

off even one member state from the GCC, the alliance will crumble and disappear as its member states are picked off one at a time.

Bahrain is also a great prize to be taken by a greedy despot. As the Bahrainis have worked very hard to diversify their economic base, they have discovered that creating an inviting legal and regulatory framework can attract an inordinate amount of foreign direct investment—disproportionate to their size, or the original size of their economy. They have succeeded in making their country a banking haven, especially for the increasing number of institutions and high net-worth individuals who want to invest without paying or receiving interest, or otherwise want to comply with Islamic rules of investing and finance. Anyone who controlled that sector would have power greater than the size of the country would seem to predict. Bahrain's Free Trade Agreement with the United States has doubled our bilateral trade volume since it was signed in 2006, again increasing the value of the national GDP.

Finally, Bahrain and its leaders have incurred the wrath of the leadership of the Islamic Republic by doing the unforgivable (and, in many circles, unthinkable). They have reached out to Iran's arch-enemy, the only country Iran hates more than it hates America: the nation of Israel. In an unprecedented opinion editorial article, published in the Washington Post July 16, 2009, Crown Prince Salman bin Hamid Al Khalifa called for direct communication with the people of Israel, and for a new approach that treats peace as a process, not an event.

Mr. Speaker, later that same year, the Bahraini Foreign Minister echoed the sentiments of the Crown Prince, in a formal address to the United Nations General Assembly. This served to emphasize that the proposal was an official government position, not a private initiative from a senior member of the royal family.

Iran, like other nations once characterized as 'rogue states', has a vested interest in extending and exacerbating the friction between Palestinians and Israelis, and in fact has called for the extermination of Jews worldwide. Ahmedinejad cannot countenance an outreach by his neighbor to a nation he hates so completely.

Why does Ahmedinejad hate Bahrain? It is easy to see. Bahrain is a member of the GCC.

It is the host of the hated U.S. 5th fleet. It is rated the 10th most free economy in the world by the Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom. It is politically free, where women are educated at state expense, can dress as they please and are not bound by law to dependence on male relatives; where there are Christian, Jewish, and female Members of Parliament; and where the royal family has maintained peace and stability for over 300 years. In short, it is, and stands for, everything that Ahmedinejad has sworn to destroy.

Mr. Speaker, it is in the interest of the United States to see that Bahrain continues to be a haven of peace and prosperity in a troubled neighborhood. It is in our interest to support the integrity of the GCC, and to provide diplomatic and political support for GCC and Bahraini initiatives. It is in our interest to support a government that has provided freedom and opportunity for women; freedom for its citizens; tolerance for religious minorities; economic freedom, growth and prosperity; and a peaceful haven for the region. It is in our interest to support a government that has reached out to call for peace with Israel, to put an end to the vicious cycle of anger and despair that has characterized the Arab-Israeli relationship for far too many decades.

For all these reasons, it is important to the United States to help its Bahraini allies in their time of need, to withstand the threat and the increased pressure from Iran. We support the reform agenda laid out by the Crown Prince, and call on all parties to show calm and to meet together around the negotiating table. We call on the Bahraini government to demand restraint from its security forces, to avoid at all costs any repeat of the bloodshed we have seen. We call on the demonstrators to sit down and negotiate their differences, and find a way to achieve the progress that they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, this is a critical time for one of our most important allies. The U.S. Congress should do all in our power to show our support, to encourage peaceful negotiations that will preserve the stability of the country, the continuation of the ruling polity, and the achievement of the aspirations of all the people of Bahrain.

HONORING THE 45TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HUMBOLDT ARTS COUNCIL OF HUMBOLDT COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 29, 2011

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the 45th anniversary of the Humboldt Arts Council in Humboldt County, California.

Since 1966, the members of the Humboldt Arts Council (HAC) have been dedicated to promoting Humboldt County's rich artistic heritage. Incorporated as a nonprofit corporation in 1971, HAC is the County's largest multidisciplinary arts organization. The HAC serves as a community leader to provide opportunities for artists of all ages, including the development of art education and partnerships, as well as ensuring accessibility of the arts through innovative and multicultural programs.

Beginning in 1996, the Humboldt Arts Council began a successful capital campaign for renovation of the Carnegie Library Building, a historic symbol of community pride and local culture, into a regional art museum and art center. On January 1, 2000, the community ushered in the new millennium by celebrating the grand opening of the Morris Graves Museum of Art. Embarking on its new "Century of Service" to the community, the Museum was enthusiastically welcomed and has since been the leading contemporary arts exhibition and performance facility in the area.

On the first Saturday of each month, thousands of visitors are welcomed to the Morris Graves Museum of Art and its seven galleries to celebrate local artists during Eureka's Arts Alive. This includes a Courtyard Sculpture Garden, classroom facilities, an Arts Resource Center, a Performance Rotunda, and more.

The Humboldt Arts Council will be celebrating its 45th year of advancing the arts in Humboldt County on April 6, 2011.

Mr. Speaker, it is appropriate at this time that we honor the Humboldt Arts Council on the occasion of its 45th anniversary of continuing the rich legacy of the arts on California's North Coast.