

# U.S. Launches New Talks To Secure Iraq

## Stanford Professor Predicted Shift



By Mark Matthews

Feb. 27, 2007 - There's been a dramatic shift in policy in the search for peace in Iraq: the Bush administration has agreed to official talks with Iran and Syria. This new attempt at diplomacy comes at the invitation of the Iraqi government.

Professor Abbas Milani is Director of Iranian Studies at Stanford University. Last Friday he wrote in The New York Times that despite all the tough talk, there appeared to be an opening for negotiations with Iran. The New York Times' editors called to ask, 'Are you sure?' Today the Secretary of State confirmed it.

The announcement came during today's Senate hearing on the President's request for another \$100 billion dollars to fund the war.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice telling the Appropriations Committee the U.S. would accept Iraq's invitation to sit down with Iran and Syria.

Condoleezza Rice: "This initial meeting will be followed perhaps as early as the first half of April by a ministerial level meeting with the same invitees."

Rice said the invitees will include Iraq's immediate neighbors and the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council -- Britain, China, France, Russia and the U.S.

Condoleezza Rice: "We hope that all governments will seize this opportunity to improve their relations with Iraq and to work for peace and stability in the region."

Senator Dianne Feinstein praised the decision.

Senator Dianne Feinstein: "I think it's really on the right track, particularly involving Syria and Iran, so thank you very much."

At Stanford, , the Director of Iranian Studies is smiling. On Friday, Abbas Milani wrote an op-ed in The New York Times saying that Iran was ready to negotiate.

Professor Abbas Milani: "My sense has been for sometime now that in spite of the Saber rattling by Mr Ahmadinejad and in spite of his tough rhetoric the bulk of the Iranian regime has recognized that the path of confrontation is not to their benefit."

Professor Milani says the U.S. should seize the opportunity to question Iran about Iranian weapons found in Iraq, about Iran's nuclear ambitions, about anything that could vent the build up of pressure.

Professor Abbas Milani: "To try to avoid and avert what I think will be a major disaster for the United States ... a war with Iran."

Professor Milani says there are forces in Iran that want war. He says there are forces in the U.S. that want it too, but in both countries they're in the minority, and direct talks are a very good start towards peace.

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