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Columbia calls prez cruel, petty, ridiculous, fanatical

IranTimes: The president of Columbia University, Lee C. Bollinger, didn't so much introduce President Ahmadinejad Monday as assail him, addressing him as "cruel," "petty," "ridiculous," "uneducated," "fanatical," and lacking in intellectual courage. Bollinger even said he hoped Ahmadinejad's presentation to Columbia would embarrass him so much before his own people that he would be unable to win re-election in 2009. The



introduction was astounding in its impoliteness. But Bollinger has come under no criticism so far in the United States for violating virtually all the rules of civility and courtesy toward a guest. It appears Americans consider those rules inapplicable when it comes to one Mahmud Ahmadinejad. Before his "introduction" of Ahmadinejad, Bollinger was under vicious attack by politicians and media commentators for inviting Ahmadinejad to speak at Columbia. Very few voices from academia—or anywhere else—were heard to defend Bollinger. His job and his future in academia were in doubt. Bollinger's nasty speech and the hostile reception he gave Ahmadinejad may have saved his professional neck. Here are excerpts from the exceptionally lengthy introduction Bollinger delivered. The full text is available on the Internet at: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/news/07/09/lcbopeningremarks.html>

"To those who believe that this event never should have happened, that it is inappropriate for the University to conduct such an event, I want to say that I understand your perspective and respect it as reasonable. The scope of free speech and academic freedom should itself always be open to further debate. I want to say, however, as forcefully as I can, that this is the right thing to do and, indeed, it is required by existing norms of free speech, the American university, and Columbia itself. We do it in the great tradition of openness that has defined this nation for many decades now. In universities, we have a deep and almost single-minded commitment to pursue the truth. We do not have access to the levers of power.

We cannot make war or peace. We can only make minds. And to do this we must have the most full freedom of inquiry. Let me now turn to Mr. Ahmadinejad. We at this university have not been shy to protest and challenge the failures of our own government to live by these values; and we won't be shy in criticizing yours. Let's, then, be clear at the beginning: Mr. President, you exhibit all the signs of a petty and cruel dictator. And so I ask you: Why have women, members of the Baha'i faith, homosexuals and so many of our academic colleagues become targets of persecution in your country? Why are you so afraid of

Iranian citizens expressing their opinions for change? In a December 2005 state television broadcast, you described the Holocaust as a "fabricated" "legend." One year later, you held a twoday conference of Holocaust deniers. For the illiterate and ignorant, this is dangerous propaganda. When you come to a place like this, this makes you, quite simply, ridiculous. You are either brazenly provocative or astonishingly uneducated. The truth is that the Holocaust is the most documented event in human history.



Because of this, and for many other reasons, your absurd comments about the "debate" over the Holocaust both defy historical truth and make all of us who continue to fear humanity's capacity for evil shudder at this closure of memory, which is always virtue's first line of defense. Will you cease this outrage? Why do you support well-documented terrorist organizations that continue to strike at peace and democracy in the Middle East, destroying lives and civil society in the region?

A number of Columbia graduates and current students are among the brave members of our military who are serving or have served in Iraq and Afghanistan. They rightly see your government as the enemy. Can you tell them and us why Iran is fighting a proxy war in Iraq by arming Shia militia targeting and killing U.S. troops? You continue to defy the world body by claiming a right to develop peaceful nuclear power. Why does your country continue to refuse to adhere to international standards for nuclear weapons verification in defiance of agreements that you have made with the UN nuclear agency?

And why have you chosen to make the people of your country vulnerable to the effects of international economic sanctions and threaten to engulf the world with nuclear annihilation?

Let me close with this comment. Frankly, and in all candor, Mr. President, I doubt that you will have the intellectual courage to answer these questions. But your avoiding them will in itself be meaningful to us. I do expect you to exhibit the fanatical mindset that characterizes so much of what you say and do. Fortunately, I am told by experts on your country, that this only further undermines your position in Iran with all the many good-hearted, intelligent citizens there. A year ago, I am reliably told, your preposterous and belligerent statements in this country—as in your meeting at the Council on Foreign Relations—so embarrassed sensible Iranian citizens that this led to your party's defeat in the December mayoral [sic, actually meaning City Council] elections. May this do that and more.

I am only a professor, who is also a university president, and today I feel all the weight of the modern civilized world yearning to express the revulsion at what you stand for. I only wish I could do better."

Explosion in Syria kills many Iranis



IranTimes: An accidental explosion at a secret missile site in Syria has killed dozens of Iranian engineers as they tried to fit a chemical warhead atop a missile, Jane's Defense Weekly reported. The London-based magazine quoted unnamed Syria sources as detailing what happened. The explosion occurred July 26 near Aleppo in northern Syria. The Syrian government announced an explosion that day, saying 15 Syrian military personnel were killed and 50 others injured when "very explosive products" blew up in what it said was an accident, not sabotage. The Syrian report said nothing about any Iranians or any chemical weapons. Jane's said 15 Syrians died along with "dozens" of Iranians. The men were

trying to attach a chemical warhead to a Syrian Scud missile when the fuel in the missile exploded, the source said. The work was being done adjacent to a warehouse in which a large quantity of chemical weapons—mustard gas, Sarin and VX—was stored. The explosion produced a toxic cloud of chemicals that enveloped many more men on the base. Syria has long had an unacknowledged chemical weapons program and is believed to have built missile warheads to carry the chemicals many years ago. There have also been rumors for years that Iran was helping Syria with the missiles and the chemical warheads. There was no confirmation of the Jane's explosion report from any other sources.

Bush shrugs off Ahmadinejad



IranTimes: While politicians from the right, left and center denounced Columbia University for inviting President Ahmadinejad to speak, President Bush nonchalantly brushed the matter aside, saying it was okay by him if Ahmadinejad spoke there. In fact, the Bush Administration essentially pushed Iran entirely off the table upon which all options lay. Is this a new policy to try to lower the rhetoric in Washington and shift attention from the Bush Administration to the

Ahmadinejad Administration? The answer will not be known for sometimes. But Bush right now is passing up opportunities to slam the Islamic Republic and Ahmadinejad. In his address to the UN General Assembly, Bush only mentioned Iran once—and that was just in a laundry list of human rights violators. "In Belarus, North Korea, Syria and Iran, brutal regimes deny their people the fundamental rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration [of Human Rights]," Bush said. Iran didn't even rate top billing. Instead, the focus of Bush's speech was Myanmar, where demonstrations by monks for several days have drawn attention to the military junta ruling the country, formerly known as Burma. Bush announced a series of economic sanctions he is imposing on Myanmar. Bush held a reception for world leaders at the UN. But Ahmadinejad was not invited. When asked why not, White House spokeswoman Dana Perino replied impishly that the invitation must have been "lost in the mail," passing up the opportunity to expound on the crimes of the Islamic Republic. And when Bush was asked by Fox news what he thought of the invitation Columbia University gave to Ahmadinejad, Bush stood above the political fray and simply said: okay by me."

Abizaid: We may have to live with Iranian A-bomb

IranTimes: The Arab-American general who commanded all U.S. forces in the Middle East until a few months ago says the world could live with an Iran armed with nuclear weapons. John Abizaid, the retired Army four star who headed the Central Command for nearly four years, said he was confident that if Iran gained nuclear arms the United States could deter it from using them. "Iran is not a suicide nation," he said. "I mean, they may have some people in charge that don't appear to be rational, but I doubt that the Iranians intend to attack us with a nuclear weapon." The Iranians are fully aware,



he said, that the United States has a far superior

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