

Iran to ask Vatican mediation of conflict with US?

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The government of Iran is preparing to ask for Vatican mediation to stave off a possible crisis in relations with the United States, Time magazine reports.

According to Time, Iranian diplomats are ready to ask the Holy See to serve as intermediary in talks if relations with the US- already tense- escalate further toward a possible military conflict.

The Time report does not say whether or not the Vatican has indicated a willingness to act as a mediator. But Pope Benedict- like his predecessor Pope John Paul II — has consistently raised his voice in opposition to military confrontations.

In May the Holy Father received Iran's former president, Seyyed Mohammad Khatami, in an unusual private audience. (The meeting was unusual in that Khatami, who remains highly influential although he no longer holds a top government post, was accorded the diplomatic courtesies ordinarily reserved for major political leader.) After that meeting the Vatican issued a statement saying that the two had discussed their shared commitment to "overcoming the severe tensions that mark our time."

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