



## FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL LEGISLATION

*... a Quaker lobby in the public interest*

June 3, 2008

Dear Member of Congress,

**We write to call your attention to the recent call from five former U.S. secretaries of state for the U.S. to open talks with Iran. We urge you to speak out in favor of such talks and to support legislation to encourage them.**

Colin Powell, Henry Kissinger, James Baker III, Madeleine Albright, and Warren Christopher all urged the U.S. to open a dialogue with Iran to find common ground and resolve differences on Iraq, Iran's nuclear program, and other issues. (See the attached article on the secretaries' statements on talks with Iran at a conference in Athens, GA.)



The administration's policy of avoiding serious negotiations with Iran until Iran suspends uranium enrichment has not worked. We agree with those in Congress and elsewhere who have argued that to offer bilateral negotiations with a precondition is no offer at all, especially when the precondition is the object of the negotiations. This position guarantees that the negotiations with the best chance of settling U.S.-Iran differences will not begin.

Former national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski and the late former National Security Agency director William Odom wrote recently that "Current U.S. policy toward the regime in Tehran will almost certainly result in an Iran with nuclear weapons." (Article also attached.) They and many other analysts have concluded that U.S. military action against Iran would only delay an Iranian nuclear weapons program and insure their determination to acquire nuclear weapons. Extreme elements would be strengthened and the cause of reform in Iran would be set back for years to come. Military action would also increase animosity toward the U.S. in the Middle East and elsewhere. It would prompt a big spike in the price of oil and would likely lead to retaliatory actions against the U.S. in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Current U.S. policy not to seriously negotiate with Iran has failed. The absence of talks and the addition of ever more stringent economic sanctions will resolve nothing. Military action would be disastrous. The only sensible option that serves the interests of the U.S. and the nations of the Middle East is to explore the possibility of finding common ground with Iran through direct negotiations. Common ground is not hard to imagine. For starters, both countries have an interest in a stable Iraq, a Taliban-free Afghanistan, and increased oil production capacity in Iran. The U.S. need not wait to develop leverage.

Please add your voice to those of the five former U.S. secretaries of state and other senior figures who are urging the U.S. to open talks with Iran. And please look for legislative opportunities to put Congress on record in support of such talks.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jim Fine  
Legislative Secretary for Foreign Policy