



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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Iran 'Will Be Dealt With,' Bush Says

Washington Post, April 22, 2004, Washington - President Bush told newspaper editors in Washington yesterday that Iran "will be dealt with, starting through the United Nations" if it does not stop developing nuclear weapons and begin total cooperation with international inspectors.

Bush said he will encourage allies to insist to the Iranians that they live up to commitments to cooperate with U.N. inspectors and end any enriching and reprocessing of uranium.

"The Iranians need to feel the pressure from the world that any nuclear weapons program will be uniformly condemned -- it's essential that they hear that message," he said. "The development of a nuclear weapon in Iran is intolerable, and a program is intolerable. . . . Otherwise, they will be dealt with, starting through the United Nations."

Earlier this month, Iran pledged to speed up cooperation with the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency, but called for an end of inspections by June.

The language was reminiscent of comments Bush made about Iraq long before the war, and to admonitions he has issued to Syria. Iran, along with Iraq and North Korea, was part of the "axis of evil" in his State of the Union address in 2002.

Bush said last July that Iran and Syria "will be held accountable" if they failed to cooperate more fully with the administration's campaign against terrorism.

Administration officials said they have no plans to attack Iran, and that Bush's policy on Tehran had not changed. But the remarks offered a window into Bush's long-range view of relations with Tehran. He usually speaks from a text but aides said he wanted to speak yesterday without a script, using just a list of topics he wanted to cover.

The administration said in October it was not pursuing a policy of government change in Tehran. But the White House has alternated between a confrontational and conciliatory stance, and Bush's comment could inflame relations with Iran.....

Shadows of Tehran over Iraq

Christian Science Monitor, April 19, Baghdad - Iran's five-day effort in Najaf raises concerns for US over how much pull Iran possesses.

The Iranian diplomats left Iraq empty handed. But even the failure of a five-day Iranian effort to defuse a standoff between a firebrand Shiite cleric and US forces lets Washington know that Tehran isn't just a spectator...

In recent days, senior US military and civilian officials have repeatedly cast Iran - which President Bush calls part of an "axis of evil" - as a secret backer of the anti-American cleric Moqtada al-Sadr and his Mahdi army....

Experts say Iran has been actively setting up "networks" in Iraq to be made ready to destabilize things in case of any US action against Iran. "The Iranians want to be in a position to meddle. They will gather intelligence, maybe collect weapons, to exploit a situation if America were to attack them," says a CPA adviser. "If you are Iranian, it would be sensible to create networks."



Iran rants - Tehran's anti-American propaganda campaign

The Weekly Standard, April 17 - In light of Iran's growing political role in Iraq (to say nothing of reports of unofficial activity by Iranian agents), there is cause for concern in the steady stream of anti-American and anti-Coalition propaganda, including inflammatory lies, that continues to flow from Iran to audiences in Iraq and other countries in the region.

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Even as a delegation from the Iranian foreign ministry arrived in Baghdad on April 14 in response to a British request for Tehran's help defusing the current unrest, radio and television stations in Iran were sending out messages tailored for Iraq and the rest of the Arabic-speaking world...

The Arabic service of the official Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting can be heard in Baghdad on four am and fm frequencies. Iran also transmits in Arabic on the 24-hour Al Alam satellite television and on the Sahar television station...

A series about the destruction of Iraqi cities on Al-Alam in March was entitled "The Harvest of One Year of American Occupation."

Nor are Arabic-speakers the only audience Tehran targets. It has responded to the replacement of the Taliban by a pro-American government and the presence of U.S. troops in Afghanistan with a relatively sophisticated multi-lingual broadcast operation designed to exploit ethnic differences in Afghanistan. This began in December 2001 and continues to this day...

Iran's Pashtu-language broadcasts have kept up a constant stream of anti-U.S. insinuation and outright lies that play on ethnic sensitivities and nationalism...

Iranian hostility to the United States is not new, but it has a new twist since the ousters of the Taliban and Saddam Hussein: Perceiving itself as surrounded by an enemy, Tehran is pursuing a systematic effort to arouse the region against the United States and to undermine peace in Iraq and stability elsewhere.

What Iran wants

The New York Post, April 18 - While Washington is looking for ways to adjust its strategy in Iraq, Tehran seems to be preparing to "settle scores" with it by preventing the emergence of a pro-American regime in Baghdad... Tehran was as glad as Washington to see Saddam go. But his removal created another, potentially more dangerous, threat to the Khomeinists: the emergence in Iraq of a democratic system in which the Shiites would play the central role....

The Khomeinist leaders remain confident that the United States will be driven out of Iraq "humiliated and chastised." To achieve that, they have devised a strategy of destabilizing Iraq without provoking direct confrontation with America. A rare insight into Tehran's thinking was offered April 9 by Hashemi Rafsanjani, a mullah often regarded as the Khomeinist regime's "strongman."... He praised Saddam Hussein's "strategy of distributing arms among 6 million Iraqis" on the eve of the war. "These people have enough arms and ammunitions for six months," Rafsanjani claimed. That indicates Tehran's belief that various armed groups in Iraq will be able to maintain a level of insecurity in Iraq right to the eve of the American presidential election in November....

The Khomeinist leaders, while supporting mainstream Iraqi Shiite opposition groups, including the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq and the Ad-Da'awah (The Call) Party, had made sure to have another Shiite card up their sleeves...

Tehran knows that the Iraqi Shiites, if united, would no longer need Iranian patronage - and might emerge as an ideological rival to the regime in Tehran.

Diyala sheikhs condemn Tehran's mediation in Iraq

Az-Zaman daily (Iraq), April 19 - The tribal sheikhs of Diyala Province announced their position against Iran's mediation in the current crisis between Moqtada Sadr and the U.S. forces, which has almost reached an impasse. Informed sources said a number of sheikhs of Diyala province took part in a conference held in commemoration of Arba'een (40th day of martyrdom of the third Shiite leader Imam Hussein).

In their speeches they rejected the arrival of a delegation from Iran's foreign ministry as a clear interference in Iraq's internal affairs and said it would be a source of turmoil.

At the end, the participants wrote a letter to Iraq's Civil Administrator Paul Bremer and stressed in part, "We emphasize that the only solution to this problem is to fight against fundamentalism, which has beset Iraq from inside and outside."

Bad neighbor

The New Republic, Apr. 16, by Michael Rubin - Sheik Muhammad Al Abadi, a member of the Badr Corps the more radical military wing of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (Sciri), an Islamist political group, didn't mince words as we sat in January at his home in the southern Iraqi city of Al Amarah, "The Americans may think they will have peace in eight months. But, even if they stay eighteen years, we will never give them peace."...

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Al Abadi's walls were decorated with a picture of his late older brother and a large portrait of Iran's Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

There's a factor largely unappreciated by the U.S. media and unchallenged by the CPA: the well-organized, highly effective infiltration of Shia into Iraq by the government of Iran....

My first night in Baghdad (in July 2003) ... Arabs and Kurds alike warned that Iranian intelligence was taking advantage of the U.S. failure to secure Iraq's borders. Later that month, several Iraqis warned me that over 10,000 Iranians had entered Iraq....



Sadr himself has become a recipient of Iranian cash. Iran's charge d'affaires in Baghdad, Hassan Kazemi Qomi, maintains close relations with Sadr. According to the April 6 edition of the Arabic newspaper al-Hayat, Qomi is not actually a diplomat but rather a member of the Revolutionary Guards, the elite Iranian terrorist network dedicated to the export of jihad; Qomi previously served as a liaison to Hezbollah...

Sadr is not the only Islamist Shia leader receiving aid from Tehran. When I visited Nasiriya, a dusty town in southern Iraq, local clerics complained bitterly about Iranian intelligence officials swarming into town, creating a network of informers and funneling money to anti-U.S. forces. At a town-hall meeting in Nasiriya last October, tribal leaders repeatedly condemned the United States for failing to confront the "hidden hand"--Iranians coming into the city...

By January, the anti-U.S. Badr Corps, trained and financed by Iran's Revolutionary Guards, had established a large office on Nasiriya's riverfront promenade. Below murals of Khomeini and the late Ayatollah Mohammad Bakr Al Hakim hung banners declaring, no to America, no to Israel, no to occupation. Two blocks away in the central market, vendors sold posters of Supreme Leader Khomeini...

The Iranian government has not limited its support to a single faction or party. Rather, Tehran's strategy appears to be to support both the radicals seeking immediate confrontation with the U.S. occupation and Islamist political parties...

This February, I spoke with a local governor from southern Iraq... The governor complained that the CPA was doing little to stop the influx of Iranian money to district councilmen and prominent tribal and religious officials....

In the wake of Sadr's uprising, Washington is faced with the same choice: End Iran's infiltration through forceful action, or wish it away. How long can we afford to keep choosing the latter?

Michael Rubin is a resident scholar at AEI.

The Iranian Hand

The Wall Street Journal, April 16 by Michael Ledeen- Much is being made about the irony of an Iranian envoy arriving in Iraq to help negotiate a solution to the U.S. standoff with radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. How could we allow a charter member of President Bush's "Axis of Evil" to negotiate a "peace" with the thuggish Sadr and his band of fanatical militants?

Indeed, the irony is as thick as Sadr's own beard. But the fact that Iran holds sway over him and other Shiite militants in Iraq should surprise no one. Despite repeated denials by the State Department, it is an open secret throughout the Middle East that Sadr has been receiving support -- if not precise orders -- from the mullahs in Iran for some time now.

One wonders what Foggy Bottom's analysts make of Sadr's recent visit to Iran, when he met with Hashemi Rafsanjani (the number two power in the regime), Murtadha Radha'i (head of intelligence for the Revolutionary Guards) and Brigadier General Qassim Suleimani (the al-Quds Army commander in charge of Iraqi affairs). And what might they say about the fact that much of Sadr's funding comes straight from Ayatollah al-Haeri, one of the closest allies of the Iranian supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei?

Iraq cannot be peaceful and secure so long as Tehran sends its terrorist cadres across the border. Naturally, our troops will engage -- and kill -- any infiltrators they encounter. But we can be sure that there will be others to take their place. The only way to end Tehran's continual sponsorship of terror is to bring about the demise of the present Iranian regime. And as it happens, we have an excellent opportunity to achieve this objective, without the direct use of military power against Iran. There is a critical mass of pro-democracy citizens

there, who would like nothing more than to rid themselves of their oppressors. They need help, but they neither need nor desire to be liberated by force of arms. Above all, they want to hear our leaders state clearly and repeatedly -- as Ronald Reagan did with the "Evil Empire" -- that regime change in Iran is the goal of American policy.... This sort of political campaign aimed at toppling the Iranian regime -- allied to firm punitive action within Iraq against terrorists of all stripes -- will make our task in Iraq manifestly less dangerous. Ultimately, security in Iraq will come in large measure from freedom and reform in Iran (as well as in Syria and Saudi Arabia). This is a truth that we should not hide from, nor be fearful to take on.

Michael Ledeen is a resident scholar at AEI

Iraqis don't want Islamic rule, just as Iranian people

VOA, Farsi service, April 17 – Senator John McCain, ranking member of the Senate Armed Forces Committee, said most Iraqis do not want an extremist-Islamic government such as Iran's.

McCain: I cannot imagine that they would want this. Just like I don't think the people of Iran support such a thing today. If the people of Iran also had the right to vote, they would overthrow the extremist regime. The Iraqi people are aware and they have an advanced society and would never vote for such a thing on their own will.