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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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International debate on Iranian crisis

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Empower Iran's opposition forces

International Herald Tribune *January 28, Maryam Rajavi.* How

should the world deal with the challenges posed by the Iranian regime, with its continuing support for terrorism, increasing meddling in Iraq and relentless pursuit of nuclear weapons? Approaches under debate range from engagement, with the hope of empowering the "moderates," to military invasion. But the best option is to initiate change through the Iranian people and the organized resistance movement. There is no need for war; no one would want to see an Iraq II played out in Iran. But engagement, which has shaped policy toward Iran on both sides of the Atlantic for two decades, has been a disaster, strengthening the most radical factions of the ruling theocracy.

The failure to isolate a religious dictatorship bent on spreading its fiery brand of Islamic fundamentalism and acquiring nuclear weapons has led to the current stalemate. Now Tehran's missiles, capable of bearing weapons of mass destruction, can reach eastern and southern Europe. No concession is going to dissuade the mullahs from continuing their ominous objectives. Only days after Tehran signed an agreement with Britain, France and Germany to temporarily suspend its uranium enrichment activities, Iran's powerful former president, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, boasted, "Tehran is set to be a member of the nuclear club soon and will resume enrichment after a maximum of six months." The engagement policy failed even to keep President Mohammad Khatami and his camp, dubbed as moderate in the West, viable. Today, the most extreme faction dominates the political establishment, and the Revolutionary Guards control most levers of power, including the Parliament.

But there is another answer: democracy. The more than a thousand students who shouted antigovernment slogans during a speech by Khatami at Tehran University last month are evidence that Iranians seek a change in the totality of the regime. As a first step in that direction, Western governments must not assist the ruling theocracy. And that means removing the terrorist tag that has been put on the People's Mujahedeen Organization. The group is the pivotal force in the largest Iranian opposition coalition, the National Council of Resistance, which has revealed Tehran's nuclear, missile and terrorist plans. In 1997, the U.S. State Department placed the People's Mujahedeen on the list of foreign terrorist organizations as a goodwill gesture to Khatami, who was Iran's new president. But after a 16-month investigation in Iraq, where the group has had a presence on the Iranian frontier for 18 years, the United States determined that its members were "protected persons under the Fourth Geneva Convention" and that there was no basis to charge any of them. Over the years, many U.S. Congressmen and their counterparts in Europe, citing the group's widespread popular and religious roots in Iran, have described the People's Mujahedeen as a legitimate resistance movement and the antithesis to Islamic fundamentalism, stressing that it should be removed from the terror list. In November, the International Conference of Jurists, a convention of 500 human-rights lawyers in Paris, declared that blacklisting the organization was a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights, the fundamental right to defense and the presumption of innocence. The Iranian resistance is committed to holding free and fair elections within six

months of regime change, to electing a constituent assembly and handing over affairs to the people's elected representatives. It seeks a peaceful Iran without weapons of mass destruction, on good terms with its neighbors and dedicated to friendship with the world community. More than fifty years after the coup that toppled the elected government of Mohammed Mossadegh, fate has again put America at a historic crossroads. This time, unlike in 1953, the United States must identify itself with the Iranian people and their aspirations for freedom, democracy and a secular state. Only such an approach can guarantee lasting peace and stability in the Middle East.

(Maryam Rajavi is president of the National Council of Resistance of Iran.)

It wouldn't take a war to overthrow Iran's mullahs

The Daily Telegraph leaders

Daily Telegraph January 22 Editorial, We can be sloppy in our approach to foreign affairs. Because of their geographical and alphabetical proximity, we tend to bracket Iran and Iraq together. You will hear even politicians and television presenters committing the solecism of describing Iranians as Arabs. It is imprecision of this kind that is clouding the debate over the proper response to the mullahs. There is a superficial resemblance between the Axis of Evil duo. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's Iran, like Saddam's Iraq, is a tyranny, silencing dissent and imprisoning its opponents. It has been linked to numerous terrorist attacks, as far afield as London and Buenos Aires. It has ordered monstrous human rights violations at home, including the execution of teenage girls and the show-trials of Jews. Whereas our knowledge of Iraq's weapons programme depended on guesswork, we have concrete evidence that Iran is equipping itself with a nuclear capability. Two years ago, Iran deployed Shahab-3 ballistic missiles, with a range of 800 miles. At the same time, it was found to be making enriched uranium. On current trends, Iran will have the bomb by 2008. Why, then, does President Bush not pursue the same policy that he followed in Iraq? Because, beneath these facile similarities, the two states are very different. Iraq was an arbitrary creation, yoking together three disparate Ottoman provinces. Throughout its history, it has lacked the sense of common identity that underpins civic patriotism. Feeling little loyalty to their nation, successive Iraqi rulers held power by rewarding their own clansmen. Iranians, by contrast, trace an unbroken history back to the Immortals who followed the Great King at Thermopylae. They have a fully evolved society, with an educated middle class. Whereas there was no chance of creating a functioning democracy in Iraq without direct intervention, there is reason to hope that, given the opportunity, Iranians would shake off their theocracy and join the modern world. How might we catalyse such a revolution? In three ways. First, we should cease our dealings with the mullahs. EU countries, in contrast to the Americans, have pursued a policy of "constructive engagement" with Teheran, exchanging state visits and sending Jack Straw on repeated visits. (Iranians take Britain especially seriously, perhaps imagining that we are still the power we were when we last occupied their country in 1941.) That policy is now in shreds, as Iran's nuclear programme nears completion. Second, we should give financial and political assistance to dissidents inside the country. Third, we should back the main resistance group, the People's Mujahidin, which, until recently, we treated as a terrorist organisation in order to appease Khamenei. As their exiled pretender, the Shah's heir Reza Pahlavi, reminds us, Iranians are not asking for our soldiers, merely for our active sympathy. Give them the tools, and they will finish the job.

Military Rumbblings on Iran

The New York Times

Jan 27-Editorial President Bush began his second term with speculation rising about future military moves against Iran. Last week, Vice President Dick Cheney placed Iran first on the list of world trouble spots and darkly hinted that unless tougher measures were taken to curtail its nuclear program, Israel might launch its own pre-emptive airstrikes. Earlier this month, Seymour Hersh reported in *The New Yorker* that secret reconnaissance operations have already gotten under way inside Iran, as the Pentagon prepares target lists of nuclear sites that could

be attacked from the air or by ground-based commando units. Thus far, Mr. Bush has kept his own counsel. But these hawkish rumblings eerily recall the months before the American invasion of Iraq when some of the same officials pressed hardest for military action, while the president remained publicly uncommitted. Given that experience, it would be foolhardy to dismiss the current rhetorical buildup. We hope that this time, wiser heads in the administration will intervene before it is too late. There is no question that Iran has been covertly developing the capacity to build nuclear weapons, and that diplomacy has so far failed to end these efforts. But precipitate American military action would almost certainly do far more harm than good. No major American ally, including Britain, favors such an approach. American planes and missiles alone cannot knock out all of Iran's many secret nuclear sites. An invasion of a country almost three times as populous as Iraq is well beyond the means of America's depleted ground forces. And an American military attack is probably the one thing still able to unite Iran's restive but nationalist population behind the unpopular clerical dictatorship. The most effective leverage available to Washington is international economic sanctions. If American diplomacy can line up traditional European allies, there is a fair chance that the Iranian nuclear program can still be stopped. Iran's nuclear ambitions predate the 1979 Islamic revolution. With crucial help from Pakistan and perhaps other countries, Iran now has centrifuges capable of enriching uranium to weapons grade. It also has considerable supplies of uranium ready to be enriched. Iran has promised not to enrich any of that uranium for now, under the terms of an agreement recently negotiated with Britain, France and Germany, and some experts believe there are still technical hurdles to overcome. Even if it mastered enrichment, Iran would still have to design, build and test a usable weapon. The best guess is that Iran remains at least three to five years from having the bomb. A nuclear-armed Iran is an alarming prospect, given the radical nature of the Iranian regime, with its long and continuing record of sponsoring international terrorism, its undiluted hostility to the United States and Israel, and its intense regional rivalries with Iraq and Saudi Arabia. So effective crisis diplomacy needs to move into high gear. The freeze on uranium enrichment that Iran agreed to is only temporary. Its duration depends on the results of talks in which the Europeans are seeking a more definitive renunciation of nuclear enrichment. The Iranians, in return, want economic and trade rewards. Expanded commercial ties with America and Europe are very appealing to Iran's ruling mullahs. Having marginalized the reformist political parties, they now see economic sluggishness and high unemployment as the only remaining threat to their continued grip on power. But the mullahs are unlikely to give up their nuclear weapons efforts, which are popular among Iranians of all political persuasions, unless they are plainly told that refusing will bring punishing economic isolation in the very near future. European leaders have not been willing to send that firm message yet, and need to do so. The next step should be a unified European-American stand that forces Iran to make a clear choice. Either fully renounce its nuclear enrichment programs and win significant trade and economic incentives or fail to do so and suffer severe economic penalties. The Iranian nuclear challenge could not be more dangerous or more pressing. It is time to put aside unilateral American military bluster and European wishful diplomacy and get serious.

Nuclear proliferation

EU Makes No Headway on Iran Nuke Program



Associated Press Jan. 26 DAVOS, Switzerland By GEORGE JAHN - A confidential summary of talks between key European powers and Iran made available to The Associated Press on Tuesday shows there has been no progress in getting Iran to scrap nuclear enrichment - even though Tehran acknowledged it does not need nuclear energy. The United States and several other countries fear Iran is seeking to enrich uranium not to the low level needed to generate power but to weapons-grade uranium that forms the core of nuclear warheads. Iran publicly insists it only seeks to make low-grade enriched uranium for nuclear fuel. But the summary of the last meeting on the issue involving representatives of France, Britain, Germany and Iran says Tehran acknowledged what Washington and its allies have argued all along - that the oil-rich country has no need for nuclear energy. "Iran recognizes

explicitly that its fuel cycle program cannot be justified on economic grounds," the document says. Diplomats familiar with the talks said on condition of anonymity that the atmosphere between the two sides had improved during the second round held in Geneva on Jan. 17. But they agreed that no progress was being made on the Europeans' insistence that Iran's present temporary suspension of its enrichment programs be turned into a commitment to permanently mothball all such activities. "The two positions cannot coexist," said one of the diplomats, from a West European nation. "If the impasse cannot be resolved, then there will be no solution," clearing the path for Iran to resume work on activities that will allow it to enrich uranium, he said. Another diplomat agreed there was no progress on the core issue but expressed hope that common ground could be found in future rounds. A separate confidential memorandum summarizing talks focusing on political and security themes said the atmosphere was "more conducive and productive" than the initial round held Dec. 21. Iran suspended uranium enrichment and all related activities in November, derailing U.S. attempts to have it reported to the U.N. Security Council for alleged violations of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. The International Atomic Energy Agency, in Vienna, Austria, is policing the freeze. Reflecting its continued view that it has a right to resume enrichment programs in the near future, Iran recently said it would decide within three months whether to continue the suspension. Concerns about Iran grew after revelations in mid-2002 of two secret nuclear facilities - a uranium enrichment plant at Natanz and a heavy water production plant near Arak. That led to a subsequent IAEA investigation of what turned out to be nearly two decades of covert nuclear activities, including suspicious "dual use" experiments that can be linked to weapons programs. President Bush has labeled Iran part of an "axis of evil" with North Korea and prewar Iraq. In Washington, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher had no comment on the developments in Davos. "We hope the Iranians agree to take the steps that the EU (European Union) is looking for and to take the steps that would be required to satisfy the international community of Iran's intentions," he said. Iran is not prohibited from running enrichment programs under the Nonproliferation Treaty, but agreed to a freeze to generate international goodwill. The summary of the Jan. 17 meeting said Iranian officials used "biased and selective quotes" from the treaty in arguing their country had the right to enrich.

Exporting terrorism and Meddling in Iraq

Iran smuggling weapons to mercenaries, Lebanese insurgents



Iran Focus Jan. 28 Baghdad,— Iran is secretly transporting weaponry to Lebanese insurgents and its own agents carrying out operations throughout Iraq, according to a Kuwaiti daily. Al-Siasa (Politics) revealed, "The weapons, to be used by Iranian agents and terrorists in Iraq, are being transported by mercenaries via Syria". "Ships full of surface-to-surface missiles were bought from an eastern European state and were being transported to Syria", the

daily adds in its Wednesday issue. In a separate development earlier this week, the National Guards commander in the southern Iraqi city of Al-Diwaniya accused Iran of carrying out attacks and funding insurgents throughout the country. "Those who carry out terrorist operations in Iraq either come from Iran or are funded by Iran to carry out their operations", Major-General Othman Al-Qanemi said in an interview with the Al-Yawm Al-Akhar weekly. "We have arrested a number of the Iranian regime's mercenaries and have handed them over to the Interior Ministry so that they would be prosecuted," Al-Qanemi said.

The National Guards commander added, "All those arrested, particularly in this province, either came from Iran or have been influenced and funded by Iran to carry out their operations".

Iraqi cleric accuses Iran of spying on Shiite leader



Iran Focus Jan. 27 Baghdad,— An independent Shiite cleric accused Iran of spying on Iraq's most influential religious figure. In an interview with Al-Arabia television, senior cleric Ayad Jamaloddin said, "Iranian intelligence agents have bought a number of houses in the road of the residence of [Ayatollah Ali] Sistani, and listen to his private conversations. There is no

doubt that Iran is meddling in the affairs of Iraq". "The Iraqi people, especially Shiites, will not allow Iranian or non-Iranian meddling in the affairs of Iraq", he added. In response to a question about the pro-Iran Shiite slate running in the January 30th elections, Jamaladdin accused the group of being a "Persian List" of candidates. In a separate development, the National Guards commander in the southern Iraqi city of Al-Diwaniya accused Iran of carrying out attacks and funding insurgents throughout the country. "Those who carry out terrorist operations in Iraq either come from Iran or are funded by Iran to carry out their operations", Major-General Othman Al-Qanemi said in an interview with the Al-Yawm Al-Akhar weekly. "We have arrested a number of the Iranian regime's mercenaries and have handed them over to the Interior Ministry so that they would be prosecuted," Al-Qanemi said. The National Guards commander added, "All those arrested, particularly in this province, either came from Iran or have been influenced and funded by Iran to carry out their operations".

Bush Tells Iran to Stay Out of Iraq Vote

Associated Press *January 26, By SAM F. GHATTAS BEIRUT, Lebanon* - Iran should stay out of Iraq's elections, President Bush said Wednesday on pan-Arab television. "Let's be clear, the Iranians should not be in a position to influence the elections," Bush said of Sunday's polls in an interview with the Dubai-based satellite channel Al-Arabiya. His remarks were voiced over in Arabic and translated into English by The Associated Press. U.S. and Iraqi officials have expressed fears that Iran, a Shiite Muslim-majority state on Iraq's eastern border, is trying to expand its influence through the elections, in which Iraqi Shiites are expected to win the largest number of seats in a transitional national assembly. Iran has rejected accusations it was trying to influence the elections, saying that Iraqis have made it clear they won't take orders from abroad. Bush said he does not think the elections will produce a pro-Iranian government in Baghdad. "The future of Iraq is based on the Iraqi nationality and the Iraqi character and the Iraqi people. There's been a problem between Iran and Iraq for a long time and I am confident that Iraq's people, pride, history and traditions are what the new government will focus on," he said. Bush also paid tribute to Iraqis and urged them to vote this weekend. "I am proud of Iraq and its people," Bush said. "I want to express my admiration for the courage of Iraqis who are ready to develop democracy and strengthen it." He said the elections presented Iraqis with a "historic opportunity." "I know that thousands and thousands of Iraqis want to vote. They love the idea that they'll be able to vote. I hope that the largest number of people participates," he said. He also singled out Iraq's minority Sunni Muslim community. "I hope that all the Sunnis participate in the elections," Bush added. Sunni leaders have called for a boycott of the polls, arguing they cannot be free and fair due to persistent violence in Iraq and the U.S. military presence. The Sunni minority wielded great influence under ousted dictator Saddam Hussein. Many insurgents are Sunnis. Bush expressed sorrow for the loss of life in Wednesday's crash of U.S. Marine transport helicopter in which 31 U.S. troops died. "The attack reminds us of the dangers from military operations," the president said. "But I am convinced that our helping Iraq to get its freedom is an important issue because that will, in the long run, affect the entire world."

Human right violations and protest in Iran

Minor sentenced to death in Iran



Iran Focus, Jan. 26 Tehran – A seventeen-year-old boy was sentenced to execution by a Tehran court. The boy, only identified by his first name Sattar, was accused of murder. Sattar allegedly stabbed to death a man by the name of Mahmoud a few months ago after a scuffle at a phone booth in Islamshahr (southern Tehran). The exact date of the execution has not been announced. Last week a young man who was accused of killing a member of Iran's security forces when he was a minor was hanged in the notorious Evin prison in Tehran. Iman Farrokhi who was 17 at the time of the offence was on death row in the Tehran Centre for Reform and Education (Juvenile Prison). Mohammad T., another teenager currently in one of Iran's Centers for Reform and Education, is to also be hanged to death in the coming weeks for allegedly stabbing someone when he was 14. His sentence was approved by Iran's Supreme Court. Under Iranian law, girls above the age of nine and boys above the age of fifteen are

considered as adults and could be executed for capital offences. At present at least 30 juveniles are on death row in Tehran and Rajai-Shahr (40km west of the Iranian capital) for offences they have been alleged to have committed under the age of 18.

Iran police attacks theater protesters, makes arrests



Iran Focus Jan 26 Tehran, – A midnight raid by members of a special police force on protesters at the main theater in Tehran led to several arrests, according to eye-witnesses. Several hundred people had waited for hours on Tuesday evening to watch *Souvenir Picture*, a new play by Iranian director Qotbaddin Sadeghi, at the capital's City Theater. They were first promised that a late-night session would be staged, but theater directors went back on their word and ruled out another show. The crowd of mainly young people, who had waited for hours in line to watch the play, began a protest that rapidly turned political. Police commandos were summoned to the scene and used force to disperse the angry protesters. Several young persons were arrested and their fate remains unknown.