



SCIENCE & SECURITY

In a Time of Tension, Scientists Build Hopeful U.S.-Iran Links

The diplomatic conflict between Iran and the West was growing more intense by the day, and global headlines focused on Russian President Vladimir Putin's trip to Tehran. At the same time, but with far less fanfare, a delegation of U.S. science and engineering leaders was arriving in the Iranian capital on a mission of science diplomacy.

Among the U.S. visitors was Norman P. Neureiter, director of the AAAS Center for Science, Technology, and Security Policy. He recalls a reception that few would have predicted: When Nobel laureate Joseph H. Taylor of Princeton spoke at Sharif University of Technology, students jammed the hall and treated him like a celebrity. Former President Mohammad Khatami had a cordial visit with the Americans. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad wanted to arrange a meeting, but Putin's visit made that impossible. And the Iranian news media covered the tour extensively.

"It was phenomenally favorable, from the first day," Neureiter said in an interview. "It's amazing how popular Americans are in Iran. Intuitively, you would think it would be just the opposite."

The October visit offered clear proof that the science communities of the two countries share a reservoir of common interest and good will that could support a more constructive overall relationship, he said. This month's U.S. intelligence conclusion that Iran suspended its nuclear weapons program in 2003 is a "remarkable development," he added, "but there are still many issues of contention between the U.S. and Iran. What we are proposing is greater engagement at the people level despite the political problems."

An optimistic view came from engineering Professor Abolhassan Vafai, who helped organize the visit as editor-in-chief of the international scientific journal *Scientia Iranica* and a member of National Academy of Sciences of Iran. "I am pretty sure that in the future this misunderstanding between the governments will be resolved, and two great nations—the U.S. and Iran—should get together to work for the benefit of humanity," Vafai said. Citing climate change, hunger, and water shortages, he added: "There are so many common challenges for our people.... It is up to us scientists to provide avenues for that work."

Sharif University, in cooperation with the Iranian Academy of Sciences, hosted the visit from 13 to 22 October. The U.S. delegation was organized by the National Academies and led by Wm. A. Wulf, recently retired president of the National Academy of Engineering.



(Left to right) Biologist Michael Clegg, National Academy of Sciences foreign secretary; Norman P. Neureiter, director of the AAAS Center for Science, Technology, and Security Policy; computer scientist Wm. A. Wulf, president emeritus of the National Academy of Engineering; unidentified man; Ayatollah Mostafa Mohaghegh Damad, Iranian Institute of Philosophy; and Grand Ayatollah Mousavi Ardebili. The group met in Qom, Iran.

Despite the tension of recent years, Neureiter's center has maintained contacts with Iran's science community. He visited three cities in Iran in 2004, lecturing at several universities and technology parks. Reza Mansouri, an Iranian physicist and science policy expert, spoke at AAAS's Washington, D.C., headquarters last year. In late November, Neureiter and his wife, Georgine, hosted a dinner for 20 Iranian medical scientists in the U.S. for a visit focused on food-borne diseases under the State Department's International Visitors Program.

Neureiter trained as a research chemist; in the 1960s, during tense years of the Cold War, he became the first U.S. science attaché in Eastern Europe. Later he served in President Richard Nixon's Office of Science and Technology, helping craft scientific elements of historic agreements with the Soviet Union and China. He served as science adviser to the U.S. Secretary of State from 2000 to 2003.

Neureiter's experience left him committed to the use of scientific and technological cooperation to build better global relationships. "I would hope that such a course might be fruitful with Iran," he said.

Though funding is limited, Iran today is pursuing an S&T renaissance. University enrollment is growing. International research publications and joint projects are up. New research centers and technology incubators are opening across the country. The Iranian blueprint for growth emphasizes sustainable, knowledge-based development, and environmental protection. Many scientists and engineers leading the effort were educated in the United States and Europe, and they are eager to restore strong ties to Western colleagues.

Neureiter sees little risk that engagement would allow Iran to obtain sensitive data; the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control regulates programs with Iran, and U.S. scientists would not be cooperating with Iran in sensitive areas. Both he and Vafai stressed the potential benefits for both nations. That sentiment was repeated throughout the visit—not just by members of the U.S. delegation, but by Khatami, Grand Ayatollah Mousavi Ardebili, and other Iranian leaders. Iran's vice president for science and technology, Sadegh Vaezzadeh, challenged researchers from both countries to cooperate in preventing the misuse of science.

Neureiter cited several areas of strength for Iranian science: engineering, theoretical physics, chemistry, medicine, and cognitive science. He suggested that collaboration also could focus on earthquake and addiction research.

AAAS officials, including Chief International Officer Vaughan Turekian, are exploring other ways to engage with Iran. "The benefits of joint visits are real, but they're also fleeting," Neureiter said. "So we should work with our Iranian colleagues to find ways to make these relationships sustainable and enduring."

COMMUNICATION

AAAS Names Science Journalism Winners

An inquiry into mysterious elk deaths in Wyoming, a profile of a largely unknown black chemist who was a pioneer in the synthesis of medicinal drugs from plants, and a skeptical look at the effects of telling children they are smart are among the winners of the 2007 AAAS Science Journalism Awards.

- **Large Newspaper—(Circulation >100,000):** Kenneth Weiss and Usha Lee McFarling, *Los Angeles Times*, for "Altered Oceans," 30 July to 3 August 2006.
- **Small Newspaper—(Circulation <100,000):** Jennifer Frazer, *Wyoming Tribune-Eagle*,

- for “Getting to the Bottom of Mysterious Elk Deaths,” 26 November and 3 December 2006.
- **Magazine:** Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman, *New York*, for “How Not to Talk to Your Kids,” 19 February 2007.
 - **Television:** Llewellyn Smith and Stephen Lyons, WGBH/NOVA, for “Forgotten Genius,” 6 February 2007.
 - **Radio:** Keith Seinfeld, KPLU-FM, Seattle/

- Tacoma, for “The Electric Brain,” 8 to 11 January 2007.
- **Online:** Katie Alvord, KeweenawNow.com, for “Lake Superior Basin Climate Change” series, 3 May; 3 June; and 30 June 2007.
 - **Children’s Science News:** Mona Chiang, *Scholastic Science World*, for “A Whale of a Mystery,” 15 January 2007.
- The judging panel also awarded a special Certificate of Merit for Sina Loeschke, the runner-

up in the Children’s Science News category, for her 7 February 2007 article on sea slugs in the German science magazine *GEOLino*.

The awards, established in 1945, are sponsored by Johnson & Johnson Pharmaceutical Research & Development, L.L.C. Each category carries a \$3000 award. The winners will pick up their plaques at the AAAS Annual Meeting in Boston in February 2008.

—Earl Lane

Results of the 2007 Election of AAAS Officers

Following are the results of the 2007 election. Terms begin on 19 February 2008.

General Offices

President-Elect: Peter C. Agre

Board of Directors: Nancy Knowlton, Thomas A. Woolsey

Committee on Nominations: Diana Hicks, Karen A. Holbrook, Peter H. Raven, Lydia Villa-Komaroff

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Chair-Elect: Daniel Bush

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Chair-Elect: Michael A. Little

Member-at-Large: Dennis H. O’Rourke

Electorate Nominating Committee: William R. Leonard, Karen R. Rosenberg

Section on Astronomy

Chair-Elect: Steven V. W. Beckwith

Member-at-Large: Nancy D. Morrison

Electorate Nominating Committee: Lynn R. Cominsky, William S. Smith Jr.

Section on Atmospheric and Hydrospheric Sciences

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Council Delegate: Claire L. Parkinson

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Member-at-Large: Diana G. Myles

Electorate Nominating Committee: Michael W. Nachman, Baldozero “Toto” Olivera

Section on Chemistry

Chair-Elect: Geraldine Richmond

Member-at-Large: Peter B. Armentrout

Electorate Nominating Committee: Alison Butler, Mark A. Ratner

Section on Dentistry and Oral Health Sciences

Chair-Elect: Huw F. Thomas

Member-at-Large: Susan W. Herring

Electorate Nominating Committee: Mark W.

Lingen, Janet Moradian-Oldak

Council Delegate: Jacques E. Nör

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Member-at-Large: Robert Tinker

Electorate Nominating Committee: Judy Diamond, Susan H. Hixson

Council Delegate: Rodger W. Bybee

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Chair-Elect: Robert M. Nerem

Member-at-Large: Cristina H. Amon

Electorate Nominating Committee: Kristi S. Anseth, Cindy Atman

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Chair-Elect: Charles N. Haas

Member-at-Large: Erika C. Shugart

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Electorate Nominating Committee: Kam-biu Liu, Ellen Mosley-Thompson

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Electorate Nominating Committee: Rachelle D. Hollander, Phillip R. Sloan

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Electorate Nominating Committee: Tingye Li, Robert W. Sprague

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Electorate Nominating Committee: Joan Maling, Sally McConnell-Ginet

Council Delegate: Keren Rice

Section on Mathematics

Chair-Elect: Keith Devlin

Member-at-Large: Warren Page

Electorate Nominating Committee: Harold P. Boas, Deborah F. Lockhart

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Member-at-Large: R. Arlene H. Sharpe

Electorate Nominating Committee: Harry B. Greenberg, Margaret K. Hostetter

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Chair-Elect: Mahlon R. DeLong

Member-at-Large: Hollis T. Cline

Electorate Nominating Committee: Rosemarie Booze, Charles D. Gilbert

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Member-at-Large: C. Anthony Hunt

Electorate Nominating Committee: F. Douglas Boudinot, Günter Hochhaus
Council Delegate: Patrick J. Sinko

Section on Physics

Chair-Elect: Bill R. Appleton

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Electorate Nominating Committee: Robert P. Redwine, Antoinette (Toni) Taylor

Section on Psychology

Chair-Elect: Edward Taub

Member-at-Large: Susan Goldin-Meadow

Electorate Nominating Committee: Jeffrey R. Alberts, Jeri S. Janowsky

Section on Social, Economic, and Political Sciences

Chair-Elect: Karen S. Cook

Member-at-Large: Judith M. Tanur

Electorate Nominating Committee: Henry E. Brady, Nancy M. Gordon

Section on Societal Impacts of Science and Engineering

Chair-Elect: Dan Kammen

Member-at-Large: Kerri-Ann Jones

Electorate Nominating Committee: Thomas Dietz, Michele Garfinkel

Council Delegate: Robert Cook-Deegan

Section on Statistics

Chair-Elect: W. Michael O’Fallon

Member-at-Large: Randall K. Spoori

Electorate Nominating Committee: Joseph L. Gastwirth, Fritz Scheuren

Council Delegate: David L. DeMets

Science

AAAS News and Notes

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