

USADI Dispatch

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

Volume 1, No. 38

Thursday, July 22, 2004

USADI Commentary

Dialogue with Iran's Tyrants: Time for Reality Check

It is quite amazing that no matter how many Iranians the mullahs torture and murder, how many suicide bombers they dispatch abroad, how many lies they tell about their nuclear weapons program, how many Americans and foreign national they kill, how many agents they send into Iraq and elsewhere to foment fundamentalism, there are always some pro-appeasement "realists" at work to whitewash the mullahs' crimes and deceptions. They put the blame for the mullahs' behavior on everything but the mullahs themselves.

The most recent example is a report by the Council of Foreign Relations (CFR) Task Force on Iran that came out this week. It recommends "direct dialogue" over issues of mutual interest. Appeasement is once again disguised under a fancy term.

Wait a minute! Have we not heard this before? Let's say seven years ago? Messrs Brzezinski, Brent Scowcroft, and Richard Murphy wrote a joint commentary in the May/June 1997 issue of the Foreign Affairs, urging the United States to "consider the possibilities of creative trade-offs" and "diplomatic contacts" to improve relations with Tehran.

Then, it was the presidency of Mohammad Khatami, the "Ayatollah Gorbachev," which justified engagement. To be sure, there was no shortage of overtures by the Clinton administration to Tehran, which included lifting sanctions on carpet, caviar, and pistachio imports, blacklisting Iran's main opposition group, the Mujahedeen-e Khalq (MEK), and turning a blind eye to Tehran's direct role in the Khobar Towers bombing.

The Iranians, of course, did not reciprocate and rapprochement again failed. Even under the helm of "moderate" Khatami, Tehran rulers lacked ideological and political capacity to enter into any meaningful relationship with Washington.

While the champions of "engagement" have been calling for an "opening" with Tehran for more than two decades, all they have to show so far is the humiliation of successive U.S. administrations and the bolstering of a loathed regime in Iran.

And now with the "moderate" faction having been eliminated from power, the pro-appeasement "realists" still suggest engagement. In 1997, the ascendance of pro-reform currents in Iran was the primary justification and today the rise of most extreme faction, "authoritative interlocutors," is the basis for engagement. We allow Iran's ruling tyrants to brutally suppress dissidents and then claim we should be content with the status quo because there is no visible organized opposition.

Equally troubling is the report's recommendation to "disband the Iraq-based Mujahedeen-e Khalq (MEK)" and "ensure that its leaders are brought to justice." The authors leave one major issue unresolved: Who is going to administer that justice and on what grounds? It is going to be Iranian justice, where the judge, the prosecutor and the jury are one and the same? Just ask the Canadian government how they feel about justice being served in the showcase trial of the Canadian journalist Zahra Kazemi, who was murdered while in detention.

One wonders why the report did not call for the leaders of the religious dictatorship in Iran – the most active state sponsor of terrorism – to be brought to justice for countless acts of domestic and international terrorism including killing dozens of Iranian dissidents as well American servicemen in Beirut in 1983 and Saudi Arabia in 1996. Should not these henchmen be held to account for the well-documented 1988 massacre of thousands of Iranian political prisoners?

As the CFR's report was released Monday, the latest evidence in the bi-partisan 9/11 commission established links between Iran's mullahs and Al-Qaeda network, which seriously brings into question the wisdom of considering Iran as party to any meaningful "dialogue". Ironically, as the European Union's major powers are now gradually moving to take a tougher line on Iran, on this side of the Atlantic, the "realists" are advocating a softer line.

Appeasement in dealing with ideologically-driven totalitarian regimes never works. It did not work with Nazi Germany in 1938 and it will not work in the case of Iran's theocratic regime. If in doubt, just ask Neville Chamberlain.

To be sure, it is the lack of firmness in our policy and sending mixed signals to Iran - and not a lack of dialogue – that have hampered our approach to Tehran. As the voices of appeasement are busy reviving a repeatedly failed policy, they must remember the costly lessons of the September 11: Negotiating with terrorist regimes never works, it only emboldens them.

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@usadيران.org

The Wall Street Journal Europe (Editorial)

July 21, 2004

More Bad News from Iran

Zahra Kazemi, a photojournalist from Canada, was arrested last June for taking pictures of Iranians protesting the imprisonment of advocates for reform in the theocracy. The mullahs accused her of being a spy and threw her into jail. After being interrogated and beaten she died.

Initially the mullahs claimed her death was the result of a stroke and tried to close the case. After international pressure they admitted she died from brain hemorrhage caused by the beatings and agreed to hold a trial. On Sunday -- just two-days into the trial -- it was farcically ended with the court announcing they'd give a verdict "sometime" in the future.

The beating and imprisonment of journalists are regular events in the theocracy -- it even has a special "press court" to hand out such punishments. But because she was a Canadian citizen, Ms. Kazemi's case brought unwanted attention. Yet the mullahs felt emboldened enough to simply cancel the trial. This is yet another example of overconfidence from Tehran.

Last month the International Atomic Energy Agency reported that Tehran was still not cooperating fully with inspectors. It said Iran was still building its nuclear program despite promises to halt it. In response to the ensuing international criticism, Iran's president calmly announced they'd continue anyway.

Then there were the British sailors. Claiming they'd strayed into Iranian waters, the mullah's held the eight sailors for three days and made them apologize humiliateingly on state television. After being released the sailors told British officials they'd been forced into Iranian waters.

Next there's Iran's support for international terrorism. Last month Iran moved beyond simply sponsoring terrorist groups, such as Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad, to recruiting for them -- the mullahs held a three-day conference encouraging volunteers to become suicide bombers. The head of their Revolutionary Guards also warned they were prepared to launch attacks -- suicide or missile -- against "29 sensitive sites in the U.S. and in the West."

U.S. President George W. Bush has repeatedly accused Iran of harboring al Qaeda leaders, and the U.S. 9/11 Commission report, due Thursday, is said to find that at least eight of the September 11 hijackers traveled freely through Iran just months before the attacks. Over the weekend Tehran effectively admitted that al Qaeda terrorists were active in Iran when Ali Yunesi -- the regime's intelligence minister -- announced on state television they had dismantled all al-Qaeda branches in the country -- meaning until then al Qaeda remained at large in Iran.

Home and abroad the theocrats are continuing to threaten and take the lives of others, and as the international community's only response are occasional words of condemnation, the mullahs are becoming more brazen in their actions.

Newsweek (Web exclusive)

Jul 21, 2004

More Evidence of an Iran-Al Qaeda Connection

Just eight months before the September 11 terror attacks, top conspirator Ramzi bin al-Shibh received a four-week visa to Iran and then flew to Tehran—an apparent stop-off point on his way to meet with Al Qaeda chiefs in Afghanistan, according to law-enforcement documents obtained by NEWSWEEK.

German government documents showing the previously undisclosed trip by bin al-Shibh, a captured Al Qaeda operative who played a crucial coordinating role in the 9/11 plot, is the latest evidence that the World Trade Center conspirators frequently used Iran as a safe transit point in their travels to and from Afghanistan.

The final report of the 9-11 Commission, which is due out tomorrow, contains significant new information about a possible "Iran connection" to the plot, including a U.S. intelligence analysis indicating that Iranian border inspectors were instructed not to stamp the passports of Al Qaeda members entering and exiting their country. Although the information has been known to the U.S. intelligence community for some time, President Bush told reporters this week that the U.S. government was "digging into the facts to determine if there was" a possible Iranian connection to the September 11 attacks...

But U.S. officials say they are concerned about the increasing evidence of possible Iranian connections to the 9/11 attacks, noting that as many as 10 top Al Qaeda operatives, including Saad bin Laden and another top bin Laden deputy, Said Al-Adel, fled to Iran after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in the fall of 2001. The Al Qaeda operatives are believed to be in some sort of government custody, most likely house arrest. But the Iranian government has repeatedly rebuffed U.S. entreaties to turn over the Al Qaeda leaders, and some U.S. intelligence officials believe they may be still supervising terror operations—especially in Saudi Arabia—through the use of couriers. "This is an evolving story," said one U.S. official about the evidence of possible Iranian ties to Al Qaeda.