

Former Sen. Joe Lieberman Urges Washington to Toughen Iran Policy, Give Priority to Human Rights, at NCRI-US Conference

Senator Lieberman called on the United States to change and toughen position, step back from the JCPOA negotiations in Vienna.

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, December 20, 2021 / EINPresswire.com/ -- On December 15, 2021, the US Representative Office of the National Council of Resistance of Iran ([NCRI-US](#)) held a conference in Washington, DC. entitled "Policy Options to Counter the Rising Iranian Threat – First 100 Days of Ebrahim Raisi." The NCRI-US's latest book "[IRAN: IRGC's Rising Drone Threat](#);

A Desperate Regime's Ploy to Project Power, Incite War," was presented by Alireza Jafarzadeh, Deputy Director of the NCRI-US, at the outset of conference. The book is available on all major bookstore as well as on [Apple Books](#).



Hon. Joe Lieberman, former Democratic Senator from Connecticut, speaks at the "Policy Options to Counter the Rising Iranian Threat – First 100 Days of Ebrahim Raisi" conference hosted by the NCRI-US in Washington, DC, on December 15, 2021

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The event's speakers were Senator Joe Lieberman, former Democratic senator from Connecticut; Ambassador Robert Joseph, former Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security; Mr. David Shedd, former Acting Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, former Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Intelligence Programs and Reform; Georgetown Professor Matthew Kroenig, Deputy Director, Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security, and Director, Global Strategy

Initiative, The Atlantic Council; and Mr. Jonathan Ruhe, JINSA Director of Foreign Policy.

Senator Lieberman remarked that:

“Thank you, Alireza. Thanks for that characteristically compelling report, in this case about the Iranian drone program. I must say that what you’ve just presented, and I’m sure the written report backs it up, reminds us that the NCRI-US is not just an advocacy group but it also has become a respected think tank, you might say, and even beyond that a kind of independent intelligence agency whose reports have attained credibility. And that’s really contributed to the effort to improve the lives of the people of Iran and also to make the region and the world, including the United States, safer from the threats represented by the current regime in Tehran. So, I thank you Alireza, and thank all who work with you at NCRI-US.

“I’m glad to be able to come in for a few minutes today to join this distinguished panel, and I regret that I have to leave shortly after I speak. But I think it’s an important time for us to be gathering here, as Alireza said, related to what is happening in Vienna with the talks but also in Iran itself.

“And I want to step back for a moment and put this in a larger context. The world today obviously is unsettled in many ways. And we have the continuing threat of terrorism to the United States, including terrorism sponsored by the number one state sponsor of terrorism, which is the Islamic Republic of Iran. But in addition, the world is heading back toward a kind of great power competition, particularly with Russia



NCRI-US’s new book “IRAN: IRGC’s Rising Drone Threat; A Desperate Regime’s Ploy to Project Power, Incite War,” presented at the “Policy Options to Counter the Rising Iranian Threat – First 100 Days of Ebrahim Raisi” conference on Dec 15, 2021



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and China. And the Biden administration's foreign policy I think has emphasized a return to America's classic democratic values as illustrated in the Democracy Summit that the administration convened in Washington last week. And also we've begun not strengthen some of our alliances which weakened a bit in the previous administration, particularly in NATO. But in this focus on China, particularly, there seems to be an opinion rising that the United States is trying to withdraw or at least pull back from the front lines of the Middle East. And to me that is not only a mistake diplomatically in terms of our own security and prosperity and principles, but it's also effectively impossible because we are too engaged historically and today in the Middle East.

"And this vision was amplified in a very disruptive way by the, in my opinion, the decision to exit from Afghanistan, but also in the way, the chaotic way in which it happened, which sent a message around the world both to our enemies like China or those who challenge us we say like China and Russia, but also to people in the general neighborhood of Afghanistan, including more broadly the Middle East, encouraging a worry in the mind of our best allies in the region, including Israel and the Arab countries, that they couldn't depend on us as fully as they had over time, and leading to the beginning of interactions with China, strengthening the interactions with Russia, and forming new alliances within themselves to counteract this fear that the U.S. wouldn't be with them. So, you've followed all that detail.

"So, here's the point I want to make at the outset and I'll amplify it pretty quickly. I think we're on the wrong course, we the United States, in our efforts in Vienna to reenter the JCPOA. I think these efforts are well-intentioned but they don't meet the reality of what Iran is doing, either in Vienna or in Iran or throughout the region or the world. And I think they're in that sense unrealistic and risky, highly risky. So, I'll talk in a moment how I hope they'll be changed.

"But I want to say something else in terms of the larger context. I think it's not only important that the United States change and toughen our position, in fact to step back from the JCPOA in negotiations as they're constituted now in Vienna, but generally be tougher with Iran. Not only is that in my opinion the best way to try to move back toward more security and more constraint, containment at least of the Islamic Republic of Iran, but it provides us the U.S. with, as I see it now, the best opportunity to counteract the impressions that were left by the withdrawal from Afghanistan and more broadly to be tougher on Iran as a way to say to our allies, most immediately in the Middle East, "we're with you. Don't look elsewhere, don't be worried about us. We get the threat that Iran represents to you and to us." And it also will say to those who will challenge us in China and Russia, for instance, that not only does the U.S. follow its principles under President Biden, which is to say democracy and human rights, but we're willing to stand up and be strong and fight for them, and not be deceived by a country like the regime in Iran which operates totally inconsistent with our values, and of course contrary to our interests.

"So, what I'm saying is we've got to change course toward Iran, not only as the best way to limit the threat that Iran represents and be true to our values, but also as the best opportunity that we have now to show the rest of the world, friends and enemies, that we're willing to be tough

and use the power economically, diplomatically, and if necessary militarily, that the United States possesses.

“So, I will say briefly that—which you all know, so I don’t have to dwell on it—that the regime in Iran that now returns to the table to negotiate over the JCPOA comes to the table with as we used to say when I went to court “with dirty hands.” In the interest of justice, you’re supposed to come to court with clean hands. I mean this is a regime that has recklessly violated the most compelling and important terms of the JCPOA, which was not a good agreement over all. But there were certain requirements on Iran and they’ve broken through them. As you know they’re enriching uranium to a very dangerous level at this point and stated just in the last few days that they’re going to keep doing it until all the sanctions on them were removed, which is outrageous.

“Secondly, they’ve continued to be aggressive in the Middle East, both undermining countries like Lebanon, contributing to the tyranny and massacre and enabling it in some ways in Syria, and threatening and actually firing at our allies such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

“It’s very important also to look inside Iran. Consistent with the priority that we give go democracy and human rights. And it’s important I think that we do this particularly so close to the democracy summit that the Biden administration convened just last week, because the regime in Iran has gotten to be more totalitarian in the last year with the coming of Raisi, as Alireza said, a mass murderer really should be spending his time before the International Court in The Hague not in the president’s office in Tehran.

“But let me just read you from a report that another group I’m involved with, called United Against Nuclear Iran, recently issued. The Iranian regime executes more people per capita than any other country. It carries out more total executions than any nation but China, whose population is over 17 times more than Iran’s. Iran continues to target political dissidents and ethnic, religious and sexual minorities for execution. Capital punishment can be and often is carried out against juvenile offenders and for nonviolent crimes. This is a brutal, inhumane regime that doesn’t understand what we Americans mean when we talk about the rule of law. And really how can you trust a regime like this, headed by a person like Raisi, really headed by a Supreme Leader Khamenei, who says the most terrible things about the United States of America.

“And let’s go briefly to the talks in Vienna. Let me begin with this outrageous demand that Iran made that the U.S. has I think mistakenly accepted, that Iran wouldn’t sit in the same room with the United States of America during these negotiations. I mean this is clearly probably expresses what they believe, but it’s also a tactic to diminish and demean the United States of America. I mean we are the world’s superpower, we’re the greatest democracy in the world. Iran is a much smaller country, led as I said by a totalitarian government, and it threatens us only because it’s so extreme not because it has any power relevant to ours. And yet they determined that the U.S. can not even be at the table to enter into these negotiations. To me that would have been

enough for the U.S. to say either we're in the same room together or the negotiations don't go forward. And I regret that the other members of the P5+1 acceded to that really offensive demand.

"The second is nothing good is happening in those negotiations. As much as we try, and we have tried, the U.S. administration, to give Iran reasons to really negotiate openly and in a way that we could rationally accept, for a while there was talk of a less for less agreement and that was a trap really. And it would end up being less from them and more from us, and only lead us down the road to more danger of their nuclear program much more than we are now.

"So, I'm glad that the U.S. seems to have pulled back from that. I'm also encouraged that the administration recently added sanctions on some of those involved, for instance, in the drone program in Iran and other programs. I think we're moving towards sending a stronger message to Iran. I myself am pessimistic that it will work. I frankly think that we'd be better to leave the negotiations, let them, let the Iranians who desperately need the removal of the sanctions we imposed on them for their wellbeing, let them figure out how to bring us, U.S. and hopefully some of our allies in the P5+1, back to the table. And let us stand with our allies in the Middle East, Arab and Israeli. And most of all, let us stand with the people of Iran who as the NCRI-US and other sources have documented are increasingly opposed to their own government because it doesn't serve them, it serves a small clique of radical Islamists and corrupt thugs who are making themselves rich while the people suffer.

"Obviously, for their violations of the JCPOA and various other international norms, Iran should be brought to the UN Security Council and face punitive action there. But it's time to stop this game that they're playing with us, which is dangerous, and gives them time to build up their nuclear program, and to be prepared to have all other options on the table, including if necessary certainly supporting an uprising of the Iranian people against the regime, not militarily but in every other way we can, and also being prepared to, if necessary as a last alternative, to join or support military activities by our allies to demolish their nuclear program before it reaches full viability and production of weapons. There's no easy path here. What may seem like the easy path maybe in Vienna may seem like the most dangerous. And I think we have in the United States I say as a final word, indicated by some of the recent legislative actions, including the stop the drone program legislation, the beginnings of a return of a bipartisan congressional consensus on Iran, which was sadly, well, destroyed really for a while or certainly ended for a while by the debate over the JCPOA in 2015. The truth is members of both parties really see the threat from Iran and increasingly I think with the advocacy of NCRI and the facts that that the NCRI think tank puts out will be supportive of action, legislation, that will send a tough message to the government in Tehran, which is the only message they will respond to.

"Probably talked a little longer than I wanted to, but I have so much in me about the subject. And I thank you for giving me the opportunity and I wish you well in the rest of the program, and I look forward to being with you in person the next time."

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