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## Iran's President Reveals Beliefs at NYC Conference, University Of New Haven Professor Says

By Amanda Pinto, Register Staff

The day before Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad angered diplomats by denouncing the United States and its European allies at Thursday's U.N. General Assembly, a University of New Haven professor helped pose questions to the controversial leader.

**UNH professor George Haley** was one of about 150 "thought leaders" from across the country to attend a conference with Ahmadinejad in Manhattan Wednesday.

"I think it was valuable to not just learn his perspective, which you can actually get pretty much of from the news, but to gain a little bit better understanding of President Ahmadinejad himself," said Haley, a World Affairs Counsel of Connecticut board member. Haley teaches marketing and serves as director of UNH's Center for International Industry Competitiveness. "One of the things I've never heard on the news is his perception and discussion of the history of the Middle East, and that's the primary basis for the position he takes."

Ahmadinejad's speech to the group was "depressing," Haley said, and littered with Ahmadinejad's mistaken belief that Middle East nations have "never had a war," and that their only conflicts have been caused by Western influences.

"It was somewhat depressing, because it really does seem that he's trying to go back to the ancient Middle Eastern version of history, which it's really a story, it's not supposed be true," said Haley, who attended the annual conference for the first time this week. "It's something that's presented to (promote) the glory of the ruling party, whoever is ruling at the time."

Haley said it was also upsetting that Ahmadinejad reversed his earlier position that he would consider a "two-nation solution," instead saying that Israel must be "basically destroyed" and that Israelis "need to go home to their original homes in Europe."

Haley was part of a Connecticut contingent that included educators from Central Connecticut State University, Trinity College and the Hartford school system, he said.

They brainstormed and asked

questions of Ahmadinejad, one of which was about whether the United States and Iran could combine forces to oppose the Taliban.

"Ahmadinejad argued that Iran was a participant who never interfered with other countries in local and domestic issues (and) that U.S. should withdraw from Afghanistan immediately," Haley said, adding that Ahmadinejad again disregarded current events.

Haley said the experience will be helpful to him as he teaches his international business class at UNH, giving him a "greater understanding of the evolution of (issues) in the Middle East" and the potential benefits and dangers facing their businesses.