

## Time for New U.S. Policy on Iran

U.S. diplomatic leadership is urgently needed to resolve long-standing tensions between the U.S. and Iran. While serious concerns regarding Iran's nuclear program persist, the most recent National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) concludes that Iran halted its nuclear weapons program in 2003. The NIE findings confirm that the time is ripe for a policy of direct diplomacy with Iran, a position also called for in the bipartisan Iraq Study Group's 2006 report. Unfortunately, current Bush Administration policy towards Iran is focused on economic sanctions and hostile rhetoric.

### *Sanctions are not Diplomacy*

In response to Iran's lack of openness on their nuclear program, the United States led an effort with European allies to sanction Iran through the United Nations Security Council in 2006.<sup>1</sup> Iran responded to sanctions by weakening cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Iran's full cooperation with IAEA inspectors is necessary to verify that Iran's nuclear program is for nuclear energy production and not weapons. Current U.S. policy states that the U.S. would talk with Iran but only after Iran stops enriching uranium. Maintaining preconditions for negotiations with Iran prevents the possibility for direct talks and progress in reducing tension. Threats from the Bush Administration have filled the vacuum left by the absence of direct dialogue with Iran.

### *War is not the Answer*

Threatening Iran with a military attack only increases tension in U.S.-Iranian relations and increases the possibility of war. A military attack on Iran would have enormous human costs. Military and civilian deaths in just the first wave of attacks against Iran would be expected to be in the thousands.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, an attack on Iran would likely plunge the entire Middle East into further chaos and violence, disrupting public health services and putting the well-being of thousands more civilians at risk.



If attacked, Iran could provide material support to Shiite militias in Iraq. These militias are widely accused of the sectarian violence against Sunnis that is gripping Iraq.<sup>3</sup> This would mean heightened risk for U.S. military personnel in Iraq as well as for Iraqi civilians. Iran could also retaliate by disrupting trade in the Strait of Hormuz which is within Iran's territorial waters. 40% of global oil supplies transit the Strait of Hormuz.<sup>4</sup> War between the United States and Iran would bring enormous financial costs to a global economy already under strain. Furthermore, an attack on Iran would validate the arguments of those in Iran that support nuclear weapons acquisition for security reasons.

## Possibilities with a New Policy of Diplomacy

Direct, unconditional and comprehensive talks between the governments of the United States and Iran represent the only realistic way to resolve long standing tensions that continue to destabilize the Middle East. Open dialogue and engagement between the United States and Iran could resolve the nuclear issue and help stabilize Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. What could a new U.S. policy of diplomacy look like?

### The United States should:

- Pledge not to use force to change Iran's government,
- Pledge to end unilateral sanctions against Iran, and to reestablish diplomatic relations if Iran satisfactorily addresses concerns about its nuclear activities, and connections to terrorist organizations,
- Affirm Iran's access to nuclear energy under strict and effective international safeguards,
- Provide Iran with nuclear fuel supply guarantees,
- Allow for Iran to have membership in the World Trade Organization.

### In exchange Iran should:

- Allow for more thorough IAEA inspections which would continually assure the international community that its nuclear program is purely peaceful in nature,
- Disclose all information relating to its nuclear program, past and present,
- Work with the United States to verify that it does not provide assistance or training to terrorist organizations,
- Work in partnership with the United States to stabilize the region.

Only real and determined diplomacy can reduce tensions between Iran and the United States and the international community. A safer and healthier planet depends on it.

### Take Action for Real Diplomacy

**Tell your Congressional Representative to sign on to HR 5056 – the *Iran Diplomatic Accountability Act of 2008*.** This resolution calls on the President to appoint a high level envoy to Iran who will seek direct, unconditional negotiations “with the purpose of normalizing relations with Iran.”

**Call the Capital Switch Board** to ask for your Congressional Representative and tell them to sign on to the *Iran Diplomatic Accountability Act of 2008*: **1- 202-224-3121**

1. President George W. Bush, “President's Statement on IAEA Board Vote to Report Iran to U.N. Security Council,” February 4, 2006. Available at [<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/02/20060204-2.html>]
2. Paul Rogers, “Iran: Consequences of an Attack,” *Oxford Research Group*, Briefing Paper, February 2006. Available at [[http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/publications/briefing\\_papers/pdf/IranConsequences.pdf](http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/publications/briefing_papers/pdf/IranConsequences.pdf)]
3. Ken Katzman, “Iran's Influence in Iraq,” *Congressional Research Service*, August 9, 2007. RS 22323.
4. Mohammed Abbas, “US warships in Gulf for show of force,” *Reuters*, May 23, 2007.