

I have repeatedly asked the president to engage in direct diplomacy with Tehran, and I have put the Bush administration on notice that the Constitution requires Congress to authorize any offensive military action against Iran."

With these words, Congressman Peter DeFazio issued an Oct. 24 statement against what many fear is an inevitable military action in Iran and a possible World War III.

Most Americans have very little idea of who the people of Iran are — the people whom, it appears, the Bush administration intends to bomb. Nor does the average American seem to know what brought Iran and the U.S. to this precipice.

DeFazio chose to end his statement on Iran with a quote by Dwight D. Eisenhower: "I think people want peace so much that one of these days government had better get out of the way and let them have it." The quote is one with which most Americans and Iranians would agree. Ironically, it was Eisenhower's administration that was responsible for first overthrow of a democratically elected government by the U.S. — the Iranian government.

Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq led Iran's first democratically elected government under the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. The U.S.- and British-supported *coup d'état* sought to end to efforts by Mosaddeq to nationalize Iran's oil industry and reduce outside control of Iran's oil resources. Kermit Roosevelt, who masterminded the 1953 coup for the CIA, would later argue the coup was staged to prevent a communist takeover of power in Iran.

The coup led to 20 years of repressive leadership by the U.S.-backed shah, which then led the anti-American backlash that resulted in the deposing of the shah and Iran's current incarnation as an Islamic republic in 1979. This turmoil coincided with the Iran hostage crisis, which ended when the Algerian government negotiated an agreement between the U.S. and Iran. One of the provisions of the Algiers Accords was that the U.S. would not interfere in Iran's internal affairs.

"I was terrified," says Jasmine Minbashian, of the day that she saw graffiti scrawled on a wall proclaiming: "Nuke Iran" during the hostage crisis. Minbashian's family came to the U.S. from Iran when she was a child and shortly before the coup, settling in Seattle. She was shocked at the anti-Iranian hatred she saw during the hostage crisis. "I was afraid to tell people I was Iranian, I told them I was Italian. Like anyone would believe that with my last name."

Minbashian worries that the same problem occurs today — people confuse the Iranian people with the current Iranian government. This is a mistake she says most Iranians don't make about the U.S. "People [in Iran] love Americans and America. They understand the U.S. government and democracy, and they want the same for their government in Iran."

According to the CIA's *The World Factbook*, the majority of Iran's population is under 30. Minbashian describes the youth of Tehran as "very cosmopolitan" in contrast to the



JASMINE MINBASHIAN

Bombing Iran

DeFazio and others speak out against more war

BY CAMILLA MORTENSEN

stereotypes of religious militants in turbans she often encounters. Islam, she says, "is a relatively new development in Iran." Zoroastrianism, she says, "is the heart and soul of Persian culture." Many Iranians refer to themselves as Persians, because what is now Iran was known as Persia until 1935.

She wonders at the affect that bombing would have not only on the lives of the young people, but on this large population's future views of Americans as well.

Iran was the second of three nations — Iraq, Iran and North Korea — named by George W. Bush in his 2002 State of the Union address as an "Axis of Evil."

"I think if Bush decides to bomb Iran, it's going to turn public opinion in Iran against the U.S.," says Minbashian, who worked for Eugene's Cascadia Wildlands Project before returning to Washington state to work for Conservation Northwest.

What goes unreported in the West, she says, are the young people in Iran who turn out for mass protests and rallies as well as all the alternative publications and blogs coming out of Iran. According to Technorati.com's April 2007 "State of the Blogosphere," Farsi (what the Persian language is called in Iran) is now one of the top 10 blog languages.

Women in Iran, by law, must wear the hijab or veil, but Minbashian describes the young women as "very fashion conscious" wearing colorful clothes under the hijab and "pushing for change." "It's a form of rebellion," she says; "How much makeup you can wear and how far back you push your headscarf."

"It's not a culture used to covering themselves up," she says.

Minbashian is an avid skier. She learned to ski in Iran in the Alborz mountain range that surrounds Tehran where her grandfather — General Fatollah Minbashian, commander of the shah's ground forces — once had a residence. A recent article in *Outside* magazine profiled the ski areas in Iran and described hip teenagers on skis and snowboards listening to their iPods and getting stoned. In other words, they were acting a lot like the average UO student.

But while the young people of Iran and the U.S. sound like they could easily hang out and get along, the governments butt heads. Iran has been engaged in talks with the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) about its possession of centrifuges used in enriching uranium.

Enriched uranium can be used both for nuclear weapons, and for peaceful nuclear power. Mohamed El-Baradei, head of the IAEA, stated earlier this year that sanctions against Iran are not advisable.

Rather than mere sanctions, it appears that Vice President Dick Cheney has other plans for dealing with Iran. According to Germany's *Der Spiegel* newspaper, an official close to Cheney said the vice president has already figured out how to give the U.S. an excuse to attack Iran: First, the Bush administration would persuade Israel to fire missiles at Iran's uranium enrichment plant, thus inducing a reprisal from Tehran. This would give the U.S. a pretext for bombing military targets and nuclear plants in Iran.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Senate passed the Lieberman-Kyl amendment to the Defense Authorization Bill last month by a 76-22 vote. The amendment, which calls for the use of "military instruments" to "combat, contain, and roll back the violent activities" of the "Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran," is viewed by many as a call to arms against Iran. Democratic presidential hopeful Hilary Clinton voted for the amendment, while fellow senators and presidential hopefuls

Barack Obama and John McCain chose not to vote at all. Oregon's Sen. Ron Wyden voted against the amendment.

Peter DeFazio has done more than just release a statement on military action in Iran. In January 2007 he introduced House Concurrent Resolution 33, "Expressing the sense of Congress that the president should not initiate military action against Iran without first obtaining authorization from Congress."

'If your goal is really to establish a democratic government in Iran, you can do that without bombing.'

— Jasmine Minbashian

The resolution at this time has only 54 cosponsors — nowhere near a majority in the 435 member House of Representatives, but it is fairing better than its sister bill in the Senate, Concurrent Resolution 13, which has no cosponsors at all.

Although Wyden has not signed on as a cosponsor to the resolution, his spokesperson Tom Fazzini says that Wyden "generally supports any effort to force the administration to authorize military action against Iran or any nation before the president decides to act." Wyden is on paternity leave this week.

Here in Eugene, Dr. Ali Emami, a UO instructor of finance, introduced a motion a year ago to the UO University Senate stating, "The University Senate of the University of Oregon opposes military actions against Iran and petitions the president of the United States to adhere to diplomatic avenues for resolving perceived disagreements between Iran and the United States."

However, the Faculty Senate voted that such a motion was not in its "purview."

Last week, the Bush administration released new sanctions against Iran to pressure the country into giving up on what the U.S. alleges is a nuclear weapons program.

"If your goal is really to establish a democratic government in Iran," says Minbashian, "you can do that without bombing."

EW

***Ol' Uncle Sam's gettin' pretty hot.
Time to turn Iran into a parking lot.
Bomb Iran.***

Bomb, bomb, bomb, bomb Iran.

— Vince Vance and the Valiants, "Bomb Iran" sung to the Beach Boys' tune of "Barbara Ann"