the Center for Future Security Strategies at Hudson Institute in Washington working principally on trying to understand the character of emerging security landscapes and the challenges and opportunities they might offer to U.S. security planning. For the last 30 years, I have consulted on long-range security issues for many agencies of our government, as well as for foreign governments and private sector clients. From 1987-93, I was Director of Radio Liberty in Munich, Germany, a period that encompassed the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union. I was trained as a Central

Asianist, hence my abiding interest in Iran and its environment. In my short testimony today, I shall endeavor to draw on each of these perspectives.

*Nuclear Iran and International Security*

From my perspective as someone who has spent a great deal of my professional life trying to understand how nuclear weapons might figure in the future strategies of states that do not now possess them, I have concluded, Mr. Chairman, that under no circumstances should Iran be allowed to acquire them. A nuclear Iran can neither be “managed,” as many of our European allies believe, nor deterred in any traditional sense, as advocates of stronger non-proliferation treaties hope will be the case.

Iran is fast building its position as the Middle East’s political and military hegemon, a position that will be largely unchallengeable once it acquires nuclear weapons. A nuclear Iran will change all of the critical strategic dynamics of this volatile region in ways that threaten the interests of virtually everyone else. The outlines of some of these negative trends are already visible, as other actors adjust their strategies to accommodate what increasingly appears to be the emerging reality of an unpredictable, unstable nuclear power. It is important to understand where we are today with respect to a nuclear Iran. Tehran needn’t test a device to shift these dangerous dynamics into high gear; that is already happening. By the time Iran tests, the landscape will have changed dramatically because everyone will have seen it coming.

The opportunities nuclear weapons will afford Iran far exceed the prospect of using them to win a military conflict. Nuclear weapons will empower strategies of coercion, intimidation and denial that go far beyond purely military considerations. Acquiring the bomb as an icon of state power will enhance the legitimacy of Iran’s mullahs and make it harder for disgruntled Iranians to oust them. With nuclear weapons, Iran will have gained the ability to deter any direct American threats, as well as the leverage to keep the U.S. at a distance and to discourage it from helping Iran’s regional opponents. Would the U.S. be in Iraq if Saddam had had a few nuclear weapons and the ability to deliver them on target to much of Europe and all of Israel? Would it even have gone to war in 1991 to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi aggression? Unlikely. Yet Iran is rapidly acquiring just such a capability. If it succeeds, a relatively small nuclear outcast will be able to deter a mature nuclear power. Iran will become a billboard advertising nuclear weapons as the logical asymmetric weapon of choice for nations that wish to confront the United States.

Mr. Chairman, it should surprise no one that quiet discussions have already begun in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey and elsewhere in the Middle East about the desirability of developing national nuclear capabilities to blunt Iran’s anticipated advantage and offset the perceived decline in America’s protective power. I believe that this is just the beginning. Proliferation across Eurasia will be broad and swift, creating nightmarish challenges. The diffusion of nuclear know-how is on the verge of becoming impossible to impede. Just yesterday, I heard former senator Sam Nunn describe the chances of success of his Nuclear Threat Initiative, which seeks to put barriers in the pathway of proliferation, as only a three on a scale of ten, and getting worse. Non-proliferation treaties, never effective in blocking the ambitions of rogues like Iran and North Korea, will be meaningless. Intentional proliferation to state and non-state actors is virtually certain, as newly capable states seek to empower their friends and sympathizers. Iran, with its well known support of Hezbollah, is a particularly good candidate to proliferate nuclear capabilities beyond the control of any state as a way to extend the coercive reach of its own nuclear politics.

In the world of nuclear Iran, arsenals will be small, which sounds reassuring, but in fact it heightens the dangers and risk. New players, including Iran, with just a few weapons will be especially dangerous. Cold War deterrence was based on the belief that an initial strike by an attacker could not destroy all of an opponent’s nuclear weapons, leaving the adversary with the capacity to strike back in a devastating retaliatory blow. Because it is likely to appear easier to destroy them in a single blow, small arsenals will increase the incentive to strike first in a crisis.

Some of the new nuclear actors will be less interested in deterrence than in using nuclear weapons to annihilate their enemies. Iran’s leadership has spoken of its willingness—in their words—to “martyr” the entire Iranian nation, and it has even expressed the desirability of doing so as a way to accelerate an inevitable, apocalyptic collision between Islam and the West that will result in Islam’s final worldwide triumph.

Ahmadinejad is the product of the most reactionary parts of Iran’s clerical regime: the support structures in security, intelligence and paramilitary vigilante *basesej* forces and their hardline Islamic mentors. This group of zealots and their views are

more extreme in virtually all aspects than those of the regime's house clerics. They see themselves as the true guardians of Ayatollah Khomeini's legacy, often criticizing the clerics for not being radical enough in pursuing Islamic revolution. Their ideological godfather is the ultra-conservative Ayatollah Mesba-e Yazdi—better known as “Professor Crocodile” to Iranians—whose teachings converge with the anti-Western conspiracy theories of Ahmad Fardid, a Persian follower of Nazi sympathizer Martin Heidegger. Together they espouse an ideological cocktail whose main ingredients are a pathological hatred of the West and its civilization and the inevitability of an apocalyptic collision between Islam and the West that will result in Islam's triumph worldwide.

This is not an original interpretation of what Islam requires of its followers, but Ahmadinejad and the zealots who support him have given it a novel and disturbing twist. According to them, the inevitable clash between Islam and the West will accelerate the reappearance of the Hidden Imam, also known as Imam Mahdi, the messianic core of Shiite Islam. According to Shia doctrine, the messiah will return to lead the forces of righteousness in a final cosmic battle against evil shortly before Judgement Day and the end of history. Ahmadinejad thus urges the Iranian people to bring the Hidden Imam's reappearance closer through “the art of martyrdom.” And “A nation with martyrdom knows no captivity,” he recently exhorted his followers. Moreover, he insists, anyone who resists this principle, “undermines the foundation of our eternity.” How soon can the Hidden Imam appear? Ahmadinejad has said that it is possible in only two years.

Is Iran's quest for nuclear weapons connected to Ahmadinejad and his followers' plans for martyring the Iranian nation to speed the return of the Hidden Imam? As if to provide an answer to this question, a disciple of Professor Crocodile recently issued a fatwa for the use of nuclear weapons by Muslims on the basis of shari'a, in what regime critics have characterized as a new effort by the hardliners to “prepare the religious grounds for use of these weapons.” We should be clear, Mr. Chairman, that we have no idea how to deter ideological actors who may seek to annihilate others and be annihilated, gloriously, in return.

This is the world Iran is dragging us into. French president Jacques Chirac clearly had Iran in mind when, uncharacteristically, he recently threatened devastating retaliation by France's nuclear forces for any nuclear strike on France. His message could not have been blunter: Iran will indeed be martyred if it takes this direction. This is a message the Iranian people need to hear, alerting them that Ahmadinejad and his confederates may be taking Iranians down a road most wish not to travel. But are they getting this message?

If we wish to avoid having to confront Iran militarily at some point in the foreseeable future, we need to unleash other influences and instruments that can help shape Iran's emerging landscape in ways that give Iranians a chance to step back, rethink their current trajectories, constrain the radicals among them, and recalibrate their strategies in the direction of rejoining the world community. I strongly believe that this is possible by going directly to Iran's people, especially its young educated men and women, its intellectuals, its labor unions and business community, and other key agents of change. Yet while these diverse groups may share visions of pushing the ruling mullahs into retirement, to date little critical mass has developed amongst them that might eventually coalesce to make this happen.

During the Cold War, we faced similar obstacles in Eastern Europe and the USSR, where unconventional ideas and intense debate were considered offenses against the state. Into this void of ideas, we directed America's powerful international broadcasting stations, now acknowledged by nearly everyone as perhaps the most important influence in shaping and accelerating change in the East. Iran is easily as resonant a milieu for idea-induced change as, say, Poland or Russia, and perhaps more so, but unfortunately both the war of ideas and the instruments that gave them life have been largely ignored by this administration. There is no better illustration of this neglect than America's principal broadcast service to Iran, Radio Farda, which the Broadcasting Board of Governors describes as “a youth-oriented 24/7 Persian-language radio service that broadcasts political, social, and economic news, information, public affairs, and music to Iran.”

Unfortunately, the youth orientation of Radio Farda means that broadcasts are mostly music. Media consultant Bert Kleinman, the architect of musical Radio Farda, insists in a recent AP story that Iran's large under-30 demographic offers the best opportunity for fomenting change in Iran. Kleinman notes that if you want to reach young people anywhere in the world, “this is how you do it.” This will come as a surprise to the critically important youth of Poland under Communism in the 1960s and 1970s, a youth bubble that was larger in fact than Iran's today. Radio Free Europe gave them a little music, but it also enlivened their critical thinking with analysis and context—history, culture, religion, economics, law, human rights,

labor, and cross-reporting from many perspectives—mostly missing from today’s Radio Farda broadcasts. Radio Liberty’s broadcasts to the former USSR never used music yet boasted a substantial youth audience.

Radio Farda’s confusion is elementary. Unfortunately, the same confusion increasingly infects most of our broadcast efforts throughout the world. The confusion is between public diplomacy—which features telling America’s story and advocating for America’s positions—and strategic communications, which is very different. The VOA, the official voice of the U.S. Government, has always been part of the public diplomacy architecture, but the Radio Frees, better known as “surrogate” radio stations, have not. Their mission is fundamentally different. While public diplomacy is all about “us,” the surrogate Radios are all about “them.” The surrogate radios were successful during the Cold War because they were less concerned with how or why people dislike us or with advocating for America than in spurring intelligent listeners to think about the costs to their nation of runaway ideologies and isolation from critical globalizing trends. They were intended to stir debate within societies like Iran in ways that weaken the ability of oppressive regimes to monopolize information and ideas and, hence, power.

What eventually became Radio Farda was created for exactly this purpose. In the un-adopted Radio Free Iran Act of 1995, Congress called for additional broadcasts to further “the open communication of accurate information and ideas about Iran to the people of Iran.” The language of the bill is crystal clear in its intent to create a new “surrogate” broadcast entity to compliment existing broadcasts to Iran from the VOA. In 1998 Congress appropriated \$4 million for a Radio Free Iran, to be run by RFE/RL, the nation’s premier “surrogate” broadcaster. At no point did the Congress envision or approve creating another public diplomacy instrument that focused on America and pumped out popular music.

In the beginning, this worked well. Radio Free Iran, renamed Radio Azadi, was run by RFE/RL as a real surrogate station until 2002. It was an effective operation. By 2002, after only four years of operation, Azadi had become the most popular foreign broadcaster to Iran, outpacing the better-known BBC and VOA in the size of its elite audience. (Anecdotal evidence suggests that even current Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was a regular listener—reminiscent of the success of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty in drawing in most of the critical elites in their broadcast areas during the Cold War.) But in 2002, the station was abruptly morphed into Radio Farda, and the programming changes that transformed it from the successful surrogate service aimed at critical elites and the populations that support them, as Congress had envisioned, to an airy music station aimed at kids took place.

Today, what passes for broadcast strategy at Radio Farda features an indiscriminant audience-maximizing formula that measures success by the number of listeners who tune in, not by the quality of those listeners or by the critical positions of influence and authority they occupy. If that metric had been applied to Radio Liberty, it would have been abolished before it came into its own in the 1970s, becoming a powerful instrument of change. This dumbing down respects the needs and intelligence of neither the traditional change agents nor critical younger audiences, especially Iran’s powerful student movement. Apparently distrustful that Iranians can handle anything but “news products,” many of which they already receive from other sources—and only if enticed to listen with feel-good music—Radio Farda offers little other substantive programming.

In Radio Farda’s defense, its manager insists in the AP story I cited earlier that Iranians will tune Radio Farda out if it ceases to be “believable.” Credibility is indeed the currency of strategic communications, which is why substituting music for powerful ideas is so confused. Any sentient Iranian can see that it’s the music that lacks credibility, that it’s a trick, a gimmick. They also see that filling up the airwaves with Britney Spears and Shania Twain says that America has no ideas of value and that we don’t trust Iranian listeners to distinguish intelligent debate from pop culture pap. What else could they conclude but the obvious: America is just trying to make us like them, it’s public diplomacy all over again. A far better and tested strategy would be to level with them, and help them level with each other.

The notion that we must not offend Radio Farda’s Iranian listeners throws that station’s reason for existing into question. As you know better than most, Mr. Chairman, while stressing balance, the Radios have never been neutral. To the contrary, they were created to shape political landscapes in ways that favor our desired outcomes, and our listeners have always known it. Calling for the overthrow of any regime has never been permitted by broadcast guidelines, and shouldn’t be. But as the Cold War experience demonstrated beyond question, the Radios can contribute momentum towards political change by stimulating and encouraging the right audience.

During the Cold War, Russians, Poles, Czechs, Azerbaijanis, Uzbeks and many others tuned in to RFE/RL to receive ideas they hungered for and to hear support for unpopular, often dangerous, platforms for change. These audiences started small, grew large, and eventually encompassed most critical elites. Iran, with a strong cohort of educated young people, including the most educated women in the Middle East, is probably a more resonant milieu than Russia ever was. Yet, while the Russians received serious analysis, commentary, context—all from within their society—and the views of others elsewhere in the world grappling with similar challenges, Iranians get Madonna.

Mr. Chairman, shielding Iranians with pop music from a reality they already understand is a losing strategy. Radio Farda should scrub much of the music and replace it with serious programming. It should not function simply as another news organization in an increasingly globalized information universe. Indeed, Iran, like most of the Middle East, is awash in news from hundreds of sources. What Iranians lack is internally generated discussion and debate on what the news means and how they should incorporate that knowledge into their view of themselves and the world.

This approach may draw a smaller audience, at least in the beginning, but it will be an audience that counts for something.

Mr. Chairman, public diplomacy—that is, telling America's story and emphasizing American values—will not lure Iran back from the nuclear threshold. Strategic broadcasting by the Radios—that is, seeding Iran with ideas from within Iran and stimulating debate—on the airwaves, on the Internet, and on emerging technologies—is a far more powerful and proven weapon. Shielding Iranians with pop music from a reality they already understand is a losing strategy, but it is the strategy Radio Farda has adopted. My recommendation, Mr. Chairman, is simple. Radio Farda should scrub its broadcasting of music and replace it with serious programming. This approach may draw a smaller audience, at least in the beginning, but it will be an audience that counts for something. Moreover—and I can't stress this strongly enough—we know how to organize and implement such a strategy. We have done it before, and we are good at it. But we are not doing it now. Although not the subject of this hearing, I recommend taking a similar hard look at the extremely expensive BBG Arabic-language investments Al Hurra TV and Radio Sawa.

The knowledge and the art of strategic communications is being lost, nearly all its traditional instruments, including Radio Farda, are currently degraded, their successful strategies have been polluted and discarded, and their missions are badly garbled. Added to this, we are in late innings with Iran. It is with a sense of some urgency, therefore, that I urge you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, to make fixing America's strategic communications a top priority.

Chairman LANTOS. I want to thank all three of our distinguished witnesses. We begin the questioning with Ms. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. You are always a gentleman about that. Because we have four votes I believe coming up rather rapidly, some of our more junior members may not have the opportunity to ask questions. I will be happy to yield my time to Mr. McCaul of Texas. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. McCAUL. I want to thank the gentlelady from Florida for yielding her time to me. In my view, a nuclear Iran poses the greatest threat to the world. That may be a statement of the obvious, but I believe that Iran is on a collision course with the world, and we really have three options here. One is to try to negotiate. I know there are some people here who think we should talk to Iran. I am not averse to talking, but I don't believe we have a lot of leverage, and I don't believe that the doctrine of mutually assured destruction which worked so well with the Soviets is going to apply with the mindset that is willing to take its own life in the name of a greater power.

There is a military option. I believe, as I think everyone here would agree, that should always be a last resort, last option put on the table.

The third option in my view is a more intriguing one, and that is the fact that as was highlighted in some of the testimony that

about 80 percent of the current population do not agree with the suppressive regime, they do not agree with the mullahs. But they are oppressed to the point where they have basically a shotgun put down, a barrel put down at their face, they have to go along.

I wanted the panel as a whole to comment on those three options, and specifically even more so focus on the internal resistance idea. Finally, what role, if any, the MEK could play in this resistance movement?

Chairman LANTOS. Dr. Milani.

Mr. MILANI. Let me begin by the last part of your question. Every evidence I have seen from inside Iran is that the MEK, because of its association with Saddam Hussein, because it became associated with Saddam Hussein during the years where Saddam was fighting Iran, is extremely unpopular within Iran. And it is known as a group that has used terror in the past. It now says that it has given up that practice. The idea of using them as an alternative, the idea of them playing a role as an alternative in Iran I think goes against everything I understand about the Iranian community, both inside Iran and outside Iran. And I think it has, in some fundamental ways, also undermined the legitimacy of the claim of the United States that we don't negotiate, for example, we don't cooperate with terrorists. For the Iranian people, right or wrong, this was a group that was known as having begun its history in that process.

I think the United States can play a very, very important role in helping that 80 percent, that side of the majority so far, and not always silent, to rise up and create a democratic option in Iran. As I said earlier, I truly believe that the only solution to the nuclear issue is if we have a democratic government in Iran.

Israel was not opposed to the idea of Iran having a nuclear program when Iran was not in the hands of the regime like the Islamic republic. In fact, Israel was one of the advocates of Iran's nuclear program in the 1970s and one of the forceful advocates of the nuclear program. We have to bring Iran back to the kind of a state where the world does not fear that if they get their hands on any kind of a nuclear weapons, for example, that they will not give it to terrorists. I don't believe that this leadership as an entirety is the kind of leadership that wants to commit suicide, that it is going to be willing to die. Most of this leadership, in fact, has become deeply corrupt. They have become renters. Mr. Rafsanjani is one of the richest men in Iran right now. The rest of the clergy, because of the corrupt practices, have become owners of this society in ways—in terms of the corruption that I think far exceeds anything Iran has seen in the past. They want to continue collecting their share of this loot. This is a \$50 billion loot that is coming in. To me, this regime is truly like a Mafia that has suddenly found itself in the control of a beat that is \$50 billion. Now, there are some, in the great tradition of the godfather, who want to threaten and go out and get more and are not willing to—are not afraid to die, but the rest of the godfathers, they just want to continue reaping these benefits. But that doesn't mean they are not dangerous, that doesn't mean that the world should not try to help the Iranians change this government. That I think is the only strategic solution to this problem. Every aspect, every problem in the Middle East I

think can be solved with this. And I think that movement, that democratic movement within Iran is far more potentially viable than we give it credit for. It is not dispirited. It is disheartened. Mr. Khatami played a very, very negative role in making it lose faith, but I think—this is a movement that is 100 years old. The Iranian democratic—you know, we are now celebrating the centennial of the constitutional revolution. This is not something that has come overnight, and it is not something that is going to go away overnight because fundamentally, the only solution to Iran's economic problem, social problem, drug problem with—all of these are serious problems. Ten percent of the population is addicted to heroin or opium in Iran, 10 percent of the entire population. These things can only be solved; the unemployment problem can only be solved if there is democracy in Iran, the infusion of capital that is required. Iran needs \$600 billion to get its oil business back to 1975. That money is not going to come unless there is democracy in Iran, and the way the United States can help this democratic potential become reality.

Chairman LANTOS. Dr. Takeyh.

Mr. TAKEYH. Let me deal with one of the first issues that you brought up, military option, and I think as Dr. Milani suggested, there is no realistic military option, because a military option relies not so much on logistical capability but on precise intelligence, and if I start the following sentence by saying that the United States possesses detailed and accurate information regarding Middle Eastern countries' concealed nuclear weapon facilities, any paragraph, any chapter that begins with the phrase "according to U.S. intelligence" has to be treated with skepticism, if not outright derision.

Second of all, you know for the past 4 years at least the United States has said, the President has said on a rather routine basis that at some point we may consider the military option. Well, if I am an Iranian strategic planner, I am taking the necessary steps in terms of dispersal, concealment and so forth to ensure the survival of my program should those persistently uttered advocated threats come to realization. So the mere invocation of military threat makes the actual military attack somewhat improbable in terms of the success. I mean, you know, they presumably know what we are talking about, as they do in fact. So that is the military option.

Let me deal with the notion of whether or not the regime can be overthrown, which I gather is the core of the evidence, through a popular revolution. I think Iran has democratic sentiments, but I would disagree that it has an organized democratic movement willing and capable of confronting the regime, especially the way the regime is being depicted today, the messianic, suicidal, determined to blow us up and the universe, and the way you deal with those radio broadcasts. I think frankly, Mr. Chairman, you should have a hearing on what precipitated the demise of the Soviet Union because often people come to these hearings and others and suggest that it was the broadcast from the United States. The point Mr. Wimbush made. I think we should actually test this proposition. You should actually have experts on what precipitated the demise of the Soviet Union. Because frankly, it was awfully complicated, flexible American containment policy that involved negotiation and

deterrence at the same time, and it had to do with the inability of the Soviet elite at the end to rescue their own state. There was a loss of will of the Soviet Union, but that is something that I think you should actually have so we can actually put this issue to rest. Do radio broadcasts help? Sure. This is a country of 85 percent illiteracy rate. It knows what is wrong with the society. There is 24-hour radio broadcast in Iran today. It is called BBC Persian Service. I mean, I don't know how that works. I am Hamed. I live in Iran. I have four jobs. I make \$150 a month. I was living a blissful life. Then I heard Radio Farda said, hey, you know, Hamed, your life is actually not that great. So that is what is wrong. So I am going to get my two friends Ali and Mohammed, and we are going to have a revolution. Does it help to inform the society? Yes. Is it an ill-informed society? No. And I am not quite sure. If Iran is all the things that the conservatives say it is, messianic, determined to blow itself up and the universe, then they should have the courage and conviction, and actually I advocate an invasion. Because then it is an existential threat. So I am not quite sure if that particular—waiting for revolution as a counterproliferation strategy seems injudicious to me. If you believe that, you are wrong. If you believe that, you are ahistorical.

This is a serious problem we face with Iran, crossing successive nuclear demarcations with apparent impunity. I mean, this is a country that is going to have—that is essentially an indigenous uranium enrichment capability in a very short time. You know, can negotiations help rest that? Maybe. I am not quite sure. Is there a military option? No. Is waiting for popular revolution stimulated through radio broadcasts a judicious strategy? I don't think so. Are they the type of sanctions that the administration is trying to impose on Iran, financial sanctions, and so on, through indirect disinvestment from it, are those sanctions going to have a cost on the Iranian economy? Indisputably so. But the problem with sanctions has never been that they don't have a cost. Is the cost sufficient to detract the regime from its contemplated policy objectives? And the record on that is indisputably clear, for 27 years is no.

Chairman LANTOS. I am sorry. Mr. Wimbush.

Mr. WIMBUSH. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is seldom that I get a chance to say I disagree with everything my predecessor has just said, but I do. Apart from his oversimplification of my discussion of how the radios were effective during the Cold War and suggesting that maybe we should study it again; it has been studied and studied. There have been many retrospectives on it, and I don't think that the jury is out on that anymore.

What I am suggesting, and this gets to Congressman McCaul's question, is that one gets a sense in Iran today, and I think this is clear in Dr. Milani's larger testimony as well, that there are new dynamics at work, that there is movement in directions that we may not have seen before, that we should be paying attention to. I am reminded of the period shortly after 1987, 1988 when we began to see the same thing in the Soviet Union, in Eastern Europe with the advent of glasnost. All kinds of things began to happen. I am not in a position to characterize all those things. I think Dr. Milani and others like him can do that very well, but to miss encouraging that dynamic, as he has suggested, to me is to miss

a great opportunity. I think that there is every opportunity to strengthen forces of change in Iran that ultimately will work out to our advantage. I am not saying that we should be calling for a regime change. But let's be honest, if you strengthen those forces, if you support those forces, what you are hoping for is eventually that the regime will disappear and you will get something a little bit better. But I think that, you know, I would not want to see this characterized as a kind of troglodyte approach to a question that can't be penetrated. We know how to do this. We have done it before. We are really quite good at it, and I think it needs a lot more scrutiny.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you very much, Mr. Ackerman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Without provoking an outburst by using the word "godfather," what specifically can we do or should we be doing, in specific, to drive a wedge into the fissure in the family?

Mr. MILANI. First of all, let me make one small point clear. I did not mean and I think Dr. Takeyh knows that that is not what I mean, that you have a radio broadcast and that somehow turns on the key and you have a democratic revolution in Iran. I was never implying that. There is a vast movement, even many within the regime itself, who have come to recognize that the continuation of the status quo is not tenable. Saeed Hajjarian was one of the most important elements of this regime's intelligence agency and Saeed Hajjarian was the architect of Khatami's reform movement because from within the intelligence agency he began to recognize that the status quo is untenable. I suggest we go back and look at the elections that Mr. Ahmadinejad won. Every candidate without fail, every candidate ran against the status quo, including Ahmadinejad. There wasn't a single candidate, including Mr. Rafsanjani, who was the pillar of the status quo, he too ran against the status quo. So there is something fundamentally rotten in the state of Iran. And a correct policy, judicious policy, exactly as you suggest, sir, will throw—will help these fissures, and will help these fissures in two ways, the fissures that exist between the Iranian people in this regime and the fissures that exist within this regime. Militarism only consolidates the most radical intransigents, and helps the tribe get together. Rafsanjani, for example, when the election he claimed was stolen from him, he said, I have secrets that I want to share but we are in a state of war. I can't do it at this time. In other words, if the United States offers, for example, the chance for a negotiation, I am not sure the Iranians will necessarily accept it, but the possibility of this reality coming to fruition will I think in itself create an enormous tension within the regime. It would bring to the surface many of these issues that are now in the background. It will potentially encourage some of the people who—

Mr. ACKERMAN. You are saying that offering to talk to them will divide them?

Mr. MILANI. Absolutely it will. Because there will have to be a serious debate within the regime in Iran about doing this. And there is another point that I want to emphasize. The idea that this regime, the mullahs are going for the nuclear program because of their nationalism I think misses an important point about these

mullahs. The fundamental ideology of this regime is that nationalism is a colonial concept, that nationalism came because the West wanted to weaken the world. The mullahs want a nuclear program because they want to stay in power.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Could we just ask Dr. Takeyh?

Mr. TAKEYH. Yes. The idea of offering to negotiate will divide Iran. There is an American offer to negotiate with Iran. It was offered in May 2006 by Condoleezza Rice. There was a precondition to it; namely, suspension of the enrichment activity for an interim period of time. There was an Iranian counterproposal in August 2006 when they accepted the offer of negotiations, but they wanted to do so on a broader basis and without the precondition. So Iranians have accepted negotiations with the United States. America has offered those negotiations. Now, whether you want to dispense with the precondition, if Secretary Rice comes here and announces that we are going to negotiate with our precondition, then those negotiations will take place. That may not be a judicious thing to do.

Chairman LANTOS. Go ahead.

Mr. TAKEYH. We should insist on the precondition because otherwise the negotiations could be a ruse for continuation of the nuclear program. But we are beyond whether or not to negotiate with Iran. That is a consensus position from the left wing of the Democratic Party to the Bush-Cheney administration. That is where we are now.

Now how do you create a more liberalized, tolerant Iranian regime? Well, here I actually have the advantage of quoting Mr. Milani's work back to him in the current issue in the Washington Quarterly and in other issues he has suggested along with his co-authors that the best way of tempering the Iranian regime and creating a change in this dynamic—I don't want to misquote you since you are here—is to actually engage it in a global society and a global economy, dispensing with those economic sanctions and the idea of being as Iran becomes part of the global economy, organizations like the World Trade Organization and the investment community will impose discipline on Iran in terms of having the rule of law, decentralization of power, institutional accountability. Those are prerequisites of the modern private economy, but they are also prerequisites of an antecedent of a democratic society.

Hoping I didn't misinterpret what he said, because in essence Mr. Milani has made a far-reaching argument for lifting of American economic sanctions and engaging with Iran. That sort of makes sense to me, but it is a politically precarious proposition to advance because if it doesn't work then actually we see the experience of China; namely, strengthens the regime and doesn't necessarily facilitate democratic transition.

Chairman LANTOS. Mr. Wimbush.

Mr. WIMBUSH. I think that Congressman Sherman and Congressman Rohrabacher had it about right. Discussions I think are certainly worthwhile. Negotiations are something else. It depends what you are negotiating for. And what I fear is that we will get into negotiations with the Iranians as a fig leaf for allowing them quietly to become a nuclear power. That to me is unacceptable. If you take the position that I have taken that that has to be stopped at all costs, then it seems to me you treat the whole subject of ne-

gotiations very carefully. As much as I would hate to do it, you keep a military option on the table, although one should be under no illusions about the outcome. Dr. Milani I think is absolutely right. A military strike of any kind will strengthen the regime, at least in the short run, but it will pull the nation together in ways that they currently are not pulled together, and so I think one wants to keep that very far in the background.

Chairman LANTOS. I want to thank all three of our distinguished witnesses. This was a singularly illuminating hearing. The committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:40 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]

## A P P E N D I X

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### MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ROBERT WEXLER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN  
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF FLORIDA

JANUARY 11, 2007

Mr. Chairman, the Iranian nuclear clock is ticking, and it is not in our favor. The US and our allies face an unprecedented strategic threat from Iran, the world's leading State sponsor of terror. This is a nation—despite repeated international offers to dissuade its leaders from enriching Uranium—that continues on a dangerous path of nuclear weapons development, continues to support terrorist organizations, and threatens to wipe out the State of Israel.

In addition, Iran and its leaders continue to spread anti-Semitism throughout the region and globally, operating outside the mainstream of the international community with President Ahmadinezhad hosting a vile Holocaust denial conference in December. I am proud to have joined my colleagues in the 109th Congress condemning in the strongest terms this heinous conference and urge the Bush Administration and international community to reject and repudiate Mr. Ahmadinezhad and Iran's anti-Semitic statements and revisionist rhetoric.

Given that Iran's nuclear program and its enrichment program has progressed, it is incumbent on the United States, Europe and the international community to make it crystal clear to Iran and its leaders Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and Mahmoud Ahmadinezhad that its pursuit of nuclear weapons will come at an diplomatic, economic and political cost to their nation. To date, Iranian leaders even under the threat of new UN sanctions, which include preventing Iran from receiving materials and technology that could contribute to its nuclear and missile programs, continue to thwart the will of the international community.

Mr. Chairman, it is essential as Congress along with the Bush Administration focus on Iran's nuclear weapons program that we also address Tehran's troubling partnership with Syria and their nefarious support of terrorist organizations such as Hamas, Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad. To this end, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses Ambassador Pickering and Director Woolsey to discuss different policy options to end Tehran's support of terrorist organizations and to determine what action needs to be taken by the United States, EU and our allies to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons.

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE SHEILA JACKSON LEE, A REPRESENTATIVE  
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS

JANUARY 31, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to begin by welcoming the expert witnesses, Dr. Abbas Milani, Dr. Ray Takeyh, and Mr. Enders Wimbush for being here today. I look forward to hearing your testimony on the very complex quandary posed by Iran.

I am grateful for the opportunity to closely examine the situation in Iran and U.S. foreign policy in relation to it. Iran poses a great danger to what little stability exists in the Middle East, as its government continues to arrogantly push forward with a nuclear program, support Islamic extremist activity, and oppress its people. The policies of this Administration thus far have been ineffective at best and we must take serious action to prevent a much more disastrous situation from developing.

However, at the same time, I am concerned by the Bush Administration's position on Iran. As important as it is to address the issue, the President's recent comments regarding Iran have been either antagonistic or dismissive, mirroring his failed foreign policy to date. While it is essential for the government of Iran to understand how serious we are about the situation, my fear is that his statements are more than just rhetoric.

The Center for American Progress notes that recently the Bush Administration has:

- Announced the movement of Patriot missile units into Iraq, which are only useful against Scud-range missiles—weapons that Iraqi insurgents do not possess but Iran and Syria do.
- Ordered the deployment of a second carrier battle group into the Persian Gulf.
- Declared the war in Iraq part of “a broad struggle going on in the Middle East between the forces of freedom and democracy and the forces of terror and tyranny—and Iran is behind a lot of that,” as National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley said on *Meet the Press*.
- Arrested several Iranian diplomats in Iraq in December and in January, and arrested six other Iranians associated with Revolutionary Guards at an office opened in Kurdistan in 1992 that has been functioning as an Iranian consulate.
- Did not criticize press reports that Israel was practicing air strikes on Iranian facilities, including the possible use of Israeli nuclear weapons.
- Announced in the President's January 10 speech to the nation: “We will interrupt the flow of support from Iran and Syria. And we will seek out and destroy the networks providing advanced weaponry and training to our enemies in Iraq.”

These actions imply a direction in our nation's foreign relations with which Congress has neither been consulted nor informed. I maintain that we must condemn Iran's support of terrorist organizations in the Middle East, which hold the threat of much more violence and instability to come. We must condemn Iran's nuclear program and join the international community in attempting to negotiate with the government to cease nuclear production. We must condemn the Iranian government's tyrannical oppression of its people, the majority of which disagree with its policies. But we must not act rashly and risk involving ourselves in a conflict as potentially disastrous as the one in Iraq.

In a hearing yesterday in the Committee on Armed Services, expert witnesses advised this House to avoid too much focus on Iran, or else risk more essential duties in Iraq, and the pressing needs of our troops in the forgotten war in Afghanistan. We must approach this situation cautiously, and I commend you, Mr. Chairman, for your emphasis on the need for dialogue. Serious efforts are needed to confront the threat that Iran poses, but we must be reasonable, and develop a clear strategy and remember that military force is always a last resort. We have seen how disastrous it can be to do otherwise, as we seek to remedy the chaos in Iraq.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back the remainder of my time.

