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## PRESS RELEASE

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### SENATOR THOMAS DASCHLE TO VISIT NEPAL

Washington, D.C. – Former U.S. Senator Thomas A. Daschle will be traveling to Nepal from July 21 to 27 on behalf of the National Democratic Institute (NDI).

While in Nepal, Senator Daschle, a former majority and minority leader in the U.S. Senate, will meet with leaders of the major political parties, government officials, civil society representatives and members of the international community to hear their views on the present situation. The Senator will also consult with political party leaders to discuss the need to increase public confidence in, and support for, multi-party democracy.

On February 1 King Gyanendra declared a State of Emergency, dismissed the prime minister, placed political party leaders under arrest, temporarily disabled Nepal's communication systems, and assumed control of media institutions. The State of Emergency was lifted on April 29, but many fundamental rights are still restricted. Seven major political parties in Nepal have convened an alliance calling for the restoration of democracy, but have yet to reach agreement with the King on a resolution to the conflict. Meanwhile, a Maoist insurgency that has led to the deaths of over 13,000 Nepalis continues to destabilize security across the countryside.

The National Democratic Institute has been working in Nepal since 1994 to promote political party development, women's empowerment, civic participation, anti-corruption, and voter education. In 2005, NDI launched a two-year initiative to support consensus building between parties, foster internal party reform, and encourage civil society and media oversight of the political process.

*NDI is a nonprofit organization working to strengthen and expand democracy worldwide. Calling on a global network of volunteer experts, NDI provides practical assistance to civic and political leaders advancing democratic values, practices and institutions. NDI works with democrats in every region of the world to build political and civic organizations, safeguard elections, and promote citizen participation, openness and accountability in government.*

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