



IRAN TODAY & TOMORROW

WEEKLY NEWS BULLETIN

The Committee in Support of Referendum in Iran (CSRI), a 501(c)(3), non-profit and independent group, is committed to advance change in Iran through an internationally monitored referendum as the only peaceful means to bring democracy and establish a secular and representative government in Iran.

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Terrorism

AP Photo shows Iran's new President as 1979 US hostage-taker



London, Jun. 29 - Iran Focus has learnt that the photograph of Iran's newly-elected president, Ahmadinejad, holding the arm of a blindfolded American hostage on the premises of the United States embassy in Tehran was taken by an Associated Press photographer in November 1979. The identity of Ahmadinejad in the photograph was revealed to Iran Focus by a source in Tehran, whose identity could not be revealed for fear of persecution . Soon



after the Iranian Revolution in 1979, Ahmadinejad became a member of the central council of the Office for Strengthening of Unity Between Universities and Theological Seminaries, the main pro-Khomeini student body. Former OSU officials involved in the takeover of the U.S. embassy said Ahmadinejad was in charge of security during the occupation, a key role that put him in direct contact with the nascent security organizations of the clerical regime and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards, which he later joined. After the 444-day occupation of the U.S. embassy, Ahmadinejad joined the special forces of the Islamic Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office, based in Evin Prison. ..Defectors from the clerical regime's security forces have revealed that Ahmadinejad led the firing squads that carried out many of the executions. He personally fired coup de grace shots at the heads of



U.S. Pursuing Reports That Link Iranian to Embassy Seizure in '79

The New York Times

TEHRAN, June 30 - Two Iranian leaders of the seizure of the American Embassy in Tehran in 1979 dismissed allegations on Thursday by former American hostages that Iran's president-elect was one of their captors. The Bush administration, however, said it took the charge seriously and vowed to investigate. "Obviously his involvement raises many questions," President Bush told reporters on Thursday morning, referring to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the president-elect....Stephen J. Hadley, the American national security adviser, said the White House was examining old photographs and looking "back to see what you have in the files." In separate interviews, four former hostages who were military or intelligence officers at the embassy and identified the president-elect as a leader among their captors did not waver. Though they shared their impressions, they said they had reached their conclusions independently. One of them, William J. Daugherty, a former intelligence officer, said: "I recognized him right off. When you're in a situation where your life is in jeopardy, where you

know your family is going through hell because of what you're in, and your country is being humiliated, you don't forget the people who cause it. I remember so much his hatred of Americans. It just emanated from every pore of his body."

Mr. Daugherty said he saw Mr. Ahmadinejad 8 to 10 times in the first 19 days of captivity, before the hostages were separated.

Iran's terrorist president

The Washington Times July 1 - If there is a silver lining in Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's election as president of Iran, it is that it will be more difficult for people in the West to delude themselves into thinking they are dealing with so-called pragmatists or reformers who want to end the clerical dictatorship that has brutalized the Iranian people. Such an exercise in self-deception will be far more difficult to engage in now that Americans taken hostage by Iranian students who invaded the U.S. Embassy in Tehran on Nov. 4, 1979, say that Mr. Ahmadinejad played a central role in the takeover, interrogating American captives and demanding harsher treatment of the hostages. In an interview with *The Washington Times*, one of the Americans, Army Col. Charles Scott said he was one of the "top two or three leaders" of the gang that took over the embassy. Col. Scott, recalled that when one of the Iranian guards permitted two Americans to visit another hostage in a nearby cell, Mr. Ahmadinejad admonished the guard, telling him: "You shouldn't let these pigs out of their cells". Early in 1979, Mr. Ahmadinejad became a leader of an organization called the Office for Strengthening of Unity Between Universities and Theological Seminaries, known as the OSU, which helped orchestrate the seizure of the embassy. The organization was set up by Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti, then a close confidant of the Ayatollah Khomeini. The following year, when Khomeini staged what he referred to as an "Islamic Cultural Revolution," Mr. Ahmadinejad and the OSU helped purge dissident students and university lecturers, many of whom were arrested and subsequently executed.

During the early 1980s, he worked in the Iran Revolutionary Guards, where he developed a reputation as a brutal torturer and interrogator. His Iranian enemies claim he worked as an executioner during the 1980s at Evin Prison, one of the most brutal detention facilities run by the Iranian regime. In 1986, Mr. Ahmadinejad became a senior officer in the Special Brigade of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, which carried out attacks outside Iran's borders, including murders of dissidents. He is said to have masterminded a series of assassinations in Europe and the Middle East, including the July 1989 assassination of Abdorrahman Qassemio, an Iranian Kurdish leader who was gunned down in Vienna. In 1997, he organized Ansar-e-Hezbollah, an Islamist vigilante group best known for beating up students and other dissidents inside Iran.

Iran Leader linked to '79 embassy crisis

The Washington Times June 30- Americans held in the 1979 seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Iran said yesterday they clearly recall President-elect Mahmoud Ahmadinejad playing a central role in the takeover, interrogating captives and demanding harsher treatment for the hostages. "As soon as I saw his picture in the paper, I knew that was the bastard," said retired Army Col. Charles Scott, 73, a former hostage who lives in Jonesboro, Ga. "He was one of the top two or three leaders," Col. Scott said in a telephone interview. "The new president of Iran is a terrorist." ... Donald Sharer, a retired Navy captain who was for a time a cellmate of Col. Scott at the Evin prison in northern Tehran, remembered Mr. Ahmadinejad as "a hard-liner, a cruel individual." "I know he was an interrogator," said Capt. Sharer, now 64 and living in Bedford, Iowa. He said he was personally questioned by Mr. Ahmadinejad on one occasion but does not recall the subject of the interrogation. Col. Scott recalled an incident when Mr. Ahmadinejad berated a friendly Iranian guard who had allowed the two Americans to visit another U.S. hostage in a neighboring cell. Col. Scott, who understands Farsi, said Mr. Ahmadinejad told the guard, "You shouldn't let these pigs out of their cells." Col. Scott said he responded by making a rude gesture to Mr. Ahmadinejad. The man about to become Iran's sixth president since the revolution became "red-faced" and stormed out of the cell... Iran Focus yesterday circulated a November 1979 Associated Press photo that it claimed showed a young Mr. Ahmadinejad beside a blindfolded American hostage. But neither the Associated Press nor *The Washington Times* could verify that the figure in the photo was the future Iranian leader. Mr. Ahmadinejad's office has denied he

helped storm the embassy and said the man in the photo is not the president-elect. But the office did not comment on whether Mr. Ahmadinejad had other duties during the 444-day hostage ordeal. Another former hostage, Kevin Hermening of Mosinee, Wis., said he came into contact with Mr. Ahmadinejad right after the takeover. "He was involved in interrogating me the day we were taken captive," recalled Mr. Hermening, who, at 20, was the youngest hostage. Mr. Hermening, a Marine security guard at the Tehran embassy, said his interrogators were seeking the combinations for "safes and other things that were locked." "There is absolutely no reason the United States should be trying to normalize relations with a man who seems intent on trying to force-feed the world with state-sponsored terrorism," Mr. Hermening said.

"Glorious" past as member of notorious terrorist militia

UPI, June 25 - ...Western intelligence sources have told United Press International that the new president served in the Al Quds Battalion of the Pasdaran, which was responsible for operations abroad. (Al Quds is the Arabic name for the city of Jerusalem, and signals strong commitment to the Palestinian cause.) The sources add that he is believed to have participated in operations in western Europe, saying in particular that he was one of a number of Iranians suspected of involvement in the killing of three Iranian Kurdish leaders in an ambush on the outskirts of the Austrian capital Vienna...

Iran Elections

Protest against Iran's sham election

Press Association, June 24 - Supporters of the National Council of Resistance of Iran held a rally outside Downing Street today to protest against the "sham" presidential elections in Iran.

A letter was delivered to No 10 calling on the British Government to adopt a firm policy towards the mullahs' "dictatorship" and to abandon a policy of appeasement towards the ruling clique in Iran. Andrew McKinlay, Labour MP for Thurrock, who took part in the rally, said: "The sooner we give our support to the Iranian resistance, the better it is for justice and also it is in the best interest of the United Kingdom." A spokesman for the Council said: "These are sham elections, in which during the first round less than 10% of the population took part. The Iranian people boycotted this election in huge numbers."

Election proves failure of appeasement: Iranian resistance leader



June 25 - The victory of hardliner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Iran's presidential election is proof of the failure of western governments' policy of "appeasement" to the Islamic republic, the president of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) Maryam Rajavi said Saturday. "Western governments have some soul-searching to do after the clear failure of years of appeasement. They must ask themselves the question what has happened so that now we have extremists in control of all the levers of power," Rajavi said in a telephone interview from her headquarters outside Paris. "Continuing the policy would

only encourage the mullahs in their oppression of the Iranian people, their bid to acquire nuclear weapons, and their export of Islamic fundamentalism," she said... Describing Ahmadinejad as a "terrorist, a torturer and an executioner," Rajavi said the former revolutionary guard had been charged with leading a team to assassinate the British author Salman Rushdie after a fatwa was pronounced against him in 1989. "The coming to power of a terrorist and known assassin shows the world that the long and tortuous story of so-called reform (in Iran) was no more than a journey from Islamic fascism to more Islamic fascism," Rajavi said. "But the least that can be said of an ultra-conservative like him is that western governments can no longer maintain their illusions about the nature of the mullahs' regime. The regime cannot change and will not change," she said. "It is time for western governments to stop siding with the mullahs and to start siding with the resistance," she said.

Clerics fear street protests in wake of Ahmadinejad's election



Iran Focus, June 25 - A day after the surprise election of the ultra-conservative mayor of Tehran as the new President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the country's security forces were placed on heightened state of alert throughout Saturday to prevent any street demonstrations.

The move reflected fears in the ruling clerical circles that a dissatisfied young population could react with fury to what many see as a "coup" by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the hard-line institutions under his control to consolidate their power...Khamenei last night banned all street demonstrations following the results of the presidential elections amid concerns that opponents of the regime would take the opportunity to turn street gatherings into anti-government protests.

Iran is 'out of step' with region: US State Department



June 25 - Iran is "out of step" with a trend toward freedom and liberty in its region, the US State Department said Friday after hardliner Ahmadinejad won Iran's "flawed" presidential election. "With the conclusion of the election in Iran,

we have seen nothing that dissuades us from our view that Iran is out of step with the rest of the region and the currents of freedom and liberty that have been so apparent in Iraq, Afghanistan and Lebanon," State Department spokeswoman Joanne Moore said. "These elections were flawed from their inception by the decision of an unelected few to deny the applications of over a thousand candidates, including all 93 women," she said. "We will judge the regime by its actions. In light of the way these elections were conducted, however, we remain skeptical that the Iranian regime is interested in addressing either the legitimate desires of its own people, or the concerns of the broader international community," Moore said. ...

Fraud claims mar Iranian poll run-off

The Guardian, June 25 - Iran's presidential election was hit by fresh ballot-rigging allegations last night as voters chose between a veteran establishment candidate and a hardliner promising to restore the values of the Islamic revolution. The head of the central electoral committee called on Tehran's provincial governor to suspend balloting amid claims of violations and abuses. But voting was extended by at least two hours...

Iran official alleges poll fraud

CNN, June 25 - An official with Iran's Interior Ministry has accused Iran's Guardian Council of election fraud in the presidential runoff vote and said he was placed under arrest when he objected to voting irregularities, Iran's official news agency said. "I was personally witness to interference of Guardians Council monitors' serious interference in voting stations where I was commissioned to survey the sound process of election," Ali Mirbaqeri, the managing director of the Interior Ministry's Majlis Affairs, told IRNA... "The monitors of the Guardians Council were not only filling out the tariffs and controlling the voters' IDs, but also constantly issuing orders for every one," he said. "I voiced my objection to such broad violation of the Election Laws, and was as a result arrested at a voting station," Mirbaqeri said.

Iran's Rafsanjani reacts furiously over election defeat



June 25, Tehran - Defeated Iranian presidential candidate Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani reacted furiously to his shock election loss, pointing the finger at a hard-line institution and a vast "illegal" operation aimed at turning voters against him. In his first public reaction to his surprise defeat to hard-line Tehran mayor Ahmadinejad, the moderate cleric alleged Saturday that "all the means of the regime were used in an organized and illegal way to intervene in the election". "I do not intend to file a complaint to jurists who have shown that they cannot or do not want to do anything. This I will leave to God," he was quoted as saying by the ISNA

news agency.

Hakim invites Ahmadinejad to visit Iraq!



Baztab Website, June 26 - Abdol-Aziz Al-Hakim, President of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution of Iraq, invited Ahmadinejad to visit Iraq... In a message to Ahmadinejad, Hakim called him a "knowledgeable brother" and

said: "It is a great responsibility that the Iranian people have given you in a free and healthy election." [Hakim had previously said that the Iranian elections are "fully democratic and despite foreign countries' propaganda, the Iranian people had a wide turnout in terms of democracy and that their vote is significant in the election of a president".]

Ahmadinejad lashes out on Europe

 *June 27* - Asked about relations with the United States during his first news conference since Friday's election, Ahmadinejad said Iran "is taking the path of progress based on self-reliance. It doesn't need the United States significantly on this path... He also responded harshly to comments in Sunday's Rome daily La Repubblica, where European Union Justice Commissioner Franco Frattini was quoted as saying: "We are waiting for clear words on human rights and the nuclear issue from the new president. But if the responses are negative, the European Union can't but freeze the dialogue with Iran." Ahmadinejad said the European Union "should come down from its ivory tower and understand that they cannot talk to the Iranian nation in this way. We are ready for trust-building measures in all fields, but... our nation is a great nation and they cannot talk to the Iranian nation in such an arrogant manner."

Nuclear proliferation

Iran vote will boost nuke work, repression - exiles

 *June 25* - The election of an ultra-conservative as Iran's next president will lead to more repression at home and fuel Tehran's drive to acquire nuclear weapons, an exiled opposition leader said on Saturday. France-based Maryam Rajavi, president-elect of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), said the elections had been rigged and widely boycotted. "There's no doubt that the mullahs' regime will emerge much weaker" from the elections, said Rajavi... "It will therefore step up repression inside the country, it will increase the export of terrorism and religious fundamentalist abroad," she said... "Iranians have no illusions when Ahmadinejad calls for unity," she said through an interpreter in a phone interview. "What he means is that other factions of the regime should join him and his supreme leader in repressing the Iranian people, help them export terrorism abroad and achieve nuclear power as soon as they can..." Rajavi said the U.N. Security Council should pass binding resolutions condemning Iran's nuclear program and terrorism record, and demanded an end to western "appeasement" of Iran...

We won't give up nuclear effort, says Iranian leader

The Guardian, June 27 - Iran's new hard-line president-elect, Ahmadinejad, yesterday threw down a challenge to western leaders by vowing to resist international pressure to abandon the country's nuclear programme and branding Israel the source of instability in the Middle East. The remarks, made at his first press conference since a landslide victory, will underline concerns in America, Israel, Britain and other European countries, where wrong footed diplomats have been scrambling to come to terms with the consequences of his win... A Foreign Office source, in a rare resort to undiplomatic language, referred to Mr. Ahmadinejad as a "head case". The Foreign Office spokesman elaborated, saying the official policy for the time being was to "wait and see" but that "our analysis is this guy appears to be a throwback to the early 80s and that cannot be a good thing"... Mr. Ahmadinejad was asked about the nuclear issue no fewer than seven times yesterday. He stuck rigidly to formulaic answers about Iran's nuclear programme, avoiding threats to withdraw from negotiations with Britain, France and Germany...

US 'has doubts' on EU Iran policy

 *June 27* - The United States doubts that European diplomacy will succeed in keeping Iran from developing nuclear weapons after Iran's election of a new president. "We have reason to be sceptical," White House spokesman Scott McClellan said before a visit by German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder to Washington...

Bush, Schroeder agree on Iran nukes

The Washington Times *June 28* - President Bush yesterday criticized a vow by Iran's president-elect to restart Tehran's nuclear-energy program, warning it could lead to the development of a nuclear weapon. "The development of a nuclear weapon is unacceptable," Mr. Bush said during an Oval Office meeting with German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder. "And a process which would enable Iran to develop a nuclear weapon is unacceptable..." Mr. Ahmadinejad was elected Friday in an election that Mr. Bush derided yesterday as unfair because Iranian authorities excluded hundreds of candidates from the ballot. "It's never free and fair," he said, "when a group of people -unelected people -get to decide who's on the ballot." Mr. Schroeder said he "couldn't agree more" with Mr. Bush's stance against Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Human rights abuse

Iranian court orders man to be blinded

The New Zealand Herald, *June 28* - An Iranian court has sentenced a man to have his eyes surgically removed for a crime he committed as a teenager 12 years ago. Amnesty International has condemned the sentence, reported in the Iranian daily Etemaad... Etemaad says the accused, identified only as Vahid, was 16 when he threw a bottle of acid at another man during a fight in a vegetable market in 1993. The top opened - Vahid insists accidentally - and blinded his victim in both eyes... The paper said the sentence was to pour acid on Vahid's eyes, but an appeals court ruled it should be done surgically so as not to harm other parts of his face. Amnesty described the sentence as "cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment amounting to torture". It called for a change of sentence.

Feature

Regime change in Iran

By Claude Salhani- June 29, 2005- "The most radical portion of the population with the most dangerous Islamic fundamentalist ideas are now in charge. Bad days to come." Those words come from Mr. Behi, an Iranian online diarist or Web logger, or blogger.

The Bush administration has been talking about regime change in Iran for some time but the mullahs in Tehran beat him to it. Granted, it was not the change Bush, or many Iranians, expected. Last Friday's presidential election in Iran brought Tehran Mayor Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a staunch conservative and a supporter and enforcer of strict Islamic traditions, to power. He won with 62 percent of the vote. Ahmadinejad's victory over cleric Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, a once-conservative-turned-reformer, and two-term president, shatters the hopes of many young Iranians to see more freedom introduced and the easing of restrictions on social norms, including granting greater freedom to women. Ahmadinejad's presidency also means a delay in the thawing of the Islamic republic's relations with the West, particularly with the United States; relations that soured and froze following the 1979 Islamic revolution. In that context, four questions are worth asking:

1. What does the conservative victory mean for Iran and the region? 2. Why did the reformers lose the election? 3. How does Ahmadinejad's victory impact long-term relations with the West, particularly on this the issue of Iran's pursuing its nuclear program? 4. And, what course, what action should the West, and more specifically the United States, adopt in view of the situation? Ahmadinejad has already said Iran will not give up its nuclear energy program. Indeed, with most of Iran's population of 68 million aged under 25 years, it was hard to predict the loss of the reformers. "Everyone is in ultimate shock of these unprecedented, unbelievable and horrible results," wrote Mr. Behi. What Ahmadinejad's success also means for Iran is the conservatives now control all echelons of government; from the presidency to the military, and of course the Pasdaran-e Inqilab -the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps and the Basij -the volunteers. It also means Iran now speaks, and thinks, with one voice, one mind and one ideology - that of keeping the spirit of the Islamic revolution alive and moving forward - something the mullahs have been unable to accomplish since overthrowing the shah in 1979

when Ayatollah Ruhallah Khomeini established the Islamic republic. Until Ahmadinejad's election, most analysts agreed exporting the Islamic revolution had largely failed. And that was not for lack of trying. The only limited successes Iran had in exporting Islamic fervor was to the Shiite community in Lebanon. And even there, the success was limited. But now with absolute control of all the state's apparatuses and with a friendly (and fellow Shiite) leadership in neighboring Iraq, and the Shiite community in Lebanon playing an increasingly important role in domestic (and regional) politics, this opens new horizons for the Islamic republic. The reformers lost because many voters felt the reform movement took them nowhere. After an initial uptake, it sputtered, ran out of gas and eventually idled. Add to that internal manipulation, voter fraud, and, as some reported, bullying at some polling sites. Early warning signs had gone up on a handful of Iranian blogs indicating that military and paramilitary groups such as the Revolutionary Guards and the Basij would come out in great numbers to support Ahmadinejad, as they reportedly did. Last month "Iranian Truth," one of the 100,000 Farsi blogs, alerted its readers about "the possible rise of militarism in Iranian politics." It made reference to Ahmadinejad's support in the military and paramilitary groups. "The victory by Ahmadinejad completes Khamenei's mission at this phase," Alireza Jafarzadeh, president of Strategic Policy Consulting, and an Iranian political activist in Washington opposed to the Tehran regime, told United Press International. "Having Ahmadinejad as Iran's president for the next four years... will be the start of one of the darkest years in Iran's contemporary history," wrote Yaser Kerachian on the blog "Free thoughts on Iran." With the media censored and controlled by the government, blogs have become powerful tools of communication in Iran, and experts expect them to continue to grow in strength as long as the Iranian government continues to repress freedom of speech. But not everyone sees Ahmadinejad's victory negatively. As a result of the election the Tehran regime will become more unstable. Public opposition against the regime will increase. "The people, especially the young, and the women will increasingly look to regime change as the only solution that they are left with," said Jafarzadeh. Clare Lopez, executive director of the Iran Policy Committee and a former operations officer for the CIA, told UPI "this election crystallizes the situation. It puts things in black and white. It actually makes it easier. Had Rafsanjani won talks would have dragged on forever." For Iran, the conservative victory will mean stricter measures domestically, with more suppression particularly against women and youth. On the international scene, it will probably mean the breakdown of talks between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency over Iran's nuclear program. The European Union 3 (Britain, France and Germany), who have been taking the "good cop" approach with Iran while the United States played the "bad cop" on nuclear negotiations, will have to reassess its position and join the United States in developing a tougher policy toward Iran. Both Europe and the United States are likely to start applying more pressure on Tehran. The United States and the EU3 are likely to waste no time in referring Iran's nuclear dossier to the U.N. Security Council. Jafarzadeh also believes the new government in Iran will step up support for terrorist groups around the world, and increase its "meddling in Iraq," in which case American forces stationed there could come under increased attacks if relations with Iran worsen. Jafarzadeh, who was associated with the Mujahedin e-Khalq, a group that has been fighting the Tehran regime since its inception, believes the U.S. government should "adopt a policy of regime change, not by military actions, but rather by stepping up support for the Iranian opposition. Mujahedin e-Khalq is on the U.S. State Department's list of foreign terrorist organizations. Raymond Tanter, a former National Security Council official in the Reagan administration, and co-founder of the Iran Policy Committee, agrees. Tanter believes the best way to bring about regime change in Iran - and one that would hopefully be friendly to the United States - is to support the opposition inside the country. "To catch up with the now-faster-ticking nuclear clock, it is a necessity - not a luxury - for the United States to empower the Iranian opposition which has the means and ability to unseat the clerics," said Jafarzadeh.

Claude Salhani is international editor for United Press International.