

# The Washington Times

## Obama sent second letter to Khamenei

• Article

By Barbara Slavin and Iason Athanasiadis, THE WASHINGTON TIMES

President Obama sent a second letter to Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, before Iran's disputed presidential elections, an Iranian-American activist says.

The Washington Times reported in June that Mr. Obama wrote to Ayatollah Khamenei in May seeking talks and improved relations between the longtime adversaries.

An Iranian Web site, Tabnak, reported Wednesday that the president had sent a second letter, but did not provide a date.

An Iranian individual familiar with the report told The Washington Times that the second letter arrived two weeks ago via the Swiss Embassy in Tehran. The individual, who asked not to be named because he was discussing sensitive matters, said the letter asked for "better cooperation" between the two countries, which have not had diplomatic relations since 1980.

White House officials cast doubt on the report but declined to deny it on the record.

"There have been multiple ways that communication has taken place with Iran," White House spokesman Tommy Vietor wrote in an e-mail. "We do not discuss the details or modalities of those communications."

Trita Parsi, head of the National Iranian-American Council, a group that represents Iranians in the U.S., said Ayatollah Khamenei had responded to Mr. Obama's first letter and that Mr. Obama then sent another letter to the Iranian leader.

Mr. Parsi, who did not disclose the contents of the letters, said that the entire exchange took place prior to the June 12 presidential elections, which handed a disputed victory to incumbent President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Since the vote, thousands of Iranians have protested in the streets, and the regime has arrested hundreds of reformists, academics and Iranians with ties to the West. At least 30 people have been killed, according to government figures, and 100 are being tried on charges they sought to overthrow the Iranian government with foreign help.

The Iranian press report about a second letter from Mr. Obama came as diplomats from six world powers met in Frankfurt to urge Iran to agree to talks or face new sanctions. On Tuesday, Iran's top nuclear negotiator said Iran was preparing a new offer for negotiations over its nuclear program.

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