

From: Emily Blout [eblout@niacouncil.org]
Sent: Thursday, August 30, 2007 1:33 PM
To: Lynn M. Kunkle; michaeldostrolenk@gmail.com
Cc: Trita Parsi; 'Babak Talebi'; Sara Shokravi; 'Shabnam Sahandy'
Subject: De-briefing on the meetings on Wednesday

Michael and Lynn,

Thank you for joining us for the meeting on democracy funding yesterday. Your commentary and insight was extremely valuable. The following is a summary of all of yesterday's meetings. Please make any additions/corrections necessary.

The meeting with Ven Neralla from Rep. Barbara Lee's office was positive, although the discussion was not as focused as we would have liked on the democracy funding. When I follow-up with Ven today with the promised information on sanctions (Ivan Eland's report, the report by Dewey Ballantine (commissioned by Jake Colvin's group), NIAC's analysis of HR 1400, and the report by Terror Free Tomorrow), I will reiterate our message on the democracy funding.

I think the meeting with the appropriations staffer from Nita Lowey's office went well. Trita and I were pleased to find Steve Lopes, who works specifically on the democracy program funding, willing to consider our concerns and suggestions. He asked that we get back to him with information about how other countries have approached democracy funding in Iran.

After you departed, Trita and I met with Paul Grove, minority clerk for the Senate state and foreign operations sub-committee (Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH)). Trita and Paul hit it off right away. We were delighted to find Mr. Grove's views in line with our own, as he has had extensive knowledge of the problems posed by explicit "democracy" funding programs enacted by congress in the past and present, most recently in the case of Egypt. He was extremely critical of the state department's administration of middle east democracy initiatives such as MEPI and said such operations/funding would be better left to the National Endowment for Democracy (as that was what it was created for). As for what could be done, he brought up the idea of "burying the money" in the greater context of funding for the Middle East, rather than specifically appropriating it to "democracy programs in Iran". Specifically, he talked about providing NED "not withstanding authority" to appropriate funding for Iran- thus deflating the role of the State department and USAID. He also raised the possibility of including a "blanket waiver" for non-profit NGO exchanges between the US and Iran. He asked me to identify and analyze all of the provisions of law necessary for inclusion in such a waiver. Hopefully, I'll have this analysis to him soon.

Following the meeting with Paul, I attended a meeting with two staffers, Chris Homan, Foreign Policy Legislative Assistant, and Reema Dodin, Legislative Aide, from Senator Dick Durbin's office. Durbin (D-IL) is the assistant majority leader in the Senate and sits on the state and foreign operations sub-committee. He is also the co-sponsor of the Iran Counter-Proliferation Act of 2007 (S970).

This meeting was also very productive. Homan used to work for USAID and his wife works for NED. Homan was very responsive to our concerns and pointed out that this had been a problem in regards to other countries in the past. He said it was important to

get a meeting with Tim Rieser, the majority clerk on the sub-committee (Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT)) and said we could use his name to get one. He also expressed interested in including a provision in HR1400 that would lift sanctions on NGO-NGO exchanges. He said he would be willing to pitch our argument to reduce or remove the democracy funding appropriation (or to take other positive measures) to the Senator, provided that he felt he had all the necessary information to make his case. He asked me to get back to him with a summary of the cultural exchange programs currently being conducted, including what types of exchanges are being done (not just those conducted by NGOs) and what is and what is not allowed under current law.

I also attended a meeting in the morning with Tim Morrissey and Peter Frosch from Representative Betty McCullum's office. McCullum is on the House sub-committee and voted 'yes' on Iran sanctions. Other than that, she has not been active on Iran. Frosch worked on the state and foreign opps bill when it was being debated by the House, but was unaware of our concerns and the problems with VOA. He asked me to provide him with a breakdown of the Iran-related funding in the bill as well as some numbers on VOA Persian listenership historically and compared to other broadcasters in Iran (such as BBC). He also said to keep him up to date on who else from the committee is on-board, and said that the congresswomen might be able to make a few calls to members (say,when its in conference).

Emily Blout

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From: Emily L Blout [eblout@niacouncil.org]
Sent: Thursday, July 17, 2008 12:31 PM
To: Michael V. Akbar; Sasan Dehghan (sasan.dehghan@cyberlockconsulting.com)
Cc: 'Babak Talebi'; Patrick Disney (pdisney@niacouncil.org)
Subject: Meeting information for Friday, July 18 with Van Hollen
Attachments: Talking Points_H.CON.RES 362_ S.RES.580_July 2008.2.doc; New Iran Policy_NIAC_4.08.pdf; In District thank you_blank letter_ June 2008.doc; In district meeting report_NIAC 3 23 08.doc.doc

Michael and Sasan,

Thank you for taking the initiative to meet with your Congressman. Meetings like these let lawmakers know that the community is paying attention to what they do, and that issues like H Con Res 362 are important to us.

I am writing today to share some important information about your meeting.

The meeting will be held on **Friday, July 18 at 1:00pm** at Rep. Chris Van Hollen's DC office at **1707 Longworth House Office Building**, District of Columbia 20515-2008.

You will be meeting with Ken Cummings, the military legislative assistant to the Congressman.

I have attached a series of documents to give you some background on the bill and help you prepare for the meeting.

In-district constituent meetings are usually short (around 20 minutes). In order to make this meeting as powerful as possible, it is important to have a game plan and stay on message. The general structure of the meeting should look like this:

- 1) Personal Introductions: Beginning with Michael, each individual will have about 20 seconds to introduce themselves
- 2) NIAC Introduction: Emily will talk for a moment about NIAC and what we do
- 3) Thank You: Selected participants will express thanks for some positive actions the Congressman has taken.
- 4) Sharing Concerns: Selected participants will share particular concerns about the blockade resolution (H Con Res 362), working off pre-identified talking points
- 5) Thanks and follow up: Participants will thank the staffer for his time and ask about how they can follow up with the Congressman

There is a mandatory coordinating conference call tonight at 5:00pm. You will receive an email invitation shortly.

Thanks!

Emily Blout

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"Promoting Iranian American Participation In American Civic Life"

**Legislative Watch Program
Twelve Month Report
(September 2007 – 2008)**

Over the past twelve months, NIAC's Legislative Watch Program (*LegWatch*) has become a major informational resource about developments on Capitol Hill for the greater Iranian-American community and the general public. By providing in-depth reporting and analysis of events inside and outside the halls of Congress, *LegWatch* has instilled in the Iranian-American community a new sense of confidence in the democratic process and has compelled them to participate in the debate on issues that affect them the most.

The *LegWatch* program has made impressive headway over the past year. Its achievements have been substantial in both the quantitative and qualitative sense.

Quantitatively, NIAC has produced extensive reports and legislative analysis that has informed and educated the community. Over the last twelve months, NIAC has issued over **56** *LegWatch* e-bulletins through its email listserv and authored over **167 articles**, including **90** relating to specific legislation or committee hearings. More than **40 articles** have been translated into Farsi and published in over a dozen Persian media outlets.

As a testament to the program's efficiency and success, NIAC's mailing list has increased to **35,000 subscribers from 25,000** in September 2007. NIAC's paid membership has grown to **2,500 from 1,800** during this period, and the website's traffic continues to rapidly grow.

NIAC conducted upwards of **1000 hours of research** on key legislative issues and reported back to the community. In order to gain inside information for its analysis and reports, *LegWatch* staff conducted over **250 informational meetings with members of Congress or their staff**. In addition to written reporting, NIAC informed members about important legislative developments and answered questions through over **20 personal conference calls**.

Qualitatively, NIAC has made a marked impact on the amount and quality of information available to the Iranian-American community. In particular, the program has provided the community and the American public with critical information regarding:

- * New and ongoing sanctions and divestment legislation
- * Efforts on Capitol Hill to prevent war with Iran and promote diplomacy
- * Alternative solutions to the nuclear stand-off
- * Efforts to support democracy and human rights in Iran
- * Negative or counterproductive legislation that increases the risk of war

NIAC's work on these issues can be best understood as part of the larger organizational advancement of the *LegWatch* program over the last year. During this time period, the program has established a record of valuable, unbiased reporting and analysis and a demonstrated capacity to respond to or predict legislative developments and rapidly inform the community. The following is a detailed discussion of these achievements.

➤ ***NIAC has become a proven source of information and analysis.***

NIAC has steadily grown in its reputation as a quality source of timely reporting and analysis of sanctions legislation and other developments pertinent to the Iranian American community. NIAC has raised awareness of all new and ongoing efforts to impose additional sanctions, support diplomacy, or undermine US-Iran engagement through its extensive legislative coverage on the website and e-bulletins. *LegWatch* staff continues to monitor and analyze any and all Iran related bills as they are introduced, shedding light on the ongoing policy debate within Congress and among Washington think-tanks.

A major focus of these efforts has been sanctions. In roughly one year, NIAC has tracked no less than 45 sanctions bills and has provided its membership with regular updates on the nature and progress of the most radical or popular of these bills. NIAC produced a three part series of articles on the House Government Oversight Committee hearings on US-Iran policy as well as several articles and email updates on the highly popular unilateral sanctions bills (HR. 1400 and

S. 970). Its ten page analysis of HR 1400 was widely circulated within the Iranian-American community and was published in the bi-annual legal review journal of the Iranian American Bar Association.

Staff also tracked and reported on developments with the Iran divestment movement on both the US state and federal level. In addition to its expansive coverage, NIAC reports were unique in that they included facts about the efficacy and historical track record of the divestment tactic with regard to Iran as well as other countries.

The *LegWatch* program has also demonstrated an ability to respond to the changing interests of its readership and spotlight new ideas as they emerge. In response to an overwhelming number of inquiries, NIAC launched an in-depth investigation into rumors of a presidential initiative to establish a US interests section in Iran. In addition to reporting on the subject as it was raised in hearings and floor statements, *LegWatch* tracked the position of members of Congress via the media and in constituent correspondence. Most recently, it reported on a little known letter to President Bush urging the establishment of a US interests section in Tehran by seven influential senators.

➤ ***NIAC has rapidly reported on key legislative developments.***

A critical function of the *LegWatch* program has been to expose the Iranian-American community to the legislative process and specific policy developments in Congress early enough for it to contribute to the debate. Over the last year, NIAC has developed and honed its rapid reaction capability to inform the community of last minute developments on Capitol Hill.

For example, NIAC was the first to report that a seemingly innocuous house and senate resolution, H. Con. Res. 362 and S. Res. 580 was in fact, an authorization of a naval blockade and a dangerous precedent for war. Thanks to extensive monitoring and key congressional relationships, NIAC was proactive in its efforts to inform the community before the resolution reached an advanced stage. NIAC produced extensive analysis of the resolution, solicited expert legal interpretations of the bill language and its impact, and moved quickly to inform NIAC's

membership, the peace and security community, and Congress. Its effort informed and inspired several op-eds on the subject, including a piece in *The Washington Times* by economist Cyrus Bina and retired Colonial Sam Gardiner. In addition, NIAC staff conducted four separate interviews on national radio stations and Persian broadcasts and was quoted in several newspaper articles.

NIAC exhibited a similar rapid reporting capacity last fall. The Kyl-Leiberman amendment was offered as a surprise amendment to a routine government spending bill and sought to consolidate Congressional support for possible offensive military action against Iran and stepped up sanctions. NIAC was among several groups to expand the public debate on this issue. Through the duration of the proceedings, NIAC issued email updates on floor developments to its members and published analysis of the final amendment language as passed.

➤ ***NIAC has increasingly covered US policy on human rights in Iran.***

As the political circumstances begin to shift to the side of diplomacy, NIAC has sought to expand its US policy coverage to include the important issue of democracy promotion and human rights in Iran. For instance, NIAC provided in-depth coverage of the Iran democracy fund appropriations process, highlighting the internal debate within Congress over the efficacy of the program. NIAC authored op-eds in *The Hill* and *The Huffington Post* about the issue and *The Washington Post* featured an article on the rising opposition to the program among foreign policy and human rights organizations in Washington. Its reporting brought into the limelight the courageous public testimony of Iranian human rights leaders such as Shirin Ebadi, Akbar Ganji, and Emadeddin Baghi and stirred a vigorous public exchange between Iranian Americans, lawmakers and policy activists via *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal* and other media outlets.

NIAC continues to produce updates on the democracy fund appropriation for 2009. Most recently, *LegWatch* produced an article featuring new analysis and inside information on the revised language for 2009 and discussed its likely impact on the State Department program and Iranian civil society.

Conclusion

Over the last year, the educational arm of the *LegWatch* program has provided robust monitoring and reporting on events on Capitol Hill and has fine tuned its early warning mechanisms to inform the community of important policy and legislative developments. This in turn, has fostered within the community a new sense of awareness and familiarity with the legislative and policy process, inspiring more Iranian Americans to participate and contribute to the American democratic system. Today, *LegWatch* serves as a vital informational resource for the Iranian-American community, the media, and the general public regarding US Iran policy developments, the risk for war, and the need for diplomacy.

In sum, NIAC's *LegWatch* program has advanced significantly over the last year. With the generous support of OSI, NIAC may continue to serve the Iranian American community and greater public through its diligent monitoring, reporting, and analysis of legislative and policy developments on Capitol Hill.

Your support is needed now more than ever. NIAC has been one of the few organizations covering human rights legislation, whether it is the Iran Democracy fund or non-binding resolutions. Human rights is an area that will hopefully grow in importance as US-Iran engagement grows. It is critical that NIAC maintain and expand its reporting capacity as these changed circumstances are realized and that the Iranian American community, which has a central stake in the advancement of human rights and democracy in their native land, is an informed, engaged actor in this debate.

Lobby groups

The policy arena in regards to Iran in the US is surprisingly empty – over the past decade, very few interest groups have played a decisive role in US foreign policy making towards Iran with the noted exception of the America Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). As the drums of war have become louder, however, new actors have emerged on this scene. Today, much indicates that the balance of power on Capitol Hill is shifting away from AIPAC, though it remains a pivotal force in this arena.

AIPAC

Since 9/11, Iran has no longer been AIPAC's top issue. It has become AIPAC's *only* issue. Yet, AIPAC is going through one of the toughest periods in its history as an organization. Two of AIPAC's key staffers on Iran, Steve Rosen and Keith Weissman, are charged with espionage for Israel and are awaiting trial. At the same time, prominent US academics have publicly argued that Israel was behind the increasingly unpopular war with Iran, creating anxiety in the Jewish-American community that they will be made the scapegoat of the Iraq fiasco, particularly mindful of the neoconservative movements' close ties to Israel.

To make matters worse, with the new Congress, AIPAC must allocate significant resources towards rebuilding ties with a new Democratic leadership that has been troubled by AIPAC's pro-Bush foreign policy positions. (At AIPAC's annual conference last year, Vice President Dick Cheney received 40 applause and 8 standing ovations when he gave the Bush Administration's toughest speech yet on Iran.) For AIPAC to take a pro-war and pro-Bush stance with the new Congress under these circumstances can be extremely risky and jeopardize AIPAC's future standing on Capitol Hill. In spite of its public announcements and efforts to give the opposite impression, there is a clear feeling on Capitol Hill that AIPAC is on the defensive.

These factors would make one expect that AIPAC would soften its stance and avoid beating the war drums on Iran. However, AIPAC's strategy has been to lower its profile and make its activities less visible than usual. But on the substance, little has changed. Indeed, the advice from Tel Aviv to AIPAC has reportedly been to go forward strong but quietly. AIPAC continues to push for a very hawkish position – both economic sanctions and military action against Iran. AIPAC's leadership recently told a senior US Senator that military strikes on Iran is “the only thing that can save Israel.” At the same time, AIPAC's is also pushing for stricter economic sanctions on Iran including a naval blockade as a fall back position in case diplomacy with Iran eliminates the military option.

An effort by AIPAC to submit a resolution calling for tougher actions against Iran was recently rebuffed by the Democratic leadership in the House. This unusual step by the Democrats may reflect the shifting mood in the legislature. AIPAC may respond to these

setbacks by further lowering its profile – or by revering its tactics and embark on a more visible and aggressive campaign. AIPAC’s annual conference in Washington DC in mid-March will give a hint of its strategic orientation in this changing political environment.

In spite of these setbacks, absent significant opposition by other interest groups, the likelihood of AIPAC succeeding in getting Congressional support for stricter financial sanctions against Iran or implementation of already existing sanctions remains fair to strong. The likelihood of Congressional support for military action as a result of AIPAC’s pressure, however, is weak.

Anti-War and Pro-Dialogue groups

As of early 2005, Washington’s heated rhetoric over Iran has attracted the attention of a variety of interest groups eager to prevent the escalation of tensions in the Middle East and the prospects of a war between the US and Iran. These groups have managed to build unprecedented support in Congress in favor of dialogue and against military action among progressive Democrats as well as conservative Republicans on Capitol Hill.

This coalition of pro-dialogue and anti-war entities consists of a diverse group of organizations ranging from arms control organizations, to Iranian American organizations, to religious groups. Key players in this coalition are the Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation, which coordinates a coalition of approximately 50 organizations, MoveOn and the National Iranian American Council.

As the most potent progressive lobby in the US, MoveOn has played a very low-profile but important role in shaping the Democratic leadership’s vocal opposition to any military campaign against Iran. MoveOn has more members in House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s district than in any other congressional district, and has managed to use its influence to with the House Speaker to rebuff AIPAC’s efforts.

This coalition has worked closely with key lawmakers such as Jack Murtha and introduced resolutions and bills that would prevent the President from initiating war with Iran without Congressional authorization. In addition, language will shortly be introduced to the supplemental prohibiting the President from using any of the Iraq funds to finance military operations against Iran.

While these groups have focused extensively on passing measures to reduce the risk for war with Iran, little attention has been paid to efforts to intensify sanctions against Iran. Furthermore, while a momentum exists for anti-war measures, no comparable opportunity exists currently for an anti-sanctions campaign. Nor is the coalition of disarmament, religious and progressive groups best suited to take on this issue. Here, the absence of pro-business interests on Capitol Hill active constitutes a key point of advantage for AIPAC.

Pro-Business groups

With the exception of USA Engage, American businesses and oil companies have after September 11 next to eliminated their efforts on Capitol Hill in favor of greater trade and contacts with Iran.

USA Engage is a coalition of approximately 500 major US companies which has retained a distant interest in the Iran issue, though the coalition has devoted little resources towards promoting trade or preventing new sanctions from being imposed. In particular, the recently imposed UN sanctions have granted the sanctions track with Iran new legitimacy and made efforts to oppose such measures on trade grounds more difficult.

However, initial efforts are currently being made to make align the trade groups with the pro-dialogue coalition and frame sanctions an initial step that invariably will lead to war. If such a coalition of pro-trade and pro-dialogue groups can be formed, the current momentum for sanctions may be significantly hampered.

Conclusion

The balance of power on Capitol Hill is currently shifted in favor of sanctions on Iran but against military action. AIPAC continues to seek both military strikes against Iran and draconian sanctions and has benefited from the absence of active lobbying by pro-trade groups. A change in heart by pro-trade coalitions may significantly hamper efforts to have Congress impose new draconian sanctions on Iran. This is great significance since Congressional sanctions are far more difficult to undo than those imposed by the Executive Branch.

NIAC 2004 PROJECT SUMMARIES

2004 ELECTIONS PROJECT

The 2004 Elections are just around the corner and NIAC plans to ensure strong Iranian-American participation. The community faces the problem of not knowing where candidates stand on issues that are close to the hearts of Iranian Americans. In addition, although there is a willingness to get involved, many Iranian Americans lack knowledge on how to get involved. Presidential candidates have recently realized the potential support they can get from the Iranian-American community, but have found difficulties in finding avenues to connect with those supporters within the community.

NIAC's 2004 Election Project will address these problems, and help answer questions about candidates that are relevant to the Iranian-American community. The project includes the following components:

- ? Organize candidate forums in which Presidential candidates address Iranian-American audiences nationwide. **NIAC has already been approached by the campaigns of Senator John Kerry, Governor Howard Dean and General Wesley Clark, and is currently working with them to organize these forums.**
- ? Encourage Iranian-American participation by helping them volunteer for, and donate to local, state, federal and presidential campaigns.
- ? Map out and publicize the positions of all the main candidates on issues that are of particular concern to Iranian Americans.
- ? Educate Iranian Americans on the electoral process and through a newsletter that deals with topics such as the primary/caucus system; third-party candidates; fundraising (including direct donations); Political Action Committees (PACs); individual donations; and campaign volunteering.
- ? Organize nationwide voter registration drives.

NIAC's 2004 Election Project will cost \$45,000.

ADVANCED CIVIC PARTICIPATION WORKSHOPS

NIAC intends to train Iranian Americans in advocacy, leadership and self-representation. Once Iranian-Americans have secured their role in American civic life, they will be able to harness this strength to influence US foreign and domestic policy and in extension social and economic development in Iran.

NIAC proposes a series of workshops, to be held in cities with high concentrations of Iranian Americans. The first series of six workshops, held in 2003, was an astounding success. In these workshops, entitled "**Demystifying Democracy: the Seven Ingredients of Influence,**" Iranian Americans learned how to translate the community's vast resources into political influence. NIAC provided the tools and information necessary for participation in civic life without imposing any set political agenda, thus allowing Iranian-Americans to take their own political stance.

The workshops served two purposes: to promote Iranian-American participation in American civic life and to show Iranian Americans that their interests can be protected through strategic involvement with governmental leaders, both local and national. Each workshop was attended by approximately 45 people and was hosted by a local Iranian-American organization.

After many of the workshops, the local communities requested that NIAC return and provide more practical training to complement the conceptual introduction supplied initially. In the proposed advanced workshops, NIAC plans to combine the successful components of the first series with customized components that cater to the varying needs of the target community. These enhanced workshops will prepare Iranian Americans for self-representation and lobbying through practical training and application-based strategies.

The project goal is the creation of a body of well-educated Iranian-American community leaders who are capable of representing the views of the community on a variety of issues including, but not limited to, civil rights, understanding of Middle Eastern cultures and US foreign policy toward the Middle East. Iranian Americans are, after all, an untapped goldmine for a more inclusive understanding of the Middle East. With proper training, they can play a crucial role in Iran and the surrounding region. Due to their unfamiliarity with, and lack of participation in the US political system, Iranian Americans have failed to play a positive role as of yet. This project is an important step towards changing that.

The project budget of \$45,000 covers the expense of ten workshops to be held across the US.

CONGRESSIONAL BREAKFAST SERIES

Many Iranian Americans are unfamiliar with the process of meeting their government representatives, and feel uncomfortable doing so individually. As a result, their unique perspective and expertise, particularly important for the conduct of US foreign policy in the Middle East, has been absent in the policy formulation processes.

In response, in 2003 NIAC launched its ***Congressional Breakfast Series***, a program that enables Iranian Americans to hold meetings with their respective representatives and establish long-term relationships with them. NIAC believes that Iranian Americans are an untapped resource for United States national security and foreign policy. These meetings will

help lawmakers attain important insight and knowledge of Middle Eastern politics and culture and will serve as an invaluable resource, given our military involvement in the region.

NIAC plans to organize eight Congressional Breakfasts for 2004, to take place in states with the largest Iranian-American populations (California, Maryland, New York, and Texas) and districts with the most demand for these meetings. Participants will sign up through NIAC's website while NIAC works with the representatives to arrange the meeting. NIAC staff members facilitate the meeting and participants come prepared with the topics they wish to discuss.

The feedback from the 2003 Congressional Breakfast Series was phenomenal and proved the importance of expanding the program across the country. Through one-hour long morning meetings in three districts within the greater Washington DC area, participants met in small groups with their representatives in order to express their support, convey their concerns, and help educate decision-makers on their interests and views.

"NIAC helped me overcome my self-imposed barriers in contacting my Congressman. Thanks to NIAC, I have found a receptive Congressman that I can educate about my concerns and the concerns of Iranian Americans."

Dr. Farrokh Alemi
Assistant Dean for Graduate Health Science,
George Mason University

The representatives, too, have been highly supportive of the program. As Virginia Congressman Frank Wolf commented after a lively discussion with his constituents, "This is what American democracy is all about: participation and dialogue. I know that it takes time for immigrant communities to get involved in our democracy, and what NIAC is doing in helping them along the way is great."

Congressman Chris Van Hollen of Maryland's 8th District said after a breakfast with his constituents: "It's exciting to meet with a group so eager to participate in the political process. It is important to get involved with organizations such as NIAC, and in campaigns at all levels to get the attention of elected officials."

The estimated cost for eight Congressional breakfasts in 2004, including administrative, training, travel, and logistical expenses is \$25,000.

SUMMER WASHINGTON DC INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Despite Iranian Americans' contribution to America's economy, the community's impact in the realms of politics, media, and other civic institutions has been less impressive. One can attribute part of this trend to dominant motivational forces within the Iranian culture that have limited Iranian-American youth's exploration of the social sciences, and that tend to

push them towards the technological or medical sciences. This is largely due to the fact that the generation of Iranian Americans that migrated to the United States within the last 30 years never before experienced democracy.

For the most part, this generation of Iranian Americans is not accustomed to the idea of developing a successful career through the pursuit of a degree in such studies as political science, government, economics, history, or international relations. This unfamiliarity has brought about an adverse cycle within the Iranian-American community, leaving us voiceless in decision-making processes in the nation's capital. NIAC plans to break this adverse cycle, starting with Iranian-American youth.

As Iranian Americans participate more in American civic life, it becomes increasingly important for young Iranian Americans to be exposed to the inner-workings of our democratic institutions headquartered in Washington DC. Through such exposures they can develop critical leadership skills and learn to become productive civic activists within the framework of American society. Many other ethnic groups have successfully opened doors to valuable career opportunities and essential training for their youth through representative national organizations. Iranian Americans deserve and desire the same.

To this end, NIAC aims to launch its *Summer Washington DC Internship Program* in 2004 and provide 15 outstanding Iranian-American college students per year with internships in political and media organization in Washington, D.C. The Internships will take place from June until August and the interns will be provided with housing. NIAC will be the first organization ever to offer such an opportunity to Iranian-American youth.

The project goal is to expose young Iranian Americans to the internal activities of political and media-based organizations in Washington, DC through various internships. These internships will broaden their perspectives and networks, strengthen their resumes and make them more competitive in the US job market. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, the goal of this program is to, for the first time ever, give Iranian-American youth an incentive to pursue careers based on their own interests within the social sciences, and to contribute as professionals to the shaping of America's dynamic civil society. The propagation of a well-educated group of Iranian Americans with an intimate understanding of the inner workings of a democratic state will pave the way for future generations within the Iranian-American community to not only accept, but address, uphold, and promote the very essence of democracy.

The project budget of \$90,000 covers the expenses of securing and coordinating the internships, promoting the program, reviewing applications and providing room and board.

NIAC's legWatch program

Document: June Memo to Trita and Board (2)

By Shervin Bolorian, June 2006:

"I am pleased to report that the NIAC Legislative Watch (LegWatch) Program has reached its two-month mark having achieved several successes on and off Capitol Hill and after making significant gains to the credit of NIAC members. Most notably, LegWatch staff has made contact with the offices of over 50 members of Congress; vastly improving NIAC's profile on Capitol Hill, building relationships with dozens of Senate and House Members and staff, and advancing NIAC advocacy priorities through the emergence of tangible results.

LegWatch produces and disseminates a number of key documents that support NIAC's advocacy goals and are readily utilized by our friends in Congress. The contents of these documents are used for Member speeches, talking points, and other measures such as a recent letter to President Bush in support of direct diplomacy. Speeches and statements delivered by Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX) and Sen. Joe Biden (D-DE) are evidence of this.

Direct discussions with Democratic Progressive Caucus staff, Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) and a presentation to several Republican Members of Congress have helped NIAC gauge and reframe Congress' disposition concerning the US-Iran nuclear crisis. Although this is being accomplished largely behind the scenes, tangible results are evident such as the introduction of a series of ad hoc Iran hearings, the drafting of Democratic and Republican-written letters calling for the President to engage in direct negotiations, and a stronger willingness of individual House and Senate members to step forward in favor of talks.

LegWatch is also making gains in a number of other areas:

- i. Through the development of a press/editorial program, we can help promote NIAC priorities in the media. Funds for this is currently being sought.

- ii. LegWatch staff is also putting the finishing touches to a member Advocacy Kit which will assist in maximizing Iranian Americans' grassroots impact on a district-by-district basis. This kit will empower members by providing them with the necessary tools and resources to conduct their own outreach in their own communities and to better acquaint themselves with their elected officials.

- iii. Finally, a number of Hill staff expressed a desire for their Members to participate in the NIAC Congressional Breakfast Program. LegWatch will take future steps to coordinate with NIAC members and Congressional district staff to arrange for a new series of breakfast programs in the months and weeks to come.

NIAC 6 months report on LegWatch

Document: "**Leg Watch Update edited**"

October 2006

The LegWatch staff, led by Shervin Bolorian, has met with **more than 80 Congressional offices** in these past months and informed them on the disastrous consequences of a war, and why Iranian Americans overwhelmingly oppose a military conflict.

Document: "**Leg Watch 1 year report OSI 9 8 08 5**"

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NIAC's US-Iran Policy program

Who is funding this program?

Document: **"RBF Grant Proposal (May 2008)"**

FUNDING SOURCES

The program is funded through donations from the Iranian-American community as well as grants from US foundations. The program is currently supported by the Ploughshares Fund (\$60,000), the Pluralism Fund (\$30,000), The Kenbe Foundation (\$30,000), the Colombe Foundation (\$20,000) and the Lee&Gund Foundation (\$10,000).

What is the US-Iran Policy program?

Document: **"Ploughshares Report - US-Iran Policy Program (May 2008)"**

US-Iran Policy Program (2007 Report)

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The U.S.-Iran Policy Program promotes a diplomatic breakthrough between Iran and the United States by filling the knowledge gap in regards to Iran. It highlights opportunities for diplomacy and what diplomacy would have to include to be successful. After thirty years of mutual demonization and missed opportunities, NIAC's U.S.-Iran Policy Program brings about broad change through a process of reeducation on Capitol Hill with objective, independent and non-partisan analysis.

The US-Iran Policy Program accomplishes this through two Annual Policy Conferences on Iran, monthly staff briefings on Capitol Hill, one-on-one briefings with staffers as well as other US officials, conference reports, and shorter analyses and op-eds.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NIAC's U.S.-Iran Policy Program has quickly become a critical voice on Capitol Hill on U.S.-Iran relations. It has accomplished major feats since its inception at the beginning of 2007 and performed beyond the goals for its first year. These include three major conferences on Capitol Hill, monthly briefings for Members of Congress and congressional staff, and more than 200 one-on-one meetings with congressional offices.

One-on-one briefings

Along with these projects, our team actively reaches out one-on-one to Members of Congress and their staffers, providing them with vital information. The increasing number of requests from staffers and lawmakers for information reflects the success and appreciation the U.S.-Iran Policy program has had on Capitol Hill. To further aid us in our objective of information dissemination, NIAC produces widely distributed memos and op-eds.

Document: : **Ploughshares Report - US-Iran Policy Program (February 2009)**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NIAC's U.S.-Iran Policy Program is an established and indispensable voice on Capitol Hill on U.S.-Iran relations. It continued to play the critical role of informing law makers of the opportunities for a diplomatic solution to the U.S.-Iran conflict with two major conferences on Capitol Hill, six briefings for Members of Congress and congressional staff, and more than 250 one-on-one meetings with congressional offices, which were funded by sources other than Ploughshares Fund.

EVALUATION AND RESULTS

Last year was a critical year for NIAC's U.S.-Iran Policy Program. We pushed the discussion towards a diplomatic solution, while preventing the passage of House resolution 362 which would have called for a blockade of and de facto war with Iran. With the election of President Obama, comes an opportunity for a diplomatic solution U.S.-Iran standoff. However, this opening cannot be fully utilized without a process that provides policy makers with objective, independent, non-partisan information. Mindful of this, the need for NIAC's U.S.-Iran Policy Program is critical to break the pattern of missed opportunities, which has plagued U.S.-Iran relations for three decades

Staff briefings on Capitol Hill

- *February 20, 2008: Iran's 2008 Parliamentary Elections: What's at Stake?*
- *April 29, 2008: Iran's Nuclear Program: Is there a technical solution?*
- *May 20, 2008: Iran and Israel: Can War Be Avoided?*

- *July 30, 2008: A U.S.-Iran Proxy War? The Case of the Mujahedin Khalq*
- *September 11, 2008: Looking Beyond Georgia: Paralysis on Iran?*
- *February 12, 2009: Syria & Iran: Obama's Options: Dealing with the Tehran-Damascus Axis*

Monthly op-ed, commentary and analysis

While new and objective research is very much needed, the challenge to get the US-Iran program fully funded prompted us to make a strategic decision to focus more on information dissemination rather than new analysis. As a result, we have devoted our resources primarily towards one-on-one briefings, conferences and briefings rather than the lengthier analyses we originally had envisioned. Still, a sub-project to the Iran policy program – the US-Iran Media Resource Project - has produced 34 memos and op-eds, as well as 10 statements in 2008. These have been distributed both to the media, editorial boards, key journalists as well as all 535 Congressional offices.

Document: **"Report - US-Iran Policy Program (Sep 2007)"**

Report to Pluralism Fund

US-Iran Policy Program (8 Month Report, June 2007)

One-on-one briefings

NIAC has conducted over 80 one-on-one briefings with Congressional offices

Monthly op-ed, commentary and analysis

The Hill: Fund bridges, not failed policy

Sep 11, 2007

Dr. Trita Parsi and Emily Blout

Memo: Bush Indictment of Iran Tops Usual Rhetoric Aug 29, 2007

Dr. Trita Parsi

Memo: Terror Label for Guard Corp Entrenches US-Iran Enmity Aug 15, 2007

Dr. Trita Parsi

Memo: A New Cold War with Iran? Aug 14, 2007

Dr. John Tirman

Memo: Success in U.S.-Iran Security Talks Requires Balanced View Jul 25, 2007

Dr. Bahram Rajaei

Memo: Iran's Security Outlook Jul 14, 2007

Dr. Farideh Farhi

Memo: Iraq - One-Sided Focus on Iran's Role Counterproductive Jul 13, 2007

Dr. Bahram Rajaei

Memo: New War Rhetoric Undercuts Iraq Talks Jun 12, 2007

Dr. Trita Parsi

Memo: U.S.-Iran Convergence in Iraq? Jun 1, 2007

Dr. Bahram Rajaei

Memo: Might the U.S., Iran Cooperate on Al-Qaida? Jun 22, 2007

Prof. R. K. Ramazani

Memo: The Challenges in Forcing Iranian "Behavior Change" **May 25, 2007**

Dr. Bahram Rajaei

Memo: Scholars Bear Brunt of Anti-Diplomacy Backlash **May 23, 2007**

Dr. Trita Parsi

Memo: Can Europe End the Lose-Lose Game with Iran? **May 10, 2007**

Dr. Trita Parsi

Memo: A Counterproductive Precondition **Apr 12, 2007**

Dr. Bahram Rajaei

Memo: Supporting Terror to Destabilize Iran Will Backfire **Apr 5, 2007**

Dr. Bahram Rajaei

Memo: Duel for leverage fuels conflict, not diplomacy **Mar 30, 2007**

Dr. Trita Parsi

Memo: How Not to Foster Democracy in Iran **Mar 26, 2007**

Dr. Bahram Rajaei

Memo: Will Surge Hurt US More Than Sanctions Hurt Iran? **Feb 26, 2007**

Dr. Trita Parsi

Memo: Supporting a Wise Iran Policy: What Congress Can Do **Feb 14, 2007**

Dr. Bahram Rajaei

US-Iran Media Resource Program (9 month report)

Program supported by:

Connect US Fund, OSI, Colombe Foundation, Ploughshares Fund

Document: "US-Iran Media Resource Program - 9 month report, Connect US"

The US-Iran Media Resource Project is aimed at ensuring that the national media has the best information and interpretation available in a timely manner on the sensitive negotiations regarding Iran's nuclear program. The project has provided the news media with objective, balanced and well-documented analyses of important developments, highlighting potential openings for a peaceful settlement that might otherwise be unnoticed and deepening the understanding of the motives of involved actors.

The fundamental goal of the program has been to **prevent war between the US and Iran**. The proposed solution towards preventing war has been to push for **direct US-Iran negotiations through overwhelming public and media support for such a shift in policy**.

Quantitatively, the project has produced an impressive number of deliverables, including seven (7) in depth **Issue Briefs**, twenty-two (22) **Editorial Memos**, and **eight (8)** statements. These written analyses have addressed a variety of issues, all pointing to the superiority of direct US-Iran negotiations versus military or economic warfare. These analyses, in turn, were either quoted or influenced otherwise reporting in major newspapers as well as important news shows, such as *Meet the Press* (where NIAC's analysis was directly quoted by Tim Russel).

NIAC also briefed print and TV journalists and producers on a weekly basis during this period. In addition, NIAC gave more than **150 interviews** to TV, Radio and print media. These interviews ranged from local radio stations to major NPR shows such as *Talk of the Nation*, to *PBS News Hour with Jim Lehrer*, the *Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer* on CNN and one-on-one interviews in *Time Magazine*. Finally, NIAC was quoted more than 80 times in major print media during this period - *Financial Times*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Newsweek*, *USA Today*, *Associated Press*, *Reuters*, *Boston Globe*, *the Nation* and the *Wall Street Journal*, to name a few. (See Appendix)

Qualitatively, the project has been even more crucial. It has succeeded in bringing wide range attention to Iran's 2003 Grand Bargain offer (including through a CNN interview with NIAC about the proposal, as well as a 2 hour CNN program on US-Iran relations that currently is in production). Furthermore, according to most analysts in DC, the Bush Administration's push for a military confrontation with Iran earlier in January 2007 was pushed back by overwhelming opposition to the idea by the media, Congress and the general public.

NIAC played a critical role in creating this opinion against such a confrontation.

(see the related document for NIAC articles and interviews, entirely focused on US policy with Iran)

Document: **"NIAC STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2008"**

III. NIAC priority goals are to:

- A. Mobilize the Iranian-American community in support of establishing diplomatic relations between Washington and Tehran.
- B. Shape and enable discourse among US policymakers with the aim of strengthening US interests in the Middle East.
- C. Produce intellectual resources which educate the American public about the crucial link between improved relations and American security.
- E. Increase media exposure and coverage of NIAC.
- F. Enhance NIAC's volunteer leadership and staffing make-up.

B. Advocacy among US policymakers

With a mobilized leadership base over the next 12 months, NIAC will help shape the public discussion about US policy toward Iran by enhancing activities on Capitol Hill and within the Administration.

It will:

- Deepen and broaden direct contacts with Senators and Representatives and their staffs, particularly building relationships among authorizers and appropriators, the Speaker, Majority and Minority Leaders of both houses, committee chairs and ranking members, and peace-oriented members
- Establish regular contacts at the White House, NSC, State and Defense Departments
- Ensure NIAC publications and other resources are sent and received by officials in both branches of the US government
- Keep a running tab of the quality and quantity of those interactions
- Hold significant NIAC events/policy conferences in Washington DC
- Engage like-minded political activists in a variety of locations.

Document: "Advocacy – Grassroots"

As the largest nationwide, grassroots organization for Iranian Americans, NIAC should utilize its membership in an effective and empowering way. Our grassroots efforts should be designed to encourage Iranian-American participation in civil society as both a capacity building measure and an effective tool to advance agenda. Therefore, NIAC must devote significant resources to establishing a network of highly effective, motivated, and capable NIAC members in key Congressional districts that we can call upon to influence their Representatives and Senators on important issues. This will at once establish a strong relationship between lawmakers and their Iranian-American constituencies, while also cementing NIAC as the recognized liaison between the Iranian-American community and members of Congress.

This political capital can only be established through extensive relationships with lawmakers through grass roots efforts. The political capital is generated at the local level and expended in Washington DC. Based on the size and whereabouts of the NIAC membership and the Iranian-American community, NIAC should establish a strong membership-based relationship with 100 lawmakers (approximately 75 Representatives and 25 Senators) by meeting with them on a regular basis, i.e. every two months minimum. These relationships should be developed through in-person meetings with Congressional staff and the members of Congress themselves. Following a model that is already in place, NIAC staff throughout the country will appoint motivated and respected members of the Iranian-American community to serve as team leaders. These leaders will develop a strong personal relationship with their Representatives and Senators by arranging regular meetings for a group of Iranian Americans to voice their opinions on issues of concern. Ideally, each district team should meet with their Representative's office six times each year.

All of this will involve a NIAC staffer from one of the local NIAC chapters throughout the country working with each district's team leader to schedule the meetings, arrange for a group of 5-7 NIAC members to attend, prepare the group for the meeting, and follow up with the member of Congress. Additionally, NIAC staffers should attend nearly all meetings with lawmakers and staffers to ensure consistency and quality.



NATIONAL IRANIAN AMERICAN COUNCIL
Promoting Iranian-American Participation in American Civic Life

July 17, 2007

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
1707 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Fax: (202) 225-0375

Dear Representative Van Hollen:

On behalf of the National Iranian American Council (NIAC), I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to you for your assistance in securing a room for our national policy luncheon on human rights in Iran, to be held on July 26, 2007 from 12:00 p.m –2:30 p.m in B369 Rayburn. I would also like to cordially invite you to participate in the event as a keynote speaker. We would be more than happy to accommodate your schedule and feature you as an introductory or concluding speaker, depending on your availability.

Today, tensions between the United States and Iran are rising over the situation in Iraq, Afghanistan, Tehran's nuclear program, and the detention of four Iranian-Americans by the Iranian government on charges of supporting regime change in Iran. Moreover, during the past year, the Iranian government has engaged in a broader crackdown against internal voices of dissent—ranging from women's groups to workers, journalists, students, and human rights and pro-democracy advocates—that has dramatically curtailed peaceful political and civic activity.

In this delicate environment, Congress is currently considering increasing funding for democracy promotion in Iran from current levels of \$75 million. Yet the real impact on the ground in Iran of U.S. democracy promotion activities remains an open question. Recent reports and interviews with prominent activists in Iran underscore the extent to which the current U.S. approach of funding "regime change" or democracy promotion has engendered negative consequences for them in Iran without undermining the regime (and in fact strengthening the national security apparatus). Their perspective should be given great weight in policy debates regarding the advancement of human rights and democracy in Iran, as they are crucial actors in this regard. We feel this is a crucial time for policymakers to hear from our invited panel of experts who have decades of combined experience on human rights and Iran.

The speakers that will follow your comments will include Alex Arriaga (Amnesty International), Joe Stork (Human Rights Watch), Laura Secor (The New Yorker magazine), and David Denehy (U.S. Department of State). The session will provide invaluable insight into the current human rights situation in Iran today and the likely impact of US policies aimed at advancing human rights and democracy in that country, such as the greater funding for democracy promotion currently being considered by Congress.

The National Iranian American Council is the nation's largest Iranian American grassroots organization and is a non-partisan organization dedicated to promoting Iranian-American participation in American civic life. The lunch is scheduled for **July 26, 2007 from 12:00-2:30 p.m. in Rayburn B369.** Please

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respond to Babak Talebi, at (202) 719-8076 or via email at btalebi@niacouncil.org to inform us of your attendance.

I look forward to meeting you at the event and working with you and your staff in the forthcoming year to address U.S.-Iran relations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Trita Parsi', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Trita Parsi, PhD
President



Memo

To: Trita Parsi, NIAC President
From: Shervin Bolorian, Legislative Director
CC: Board Members
Date:
Re: Legislative Watch Program Update

I am pleased to report that the NIAC Legislative Watch (LegWatch) Program has reached its two-month mark having achieved several successes on and off Capitol Hill and after making significant gains to the credit of NIAC members. Most notably, LegWatch staff has made contact with the offices of over 50 members of Congress; vastly improving NIAC's profile on Capitol Hill, building relationships with dozens of Senate and House Members and staff, and advancing NIAC advocacy priorities through the emergence of tangible results.

I have summarized LegWatch's major achievements below and offered recommendations for yours and the Board's consideration.

- 1) *NIAC is helping to shape, balance, and reframe the debate.* LegWatch advocacy activities help overcome an information gap in Congress and enhance the knowledge of Hill actors concerning Iranian-American priorities and policy preferences. LegWatch produces and disseminates a number of key documents that support NIAC's advocacy goals and are readily utilized by our friends in Congress. The contents of these documents are used for Member speeches, talking points, and other measures such as a recent letter to President Bush in support of direct diplomacy. Speeches and statements delivered by Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX) and Sen. Joe Biden (D-DE) are evidence of this. NIAC's LegWatch Program should continue providing technical expertise services to cement its reputation as a credible source of facts and knowledge about Iranian Americans.
- 2) *NIAC is carefully navigating Congress' highly political environment and attracting a growing number of Hill support to its side.* Direct discussions with Democratic Progressive Caucus staff, Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) and a presentation to several Republican Members of Congress have helped NIAC gauge and reframe Congress' disposition concerning the US-Iran nuclear crisis. Although this is being accomplished largely behind the scenes, tangible results are evident such as the introduction of a series of ad hoc Iran hearings, the drafting of Democratic and Republican-written letters calling for the President to engage in direct negotiations, and a stronger willingness of individual

House and Senate members to step forward in favor of talks. LegWatch should continue to position itself as an organization that can support and initiate federal action that is important to the Iranian-American constituency.

- 3) *NIAC is building a network with the support of other likeminded organizations.* Through connections and relationships with other grassroots and Hill advocacy groups, LegWatch is identifying and linking together with key partners to institute an effective and viable longterm advocacy operation. Through strengthening of informal ties with groups such as Moveon.org (Dem), the Liberty Committee (Rep) and the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee, LegWatch can continue gathering influence and best-practices experience, while remaining true to its non-partisan mission and its responsibility to the Iranian-American community's priorities.

- 4) *NIAC is providing a Legislative information service to members.* In addition to direct Hill-related advancements, the launch of LegWatch's principle weekly web-based publication known as the "E-Bulletin" has produced a eight editions containing over 30 articles. These Washington alerts keep thousands of Iranian Americans plugged into Capitol Hill developments while also serving as a resource for our partners and the Hill community. With continued support, this publication will establish a reputation as a trusted, non-partisan periodical benefiting the Iranian-American community and beyond.

LegWatch is also making gains in a number of other areas:

- i. Through the development of a press/editorial program, we can help promote NIAC priorities in the media. Funds for this is currently being sought.

- ii. LegWatch staff is also putting the finishing touches to a member Advocacy Kit which will assist in maximizing Iranian Americans' grassroots impact on a district-by-district basis. This kit will empower members by providing them with the necessary tools and resources to conduct their own outreach in their own communities and to better acquaint themselves with their elected officials.

- iii. Finally, a number of Hill staff expressed a desire for their Members to participate in the NIAC Congressional Breakfast Program. LegWatch will take future steps to coordinate with NIAC members and Congressional district staff to arrange for a new series of breakfast programs in the months and weeks to come.

Thank you for your attention and support.

Shervin Boloorian



National Iranian American Council

US-Iran Policy Program

2008 Report

Organization Name: National Iranian American Council

Contact Person and Title: Dr. Trita Parsi, President

Fiscal Sponsor: n/a

Project Title: U.S.-IRAN POLICY PROGRAM

Email Address: Web Site: www.niacouncil.org

Grant Amount and Number: \$70,000

Date Grant Awarded: Feb 7, 2008????

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The U.S.-Iran Policy Program promotes a diplomatic breakthrough between Iran and the United States by filling the knowledge gap in regards to Iran. It highlights opportunities for diplomacy and what diplomacy would have to include to be successful. After thirty years of mutual demonization and missed opportunities, NIAC's U.S.-Iran Policy Program brings about broad change through a process of reeducation on Capitol Hill with objective, independent and non-partisan analysis.

The US-Iran Policy Program accomplishes this through two Annual Policy Conferences on Iran, bi-monthly staff briefings on Capitol Hill, one-on-one briefings with staffers as well as other US officials, conference reports, and shorter analyses and op-eds. Going into its third year, demand for the U.S.-Iran Policy Program has increased significantly due to the quality of the experts and unprejudiced information presented. This demand can be seen by the tremendous attendance of members of Congress and their staff to NIAC conferences and briefings. In order to continue the momentum needed for a diplomatic resolution to the U.S.-Iran standoff, accurate and reliable analysis of Iran, its politics, and the intentions of its leadership needs to be presented to policy makers. NIAC has already begun to see real progress towards a diplomatic solution with the campaign promises of President Obama. However, the need balanced and objective analysis is greater than ever as contending forces continue to push to prevent or limit diplomatic engagement between the U.S. and Iran. NIAC's work in this regard is unprecedented as we continue to produce and provide the necessary information to help promote diplomacy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NIAC's U.S.-Iran Policy Program is an established and indispensable voice on Capitol Hill on U.S.-Iran relations. It continued to play the critical role of informing law makers of the opportunities for a diplomatic solution to the U.S.-Iran conflict with two major conferences on Capitol Hill, six briefings for Members of Congress and congressional staff, and more than 250 one-on-one meetings with congressional offices, **which were funded by sources other than Ploughshares Fund.**

EVALUATION AND RESULTS

Last year was a critical year for NIAC's U.S.-Iran Policy Program. We pushed the discussion towards a diplomatic solution, while preventing the passage of House resolution 362 which would have called for a blockade of and de facto war with Iran. With the election of President Obama, comes an opportunity for a diplomatic solution U.S.-Iran standoff. However, this opening cannot be fully utilized without a process that provides policy makers with objective, independent, non-partisan information. Mindful of this, the need for NIAC's U.S.-Iran Policy Program is critical to break the pattern of missed opportunities, which has plagued U.S.-Iran relations for three decades

A policy centered on diplomacy will require a tremendous amount of political sophistication on the part of the United States, which in turn will depend on accurate and reliable analyses of Iran, its politics, and the intentions of its leadership. NIAC has been and continues to be in a unique position to produce and provide this information.

Annual Policy Conferences and conference reports

All of NIAC's conferences are held on Capitol Hill in order to ensure maximum attendance by lawmakers and Hill staffers. All conferences are also filmed and transcribed. The videos are posted online (including on youtube) and the conference proceedings are delivered to all 535 Congressional offices, all relevant government agencies, foreign policy think tanks, media outlets, and embassies.

- *April 8, 2008: Breaking the U.S.-Iran Stalemate: Reassessing the Nuclear Strategy in the Wake of the Majles Elections*

NIAC's April conference featured Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Ambassador Thomas Pickering and Dr. Hans Blix, among others. The conference was aimed in part to begin a much needed and overdue discussion on solutions to the Iranian nuclear stand-off beyond the unachievable zero-enrichment objective that has dominated the discourse in Washington. In particular, the conference provided Hill staffers an opportunity to get better acquainted with the Luers-Pickering-Walsh proposal, which provides realistic and pragmatic solutions to the U.S.-Iran nuclear standoff. The conference, as well as the follow through mailing of the Conference transcripts, helped give the Luers-Pickering-Walsh proposal legs, significantly increasing its exposure throughout Capitol Hill. It also offered

Senator Feinstein to add her voice in support of diplomacy and negotiations, which is critical mindful of her standing in the Senate. In addition, the conference addressed the recent Majles elections in Iran. Scott Peterson of the Christian Science Monitor, Barbara Slavin of USA Today and Prof. Ahmad Sadri provided analysis on how to read the political developments in Iran.

- *November 18, 2008: Can Obama Untangle the Iranian Challenge?: Prospects for a New Iran Policy*

NIAC's most recent conference was the first conference following the elections to deal with how President Obama could move forward with a diplomatic solution to the U.S.-Iran standoff which brought in key lawmakers. The conference speakers included Senator Thomas Carper (D-DE), Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA), Chairman John Tierney (D-MA), Ambassador James Dobbins, Joe Cirincione, President of Ploughshares Fund, and Dr. Farideh Farhi. With Iran remaining a top national security concern at the time, and diplomacy with Iran being a major presidential campaign issue, the conference explored the prospects for a new Iran policy and what diplomacy with Iran would look like under the new administration. In particular, the Joint Experts' Statement on Iran was revealed at this conference, giving the Obama administration realistic and constructive advice on how to operationalize diplomacy with Iran from 17 of the most respected Iran policy experts. It also offered Senator Carper, Senator Specter, and Chairman Tierney an avenue to show their support of diplomacy and negotiations, which is critical, mindful of their standing in their respective chambers of Congress. The conference also had a panel discussion which addressed the prospect of a new policy on Iran in regard to the nuclear issue, Iraq, Afghanistan, human rights, terrorism, and the political situation in Tehran. In addition to the tremendous turnout for the conference, the media attention for NIAC and the Joint Experts' Statement was unprecedented with media coverage of NIAC in the Associated Press, Reuters, Financial Times, Christian Science Monitor, American Conservative, The Jewish Telegraph, CQ Magazine, The National, Salon, and IPS/Asia Times. The media attention, along with the post conference transcript mailing significantly increased NIAC's exposure, as well as the exposure of the Joint Experts' Statement on Iran, throughout Capitol Hill and among foreign policy circles.

We are currently in the process of planning our Spring conference as well as a conference in the Summer of 2009 with the aim of including a speaker from the Obama Administration to lay out the new diplomatic plan for US-Iran relations.

Staff briefings on Capitol Hill

The program also includes monthly briefings on Capitol Hill to provide a forum for lawmakers and their staff to gain insight and engage on issues that affect US-Iran policy.

The briefings provide an excellent opportunity to provide critical education to staffers and lawmakers on the realities of Iran and US-Iran relations.

- *February 20, 2008: Iran's 2008 Parliamentary Elections: What's at Stake?*

NIAC's February 20th briefing featured Rasool Nafisi, Associate Dean of Arts and Science at Strayer University, and Mehrdad Mashayekhi, visiting Assistant Professor at Georgetown University, both of whom have written extensively about Iran's political system. The briefing discussed the 2008 Iranian parliamentary elections and the consequences of the elections on the trajectory of U.S.-Iran relations.

- *April 29, 2008: Iran's Nuclear Program: Is there a technical solution?*

NIAC's April 29th briefing featured Dr. Geoffrey Forden and Sir John Thomson, from the Science, Technology and Global Security Working Group at MIT, both of whom have written extensively about alternative approaches to the Iranian nuclear issue. The briefing discussed the Forden-Thomson plan, which similar to the Luers-Pickering-Walsh proposal suggested a modern multilateral solution to Iran's nuclear ambitions.

- *May 20, 2008: Iran and Israel: Can War Be Avoided?*

NIAC's May 20th briefing featured Thomas Dine, former Executive Director of AIPAC, Dr. Avner Cohen, Senior Fellow at the United States Institute of Peace, and myself, Dr. Trita Parsi, author of *Treacherous Alliance – The Secret Dealings of Iran, Israel, and the United States*. The briefing focused on the possibility and repercussions of a war between Israel and Iran, the likelihood of an Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear facilities, and possible solutions to the Israeli-Iranian tensions.

- *July 30, 2008: A U.S.-Iran Proxy War? The Case of the Mujahedin Khalq*

NIAC's July 30th briefing featured Colonel Sam Gardiner, USAF (retired). Colonel Gardiner is a military strategist and has written and worked extensively on U.S. military options on Iran. The briefing focused on the Mujahedin Khalq, which is a group that in spite of being included on the U.S. Foreign Terrorist Organizations List, continued to receive support from the U.S. to carry out attacks against the Iranian government, and how U.S. support for the Mujahedin Khalq undermines the diplomatic process.

- *September 11, 2008: Looking Beyond Georgia: Paralysis on Iran?*

NIAC's September 11th briefing featured Professor Mark Katz of George Mason University, an expert on Russia and Iran. The briefing focused on the conflict between Russia and Georgia and how it preoccupied U.S. attention, causing Iran to move closer to Russia, with significant consequences for American interests

throughout the world. Professor Katz argued that Russia is using its relationship with Iran as leverage in the Caucasus region by limiting America's options on Iran and essentially playing both sides against each other.

- *February 12, 2009: Syria & Iran: Obama's Options: Dealing with the Tehran-Damascus Axis*

NIAC's February 12th briefing featured Robert Malley of the International Crisis Group as well as an introductory statement by Congressman Geoff Davis (R-KY). Robert Malley was President Clinton's Special Assistant for Arab-Israeli Affairs and the briefing focused on the Syria-Iran alliance and the way forward for the new Obama administration. Malley argued that U.S. should begin dialogue with Syria by simultaneously engaging Iran because by engaging both countries, the United States can reduce any incentive for Syria or Iran to undermine the other's talks with the United States.

One-on-one briefings

Along with these projects, our team actively reaches out one-on-one to Members of Congress and their staffers, providing them with vital information. The increasing number of requests from staffers and lawmakers for information reflects the success and appreciation the U.S.-Iran Policy program has had on Capitol Hill. To further aid us in our objective of information dissemination, NIAC produces widely distributed memos and op-eds.

Monthly op-ed, commentary and analysis

While new and objective research is very much needed, the challenge to get the US-Iran program fully funded prompted us to make a strategic decision to focus more on information dissemination rather than new analysis. As a result, we have devoted our resources primarily towards one-on-one briefings, conferences and briefings rather than the lengthier analyses we originally had envisioned. Still, a sub-project to the Iran policy program – the US-Iran Media Resource Project - has produced 34 memos and op-eds, as well as 10 statements in 2008. These have been distributed both to the media, editorial boards, key journalists as well as all 535 Congressional offices.

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The success of the program speaks for itself. However, there are several areas in which the program can be strengthened to further advance knowledge of US-Iran relations in Washington DC.

First, the reach of the program needs to go beyond Capitol Hill and the foreign policy establishment and make even greater inroads into mainstream media. By addressing Capitol Hill without addressing the media, hurts NIAC's ability to reach the widest possible audience of policy makers. NIAC needs to build on its established media

relations and continue to build more relationships with the media in order to help NIAC spread its expertise on Capitol Hill.

Second, the value of the education and analysis produced will make a greater impact if greater resources and time can be devoted to one-on-one briefings with members and staff. One-on-one briefings are essential to building relationships with members of Congress and their staff members. By increasing the amount of time dedicated to one-on-one briefings, NIAC will be able to personally engage more members of congress and their staff and thus provide members of Congress with personal answers to their questions dealing with Iran.

Third, the impartial and intellectually vigorous analysis that NIAC provides is indispensable at this time, especially the need for independent arguments on how to operationalize diplomacy. While the US-Iran Policy Program devoted significant amount of time on the distribution on both existing and new analysis, the need to devote greater resources towards producing new analyses is growing, as policy makers try to figure out what diplomacy with Iran should look like. NIAC will fill that vacuum by expanding its analysis and continuing to push its analysis on Capitol Hill and the media until it is accepted.

In 2009, NIAC will address these challenges through the following steps:

1. We will continue to expand NIAC's media work and strengthen our collaboration with our public relations firm, Fenton Communications.
2. We have expanded our legislative staff from one to three last year. In order to increase the number of one-on-one briefings we will expand the legislative team to five members by the end of 2009.
3. We will continue to utilize and expand our Academic Board of Advisors of prominent Persian speaking academics in the US. These board members will assist in writing original analysis as well as be available for interviews with media or briefings with lawmakers and staff.

The expansion of the program will undoubtedly require greater resources. While NIAC will continue to raise the bulk of its funds from the Iranian-American community, our requests to US foundations such as Ploughshares will also need to grow. We would also appreciate any assistance Ploughshares can provide in reaching out to other US foundations that would be inclined to support the work of NIAC's US-Iran Policy Program.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Project Duration: Jan 2007-Dec 2007			Budget	Final exp	Ploughshares	Other
Salaries including Taxes and Benefits			\$164,400			
A.	Director	Full time	\$96,000	12000		12000
		\$3200/month				
B.	President	(40%)	\$38,400	38400		38400
		\$2000/month				
C.	Assistant	(50%)	\$24,000	24000	10000	14000
D.	Intern	\$500/month	\$6,000	6000		6000
EQUIPMENT AND RENT			\$21,200			
		\$1500/month				
A.	Rent	(60%)	\$18,000	18000	5000	13000
B.	Computers		\$3,200	4100		4100
POSTAGE AND COMMUNICATIONS			\$7,800			
A.	Telephone and fax		\$3,600	4400		4400
B.	Postage/DHL		\$1,800	1800		1800
C.	Transportation	\$200/month	\$2,400	1800		1800
SUPPLIES			\$3,600			
A.	Office supplies		\$1,200	1200		1200
B.	Printing		\$2,400	2400		2400
CONFERENCES - TWO PER YEAR			\$20,000			
A.	Speaker's fees	\$1500/conference	\$3,000	0		0
B.	Travel and acc.	\$1500/conference	\$3,000	4662	4662	0
C.	Catering	\$1500/conference	\$3,000	6225	6225	0
D.	Transcription	\$1500/conference	\$3,000	3757	3757	0
E.	Design, printing, distribution of conference proceeds	\$4,000/conference	\$8,000	8969	5356	3613
BRIEFINGS - SIX PER YEAR			\$4,200			
A.	Catering	\$700/conference	\$4,200	2870		2870
PRINT REPORT - FOUR PER YEAR			\$22,000			
A.	Design, printing and distribution of larger reports	\$4,000/report	\$16,000	0		0
B.	Design, printing, distribution of briefs	\$1500/brief	\$6,000	405		405
REPRESENTATION/OUTREACH			\$8,000			
A.	US Conference fees		\$2,000	0		0
B.	Iran conferences (travel, accommodation, per diem)		\$6,000	0		0
TOTAL			\$251,200	\$140,988	\$35,000	\$105,988



US-Iran Media Resource Program

National Iranian American Council

9 month report

Program supported by:

Connect US Fund, OSI, Colombe Foundation, Ploughshares Fund

The US-Iran Media Resource Project is aimed at ensuring that the national media has the best information and interpretation available in a timely manner on the sensitive negotiations regarding Iran's nuclear program. The project has provided the news media with objective, balanced and well-documented analyses of important developments, highlighting potential openings for a peaceful settlement that might otherwise be unnoticed and deepening the understanding of the motives of involved actors.

The fundamental goal of the program has been to **prevent war between the US and Iran**. The proposed solution towards preventing war has been to push for **direct US-Iran negotiations through overwhelming public and media support for such a shift in policy**.

Evaluation:

The project has made a significant impact on the debate in the US by producing unique analysis disseminated widely both to the media and directly to decision makers, briefing journalists in order to improve the accuracy of their reporting, advising TV and radio producers, and giving interviews to the media.

The evaluation of the project during its first 9 months is based on both qualitative and quantitative measurements.

Quantitatively, the project has produced an impressive number of deliverables, including seven (7) in depth **Issue Briefs**, twenty-two (22) **Editorial Memos**, and **eight (8)** statements. These written analyses have addressed a variety of issues, all pointing to the superiority of direct US-Iran negotiations versus military or economic warfare. These analyses, in turn, were either quoted or influenced otherwise reporting in major newspapers as well as important news shows, such as *Meet the Press* (where NIAC's analysis was directly quoted by Tim Russel).

NIAC also briefed print and TV journalists and producers on a weekly basis during this period. In addition, NIAC gave more than **150 interviews** to TV, Radio and print media. These interviews ranged from local radio stations to major NPR shows such as *Talk of the Nation*, to *PBS News Hour with Jim Lehrer*, the *Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer* on CNN and one-on-one interviews in *Time Magazine*. Finally, NIAC was quoted more than 80 times in major print media during this period - *Financial Times*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Newsweek*, *USA Today*, *Associated Press*, *Reuters*, *Boston Globe*, *the Nation* and the *Wall Street Journal*, to name a few. (See Appendix)

Qualitatively, the project has been even more crucial. It has succeeded in bringing wide range attention to Iran's 2003 Grand Bargain offer (including through a CNN interview with NIAC about the proposal, as well as a 2 hour CNN program on US-Iran relations that currently is in production). Furthermore, according to most analysts in DC, the Bush Administration's push for a military confrontation with Iran earlier in January 2007 was pushed back by overwhelming opposition to the idea by the media, Congress and the general public.

NIAC played a critical role in creating this opinion against such a confrontation.

On January 10, 2007, President Bush addressed the nation to discuss his policies in Iraq. In that speech, the President said the following:

"Iran is providing material support for attacks on American troops. We will disrupt the attacks on our forces. We'll interrupt the flow of support from Iran and Syria. And we will seek out and destroy the networks providing advanced weaponry and training to our enemies in Iraq."

This was widely seen as a near declaration of war on Iran. Rather than focusing on the weakness of the unproven accusations made by the President to justify military confrontation with Iran, during the first 48 hours after the speech, the media repeated their mistake from Iraq – penetrating questions about the validity of the accusations were simply not asked.

On January 12, NIAC produced a widely distributed analysis, "*Bush's Iraq Plan - Goading Iran into War.*" It pointed out the weakness of the Administration's strategy and argued that rather than fixing Iraq, the new strategy seemed more about goading Iran into war by targeting Iranian targets and diplomats in Iraq. NIAC pushed the analysis extensively with the media, with great results. The angle was picked up quickly by *New York Times* and the *Boston Globe*, where parts of NIAC's analysis were repeated verbatim. Soon enough, pointed questions were asked at the White House press briefings and within a few days, the idea that the Bush Administration was seeking to goad Iran into war became part of the mainstream narrative. This in turn, caused the Democratic led Congress to react strongly and according to many analysts, the push-back this created is a critical reason as to why the White House's war plans were derailed.

This is one of many examples of how the project played a pivotal role in mobilizing media and public opinion against a US-Iran war at a critical junction.

Unfortunately, however, the risk for a US-Iran war remains high. The incident with the British sailors detained by Iran shows the sensitivity of the situation. Such an incident between the US and Iran in the Persian Gulf can easily provide hawks in Washington with a pretext to give a green light to a larger military confrontation.

NIAC's US-Iran Media Resource Project is very much needed in order to ensure that a) such incidents are prevented from triggering a US-Iran conflict and b) that the state of US0-Iran relations are moved to a state in which sensitivity to such incidents and the risk for a military conflict are scientifically reduced. As a result, NIAC would like to request that Connect US renew its support for the project for an additional 9 months with a \$25,000 grant.

Appendix:

Select list of interviews:

5/5/2007 – To the Point, NPR
5/9/2006 – Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer, CNN
5/30/2006 – Interview with Council on Foreign Relations
6/3/2006 – C-Span
6/5/2006 – Dianne Rehm Show, NPR/WAMU
6/12/2006 – Talk of the nation, NPR
7/16/2006 – BBC Radio
8/18/2006 – To the Point, NPR
8/21/2006 – Talk of the Nation, NPR
8/22/2006 – NPR-KQED
9/12/2006 – KWRE Radio
9/13/2006 – Interviewed with Jim Lehrer NewsHour
9/14/2006 – Interviewed by Washington Post
9/18/2006 – Anderson Cooper and Situation Room (CNN)
9/19/2006 – Talk of the Nation (NPR)
9/19/2006 – Briefed USA Today
9/19/2006 – BBC World News
9/23/2006 – BBC Radio
10/6/2006 – Briefed WSJ
10/6/2006 – Interview with Time Magazine
10/31/2006 – “America's Workforce,” in Cleveland
10/31/2006 – To the Point (NPR)
11/2/2006 – BBC Radio
11/3/2006 – WOSU-AM, Columbus, OH
11/13/2006 – WJFF-FM, Jeffersonville, NY
11/15/2006 – WWPR Bradenton (Tampa Bay, FL)
11/15/2006 – WKLA, Ludington, MI
11/16/2006 – WWPR Bradenton (Tampa Bay, FL)
11/16/2006 – PalTalk Talk Show
11/17/2006 – 1100AM KFNX News Talk Radio
11/17/2006 – Al Jazeera
11/20/2006 – KSFR FM, Santa Fe, NM
11/21/2006 – Briefed Jamie McIntyre CNN
11/21/2006 – Al Jazeera
11/24/2006 – KZFR-FM, Chico, CA
11/25/2006 – KGNU Boulder and Denver, CO
12/15/2006 – 90.7 FM, KPFK, Los Angeles.
12/26/2006 – To the Point (NPR)
12/27/2006 – WMNF 88.5FM Tampa
12/28/2006 – Pacifica radio KPFA
12/28/2006 – WPKN Radio 89.5 FM
12/29/2006 – Al Jazeera

12/29/2006 – BBC Radio
1/2/2007 – Situation Room CNN
1/4/2007 – KGAB Radio
1/13/2007 – Al Hurra
1/14/2007 – BBC Radio
1/15/2007 – KWRE in the St. Louis
1/16/2007 – Lolita C. Baldor, Associated Press
1/16/2007 – Tom Omestad, US News & World Report
1/17/2007 – French TV 24
1/17/2007 – Al-jazeera
1/17/2007 – KSFR FM, Santa Fe, NM
1/20/2007 – C-Span
1/22/2007 – WSMN, Nashua, NH
1/22/2007 – KRCL, Salt Lake City
1/26/2007 – Al-jazeera
1/27/2007 – Interview with Radio Free Europe
1/29/2007 – Dianne Rehm (NPR)
1/30/2007 – To the Point (NPR)
1/30/2007 – Briefed CNN Situation room
1/31/2007 – CNN Situation room
2/1/2007 – CNN American Morning
2/1/2007 – BBC World News
2/1/2007 – NewsTalk 1530 KFBK/ Talk 650 KSTE
2/2/2007 – WSMN, Nashua, NH
2/2/2007 – Briefed CNN producers
2/5/2007 – Al Jazeera Riz Khan show
2/5/2007 – KRXA540
2/6/2007 – BBC World News
2/10/2007 – Al Jazeera
2/15/2007 – WHY Y
2/15/2007 – AIR AMERICA
2/16/2007 – VOA
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2/19/2007 - American AM
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2/26/2007 – WOSU radio NPR station, Columbus, Ohio
3/1/2007 – KRCL, Salt Lake City, Utah
3/2/2007 – Jim Zogby Show
3/15/2007 – Extensive briefing for Frank Sesno, CNN
3/15/2007 – BBC Radio
3/15/2007 – BBC World News

3/22/2007 – Japanese TV
3/25/2007 – BBC Radio
3/27/2007 – Al Arabiya
3/28/2007 – Second extensive briefing for Frank Sesno, CNN
3/29/2007 – Danish TV
3/29/2007 – Briefing for Michael Hirsh. Newsweek
3/29/2007 – BBC World News
3/30/2007 – Danish State TV
4/1/2007 – KIRN Los Angeles
4/1/2007 – Al Jazeera
4/1/2007 – Al Hurra
4/2/2007 – Talk of the Nation (NPR)
4/4/2007 – PBS Newshour with Jim Lehrer
4/4/2007 – Al Jazeera
4/4/2007 – BBC World News
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