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FOUNDATION FOR DEMOCRACY IN IRAN



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**For immediate release:**

**State Department negotiating Iran sanction waiver**

Monday, July 1, 2013

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Rockville, MD – July 1, 2013) - As the U.S. Senate was engrossed in the immigration debate last week and the House was preparing for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July recess, the State Department quietly negotiated a deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran to establish direct flights between Tehran and New York, FDI has learned.

The deal involves a government to government Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), and flights between the two countries operated by Iran Air, which is on the Treasury Department's list of Specially Designated Nationals and banned from all commerce with U.S. persons because of its involvement in terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

So far, the State Department has not announced any MoU with the Islamic Republic of Iran, which would require the U.S. government to issue substantial waivers of multiple U.S. sanctions laws and would surely anger Members of Congress who worked hard to tighten the economic noose around the neck of Tehran's leaders.

It is unclear how the Treasury Department could issue a license to Iran Air without opening the entire designation process to a multitude of legal challenges.

**“Waiving sanctions on Iran Air so it can operate direct flights to the United States would jeopardize most of the sanctions legislation currently on the books, and would expose the Treasury Department’s designation process to charges of being arbitrary and political,”** said FDI President and CEO, Kenneth R. Timmerman.

In a special advisory delivered this morning, FDI urged the appropriate committee chairmen and ranking members in Congress to immediately clarify with the State Department whether they have indeed negotiated an MoU with Iran, as the Iranian Foreign Minister announced last week (*see attached news article, below*); and if so, to withhold funds from the State Department for the implementation of this MoU or further negotiations.

“Beyond this, Congress should conduct an investigation and ultimately public hearings to determine how this MoU was negotiated, what officials were involved in the negotiations, and who ordered them to usurp the authority of Congress to regulate international trade,” Timmerman said.

It is FDI’s belief that such an MoU violates both the letter and the intent of multiple Iran sanctions laws. In addition, it would require an executive branch waiver of the Iran Trade Regulations, which must be duly notified to Congress. To our knowledge, the administration has not made such a notification as of yet.

“The Obama administration has displayed an abundance of naïve enthusiasm for the newly selected ‘president’ of the Islamic Republic and his alleged ‘moderation,’” Timmerman added.

“Before making unilateral concessions such as this MoU, the administration would do better to examine mullah Hassan Rowhani’s track record as a 30-year veteran of the Islamic Republic’s inner decision-making circle, where he has promoted Iran’s clandestine nuclear weapons program and dipped his hand in the blood of the Iranian people during the 1999 uprising. Watch what he does, not what he says.”

*For additional comment, contact:*

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ADDENDUM:

## IRAN PRESS TV

**Tehran welcomes direct Iran-US flights: Salehi**

Wed Jun 26, 2013 5:38PM GMT

**<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/06/26/310973/tehran-welcomes-direct-iran-us-flights/>**

**Iran Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi says the Islamic Republic welcomes the establishment of direct flights between Iranian and US cities after more than three decades.**

“We welcome direct flights between Iran and the United States, and have no problem with it,” Salehi told IRNA on Wednesday.

*“Launching direct flights is for the sake of public welfare, and we have no problem with this issue.”*

On Tuesday, Mehr News Agency reported that necessary preparations were made to sign a memorandum of understanding regarding the establishment of direct flights between Iran and the United States.

According to the report, Atlanta-based Delta Air Lines and the national Iranian flag carrier, Iran Air, are expected to transport passengers between Iran and the United States.

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