Mr. President, I

don’t want to overly belabor the point

but there is a very important thing

happening on the other side of the

world, in Iran, at this very time. My office

has been receiving, now, numerous

reports of a growing protest in Iran

taking place right now. This is within

the past couple of hours. It is dawn in

Tehran, as I speak. It is estimated that

this past evening between 5,000 to 8,000

students are joining protests against

the Government’s crackdown on student

democracy dissidents.

Recently, five student leaders were

arrested in advance of the July 9 anniversary

of the original mass student

protest in 1999. Even though it is now

almost dawn in Tehran, the protest has

continued.

I understand during the night there

was a dissipation of the protest. A

number of the student protesters—this

was outside Tehran University—who

were protesting dissipated. Rather

than going back to their dorm rooms,

they have gone and dispersed to other

places because, after the 1999 protest, a

number of the Iranian military guard

went to the dormitories and arrested

en masse a number of students and

they were roundly punished.

We have also received reports that

Iranian Government forces are beating

up on the protesters, firing warning

shots at them. I do not have that

verified but we have received these reports.

I call this to the attention of Members

of this body because there has

been a lot of discussion going on at the

present time of U.S. policy towards

Iran. I think it is clear the United

States should clearly stand with those

who stand for democracy.

We don’t know if the student protest

is going to go ahead and mature further

or not, or if it is going to further

brutally be put down.

This is in a buildup to a July 9 protest

that had been planned for a number

of months, to recognize the July 9,

1999, student protest that was brutally

put down by the regime. This has been

building. In anticipation of that, the

regime in Tehran—and this is a dictatorial

regime that has never been

elected, the rulers have never been selected

by the people in Iran—arrested

these student leaders in advance of

July 9 in an effort to put it down before

it gets started.

This is deplorable. This is not democracy.

The United States should stand

with those who stand for democracy.

We should have a clear official policy

that our position toward Iran is to support

those who support democracy and

we support democracy in Iran. We

stand for that with the Iranian people.

There has been a growing, burgeoning

movement in Iran of young

people who do not want anything to do

with this dictatorial regime. They have

lived, now, some 25 years, over 25 years

under this militant, dictatorial regime

that supposedly has put Islamic law in

place and they are tired of it and they

want no more of it. They want no more

of it and they are willing to put forward

their lives in this gallant effort,

this brave push for democracy. That is

their desire.

I call on the Iranian Government to

stop beating and harassing their own

people. The students are shouting:

Khatami, Khatami, go away.

These are the same students who

gave President Khatami his start 7

years ago. He was elected as a reformer,

which he has not produced on.

Instead, he has continued with the

same totalitarian way.

I believe he was one of seven candidates

at the time selected by the ruling

mullahs to be able to run in front

of the people, and the people selected

the most reformist, most hope minded.

He has not produced. But they didn’t

get a free selection. Nor does

Khatami—I want to identify this as

well—have free control. The ruling

mullahs continue to control the military

secret police, foreign policy, and

the treasury.

They control, not President

Khatami. So it is a system where

unelected, unselected dictators brutalize

a country, an elected reformer is

not allowed to reform, and he isn’t

even selected by the people. He has to

go through a selection process by the

ruling mullahs, so only appropriate

candidates can run for office. And the

students are tired of it. They are fed up

with it, they are protesting, and they

are being brutalized in the process.

We should support the student movement

for the July 9 nationwide protest

in Iran. We should state that it is U.S.

policy to stand for true democracy in

Iran.

This is a great nation of great people.

It is going to make a wonderful open

democracy when it is liberated and

opened up. These students are trying to

pave the way for that to occur.

This is how history is made. It is

made one brave act at a time. The

world is watching how the regime

treats the students, the protesters, and

it will hold this regime accountable.

In Iran they have a saying that they

yell frequently: ‘‘Free Iran.’’ As these

protesters are yelling ‘‘Free Iran,’’ that

should be our call as well: Free Iran.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.