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Americans' entry into Iran linked to vote unrest: MP

Mon Aug 10, 2009 7:45am EDT

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Featured Broker sponsored link TEHRAN (Reuters) - A leading Iranian lawmaker said on Monday the illegal entry of three detained U.S. citizens into the country may have been related to unrest that erupted after Iran's June presidential election.

Iran detained the three Americans more than a week ago after they strayed across the border from Iraq, according to Iraqi officials.

"Their illegal entry cannot be altogether unrelated to the post-election unrest ... What mission were the three pursuing in Iran? Why did not they apply for Iran visas?" said Mohammad Karamirad, a member of parliament's Foreign Affairs and National Security Committee, the official IRNA news agency reported.

"In the most optimistic scenario, we think that the three had plans to interfere in Iran's internal affairs," Karamirad said.

The United States sent strong messages to Iran urging the release of three hikers, U.S. National Security Adviser Jim Jones said on Sunday.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's disputed re-election has sparked Iran's worst unrest since the 1979 Islamic revolution. At least 20 people were killed and hundreds were detained in the street unrest after the June 12 poll.

U.S. President Barack Obama and the leaders of France, Britain, Italy and Germany decided not to congratulate Ahmadinejad on his re-election.

Western governments are also locked in a dispute with Iran over its nuclear program, which Tehran says aims to produce electricity but the West suspects is a covert weapons program.

(Writing by Parisa Hafezi, Tehran newsroom; Editing by Jon Boyle)

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