



# Celebration of the Holiday Season New Administration & Iran Policy Options

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Kennedy Caucus Room  
(325 Russell Senate Office Building)

**Senator John McCain**, Chairman, Armed Services Committee;

**Senator Robert Menendez**, Foreign Relations Committee;

**Honorable Joseph Lieberman**, former Senator from Connecticut;

**Honorable Tom Ridge**, first United States Secretary of Homeland Security;

**Ambassador Mitchell Reiss**, former Director of Policy Planning at the US Department of State, President and CEO of the Colonial Williamsburg

# Ambassador Mitchell Reiss

*Former Director of Policy Planning at the US Department of State,  
President and CEO of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation*

Thank you. Good morning everyone. I'd like to welcome our distinguished visitors, members of the diplomatic corps and our guests to a discussion on the new administration and policy options for Iran.

I am the president and CEO of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, a place where over 240 years ago brave and courageous American revolutionaries first discussed and debated freedom from tyranny, the inalienable rights of individuals, and the search for human dignity. We tell their stories every day as a beacon of liberty for all to see. In colonial Williamsburg, we believed that these American principles and ideals that we stand for are examples and inspiration, not just for our fellow Americans, but for people all over the world. This past year we saw another group of brave and courageous revolutionaries at Camp Liberty stand up to tyranny and achieve their freedom. Please join me in saluting the brave men and women of Camp Liberty.

These men and women were helped by many other brave individuals, some of whom are here with us today. I would like to acknowledge in particular the ambassador from Albania, which stood resolutely on the side of freedom....



And finally, I want to thank the members of the Iranian-American community who struggled for years to free their relatives, loved ones, and friends from the reach of the mullahs in Tehran. Please give yourselves another round of applause.

Now let us turn to the future. While we have won an important battle with Iran, challenges remain. Internally the regime continues to imprison, torture, and murder its domestic opponents. It is a serial human rights violator. Within the region, Iran continues to provide weapons, training, and support for insurgents and terrorist groups that attack our friends and allies, while the nuclear deal may buy us a little time, Iran is free to continue its research on nuclear weapons and continue to develop ballistic missiles. In short, Iran poses both an immediate and long-term threat to U.S. national security.

The good news is that we are strong. We have friends and allies and we have options. We are particularly fortunate that we can now rely more heavily on the MEK and the leadership of Madame Rajavi. MEK members are now free from attacks in Iraq and the MEK is no longer operating under the cloud caused by its wrongful designation as a terrorist organization. Madame Rajavi and her 10-point plan for a truly democratic Iran can and should play a much larger role in leading the opposition to the mullahs. We are also fortunate that we have with us this afternoon some of the country's most distinguished public servants and experts on foreign policy. They will share with us their insights and expertise on how we should deal with Iran during the next four years.





## Message of Maryam Rajavi

### *President-elect of National Council of Resistance*

This Christmas, in celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, the messenger of peace and solidarity, I wish all of you, who have gathered for today's meeting, health and prosperity.

First, let me offer my warmest appreciation to U.S. senators and distinguished personalities for supporting the cause and struggle of the Iranian people for freedom, democracy and the rule of law.

I would also like to sincerely thank the elected representatives of the American people for their support for the freedom fighters of Ashraf and Liberty and for shielding them from danger, and relocating them to Europe.

The 37-year-old experience of the destructive and murderous mullahs' regime in my country has shown that no degree of political and economic concessions which has been carried out at the expense of the Iranian people, have led to a change of behavior or policies of the Iranian regime either inside or outside of Iran. On the contrary, the situation has been worsening in every aspect.

During Hassan Rouhani, the so-called "moderate" president, more than 2,600 people have been executed. According to the United Nations, this marks the largest number of executions in the past 25 years. In order to create an atmosphere of fear and oppression in society the clerical regime has been executing a large number of victims in public places. At least 70 women have been hanged during Rouhani's term.

Despite a decline in sanctions, and transferring a considerable amount of cash to the mullahs' pocket, the Iranian economy is suffering from recession. Bureaucratic and government corruption, and astronomical stealing by regime officials, appear to be endless. The Iranian economy is under the control of the regime's supreme leader Ali Khamenei and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

They are the only one that will benefit from trade with Iran, and not the Iranian people. The clerical regime has been continuing its ballistic missile tests in violation of UN Security Council resolution 2231.

In the region, the regime has used all its might to save the criminal dictator of Syria. Currently, more than 70,000 regime forces, including the IRGC, and its agents are involved in the massacre of innocent people in Syria, especially in Aleppo.



## Message of Maryam Rajavi

### President-elect of National Council of Resistance

These days, the regime is talking about establishing naval bases in Yemen while continuing its sectarian policies in Iraq. Under such circumstances, there is no doubt that drying up the swamp of fundamentalism and extremism under the banner of Islam, either Shiite or Sunni, can only be made possible through confronting the Iranian regime, the godfather of fundamentalism and terrorism.

In other words, fighting ISIS cannot be separated from confronting this regime. To the extent that the clerical regime is pushed back from the region the world will get that much closer to destroying ISIS.

The only effective path for democratic change is by relying on the Iranian people and their organized resistance. The Iranian resistance is fighting with all its power to establish this goal, and we hope the United States congress will continue its support for the Iranian people in their quest for a free Iran.

The dossier of gross human rights abuses in Iran, especially the case for the massacre of 30,000 political prisoners in 1988, must be referred to the UN Security Council for the adoption of binding punishments. Nuclear and missile program is against the interest of the Iranian people and must be stopped.

The clerical regime must be evicted from Syria, Iraq, and, the IRGC must be placed on the list of terrorist organizations. The Iranian people, owing to more than a century-long struggle for democracy and liberty, deserve a government that respects their fundamental rights. These rights include the freedom of expression, free elections, gender equality, equal rights for religious and ethnic minorities.

Such a country would herald peace, and tranquility in the Middle East. This is our vision for tomorrow's Iran. Thank you all very much.



# Chairman John McCain

## Senate Armed Services Committee

Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, dear friends..... So I'm honored to be here with you today. Among others, I'm joined by my dear friend Tom Ridge of Pennsylvania. He and I served together in the Coolidge administration. And my beloved friend Joe Lieberman, an advocate for freedom and democracy in Iran of great magnitude.

And we are here to celebrate. We're celebrating with gratitude, thanks to God, all of our people are out of Iraq. That is the greatest thing we can say. By the way, I intend in the next couple months to go and visit them in their new homes and make sure that everything is okay there. And do whatever else is necessary to help them begin new lives. And with your help and support, I promise you it never would have happened without the people around this room, in this room and around this country, those people would still be living under the threat of death. And so I congratulate you, I thank you. It's an act of charity and love for your fellow men and women that is transcendent. And because of your dedication there are so many of us in public life that rose and did everything we could to help.

I'd just like to mention a couple words about what's happening today. The oppression goes on. The military buildup goes on. There are numerous occasions where the Iranians have either stretched or actually broken the agreement that was made. I have never been more upset as a former member, proud member of the United States Navy, and a Navy family by the way that goes back generations, to see American sailors, our fighting men and women, on their knees with their hands clasped behind their neck. That is an act that I have not seen in many, many, many



years. And the fact that our Secretary of State—and they were captured as you know it was a gross violation of international law, and then they were released—and the action of our Secretary of State was to thank the Iranians. Was to thank the Iranians. That picture, as you know, was all over the Middle East of American servicemen and women being humiliated by Iranians.

My friends, we have a new administration. We're going to have a Secretary of defense that is an outstanding military officer. General Mattis I have known for years, and I can tell you he understand Iran. He understands it very well. Those that I see that are candidates for Secretary of State, they will be strong. And I am convinced that the support that we have in the United States Senate and House on sanctions, on further sanctions on Iran, is very, very strong. So we are entering a new era in American foreign and national security policy. And I don't know frankly what the President-Elect will do because I've only had one conversation with him. But I do know the people I see him selecting or considering for key positions in his administration I'm very pleased to see.

My dear friends, your country has gone through very difficult and agonizing times. And there's always a symbol, there's always a symbol. For example, the latest symbol that many of us saw in every newspaper around the country all over America was that of a little boy in Syria covered in blood and dirt. That epitomizes or failure in Syria and our failure to side with those who were struggling against the dictator and brutality of Bashar Al-Assad. The picture I'll never forget as long as I live is watching a young woman named Neda bleed to death in the square while the Iranian people rose up to speak for and demonstrated for their God-given rights. And the repression and the oppression of the Ayatollahs is something that none of us will ever forget. And some day, in that square in Tehran, I promise you, and I will be there, there will be a statue of that brave young woman named Neda. God bless you. God bless freedom for Iran.



# Senator Robert Menendez

## *Senate Foreign Relations Committee*

Thank you very much. Salaam. It is a pleasure to be here with you and I am proud to be here at a time in which this is the last time that we will speak about your brothers and sisters being at risk in Iraq and we appreciate the government of Albania giving them refuge and so I am proud of what we did together because those who seek freedom and democracy should never have to face the terror of the risk of their life every day. And when I was the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, we made a singular issue of making sure that we told the Iraqi government and our own government that they were responsible for the lives of those at the camp until we ultimately could transfer them to safety where they can renew their life and also their commitment to the cause.

As you know, I have been pursuing Iran since I was in the House of Representatives and sitting on the House Foreign Affairs Committee. And continuing that in the United States Senate years ago, I found that as a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, that you, we, the United States was sending voluntary contributions to the International Atomic Energy Administration, which was going to Iran for ultimately creating operation capacity at the Bushehr Nuclear Facility, not in the national interests of the United States or of our allies in the region. Iran that has one of the world's largest oil and natural gas reserves certainly didn't need the pursuit of nuclear energy for domestic energy concern. And I led a successful drive to stop those voluntary contributions to the International Atomic Energy Administration and I have been since focused on the challenge of Iran to our country and to the region and the world.

And I would say to many of my friends who are focused on other issues in the world, "Why are you not focused on Iran?" And I see my distinguished friend and former colleague, Senator Lieberman who shared so many of those issues with me. And so now we have an opportunity, I believe, to counter Iran's continuing threats, because clearly just the nuclear accord, even though my view was not an accord that should have been supported and even as Iran continues to test us under the accord by, for example, creating more heavy water than it is permitted under the accord, and for me, just moving it or selling it to the United States is only to facilitate their capacity and capability and the capacity and capability are concerns as we think about the day in which they can seek to break out. And so even as we need a stronger enforcement of that, and I was glad to see the Senate reinstate the sanctions that I authored, the Iran Sanctions Act at a 99 to 0 to make sure that Iran has a very clear message that there will be consequences for violation of the agreement, I believe we need to go beyond.

This is a time to counter Iran's terrorism in the region and the world, the largest state sponsored terrorism. This is a time to challenge Iran as it relates to its missile proliferation, which has extended dramatically in terms of capacity and whose reach goes beyond the state of Israel and others in the region we care about can go into Europe and under our NATO obligations we are committed under NATO to ultimately respond. This is about Iran's violation of human rights in its own country. It is about the stabilization in the region, in Yemen, and in the incredible human catastrophe is Syria and so Iran has not changed its course. It has not changed its designs and it has not changed its hegemonic focus.

This is a time for the United States to respond, and that's why I introduced the Countering Iran Threat Act with Senator Corker, the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. I hope we can build upon that in the next Congress, because if we do, we can deter Iranian aggression.

We can move into a better day and a better hope where the Iranian people can ultimately achieve the freedoms and blessings that we achieve here in the United States. That is my hope. That is my focus and for as long as I'm a member of the United States Senate, that is what we're going to continue to fight for. Thank you so much for having me with you.



# Senator Joseph Lieberman

## Former Senator from Connecticut

Thank you. Thank you very much. It's great to be here. It's a cloudy day in Washington, D.C., but I would say in this room the sun is shining, for many reasons. I will tell you first it's just good to be back with friends, but I think a new day is dawning for the cause of a liberated, stable, free, independent Iran, free of the rule of the mullahs. That's my feeling and I will predict it today.

...Since we last gathered here, the residents of Camp Ashraf have been liberated. Make no mistake about it, their liberation was a victory over the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Iranians wanted them there, wanted them to be held hostage, wanted to threaten their lives constantly. But a quite remarkable coalition of people in this country and beyond, assisted by the humanitarian and strong responsiveness of Albania, led to this extraordinary result. So I want to say two things about it. One is I don't want to let pass my admiration for the members of the Iranian-American community, the MEK, and the values you showed by sticking by your friends, your allies, your brothers and sisters in Camp Liberty and Camp Ashraf. In some sense it would have been easy to move on. But you know the value of the whole idea, which is of course part of the ethic of the American military, no soldier left behind. No ally of the MEK left behind. So you showed what you're made of, and I think that strengthens you as you go forward. The second thing obviously is that having completed this task victoriously, the NCRI led by the MEK led by Madame Rajavi is now free to focus on the resistance in Iran and on changing the regime in Iran. So that's another reason why I think the sun is shining on this movement today.

The final reason I want to cite is there was an election here in the United States, and elections have consequences...But I'll tell you when it comes to Iran that the change from the Obama administration to the Trump administration is I think a hopeful one. President-Elect Trump has been very clear about what he thinks of the Iran nuclear agreement. It is, in his normally restrained language, a disaster and I of course agree very much. He has said in the worst of all cases he's prepared to tear it up. But he's certainly prepared to renegotiate it. And what we are going to see is a change from an administration that was so intent on improving our relations with Iran that it forgot our allies in the region in the Gulf Arab countries and Israel, and frankly to a certain extent forgot our values. It forgot where we come from, who we are as Americans, which is to focus on freedom, of which there is none in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Now we go to a new administration, not protective or defensive of the Iran nuclear agreement but really to challenge it, and I hope ready to challenge Iran on its domestic policies as well, and its expansionism, and on its support of terrorism.

I want to thank each and every one of you. Many of you are coming from around the country to Washington today to be part of this meeting and assert that you are part of the resistance to the status quo in Iran. In doing so I want to say that you are not just attending a meeting. I believe you've chosen to become part of history, not to sit passively by but to act in the long proud history of patriotic and courageous people who have fought and achieved their freedom, often against very big odds. And that goes back, way back, but certainly in the modern era to the Americans who achieved their independence by revolution in the 18th century, to the French who won freedom in their revolution in the 19th century, to the patriots who fought and defeated Nazism and Fascism in the Second World War, to the heroic people whose revolutionary uprisings collapsed the mighty Soviet Union in the 20th century.

By choosing to be here today, each and every one of you joins and advances that history. Together, we're engaged now in a historic struggle to liberate the people of Iran, a great nation with a proud history and culture, from the evil regime that is holding those people, that history, and that culture, hostage.

Although the regime that we're fighting in Tehran is led by religious people, it is in my opinion doing so much that I would call profoundly sacrilegious. It is denying the people of Iran the human rights that most religions, including Islam, and certainly we in America as expressed in our Declaration of Independence, believe are the direct endowment from our Creator, from God. That's why Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin declared long ago that, and I quote, "Resistance to tyrants is obedience to God." And that's the sense in which I understand the title of this organization, the National Council of Resistance of Iran.

In resisting the current regime in Iran we've got to be realistic. We can't close our eyes to what they do, our ears to what they say. It's almost a year now since the Iran nuclear agreement was activated, almost a year and a half since it was signed. But I ask you, has anything about Iran's behavior changed? No, it has not. Iran, under the alleged but not real moderate Rouhani, has as Senator McCain said, Ambassador Reiss said, already violated terms of the Iran nuclear agreement. And real substantial terms, the limits on the development of heavy water, the development of ballistic missiles, contrary to a United Nations resolution which embraces the Iran nuclear agreement. Iran under Rouhani continues to directly support and carry out, as Madame Rajavi said so powerfully a few moments ago, what I would call genocide in Syria. It continues to violate the sovereignty of the neighboring countries of the region. Iran under Rouhani continues to fund and train violent extremist terrorists in the Middle East and beyond.

Iran under Rouhani continues to punish and imprison Iranians who speak their minds against the regime, or just with independent ideas. As you well know, unprecedented numbers of citizens of Iran have been executed under this allegedly moderate regime. Women are treated terribly, gays and lesbians are treated brutally. The people of Iran under Rouhani continue to suffer economically from poverty and unbelievable levels of employment, which are not normally reported by the media. And still there are those outside of Iran, including in the United States of America, people in high places who want to see Iran as they wish it would be, not as it actually is today. Those who have negotiated with the regime and trusted its representatives, those who work with them, I believe have deceived themselves, and in the process endangered the rest of us, including particularly the people of Iran. Their hopes blind their eyes to the truth. Nothing has changed in Iran under Khamenei and Rouhani, in fact there is a good argument to be made that things have gotten worse. They are the enemies of freedom, the enemies of America, and obviously the enemies of the National Council of Resistance in Iran, which they fear terribly.

Now, you're here, we're here together, what can we do? Madame Rajavi offered some very powerful and good suggestions. And I want to both echo and build on them. We have a new president, and the new president is a strong negotiator. He wrote the book, as we know, on The Art of the Deal. And he has some steps he can take to right the relationship between the U.S. and Iran before we even begin to think about renegotiating the agreement. He has the power under law, as Madame Rajavi called for, to designate the IRGC as a terrorist organization. Now only the Quds Forces is designated as such. That would be the reality but also would have severe economic consequences on the regime. The president also has the capacity to aggressively renegotiate the agreement and threaten the Iranians to change the balance between us. And I think there's reason for us to seek an opportunity to make our case to him and his administration when they come in.

Congress has been the bulwark, the foundation, on a truly bipartisan basis of support for freedom in Iran and a change of regime in Iran. The vote on the Iran nuclear agreement that occurred in the summer of 2015, or perhaps it was the early fall, was a great disappointment to a lot of us, when Congress refused to rise up to reject that bad agreement. But it was also a disappointment because the bipartisan consensus that has existed on our policy toward Iran was broken in the vote on that agreement. And for the first time, broke largely along partisan lines with most Democrats supporting the agreement and most Republicans opposing it.

I understand a lot of it was because President Obama made this a very personal priority and in my opinion lobbied Congress as personally and strenuously as he has on any issue. But that was then and now is now. And just in recent days, weeks, but even days, congress returned to the bipartisan ground on Iran policy and extended the Iran Sanctions Act with overwhelming bipartisan support. I think that's a very hopeful sign and gives us open territory and responsive ears as we make our case for more sanctions, for support for a tough administration policy against the Islamic Republic of Iran, and for support of ultimately a change of regime.

I suppose it's possible that this regime could become a democratic regime that respects the rule of law. But as Senator McCain might say in his own colorful fashion, on the day that happens pigs will fly. So don't hold your breath until that happens. Recently on Students' Day in Iran, as you know better than most, there was a very impressive representation of students protesting the regime. There's a lot of unhappiness still there.





Elections are coming next June. If there is a repeat of the public demonstrations after the elections, because the elections have been conducted fraudulently and the people of Iran, who are our allies, go out into the streets, we have to make sure that this time the government of the United States stands with our values and on the side of freedom, and the people of Iran.

So I say to you that a new day has dawned. And for the reasons I've cited, the work that you've done for a long time has brought us to a point where we can have some hope. You have a very strong movement under a remarkably gifted, thoughtful, leader, Mrs. Rajavi. Her leadership—proof of this is the extent to which her leadership has sustained this movement through very difficult times, and it remains strong and resilient. History is on your side and our side. And she presents a face to the world, a religious woman, a woman of Islamic faith, who is open, who is progressive, who is tolerant, who wants Iran to return to its place in the community of civilized nations.

I just want to say a final personal word to you. I know as much as you believe in your cause, as I do, you must ask yourselves sometimes is it really possible that the regime in Iran with its growing wealth and its growing military strength can actually be stopped and overturned? And I'm here to tell you based on history that it can. I've always been inspired by the words of the anthropologist Margaret Mead, who said, "Never underestimate the capacity of a small group of ordinary citizens to change the world. In fact, it's the only way it's ever happened." And I remember what Dr. King said, "The moral arc of the universe often bends slowly, but it always bends towards justice." Thomas Paine, a leader of the American Revolution, said to his fellow revolutionaries when they rose up against the mighty British Empire, which was the superpower of its day, "We have it in our power to begin the world once again." And against all odds they did, they defeated the British Empire. The independent nation of America was created in order to secure the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In our time, President Reagan recalled the words of Thomas Paine that I quoted when he promised, "To begin the world anew by vanquishing an evil empire," the Soviet Union. And to the amazement of most people that is exactly what soon happened. The mighty Soviet Union collapsed, it was vanquished. And freedom triumphed. And so too I predict to you today that the evil empire that now rules the good people of Iran, will also collapse. And it will happen in our time. So let us go forward from today with a sense of resolve, and a sense of optimism. We have allies on the Hill here. We I believe will have allies in the White House soon such as we have not had on this particular issue for some time. So there's reason to be optimistic.

I just want to come back and reflect that I was privileged about nine years ago to go to Prague in the Czech Republic to attend a conference of political dissidents, freedom fighters, that was organized by the former Czech president and freedom fighter Vaclav Havel, and the former Soviet dissident, Natan Sharansky, and they brought together there an unbelievable array of freedom fighters from around the world, including from Iran. And I had the privilege of speaking there then, and I concluded with these words and I will conclude with them today, thanks for all your leadership and courage and friendship, I said. And I say again, history and the heroes in this room tell me that the future does not belong to despots and dictators, it belongs to the freedom fighters in Tehran. And I added, to the human rights advocates in North Korea, and to countless others whose names are not yet known but which will someday be inscribed alongside those of Havel and Sharansky in the kingdom of conscience and courage in which all freedom fighters belong. And on that day, Iran will once again be free. Thank you very, very much.



# Honorable Tom Ridge

## First United States Secretary of Homeland Security

Thank you very much. Well, some of my remarks are going to probably sound a bit like an echo to you, because there've been other speakers that have alluded to them, but certain messages bear repeating. The first is an acknowledgement of the great ambassador from Albania. Of the nearly 200 countries out there, there was only one whose heritage and commitment to freedom and freedom loving people manifested itself in opening the doors and welcoming their brothers and sisters and friends from the MEK, so Madame Ambassador, we thank you again.

You know, I arrived, I had the chance to sit down next to the Ambassador and to my left was a good friend, Senator Lieberman, and then the Senator and I were joined by mutual friend, John McCain, and then one of my fondest political and personal memories is a cold January or February evening in New Hampshire at a restaurant called The Common Man. And the three of us were there the evening before Senator Lieberman announced his endorsement of his dear, close, and personal friend and colleague. I was there to announce mine, but it paled in comparison to one of his colleagues. And the three of us sat there and I thought, "This is a very special moment for me personally, but when you think about Senator Lieberman whose tradition is roots within the Democrat party, supporting his good, close, personal friend, John McCain, a strong conservative Republican," and I said, "It's a shame from that day forward that that kind of relationship and mutual respect hasn't projected itself in this town and up on this hill so that we can advance America's collective interests in a much more aggressive fashion."

So whenever I'm around both of those great men, I'm reminded not only of that, not even that experience, but how important it is to have people on both sides of the aisle embracing a particular cause. And then Senator Menendez is here, following Senator McCain, and so all of you appreciate the either bipartisan or apolitical nature of the strong support that the National Council of Resistance of Iran has in the political world and in the diplomatic world that is personified by Ambassador Reiss and in the military world we've had chairman's of the Joint Chiefs serving multiple presidents in the academic world and many of them are here.

So the willingness of both the House and the Senate within the past week or so to almost unanimously—I think it was only one dissenting vote in both chambers—to pass the Iranian sanctions I think is very, very important. It's a very important tool, means of leverage for the next administration.

And I want to revisit that notion that this potentially moderate regime would change its behavior, be more welcome into the broader global community, the hope that they would change their conduct vis a vis their citizens and their neighbors and frankly the rest of the world, but we know it hasn't happened. If your intent is not only embracing the agreement but the spirit of the agreement, you would not have test fired missiles in March or October of last year. If we're going to become that moderate regime, which was our hope, but we're sensitive to the human rights of your own citizens and you wouldn't have executed over the past couple years the highest number of political dissidents, the members of the opposition than they've ever done in previous years. You wouldn't be executing minors. You wouldn't be executing women. You wouldn't be hanging people who supported publicly opposition to the existing regime. Certainly doesn't sound like moderating behavior, at least on our terms in this country and in the democratic world.

Well, (how to) impose sanctions if you destabilize? Iran's destabilization, is involved in destabilizing the region and the neighborhood. The single most significant destabilizing force throughout the Middle East, it was, it is, in the foreseeable future will be, is Iran—Rouhani, the mullahs.

Everybody has a picture of the horrific genocide that's going on in Syria. One that comes to my mind is that little boy face down on the shore, trying to escape the oppression and the violence and the hurt and the pain of Syria. This massive refugee crisis, three, 400,000 people killed and millions trying to exit. And what's the primary destabilizing force supporting the radical regime of Assad? It's Iran. They've got troops in Syria. They're funding militias in Syria. They're providing arms, let alone what they're doing in Yemen and other parts of the region. And it still remains the number one terrorist state in the world.





So continued human rights violations at unprecedented levels, massive destabilization in the region which is not only contrary to the interest of the neighboring countries in the region, but to Western values and interests in the United States—ballistic missile testing. So there's every reason to believe and to be hopeful that the President-Elect and his foreign policy team will take a new set of eyes and a new attitude and a new approach toward this theocracy. I'm very hopeful that that's going to happen.

But there's another element to being able to encourage and support and that is to sustain commitment of all of you, and I notice some young people here. When I look at the audience I see young people and I assume they're members of the staff, but now at my age when I look to an audience, everybody's younger, so but I look to the men and women here who work on the Hill, in the House or the Senate, and first of all, I want to thank you for taking the time to join us. privilege of serving the House of Representatives, one of the things that I was very proud of, and I think Senator Lieberman would tell you the same thing, is you got great talented young men and women—I don't care what side of the political aisle you're on—interested in learning and giving counsel and supporting their individual member on issues that they believe in.

So I want to thank you for taking the time to familiarize yourself with the group that has supported the Iranian National Resistance and our objectives. And we know the objectives, it's an aspirational goal, but it's a doable goal. It won't be done overnight. It took us years and years and years simply to move several thousand people from Iraq to Albania and it may take us a while to do this, but we have to sustain our commitment to replace a theocracy with a democracy.

To those of you who have supported with your tireless effort, your financial support, your encouragement to the men and women, and even the dissidents, the quiet dissidents in Iran itself, and your sustained support is absolutely invaluable in this effort to effect a regime change. It's not going to happen overnight. It's going to take a long time, but at least we have a new set of eyes and a new approach and a new leadership that's going to look at that relationship entirely differently.

It's been said many times before—I'm not going to give the original quote justice, but it's goes something like this, "Evil prevails if good people are quiet." Iran is an evil regime. There is no freedom of press. There is no freedom of religion. Human rights violations are extraordinary. Rule with an iron fist and an iron hand. They're destabilizing the region and good people such as yourselves in countries committed to human rights and freedom and democracy such as this, do all they can to effect the change, and continue to bring those corrosive forces to that region and for that matter to the rest of the world.



# Tim Ghaemi

*President of the Colorado's Iranian American Community, Member of the Organization of Iranian American Communities:*

Good morning ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the historic Senate Kennedy Caucus Room and thank you for being here. Our communities have worked very closely with our representatives in a bipartisan way, which speaks to the three-decades-long bipartisan support for the Iranian opposition, particularly the MEK.

Our community members who have been active in over 40 states, came to this country after enduring unspeakable brutality and hardship at the hands of the ruling theocracy.

We have striven for the establishment of a secular, democratic, and non-nuclear republic in Iran, which also best serves the national security of the United States as well as global peace and security.

With the rising threat of the Iranian regime inside Iran and in the region, as well as political change in the United States, we are hopeful that nearly four decades of futile search for the moderates within the Iranian regime, the U.S. policies will be based on the realities on the ground, which means reaching out to the majority of the Iranian populations and organized opposition, who seek democratic change.

And now, I would like to ask Ambassador Mitchell Reiss, who was the director of policy planning at the Department of States and is currently the president and CEO of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation to take over as the moderator of the event today while we benefit from his remarks as well.





# The Washington Times

## Emboldened Iran hawks eager to press Tehran on nuclear violations under Donald Trump

Hawks critical of the Obama administration's outreach to Iran over the past eight years were in a distinctly upbeat mood as they took over an ornate Senate caucus room Thursday to promote their cause. The incoming Trump administration, many said, understands their case and the threat posed by the regime in Tehran far better than President Obama ever did.

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain and Democratic Sen. Robert Menendez, a longtime member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, were among the lawmakers saying Mr. Trump and the team he is assembling will clearly be more skeptical of Iran and ready to call out any violations of the multinational nuclear deal Mr. Obama helped negotiate in 2015.

"There is every reason to believe and be hopeful that the president-elect will take a new set of eyes and a new approach to this theocracy. I'm very hopeful that will happen," former Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge, the first secretary of homeland security, told the briefing on the policy options on Iran held in the Russell Senate Office Building.

Mr. McCain said he was heartened by Mr. Trump's choice of James N. Mattis to head the Defense Department, saying the retired Marine general was deeply familiar with the threat posed by Tehran to the U.S. and its regional allies. Gen. Mattis has criticized the Iran nuclear deal as "imperfect" and said in an April speech that "the Iranian regime, in my mind, is the single most enduring threat to stability and peace in the Middle East."

"I don't know, frankly, what Donald Trump wants to do [about Iran], but I do know the people he has selected so far for major positions I've been very pleased to see," the Arizona Republican said.

The Capitol Hill event itself, put together by the Organization of Iranian American Communities,\* marked another step in the remarkable evolution for one of the major sponsors of the event, the Paris-based National Council of Resistance of Iran and the NCRI's largest component, the Mujahedeen-e Khalq (People's Mujahedeen of Iran), or MEK.

A fierce opponent of the Islamic republic regime in Tehran and a source of many of the intelligence scoops detailing Tehran's clandestine nuclear programs, the secular coalition broke with other elements of the coalition that toppled the Shah of Iran in the 1979 revolution, and has operated in exile ever since.

The MEK was placed on the State Department's list of terrorist organizations in the mid-1990s but, backed by a growing number of supporters on Capitol Hill, was removed from the list in 2012. MEK officials say they have renounced violence but remain committed to the peaceful overthrow of the theocratic regime in Tehran in favor of a new secular, democratic government.



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## Camp Liberty Resolved

The group was buoyed this year by the end of a long stalemate over Camp Liberty, a onetime U.S. military base in Iraq that became a holding post for over 3,000 MEK members, held there by the Iraqi government and constantly criticized by Iranian authorities. The last of those detained at the camp left Iraq this fall, many having been taken in by the government of Albania. Former Sen. Joseph Lieberman, the 2000 Democratic candidate for vice president, told Thursday's gathering that he voted for Hillary Clinton last month but that Mr. Trump's surprise election, coupled with strong congressional majorities critical of the Iranian regime, could mean a major change in Iranian policy in the months ahead.

"I really think a new day is dawning for the cause of a free, stable, independent and democratic Iran," said Mr. Lieberman, who noted the resolution of the Camp Liberty standoff means the NCRI "can focus on resistance and changing the regime" in Iran. "Elections have consequences," Mr. Lieberman said. "I can tell you, when it comes to Iran, the change from Barack Obama to Donald Trump is a very hopeful one. Now we go to an administration that is not protective or defensive of the Iran agreement, but is ready to challenge it."

Mr. Trump has been sharply critical of the deal — and the tens of billions of dollars in frozen and sanctioned funds returned to Iran — but has been unclear on whether he would scrap it unilaterally or take a far more aggressive approach to enforcing it and calling out Iranian violations. Many of the other signatories to the deal, including Russia, China, Germany and France, have been actively exploring new commercial opportunities with Iran, in the energy sector and beyond.

or its part, Iran has stepped up its warnings against any move by the Trump administration to torpedo the nuclear deal and the lifting of international sanctions Iran demanded as part of the agreement.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, considered a relative "moderate" on the Iranian political spectrum, said just this week Mr. Trump "may wish many things, he may wish to weaken or tear up [the nuclear deal], but will we and our nation allow such a thing? America cannot influence our path of strength and endurance."

But Mr. McCain and other critics of the deal say Iran has already violated both the letter and the spirit of the deal, with little sign that Tehran has modified its policies or stopped sowing instability in regional hot spots from Syria to Yemen.

Mr. Lieberman said Mr. Trump and the Republican-dominated Congress could take a number of steps to check Iran's aggressiveness short of tearing up the nuclear deal, including new unilateral sanctions and designating Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps, the military unit specifically charged with defending the country's Islamic theocratic system, as a terrorist organization. The sanctions could hurt, because the IRGC has built up a major business empire in addition to its military operations.







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