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Political Hotsheet

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W.H. Calls Ahmadinejad Iran's "Elected Leader"

Posted by Brian Montopoli



(AP Photo/ISNA)

At his press briefing Tuesday afternoon, White House press secretary Robert Gibbs called President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad "the elected leader" of Iran.

After a reporter asked if the Obama administration recognizes Ahmadinejad as the "legitimate president of Iran," Gibbs responded with, "he's the elected leader."

Gibbs also said the fact that no U.S. representative is attending Ahmadinejad's swearing-in ceremony tomorrow does not

mean America is refusing to recognize his legitimacy.

"I think we have said throughout this that this was a decision and a debate that was ongoing in Iran by Iranians, that they were going to choose their leadership," Gibbs said. "The president has discussed our goals for reaching out in order to ensure that they don't develop a nuclear weapons program. Those continue to [be] our goals."

The Iranian government has repeatedly faced off with protesters, dozens of whom were killed or wounded, since Ahmadinejad's reelection in an election opponents say was stolen.