

STATEMENT

JULY 19, 2004

CONTACT: (202) 661-4675

Reviving the Fantasy of “Engagement” is Doomed to Fail Again
Belligerent Behavior of Iran Requires Firm Action, not Appeasement

The US Alliance for Democratic Iran regrets policy recommendations made by the Council on Foreign Relations Task Force on Iran today. The USADI considers the call for improved relations with the tyranny ruling Iran as running counter to the interests of Iranian people in their quest for a secular democratic Iran. The approach would undermine efforts by the United States to establish peace and security in the region.

As the voices of appeasement – disguised under “engagement” or a “direct dialogue” - are working to revive a repeatedly failed policy, they must remember the costly lessons of the September 11: Negotiating and making deals with terrorist regimes never works, it only emboldens them.

The champions of “engagement” have been calling for an “opening” with Tehran for more than two decades. Of course, so far, they have nothing to show for, except the humiliation of successive U.S. administrations and the bolstering of a loathed and isolated regime in Iran.

The report by the Council’s Task Force, co-chaired by Mr. Robert M. Gates, and Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, calls for a “systematic and pragmatic engagement” through “direct dialogue” over issues of mutual interest with Iran’s clerical regime.

Dr. Brzezinski’ report describes Tehran regime “solidly entrenched.” He should be reminded of the now famous comment by the President Carter, in whose National Security Council he served, during a state dinner hosted by the Shah in late December 1977. President Carter applauded Iran as “an island of stability.” Several months later, the storm that destroyed that “island of stability” gathered steam.

The mullahs ruling Iran are gratified to know that their brutal suppression of Iranians through arrest, torture, and execution of dissidents; and stoning, hanging, and flogging citizens in public is paying huge political dividends by making them look “entrenched.”

A similar Task Force by the Council of Foreign Relations in spring of 1997, when Mohammed Khatami was declared Iran’s new president, made a similar recommendation. Messrs Brzezinski, Brent Scowcroft, and Richard Murphy in a joint commentary published in the May/June 1997 issue of the Foreign Affairs, called on the United States to “consider the possibilities of creative trade-offs” and “diplomatic contacts” to improve relations with Tehran.

Despite many overtures by the Clinton administration to Tehran, including lifting sanctions on carpet, caviar, and pistachio imports, as well as blacklisting Iran’s main opposition group, the Mujahedeen-e Khalq and turning a blind eye to Tehran’s direct role in Khobar

Towers bombing, Iran did not reciprocate. Even under the helm of “moderate” Khatami, Tehran rulers lacked ideological and political capacity to enter into any meaningful relationship with Washington.

Appeasement in dealing with ideologically-driven totalitarian regimes never works, more so in the case of Iran’s theocratic regime which has displayed an increasingly belligerent behavior in recent months and reneged on its agreement with France, Britain, and Germany to stop enriching uranium.

It did not work with Nazi Germany in 1938 and it will not work today. If in doubt, just ask Neville Chamberlain. To put it mildly, the “realists” of our foreign policy establishment consciously choose to ignore the stark realities.

As the report was released today, the latest evidence in the bi-partisan 9/11 commission report of links between Iran mullahs and Al-Qaeda network seriously brings into question the wisdom of considering Iran as a party to any meaningful “dialogue”.

The world community has arrived at a historic crossroad: to continue to appease the mullahs or to side with Iranian people and their struggle to establish an Iran free of torture, terror and weapons of mass destruction.

The choice, no doubt, will have strategic reverberations in Iran, the Middle East and the Western world for decades to come.

###