

STATEMENT

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Planned Congressional Trip to Iran on 25th Anniversary of Mullahs' Theocratic Rule Runs Counter to Interests of People of Iran and America

The US Alliance for Democratic Iran deplores the latest chapter in the failed policy of "engagement" towards Iran - "the most active state sponsor of terrorism" – manifested in the announcement last week of a planned Congressional delegation trip to Tehran.

Authorizing Iran's UN Ambassador, Javad Zarif, to travel to Washington for a dinner reception hosted by Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA) and Rep. Bob Ney (R-OH), seriously undermines the war on Terrorism. Not only Mr. Zarif is the representative of a terrorist regime, he was reportedly among the students who took over the US Embassy in Tehran in 1979.

The planned trip slated for February 11, the 25th anniversary of the mullahs' terrorist rule, coincides with the visit to Tehran by dozens of Middle Eastern terrorist organizations. The overture is an insult to those who fell victim to these terrorists, including the American servicemen killed in 1983 bombing of US Marine barracks in Beirut and in 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers in Riyadh.

The Iranian people also feel affronted when "appeasers" of the mullahs disguise their mollifying of one of "the most dangerous" regimes of our time at the expense of the secular democracy movement in Iran. The Iranian public's shunning of the recent factional row over the upcoming sham parliamentary election has made quite clear that millions in Iran reject the regime in its entirety.

Sen. Specter told the Associated Press that "now is a good time" to improve relations with Tehran rulers. Why is "now a good time"? Domestic terror, suppression of political dissent and public executions are still common place in Iran. On the foreign policy front, spread of the Islamic fundamentalism and expansion of influence in Iraq and efforts to procure nuclear weapons continue unabated.

Diplomatic overtures towards Iran's ruling theocracy run counter to the call by President Bush in support of Iran's secular democracy movement. Messrs. Specter and Ney, the long-time proponents of soft-line approach to Tehran, should hear and pay head to the demands of millions of Iranians: an internationally monitored referendum for regime change in Iran. It is time for overtures towards the Iranian people and not their oppressors.

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