Mr. President, I

rise today to talk about some of the recent

developments in the Islamic Republic

of Iran.

We have a lot of activity today.

There is a hearing in the Foreign Relations

Committee, as well as some dissidents

who are in town to talk about

the state of affairs in Iran.

As many of my colleagues know, the

Iranian Government’s track record

with respect to supporting acts of terror

inflicted upon innocent persons and

inflicting damage on peaceful relations

among Middle Eastern countries is

abysmal. Iran’s bad activities in the

Middle East and, candidly, bad actions

in the world—at the head of the list,

from my perspective, is promoting terrorism

activities and Islamic fascism

ideology that undergirds that terrorist

activity in the Middle East—have secured

a designation by the U.S. Department

of State as a state sponsor of terrorism.

Iran supports terrorist organizations

such as Hezbollah, the entity

behind the 1983 suicide terrorist attack

against U.S. military and civilian personnel

in Lebanon. Hamas is another

organization that they are now supporting,

the Palestinian Islamic Jihad,

and the Popular Front for the Liberation

of Palestine-General Command.

All of these are reprehensible organizations

that the Iranian Government is

directly sponsoring as a state sponsor

of terrorism.

Additionally, Iran has been implicated

in the 1996 attack on U.S. military

personnel at Khobar Towers in

Saudi Arabia.

Iran’s reach into Iraq, which many of

us have been complaining about for a

couple of years and which is now being

recognized by our Government, by our

Department of State, and which is now

being recognized by the world—Iran is

one of the fomenters of terrorism within

the country of Iraq. Iran’s connection

to the Supreme Council for the Islamic

Revolution in Iraq and the organization’s

Badr Brigades means that

Iran has a hand in shaping the allegiances

of both Iraq’s police and military

forces.

Iran’s human rights violations, in addition

to their terrorist activities, are

no less chilling. The State Department

reported that the Government of Iran

engages in widespread use of torture

and other degrading treatment and the

Iranian Government continues to discriminate

against religious and ethnic

minorities. They do not discriminate

as to who they discriminate against.

Other Muslim sects—whether Sunni or

Suffi or Jews or Christians, they discriminate

against them all.

Iran’s record of degradation of

women is appalling and should not be

tolerated by the international community.

Iranian women are severely oppressed

and their voices are constantly

suffocated by the government. There

are numerous examples of Iranian

women who have been arrested and severely

beaten for the simple fact they

are females. One example is Dr. Roya

Toloui, a women’s rights activist and

the editor of a publication that is now

banned in Iran. She was arrested last

summer in the wake of a 2005 July

demonstration in the town of Mahabad.

Dr. Toloui was held in prison for 66

days. While she was there, she was

raped and she was tortured. Though she

has since been released from prison, Dr.

Toloui is in constant fear of rearrest

and of death.

The State Department also noted

Iran’s continued restrictions on workers’

rights. In short, the Government of

Iran oppress its people and terrorizes

the world and is a threat to the security

of this country and to the security

of democracies throughout the West.

The one additional aspect that has

now taken a lot of press is Iran’s pursuit

of nuclear capability. This is very

unsettling when you have a regime

with this kind of track record to be in

pursuit of nuclear capability. Iran, of

course, is permitted to pursue peaceful

nuclear research under the terms of the

Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. Its

record on transparency and the true

purpose of its program, obviously, is

very much in doubt. In November of

2003 the International Atomic Energy

Agency reported that Iran has been developing

an undeclared nuclear enrichment

program for 18 years and had covertly

imported nuclear material and

equipment. Furthermore, the IAEA reported

that Iran had conducted over 110

unreported experiments to produce

uranium, metal, and separated plutonium,

and had possession of designs

clearly related to the fabrication of nuclear

weapons.

In 2005, in August, following the election

of President Ahmadinejad, Iran

announced that the ongoing negotiations

under the terms of the 2004 Paris

agreement, the agreement that suspended

activities brokered by the EU–3,

were ‘‘satisfactory’’ according to Iran.

Then they announced they were resuming

the conversion of raw uranium into

gas for enrichment. In January of 2006,

Iran removed the IAEA seals on the research

enrichment plant in Natanz.

Recently, the IAEA board voted 27 to

3 to report Iran to the U.N. Security

Council, and in so doing noted Iran’s

many failures and breaches of its obligations

to comply with the Nuclear

Nonproliferation Treaty. Iran’s aggressive

behavior and concealment of ongoing

nuclear activities can only lead to

one conclusion, and that is that Iran is

seeking to enrich uranium to use for

nuclear weapons.

In response to this nuclear gambit, I

believe we need smart sanctions for the

U.N. to impose. For example, the U.N.

should consider imposing a travel ban

on Iran’s leaders, banning international

flights from Iranian air, banning

the transportation of cargo carried

by Iranian Government-owned

ships, and possibly to pursue legal action

against Iranian leaders responsible

for human rights and terrorism abuses,

as well as executions.

I recently introduced legislation with

my colleague, Senator NORM COLEMAN,

that seeks to empower the forces of democracy

in Iran and support efforts to

foster peaceful change within Iran. It is

S. 333, the Iran Freedom and Support

Act. It seeks to make it harder for the

Government of Iran to have access to

revenue and foreign investment. Resources

that those investments accrue

are used by the Iranian Government to

support terrorist organizations and to

pursue nuclear activity as well as to

repress its people.

The bill also codifies sanctions, controls,

and regulations currently in

place against Iran by Executive order.

It codifies those in statute. The bill declares

it should be a policy of the

United States to support the Iranian

people in their prodemocracy movements.

We believe, and the bill says,

that the people of Iran are entitled to

self-determination, to free and fair

elections, and we want to provide the

resources in helping those groups attain

those free and fair elections. We

authorized $10 million in this bill, but

thanks to the effort on the supplemental

the administration has sent up

to the Congress, they have requested

$75 million for prodemocracy efforts in

Iran. I hope the introduction of our legislation

last year perhaps gave some

encouragement to ask for such funding.

They have asked for $75 million. I will

amend our bill to ask for $100 million

for those efforts.

The Iran Freedom and Support Act is

a nonviolent way to try to effect

change in Iraq. I agree with the President

and all who have talked about

keeping our military options on the

table, but it is vitally important to try

to use our diplomatic options first and

foremost. At a time when the threat

from Iran is real, it is not only real to

this country, not only real to the Middle

East and Iraq, but it is, obviously,

real to their own people in the way

they treat them.

This is an important piece of legislation.

It is something I hope we can do.

It is important in spite of what the

President has done. I support his policies

that we show the Congress is 100

percent behind his effort to do something

about the nuclear gambit Iran is

engaged in right now. I am hopeful we

can pass this legislation in a timely

fashion.

I yield the floor.