



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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Nuclear proliferation

Opposition group says Iran has budget for nuclear warheads



AFP, March 31, PARIS - The main Iranian opposition group charged here Thursday that Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had allocated 2.5 billion dollars to acquire three nuclear warheads. Khamenei decided in mid-2004 that Tehran would "acquire the warheads by their own means or buy them abroad," said Mohammed Mohaddessin, an official in the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI). Mohaddessin, the NCRI's foreign affairs committee chairman, told a Paris press conference that the warheads were to be used to equip locally-produced missiles. He did not identify his sources. The NCRI representative said he could not say which country could have eventually provided Iran with the warheads, and he did not provide a date for the implementation of Khamenei's alleged secret plan. But he said Iran wanted to acquire nuclear weapons "this year", a claim the NCRI has made several times in the past. Tehran is in negotiations with Britain, France and Germany, which want the Islamic republic to provide "objective guarantees" that its nuclear program will not be used to develop weapons. Iran says it only wants to enrich uranium to make nuclear fuel to generate electricity, but there are widespread fears that the technology could be diverted to produce highly enriched uranium for a nuclear bomb. Based in a northern Paris suburb, the NCRI is the political face of the People's Mujahedeen, which is considered a terrorist group in both the United States and the European Union. The NCRI vehemently contests the label, which it says was imposed by governments seeking to curry favor with Tehran. In recent months the NCRI has produced evidence purporting to show that the Islamic republic is well advanced in its production of enriched uranium fuel and in the development of a missile capable of delivering nuclear warheads. In early February, the NCRI said Iran had obtained the materials and expertise to make the triggers for an atomic bomb. On Thursday, Mohaddessin also showed reporters photocopies of what he called a "confidential report" of an Iranian parliamentary committee tasked with oversight of nuclear affairs, dating from February 2004. The report allegedly says that the Iranian parliament was "unaware of Iranian military projects" and that the budget for such projects "does not appear in the country's general budget". The NCRI official also claimed that Tehran was ready to produce "between now and 2006-07, 10 kilos (22 pounds) of plutonium" for its supposed nuclear arsenal.

Arak reactor ready by 2007, and capable of producing bombs, exiled group claims



AP, March 31, By ELAINE GANLEY PARIS - A heavy water reactor in central Iran should be able to produce up to 10 kilograms (22 pounds) of plutonium by 2007, enough for a nuclear bomb, an exiled Iranian opposition group claimed on Thursday. The National Council of Resistance said the main unit of the reactor near Arak was already producing heavy water and work on a third unit is «near an end.»The 40-megawatt heavy water nuclear reactor should be

ready in 2006 or 2007, said Mohammed Mohaddessin, head of the group's foreign affairs committee. «The Iranian regime is engaged in an all-out race against time to terminate the complex,» Mohaddessin told a news conference in Paris. The objective, he claimed, is «to obtain plutonium to build a nuclear bomb.» The existence of the reactor has been known for several years and Europeans, who are in negotiations with Iran, had asked Tehran to stop construction and build a light water reactor instead. Iran refused. Nuclear experts consider heavy water reactors a danger because they provide for a simpler way of producing bomb fuel. Iran informed the International Atomic Energy Agency that the reactor near Arak would be finished in 2014, said Mohaddessin, citing information from the group's sources inside Iran. The National Council of Resistance serves as the political arm for the Mujahedeen Khalq, deemed a terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union. However, some of the group's past information about Iran's nuclear program have proved accurate. Mohaddessin said that sources inside the Arak facility were among those providing information. The United States suspects Iran of using its once-covert nuclear program to produce weapons, which Tehran firmly denies. It claims the nuclear technology is for civilian purposes only, such as producing electricity. France, Britain and Germany are holding talks with Tehran in a bid to guarantee that nuclear weapons cannot be produced by Iran. Under an agreement reached last year, Iran suspended its uranium enrichment program during talks about European economic, political and technological aid. The European deal left Iran free to produce plutonium, which can also be used to build nuclear weapons. Mohaddessin said the group's information confirms that the Iran issue should be put before the U.N. Security Council for possible sanctions, as Washington earlier threatened. He cited a «confidential» parliamentary report dated February 2004 on Iran's nuclear activities, which he said he received earlier Thursday, as evidence that Iran has covert motives for its nuclear program. The report, as cited by Mohaddessin, says the majlis, or parliament, was not informed about the construction of nuclear sites at Arak or at Natanz or about the projects' budgets. «This report clearly reveals Tehran's real intentions for its nuclear program, so much so that parliament is not aware and it is outside the budget,» he said.

US military leaders looking at what few options they have

International Herald Tribune, Mar. 28, Washington - American military leaders, acknowledging a lack of intelligence about where to strike and the danger of retaliation, are looking at what few options - air strikes, covert raids, commando operations - they have. While dismissing talk of deadlines, some administration officials acknowledge that if there is no movement by the summer, it may be hard for the United States to keep supporting talks with the two countries...The longer we keep the suspension going, the better," said a European diplomat, noting that the suspension is fortified by inspections from the International Atomic Energy Agency. "Every day that Iran is kept from making bomb material for a nuclear weapon is one more day we have to solve this problem permanently". The American view is less trusting of the status quo, however, in part because of fears that Iran is cheating and proceeding full speed with nuclear arms activities. There is a clear and growing sense of urgency on our side, but that does not translate into a specific timeline," said a second senior administration official. "The IAEA has talked about another decision point coming in June. That's obviously one date that's out there"...

Iran pursues unstable revisionist policies

The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, Mar. 28 - Iran pursues unstable revisionist policies, and its core-decision makers are isolated, with the elected government providing a facade, particularly in the strategic realm. The ability of Islamic clerical leaders to manage the intricacies of stable deterrence, and to prevent crisis situations from escalating out of control, is highly questionable. Iran is continuing to violate its commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), hide facilities and activities from the International Atomic Energy Agency, and move steadily to a nuclear weapons capability, European diplomatic efforts notwithstanding. Indeed, the extent of these activities and the repeated discovery of Iranian efforts to hide the evidence is the most telling confirmation of the weakness of the European approach. But instead of moving to a more visible and credible effort, including sanctions and the threat of military action, European diplomats such as Javier Solana, the EU's foreign policy czar, dismiss and undermine the Bush administration's reminders that military options have not been ruled out. As a result, Iranian decisions-makers can confidently conclude that they can achieve a nuclear weapons capability without a significant penalty. In private conversations,

many Europeans are increasingly ready to admit the obvious - that without credible threats, Iran will not end its pursuit of nuclear weapons.

Tehran had yet to take "some very clear steps" - Rice

The Los Angeles Times, Mar. 25 – Excerpts of interview with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice



QUESTION: On Iran, the Europeans are arguing essentially that time is now on our side -- that with the agreement for a freeze and with the IAEA monitoring the freeze, it's the Iranians who are in a hurry to get a deal and that they are effectively contained. Do you accept that, and does that mean that we do have time to negotiate onward? SECRETARY RICE: Well, it's always better to resolve these things as soon as you can, not later, because Iran is a very closed society. It's not Iraq. It has people going back and forth. It was a dissident group that exposed Natanz. And so you have some sources of information, but they are by no means

perfect. And so you want as soon as possible to get a handle on the Iranian program...I would hope that the Iranians would want to demonstrate sooner rather than later that they really do now intend to live up to those obligations because a lot is riding on it... QUESTION: Are you comfortable that the current freeze amounts to containment of the Iranian program? SECRETARY RICE: I do not think you can ever be certain of any such thing. The Iranians make a choice that they are not going to engage in activities that heighten suspicion that they're trying to get a nuclear weapon under cover of civilian nuclear program. And there are some very clear steps they could take to do that, and they have to be steps that are not easily reversible....

QUESTION: U.S. officials in Iraq have from time to time raised questions with their Iraqi counterparts about the presence of Iranian influence. Before the election, there was talk about how much are the Iranians supporting one candidate. Since then, there has been talk, I guess, about will there be people with Iranian links in some of the security-related ministries. What's your level of concern about that issue? A new government is about to be formed. Will there be an important Iranian influence in it? SECRETARY RICE: Let me start by saying it is in many ways the Iraqi government, or members of the Iraqi government, who have most often raised the Iranian issue. And I would make a distinction. Iran is Iraq's neighbor... so we would be the first to say that we would hope there would be good, transparent relations between Iran and Iraq. But that does mean that the kind of activities that Iranian security forces might carry on... that might be intended at destabilizing somehow the environment, or non-transparently influencing the course of affairs, that that would not be welcome. And so there's a distinction here between relations with Iran, which are going to happen because it's a neighbor, and non-transparent relations with Iran... I don't detect from most of the key leaders in Iraq any desire to exchange the yoke of Saddam Hussein for the yoke of Khamenei. I just don't detect that. The Iraqis have a very different tradition in terms of the role of clerics...

Prominent Iranian exile: Tehran just completed an undeclared uranium enrichment facility

Los Angeles Times **The Los Angeles Times, Mar. 25 --** "It is a loophole that countries have used, including, for instance, the North Koreans ... to gain access to civilian nuclear power but to continue activities that were closed and unclear," Rice said.

A prominent Iranian exile made new claims Thursday that Tehran was doing just that. Alireza Jafarzadeh, who is a former key figure in the National Council of Resistance of Iran, said in a telephone interview that he had received information during the last three days that Iran had just completed a uranium enrichment facility near Tehran that was previously unknown to the international community. Jafarzadeh said the facility, in a major military complex at Parchin, uses laser technology to enrich uranium. He said it had been hidden in a part of the complex normally devoted to the production of chemicals under the responsibility of Mohammed-Amin Bassam, a leading Defense Ministry scientist with expertise in molecular laser enrichment. "How far they've gone or whether they've started enriching I don't know, but the lasers have been installed and the scientists are there," said Jafarzadeh, who heads a Washington think tank, Strategic Policy Consulting.

Iran's Meddling in Iraq

Tehran's red line, Allawi taking PM post

Kol Al-Iraq daily, Mar. 29 – Housien Al-Sadr, member of the Iraqi National Assembly, accused Iran of interfering in Iraq's internal affairs and said, "An Iranian Minister contacted an Iraqi politician to say that we will not prevent any Iraqi from being Prime Minister. We have only one red line and that is for Doctor Ayad Allawi to take this post."

Iraqi border guards shut Iran border post



AFP, Mar. 29, Tehran - Iraqi border guards have temporarily shut one of the main frontier posts with Iran, blocking large numbers of pilgrims from entering the country ahead of a major Shiite Muslim holy day, press reports said Tuesday.

According to the official news agency IRNA, the Shalamsheh crossing point -- situated close to the southern Iraqi city of Basra -- was closed on Monday, the eve of the end of mourning for the seventh-century martyrdom of Shiite Imam Hussein. Iraqi border guards also reportedly reinforced their presence at the crossing, and commercial transport was also blocked. The report said the border was likely to be closed until Sunday, adding the move was made without coordination with Iranian officials and apparently without explanation. Iraqi officials have frequently accused Iran of allowing insurgents to use its territory to enter Iraq.

Iran summons Egyptian diplomat to protest Cairo trial



Associated Press

Associated Press, Mar. 29, Tehran - Iran has summoned an Egyptian diplomat to protest the conviction of two men on charges of spying for Iran and plotting to assassinate the Egyptian president, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said Tuesday. The trial has set back attempts to improve Iranian-Egyptian relations, particularly as one of the two men convicted Sunday is an Iranian diplomat who was formerly stationed in Cairo.

Jordan's King says Iran is a long-term threat to regional stability

The Forward, Mar. 25, Washington - Syria and Iran are pushing Hezbollah to increase anti-Israeli terrorism, Jordan's King Abdullah warned this week, in a rare rebuke of other Muslim countries in front of a Jewish audience... n the meeting with Jewish communal leaders, Abdullah reportedly described Iran as a long-term threat to the Israeli-Arab peace process and to regional stability — a position similar to Israel's...Jordan is particularly concerned that Iran will act to turn Iraq into another Shi'ite Islamic republic. In a recent interview with Satloff, of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, published in the current issue of the Middle East Quarterly, the king said: "My concern is political, not religious, revolving around Iran, Iran's political involvement inside Iraq, its relation with Syria and Hezbollah, and the strengthening of (their) political-strategic alliance. This would create a scenario where you have these four [Iran, Iran-influenced Iraq, Syria and Hezbollah] who have a strategic objective that could create a major conflict."

Tehran attempts to fill the vacuum

The Power and Interest News Report, Mar. 28 - Power, like nature, abhors a vacuum. With its Syrian ally in disarray, Tehran will attempt to fill the void left behind by Syria's putative departure from Lebanon. According to some sources, Iran has been fortifying Hezbollah bases in the face of a Syrian troop withdrawal in an attempt to enhance its strategic position. Iran has been using Revolutionary Guard units to fortify important positions Syria has promised to vacate, such as early warning stations. Iran maintains about 1,000 Revolutionary Guards in Lebanon, serving as ideological and military advisors to Hezbollah. Tehran is also reportedly increasing arms shipments to Hezbollah, as well as unmanned aerial vehicles, one of which unnerved the Israeli Air Force by recently penetrating Israeli airspace undetected. It is also using the organization to create a larger pro-Iranian Shi'a force in Lebanon. Tehran thus wields the ability to ignite a larger Middle Eastern conflict. According to a spokesman for the Druze opposition, "Iran sees the mounting pressure on its partner Syria to withdraw and is using it as an opportunity to become the next power broker in Lebanon." By fortifying its Hezbollah proxy in Lebanon, Tehran sends a resounding signal that Israel cannot disregard Iranian interests without suffering harsh consequences. More pointedly, it serves as a visible and powerful

deterrent against any attack on Iranian nuclear facilities. Syrian President Assad recently appointed Assaf Chawkat, a family member, to the state's head intelligence post. Chawkat, who has close ties to Hezbollah, has long overseen relations between the organization and its Iranian sponsor. Chawkat has most likely assured Tehran that Hezbollah will not be weakened by a Syrian withdrawal and that Damascus will not restrain it if Israel or the U.S. attacks Tehran's nuclear facilities. Hezbollah will remain a potent force that Tehran will control for the foreseeable future.

Iran Policy: Third Option

US should focus policy on unseating clerical regime by Iranians themselves

The Wall Street Journal, Mar. 23, by David Johnson, Co-Founder of U.S. Alliance for Democratic Iran, Washington - The announcement by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice that the U.S. had agreed to offer modest economic incentives to Iran in exchange for Tehran's abandoning its nuclear enrichment program would send the wrong signal. Tehran's immediate rejection of the offer as "too insignificant to comment about" proved this point. When it comes to rogue regimes, the bitter truth is that diplomatic engagement is futile. The root cause of the nuclear crisis with Iran is not a shortage of "economic incentives"; it is the nature of the regime in power in Tehran. Iran is ruled by an irreformable theocratic regime that has worked to ensure its survival by brutal crackdown of political dissent at home, exporting fundamentalism and sponsoring terrorism abroad as well as developing weapons of mass destruction. Thus it would be naive to assume that the mullahs will agree to undermine their survivability by abandoning one of the regime's main pillars, possessing the A-bomb. Engaging Iran is not futile if we make the Iranian people, not the tyrants, the focus of a new and comprehensive policy. This policy must ensure the unseating of the clerical regime by Iranians themselves as a necessary step toward eliminating what President Bush described as "conditions that feed radicalism and ideologies of murder" in the world.

Deteriorating human rights

Step up pressure on Iran torturers

Toronto Star, April 1 - Zahra Kazemi did not die in "an accident" at Tehran's notorious Evin prison, whatever Iran's discredited courts may claim. She was savagely beaten, tortured and raped, according to a physician who treated her as she lay dying from a brain injury. Kazemi, an Iranian-born Canadian photojournalist, was arrested June 23, 2003, outside Evin prison while taking pictures at a pro-democracy rally. Three days later she was carried unconscious on a stretcher into Baghiatollah military hospital, reports Maj. Shahram Azam, a physician in the Iranian security forces who treated her. She never recovered. What Dr. Azam saw at the hospital that night shocked him and will outrage Canadians, including the 250,000 of Iranian origin in this country. Kazemi's skull was badly bruised and her nose was crushed. Her eardrum was ruptured. Fingers were broken. Fingernails and toenails were ripped out. Her ribs were bruised, possibly broken. She had been flogged. A nurse reported Kazemi had been violently raped. "I could see this was torture," Azam said yesterday in Ottawa, after arriving this week with his family seeking asylum. And he said the torture went on for some time. Azam's horrific account of Kazemi's last hours makes a mockery of the Iranian court's claim that her death resulted from "a drop in blood pressure resulting from a hunger strike" and a fall to the ground. While Canadians have just learned of Azam's findings, Prime Minister Paul Martin's government has known for months. Why wasn't the information made public? And why did Foreign Affairs Minister Pierre Pettigrew suggest lamely yesterday that "Canadians want answers"? What Canadians want is action. That action should start today with Martin recalling our ambassador to Iran and demanding Tehran immediately reopen the probe into Kazemi's death, with full Canadian and international participation. He should push for a statement by the United Nations endorsing that approach. Martin should also insist Iran surrender Kazemi's remains to her family for burial here. That would allow the family to seek an autopsy to verify Azam's account. If Tehran balks, Martin should expel Iran's ambassador, bar officials from visiting here, and downgrade ties with the regime. He should then petition the International Criminal Court to

hold Ayatollah Ali Khomeini and Iran's rulers to account. Article 8 of the Rome Statute that created the court gives it jurisdiction over crimes "committed as part of a plan or policy" that violate the Geneva Conventions, including "wilful killing" and "torture or inhumane treatment." Kazemi was subjected to both under a policy to crush dissidence. We have a case. Martin has already rightly labelled Iran an "emerging threat" because of its attempts to develop technology that can be used to make nuclear weapons, and because of its support for terror. He should push other countries to adopt the same view. Finally, Canada must sponsor more embarrassing U.N. resolutions censuring Iran for rights abuses. Martin must be relentless in this. That's because until justice is delivered for Zahra Kazemi, the whole world must know that Iran is run by a brutal regime that lies and turns a blind eye to torture and murder.

Iranian secret police tortured woman to death, says doctor

The Times, April 1 - A CANADIAN woman photographer who died in Iranian custody after taking pictures of a protest outside the notorious Evin prison in Tehran, was beaten, tortured and raped, an Iranian doctor who fled to Canada said yesterday. Zahra Kazemi, 54, a Canadian citizen born in Iran, was arrested by secret police in June 2003. Shahram Azam said that he examined her at a hospital in the capital four days later. She was in a coma and died several days later without regaining consciousness. Ms Kazemi was the victim of "a very brutal rape", her skull was fractured and her nose broken and there were strange markings all over her body, Dr Azam said. "The backs of both legs, where the skin had come off, indicated a flogging." His account is the first by a medical official from Iran, and contradicts Iranian officials who said that Ms Kazemi fainted while in custody, hit her head on the ground and failed to regain consciousness. "Everything I saw indicated it was organised torture and not an injury that caused her death," Dr Azam said. Deep scratches behind her neck "looked like the result of nails digging into the flesh". Her right shoulder was bruised, she had two broken fingers, a broken nose, three missing fingernails, a skull fracture, crushed left toe and a burst ear membrane, he said. Male doctors in Iran are not permitted to conduct vaginal examinations, but a nurse found severe abdominal and genital bruising and concluded that it was the result of savage rape. Ms Kazemi had bruises from her abdominal area down to her thighs. Dr Azam fled from Iran in August after pretending to seek medical treatment in Finland. From there he went to Sweden, where he got in touch with Ms Kazemi's son, Stephan Hachemi, and the doctor was granted political asylum in Canada. He landed in Canada on Monday, as a refugee sponsored by the Canadian Government, with his wife and their daughter, aged 12. He refused to say where his family would live in Canada.

UN must not shrink from naming human-rights abusers

Documents & Texts from the Washington File, Mar. 28 - U.S. Says former Senator Rudy Boschwitz, head of the U.S. delegation to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), expressed the Bush administration's concern with human rights abuse throughout the world in a March 24 statement to that body's 61st session. Moving to the Middle East, in Iran, the regime's poor human rights record worsened last year and a resolution on the disturbing human rights situation in Iran was successfully passed at the UN General Assembly. Authorities in Iran continued their crackdown on free speech, including closing independent domestic media outlets, and harassing journalists and web-log authors. The February 2004 parliamentary elections, when hundreds of reform candidates were not allowed to run, made blatantly clear that regime hardliners continue to exert undue influence on the electoral and legislative processes, hindering the Iranian people's ability to assert their democratic will. We urge the Iranian Government to enable all candidates, including reformers, to run and campaign freely in the Presidential elections scheduled for June (2005). Meanwhile, the Government continues to engage in particularly severe violations of religious freedom....