

USADI Dispatch

A publication of the U.S. Alliance for Democratic Iran

Volume 2, No. 14

Monday, April 18, 2005

USADI Commentary

Making a Stand for Liberty

It is not every week that the cause of democracy and freedom in Iran gets back to back boosts. Last week was an exception, however.

On Wednesday, a U.S. congressional committee approved legislation which seeks to increase pressure on Iran's government over its weapons of mass destruction program, and to provide greater support for Iranian democracy groups. This was a welcome, however long-over due Iran initiative from the House.

Appropriately called Iran Freedom Support Act, the legislation was approved last Wednesday by the House Middle East Subcommittee chaired by Florida Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen. It calls for a U.S. policy in support of human rights and pro-democracy forces who are struggling against the ruling tyranny in Iran.

The following day, delegations of Iranian-Americans from across the United States took part in the "2005 National Convention for a Democratic, Secular Republic in Iran" in Washington's Constitution Hall. It ratified its four key platforms including support for a U.S. policy toward Iran which, in their word, rejected both a policy of appeasement of the ruling regime and a foreign military intervention. The convention called for "democratic change in Iran by the Iranian people and the organized resistance."

Considering the immediate and clear threats posed by Tehran to the well being of Iranians and the security and stability in the region, this option offers the most viable and effectual approach to eliminate those threats.

The impetus for the Convention's policy endorsement was the initiative, widely known as the "third option", first introduced by Maryam Rajavi - the leader of Iran's major coalition opposition, the National Council of Resistance of Iran - when she addressed the European Parliament in December.

According to media reports, in a strong show of American backing for the "third option", an array of bi-partisan Congressional speakers joined former US government officials and military officers to declare their support for "the third option."

Agence France Presse wrote, "Iranian opposition leader Maryam Rajavi, addressing the convention in a video link from France, called on the United States and the European Union to end its appeasement of the Tehran regime and recognize her National Council of Resistance of Iran as an Iranian government-in-exile."

"Just as the time has come to abandon the appeasement of tyrants, so the time has come to remove the ominous legacy of that policy, namely the terror label against the Iranian resistance," AFP quoted Rajavi as saying.

Representative Tom Tancredo (R-CO), who called Rajavi "an extraordinary individual," said the Iranian people "can't have any better spokespeople than all of you here," AFP added.

According to The New York Sun "Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Cantwell, the former military police commandant of Camp Ashraf, a facility in northern Iraq where some 4,000 fighters associated with the MEK (Iranian Mujahedeen) are under military supervision, expressed solidarity with fighters he used to guard. To cheers of support, he told the audience, "If there is a terrorist group in Ashraf, where are the terrorists?"

The strong showing of Iranian Diaspora - representing a wide range of backgrounds - only a few blocks from the White House - sent a timely message to Washington's policy-making circles while the debate about the a new Iran policy continues.

From a policy point of view, the Convention's platform about human rights, terrorism, nuclear threat, and US Policy, made a lot a more sense than some policy papers put out in recent months by several well-established policy institutions.

In particular their "No to appeasement, No to War, Yes to Democratic Change by the Iranian People and the Resistance" provided an indigenous Iranian solution to the global and regional menace posed by regime in Tehran.

The Iranian expatriates are generally viewed as suffering from many of the same problems many other immigrants do: assimilation, indifference, endless bickering and disunity. But the hundreds of Iranians-Americans at the convention had a clear sense of where the US policy toward Tehran should be headed.

In his 2005 State of the Union Address President Bush pledged, "And to the Iranian people, I say tonight: As you stand for your own liberty, America stands with you." Inspired by more than two decades of Iranian people's resistance against one of the most brutal tyrannies of our times, the Iranian-Americans' convention made a strong stand for liberty in their homeland a day after a Congressional Sub-Committee in the House did its job. The ball is now in the White House's court and the rest of Congress.

The US Alliance for Democratic Iran (USADI), is an independent, non-profit organization, which aims to advance a US policy on Iran that will benefit America's interests, through supporting Iranian people's aspirations for a democratic, secular, and peaceful government, free of tyranny, fundamentalism, weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism. The USADI is not affiliated with any government agencies, political groups or parties.

1201 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20004
Tel: 202-661-4675, Fax: 202-318-0402, E-mail: dispatch@usadIran.org

The Washington Times

April 13, 2005

Iranians inspired

Iranian exiles plan to hold a constitutional convention in Washington tomorrow, inspired by the stirring words of President Bush from his State of the Union speech and from America's own such convention more than 200 years ago.

Zari Sariri, the convention director, said the meeting beginning at 1 p.m. at DAR Constitution Hall was conceived "mainly because of President Bush's speech." In his February address to Congress, Mr. Bush sent a message to the Iranian people.

"As you stand for your own liberty, America stands with you," Mr. Bush said.

Mrs. Sariri yesterday said she hopes those few words will spark an Iranian revolution from within the country to replace a brutal theocracy with a democratic government.

The organizers expect members of Congress and members of the Canadian and European parliaments to address Iranian exiles in America from more than 30 states. Speakers also include terrorism specialist Neil Livingstone.

Mrs. Sariri explained that the convention aims to deliver a message to the Bush administration and to the European Union.

She hopes a demonstration of a massive support for democracy will persuade Washington to remove the Iranian resistance from a list of terrorist organizations. The Clinton administration placed the National Council of Resistance of Iran and its armed wing, the People's Mojahedin, on the black list when it was trying to improve relations with the Iranian government.

"The important thing is to give the resistance legitimacy," she said.

The message to Europe is to stop "appeasing the mullahs" with "vain attempts" to get the Iranian government to give up its nuclear program, Mrs. Sariri added. "The Iranian people and the resistance can do the rest," she said.

Mrs. Sariri said contacts in Iran report growing protests against the regime. She cited 1,500 pro-democracy demonstrations over the past year...

In December, Maryam Rajavi, president of the Iranian resistance, delivered a similar message to Europe when she addressed supporters in the European Parliament.

"Appeasement is not the way to contain or change the regime," Mrs. Rajavi said, calling the Iranian government a "medieval theocracy."

"Appeasement only emboldens the mullahs. The answer to fundamentalism is democracy."

Struan Stevenson, the Scottish member of the European Parliament who hosted Mrs. Rajavi, warned that Europe would be within range of a nuclear weapon in the hands of the Iranian regime.

"The threat is not only the complete destabilization of [the Middle East], the threat is to us, to the rest of the world," he said.

Reuters

April 18, 2005

Iran stalls in probe of nuke smuggling - diplomats

VIENNA - Tehran is not cooperating fully with a probe by the U.N. nuclear watchdog into Iranian officials' meetings with smugglers who had links to Pakistani atom bomb-maker Abdul Qadeer Khan, diplomats said on Monday.

The diplomats said the meetings in 1987 and 1994 were key to help determine whether Iran's program was originally intended to produce electricity, as Tehran insists, or to make bombs, as Washington maintains.

Iran's failure to cooperate fully with the United Nations on the issue worried the European Union's "big three" powers, the diplomats said. Britain, France and Germany resume nuclear talks with Iran in Geneva on Tuesday.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, several Western diplomats familiar with the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) investigation said Iran appeared to be withholding information about the two meetings, both of which took place in Dubai.

"They are not cooperating on this issue," said one diplomat. He said there was a lack of documentation and there were inconsistencies in the Iranian accounts of the meetings with people known to be part of Khan's network that supplied Iran and Libya with sensitive atomic technology. Iran first acknowledged the 1987 meeting earlier this year.

According to the IAEA's deputy director general, Pierre Goldschmidt, Iran showed the IAEA a one-page offer for centrifuges that resulted from that meeting. Such machines are used to enrich uranium for use in atomic power plants or arms.

In a speech to the IAEA board of governors last month, Goldschmidt called on Tehran to produce "all documentation relevant to the offer" that came out of the 1987 meeting. Iran had not done this, the diplomats said. The IAEA believed civilians at the meetings in Dubai worked for a front company that might have been intended to mask their relationship with the Iran's defense industry.

"They think it was a camouflage organization. These were civilians but it was a dummy organization," a diplomat said.

One diplomat said the IAEA's nuclear safeguards inspectors were convinced that meeting was military related.