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USADI Commentary

Toward a Coherent Policy in Support of Regime Change in Iran

In calling for a strong policy toward Iran, Lt. Gen. McInerney and Maj. Gen. Valley, two veteran military analysts, wrote in the Wall Street Journal yesterday, "It is imperative... that we immediately and forcefully check Iran, inside and outside of Iraq." In doing so, they cited the clerical regime's sinister designs in Iraq.

The two added that "the best way to end the threat posed by Iran is end the mullahs' rule of Iran," and called for removal of the Iranian main opposition organization, the Mujahideen-e-Khalq from the State Department's list of terrorist organizations, saying that group is "the most organized, disciplined, and popular opposition movement in Iran."

Similarly, Jed Babbin, the former Deputy Undersecretary of Defense under President George H. W. Bush, told a recent symposium on Iran's nuclear program that "Iran is, by far, the most dangerous terrorist nation. Their nuclear ambitions and their unarguable involvement in global terrorism make them our number one problem."

Mr. Babbin went on to say, "We should be pursuing regime change in Iran now, through covert operations, support for Iranian opposition groups (such as the Mujahideen e Khalq, which we wrongly labeled a terrorist group at Tehran's request)."

Given the current stalemate in Washington concerning the policy on Iran, these bold policy recommendation are to say the least refreshing if not over due. But the obvious question is why these veteran analysts and policy experts see this urgency and why the removal of the MEK from the State Department terror list is indispensable to the any serious policy toward Iran.

The explosive "Iran problem" we are facing both in Iraq and in the nuclear arena is the same "mullah problem" the Iranian people have been fighting against for more than two decades now.

Never before in the history of US-Iran relationship, has the need for democracy in Iran and the security interests of the United States been so intimately intertwined. This fact has recently been in full display in Iran where harsher crackdown, including public executions particularly of minors in recent weeks, has been matched by an increasing number of suicide volunteers clerical regime has recruited for dispatch to Iraq.

Iran has been on a crash course to pass the nuclear point of no return and make its political and ideological gains in Iraq irreversible. The urgency these policy experts are talking about has been imposed on us by the tyrants in Iran. Unlike our policy makers in Washington, the mullahs are not deferring these issues to post presidential election. They have in fact been exploiting this apparent policy paralysis in Washington to act with impunity.

The terrorist designation of the MEK was a by-product of the failed policy of engagement pursued by the previous administration following the presidency of Khatami in 1997. That was the case then and it is now.

For 16 months after the war, the United States and law enforcement agencies interviewed the MEK members at their main Camp, Ashraf, in Iraq. Senior U.S. administration officials told the New York Times in July, "The United States has found no basis to charge members of an Iranian opposition group in Iraq [the MEK] with violations of American law." The State Department also confirmed that the dissident group was not a belligerent during the Iraq war.

Now, with the failure of the policy of engagement and all of its aliases such as "grand bargain" and "direct dialogue", the only viable approach is the formulation of a meaningful and coherent policy in support of regime change by Iranians.

Recommendations by Generals McInerney and Valley, and Mr. Babbin are serious practical policy proposals based on a realistic analysis of the gravity of the threat the mullahs pose to the well-being of Iranians and our security interests.

Blacklisting this dissident group has not only hampered its campaign against the mullahs and weakened a significant segment of Iran's democracy movement; it has also put our Iran policy in a stray jacket limiting our ability to reach out to the opposition groups in Iran. It has also enabled the regime to justify the savage treatment of its dissidents and MEK members and supporters as part of the "war on terrorism".

Generals McInerney and Valley wrote, "We understand these suggestions will strike some as too strong. Considering, however, that Iran is poised to make a play for regional dominance, our countermove must be the strongest we have ever made in our 25-year cold war with Iran. Iraq's success is dependent on it." They could not have said it any better.

The US Alliance for Democratic Iran (USADI), is an independent, non-profit organization, which aims to advance a US policy on Iran that will benefit America's interests, through supporting Iranian people's aspirations for a democratic, secular, and peaceful government, free of tyranny, fundamentalism, weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism. The USADI is not affiliated with any government agencies, political groups or parties.

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Bush Can't Afford Inaction on Iran

Hyped reports about an Israeli "mole" in the Pentagon are falling apart faster than the Kerry campaign. It now seems likely that the analyst in question was, at worst, guilty of mishandling a classified document, not espionage. According to news accounts, the memo he's accused of passing to pro-Israel lobbyists called for U.S. support of Iranian dissidents trying to overthrow their dictatorial government. This may not be spy-novel stuff, but it does raise an important question: Why hasn't President Bush implemented the recommendations reportedly contained in the Pentagon paper?

The case for action seems overwhelming in light of Bush's oft-stated warning: "Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists." There is no question which side Iran is on. The State Department calls Iran the "most active state sponsor of terrorism in the world." ... A number of Al Qaeda operatives remain in Iran, ostensibly under house arrest but in all likelihood allowed to carry on their deadly work. Iran has trained and armed Muqtada Sadr's militia, which has been attacking U.S. forces in Iraq...

Why would Iran be worried about being attacked by the United States? Because it is close to producing a nuclear bomb... Hassan Abasi, a senior member of the Revolutionary Guards, recently boasted that Iran had "a strategy drawn up for the destruction of Anglo-Saxon civilization."

Faced with this grave and gathering threat, John F. Kerry advocates appeasement.... Iran has already violated a 2003 agreement with Britain, France and Germany to curtail its nuclear weapons development. The mullahs are hellbent on going nuclear; they are not going to give up what one Iranian newspaper editor calls "the rare pearl for which we have labored greatly."

If we can't trust Tehran to make a deal, then we need a more confrontational approach... Luckily, Iran has a robust opposition movement that makes peaceful change from within a feasible alternative.

Self-styled realists claim that the tyrants of Tehran can't be budged, but then that's what they said about the Soviet commissars too, right up until the fall of the Berlin Wall. As in the Soviet bloc, most people in Iran have lost faith in their rulers. Many have even braved regime goons to protest in the streets. If they can succeed in establishing a representative government, it will not matter whether Iran has nuclear weapons, any more than it matters that India, Israel, France or any other democracy has nukes. Conversely, even without nukes, the terrorist-sponsoring mullahs would remain a major threat. We need to focus on the nature of the regime, not simply the nature of its weapons.

Bush has recognized the need for democratization in the Middle East, yet, oddly enough, he doesn't seem to be doing much to help Iranian freedom fighters. Bush's own deputy secretary of State has said that regime change is not U.S. policy. I hope this is just a ruse to hide covert actions, but I fear it's the truth. On Iran, as in so many other areas, the administration seems to be paralyzed by disagreements between Defense Department hawks and State Department doves. If Bush doesn't break through this gridlock soon, he will greatly undermine his claim to offer strong leadership in the war on terror.

Excerpts from an article by Max Boot, a Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York.

Reuters

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Iran Using EU to Buy Time to Get Atomic Bomb

VIENNA -- Iran is using negotiations with the European Union's "big three" on suspending sensitive nuclear activities to buy the time it needs to get ready to make atomic weapons, an Iranian exile and intelligence officials said.

With intelligence sources saying Iran could be months away from nuclear weapons capability, the United States wants Iran reported to the U.N. Security Council immediately, charging Tehran uses its civilian atomic energy program as a front to develop the bomb. Tehran vehemently denies the charge.

"Iran continues to use existing differences between the U.S. and Europe to their advantage and tries to drag out talks with the EU to buy time," Alireza Jafarzadeh, an Iranian exile who has reported accurately on Iran's nuclear program in the past, told Reuters. "They feel they have bought at least 10 months," Jafarzadeh said. He said he was citing sources in Iran familiar with the results of a recent high-level meeting on Iran's nuclear program attended by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Jafarzadeh said officials at the meeting also decided to allocate an additional \$2 billion from Iran's central bank reserves to supplement some \$14 billion already spent on what he called Iran's "secret nuclear weapons program."

The EU trio remain committed to a process of engagement with Tehran. However an intelligence official said a failure to act now as Washington would like, could be decisive for the development of an Iranian nuclear weapons capability.

"The Europeans express helplessness, despair and lack of strategy, which is exactly what (the Iranians) want to hear," a senior non-U.S. intelligence official said. "This is their golden opportunity, between now and the coming of a new (U.S.) administration."