

ParsBrief

Number 25

July, 2006

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Mojahedin exploit Iraqi bombing victims to secure their own political asylum

Mojahedin.ws

8.6.2006

It seems that some day Mojahedin resolve to register the names of the 13 killed innocent Iraqi workers, who worked in Ashraf City, in the list of the member martyrs killed for the cause of Mojahedin's cult. Following a roadside bomb explosion on May 29, 13 Iraqi workers were killed and 15 more were wounded. The victims have ever since, however, been feeding the Mojahedin's propaganda machine to secure the cult's protected status and, if possible, ensure political asylum.

Some Western figures are quoted by Mojahedin to have urged Iraqi government to take necessary steps to ensure the security and safety of Camp Ashraf. All these figures seem to have only put their signature under a Mojahedin's prearranged letter because they all write and say the same thing. Look at the last paragraph of the letter by Tunne Kelam, the Estonian member of the European Parliament:

"Considering the fact that Ashraf residents have the status of protected persons under the Fourth Geneva Convention and according to international law. I believe it is time that the Iraqi government grants PMOI personnel in Ashraf political asylum".

And the Polish member of the European Parliament:

I would like to use this occasion to urge your Excellency to reiterate on the rights of the PMOI personnel in Iraq and make sure that they are granted political asylum in Iraq".

There are a lot more reported daily by Mojahedin's sponsored websites.

Paris Appeals Court's Ruling on MKO

Reuters,

June 18, 2006

A French appeals court on Friday eased restrictions on an Iranian exiled opposition group with links to an armed guerrilla movement which is listed as a terrorist group by the United States.

The appeals court ruled that 18 members of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), which seeks to oust Iran's clerical leaders and is the political wing of the People's Mujahideen, had the right to travel abroad, go to the organisation's headquarters outside Paris, and communicate with each other.

But it upheld a ban that prevents them from owning weapons, collecting funds from the public for organisations linked to their cause, or having contacts with donors.

Eleven members of the NCRI, including its leader, Maryam Rajavi, were imprisoned in 2003 on a charge of "association with criminals in connection with a terrorist enterprise" but were released at the order of the Paris appeals court.

More than 1 million dollars were confiscated from MKO headquarters at that time.

Several supporters of the group had set themselves on fire in Paris, London, Rome and Berne to protest the arrest of Rajavi, the wife of the Mujahideen main figure Massoud Rajavi.

Formed in the 1960s, the Mujahideen fled to Iraq in the 1980s after falling foul of Islamic leaders after the 1979 Islamic revolution.

US, UK, Israel Talks on MKO

Fars News Agency,

June 9, 2006

Discrepancies between Zionist lobbies and US politicians about US and West's support for the MKO entered a new phase with the secret talks by the US, British and Zionist officials last May about the possible role and influence that the terrorist group can play in pressurizing Iran on the political scene.

A French journalist who asked to remain anonymous said that the Israeli intelligence service, Musad, had attended some meetings with a number of the MKO members during the last 6 months, where the two sides have made some deals.

The source said that the two sides have agreed to keep their meetings secret and increase the number of their representatives in the said talks.

Consequent to the MKO's efforts during recent years to get out of international isolation and have their group's name crossed out of the US and EU's list of terrorist groups, they started meetings with Zionist groups, an effort which led to the formation of a committee of Zionist Jewish Rabbis. Representative of Reagan Administration to the US Jewish Community, Gary Crap represented the Zionist lobby in the said committee.

The Jewish lobby has recently forced the US administration to cross out the MKO from its list of terrorist groups, but some US senators and congressmen have advised Bush not to take the measure, stressing that such a decision would put the United States under a big question mark.

The journalist, quoting a member of the said committee, stated that the Jewish lobby is demanding the US administration and President Bush to exclude the name of MKO from the list in return for the terrorist group's cooperation with the US Central Intelligence Agency, CIA.

The source reminded that considering the anti-terrorism feelings and atmosphere created on the political scene of the world and the US since September 11th and taking into account that the genuineness of MKO's reports against the Iranian ruling system is much suspected, even the members of the MKO are not hopeful about the results of their contacts with the Zionist lobby and Musad.

A letter to Lord Fraser

Awaa association,

May 30, 2006

Dear Lord Fraser!

After having met Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, the religious leader of the Iranian People's Mojahedin, a woman that is representing herself as being the elected president of Iran, you are reported in their journal „Mojahed“, No. 803 dating May, 15th 2006, to have said that in your opinion MKO would not be a terrorist organisation and you would be supporting the organisation in their way of bringing the Iranian government to fall.

It is Mrs. Rajavi's idea to bring down the Iranian government with the help of the Americans, which are to bomb the Iranian country and then give way to the dispatch of ground forces of the National Resistance Army (NRA) from Iraq. This plan is continuously being presented and repeated in the media of the organisation MKO. By means of purposeful propaganda MKO is trying to win supporters for their political goals. For many years Mr. and Mrs. Rajavi have cooperated with the former dictator of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, making numerous attacks with leaving many innocent people dead. She does not even shrink back from using the organisation's members for her purpose (i. e. people burning themselves to death). Such an organisation that is being listed for several years as terrorist organisation would scarcely be capable to bring democracy and freedom to Iran and the Iranian people.

Judging from your previous statements, for instance in the journal „Scotsmen“, you have appeared to be declaring yourself against war and violence. We would assume that you are not really willing to support a person like Mrs. Rajavi.

Attached please find a short documentation of MKO's previous terrorist activities. We would appreciate if you would ask our news service for more information.

Best regards

AAWA Association

Cologne, May 30th 2006

Terror Ops Underway in Iran

Devlin Buckley,
The American Monitor,
June 01, 2006

Despite the Bush Administration's adamant and continual denunciation of terrorism, the Department of Defense—under Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld's orders—is using a terrorist organization to orchestrate attacks and collect intelligence inside Iran, according to numerous former and current military, intelligence, administration, and United Nations officials.

Government sources—according to reports by Raw Story, UPI, and others—say the militant group is being “run” by the Pentagon in Iran's oil-rich province of Khuzestan—which has been the subject of numerous attacks and terrorist bombings over the past year—and in the opium-smuggling border province of Sistan-Baluchistan, where suspected US operatives attacked and killed several Iranian officials just this March.

Based in Iraq, the group carrying out the reported operations is an Iranian rebel organization that aims to overthrow and replace Iran's clerical regime. Known as the Mujahedeen-e Khalq (MEK or MKO), the group has been officially designated by the US government as a terrorist organization.

Widely regarded as an extremist cult, the MEK has a long history of violence: they murdered several Americans during the 1970s; they were involved with the 1979 takeover of the US embassy in Tehran; they killed 70 high ranking officials by bombing the Premier's office and the head office of the Islamic Republic Party in 1981; they helped the Iraqi government violently suppress Shia and Kurdish uprisings during the 1990s; they executed near-simultaneous bombings against Iranian interests in 13 separate countries in 1992; and they have carried out several attacks and assassinations inside Iran over the past decade.

During the first stages of the 2003 invasion, US forces destroyed two MEK bases and confiscated a considerable stockpile of the group's weaponry, by one count: 300 tanks, 250 armored personnel carriers, 250 artillery pieces, and 10,000 small arms.

The MEK was officially expelled from Iraq by the Iraqi Governing Council in 2003, but approximately 3,800 members of the group remained in the country under the watch of US forces. [1]

In 2004, they became the first terrorist organization to be granted “protected” status by the US government.

The MEK captives were supposedly being confined to a US military-run compound northeast of Baghdad, but according to several sources, the Bush Administration and the Department of Defense have been using the group against Tehran. [2]

According to Raw Story, “Although the specifics of what the MEK is being used for remain unclear, a UN official close to the Security Council explained that the newly renamed MEK soldiers are being run instead of military advance teams, committing acts of violence in hopes of staging an insurgency of the Iranian Sunni population.”

Suspected US-sponsored MEK operations include the string of terrorist bombings that killed at least 12 people and injured 90 others in Iran just prior to the country’s elections in 2005.

The vehicle pictured above was destroyed during the pre-election attacks

(Photo: AP / Iran TV)

US-sponsored MEK militants also attacked and killed 22 Iranian officials in the south-eastern province of Sistan-Baluchistan this March, according to US government officials who spoke to Raw Story.

As early as January of 2005 the MEK were “launching raids” from Camp Habib in Basra on behalf of the US, and had also been given permission by Pakistani President Pervez Musharaff to operate from Pakistan’s Baluchi area, according to US officials who spoke to UPI.

“[Undersecretary of Defense Intelligence Stephen] Cambone and those guys made MEK members swear an oath to Democracy and resign from the MEK and then our guys incorporated them into their unit and trained them,” one intelligence official told Raw Story. “These guys are nuts,” he said.

In addition to carrying out attacks, US-trained MEK units are also reportedly being sent into Iran to collect information and targeting data on the country’s alleged nuclear weapons program. [3]

According to former and current intelligence officials interviewed by UPI, the MEK units are entering Iran from the south while Israeli-trained Kurds are carrying out parallel operations from the north.

“Both covert groups are tasked by the Bush administration with planting sensors or ‘sniffers’ close to suspected Iran nuclear weapons development sites that will enable the Bush administration to monitor the progress of the program and develop targeting data, these sources said,” according to UPI.

“There is an urgent need to obtain this information, at least in the minds of administration hawks,” one administration official reportedly said.

While ‘gathering’ intelligence in the past, the MEK has been known to use deception to advance their own agenda—in some cases conspiring with their American supporters.

According to The New York Times, for instance, the MEK “rattled the Iranian government and the arms control community in 2002 when it revealed the existence of two secret Iranian nuclear facilities.” The MEK’s information, however, according to a CIA official interviewed by Iran Press Service (IPS), was actually given to the group by sources within the Pentagon that were seeking to legitimize the MEK.

In October of 2004 the MEK once again falsely took credit for exposing a ‘secret’ Iranian uranium processing plant. Far from being secret, the plant had been disclosed to the IAEA two years earlier.

Current and former senior national-security officials told Newsweek that “all the major revelations MEK publicly claims to have made regarding nuclear advances in Iran were reported in classified form—and from other sources—to U.S. policymakers before MEK made them public.”

“Except the information...given to them by the Americans, all other material the Mojahedeen gave to the media are open secrets,” said a former MEK leader, according to IPS.

“All the information the Mojahedeen provides the western media is pure lies and fabricated to discredit the Iranian regime and help the United States and Israel to put more pressures on Iran,” another former MEK leader reportedly said.

‘Covert infrastructure’

A “long-time CIA operator” interviewed by UPI revealed even more regarding the US-sponsored operations inside Iran:

“The United States is also attempting to erect a covert infrastructure in Iran able to support U.S. efforts, this source said. It consists of Israelis and other U.S. assets, using third country passports, who have created a network of front companies that they own and staff.”

“It’s a covert infrastructure for material support,” one administration official said, according to UPI. This official said the “network would be able to move money, weapons and personnel around inside Iran.”

A former CIA officer interviewed by The Guardian commented, “They are bringing a lot of the old war-horses from the Reagan and Iran-contra days into a sort of kitchen cabinet outside the government to write up policy papers on Iran.” This former officer, who reportedly refused a request to oversee “MEK cross-border operations,” called the plans “delusional”.

Saddam’s ‘crimes’

The Pentagon and the Bush Administration’s use of the MEK is ironically similar to the tactics once used by the regime of Saddam Hussein—tactics the administration actually condemned while attempting to build support for war against Iraq.

In fact, the White House pointed to Saddam Hussein’s support for the MEK as evidence that Iraq was violating UN Security Council Resolutions. Specifically, the background paper for President Bush’s September 2002 speech before the UN General Assembly accused Iraq of “supporting terrorism” and “allowing terrorist organizations to operate in Iraq,” citing the following example:

“Iraq shelters terrorist groups including the Mujahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO), which has used terrorist violence against Iran and in the 1970s was responsible for killing several U.S. military personnel and U.S. civilians.”

Legality

The Bush Administration’s reported use of the MEK for special operations—in addition to being hypocritical—may also be illegal.

As the Associated Press reported in February of 2005, “as soon as the State Department created a list of terror organizations in 1997, it named the MEK, putting it in a club that includes al-Qaida and barring anyone in the United States from providing material support [to the group].”

Moreover, in August of 2003, the US Treasury Department officially designated the MEK and its affiliates as “Specially Designated Global Terrorist” entities, “effectively freezing all [of their] assets and properties and prohibiting transactions between U.S. persons and these organizations.”

Defense Secretary Rumsfeld’s reported plan to “convert” the MEK fighters and make them swear an oath to democracy was apparently implemented in order to give the Pentagon a legal justification for using the group against Tehran.

Even if such a justification were to hold up in court, military and intelligence officials, according to Raw Story, say the operations bypass congressional oversights.

An article by Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Seymour Hersh from January of last year suggests how the Pentagon may be avoiding such standard legal restrictions:

“The President has signed a series of findings and executive orders authorizing secret commando groups and other Special Forces units to conduct covert operations against suspected terrorist targets in as many as ten nations in the Middle East and South Asia. ... The President’s decision enables Rumsfeld to run the operations off the book—free from legal restrictions imposed on the C.I.A. Under current law, all C.I.A. covert activities overseas must be authorized by a Presidential finding and reported to the Senate and House intelligence committees.” [4]

Military and intelligence sources, as Raw Story reported, “say no Presidential finding exists on MEK ops. Without a presidential finding, the operation circumvents the oversight of the House and Senate Intelligence committees.”

“The Pentagon doesn’t feel obligated to report any of this to Congress,” a former high-level intelligence official said, according to Hersh. “They’re not even going to tell the cincs,” he said, referring to the American military commanders-in-chief.

“They are doing whatever they want, no oversight at all,” another intelligence official told Raw Story.

According to Raw Story, “Congressional aides for the relevant oversight committees would not confirm or deny allegations that no Presidential finding had been done. One Democratic aide, however, wishing to remain anonymous for this article, did say that any use of the MEK would be illegal.”

Speaking with The Asia Times about the reported operations, retired Air Force colonel Sam Gardiner said, “The president hasn't notified the Congress that American troops are operating inside Iran. ... So it's a very serious question about the constitutional framework under which we are now conducting military operations.”

Pentagon’s priorities

In 2003 the US reportedly rejected a deal with Iran to exchange MEK captives for several top al-Qaeda leaders. According to NBC, among those in Iran's custody at the time was Abu Mussab al Zarqawi, who is now supposedly leading al-Qaeda in Iraq.

In exchange for the MEK captives, Iran was reportedly willing to hand over Zarqawi, along with al-Qaeda spokesman Suleiman abu Gaith and Osama bin Laden's third oldest son Saad bin Laden, but according to Washington Post columnist David Ignatius, "the Bush administration ultimately rejected this exchange, bowing to neoconservatives at the Pentagon who hoped to use the Mujaheddin-e Khalq against Tehran." [5]

In an article published by antiwar.com in August of 2004, Juan Cole, president of the US Middle East Studies Association (MESA), wrote that "[Larry] Franklin, [Harold] Rhode and [Michael] Ledeen conspired with [Manucher] Ghorbanifar and [the Italian intelligence agency] SISMI to stop that trade." [6]

Cole commented, "Since high al-Qaeda operatives like Saif al-Adil and possibly even Saad bin Laden might know about future operations, or the whereabouts of bin Laden, for Franklin and Rhode to stop the trade grossly endangered the United States."

Lobbying

The MEK, in addition to gaining the support of the Bush Administration and the Department of Defense, has conducted a fairly successful lobbying campaign in Washington DC, garnering support from influential foreign policy groups and several members of Congress.

The Iran Policy Committee (IPC), which has been described as a "spin off" of the highly influential American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), serves as the MEK's primary support group in Washington. [7]

The MEK's lobbying ability is actually "very weak and would be completely ineffectual were it not for the support of the pro-Israel lobby," a former MEK leader recently told The Asia Times. He said "if you need 1,000 lobbying units to influence Iran policy in the US Congress, 999 of these are provided by the pro-Israel lobby or the American administration, and the remainder by the weak and fragmented exiled opposition."

"We knew which members of Congress were influenced by AIPAC, so when we needed signatures we'd go to these congressmen first," the former MEK leader revealed.

According to Front Page Magazine, "MEK supporters roam the halls of Congress asking unsuspecting twenty-something aides if their Member will sign a 'Dear Colleague' letter calling for freedom and democracy in Iran." [8]

Coincidentally, in 2002 150 members of Congress reportedly signed a letter advocating the group's removal from the State Department's list of terrorist organizations.

House Representative Tom Tancredo (R-Co), according to The New York Sun, has compared the MEK to “America’s Founding Fathers,” while Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) told The Hill that the MEK “loves the United States.” “They’re assisting us in the war on terrorism; they’re pro-U.S.,” she said.

“In fairness to those on the Hill, I don’t think they have any idea who these people are,” State Department spokesman Greg Sullivan said, according to The Hill. He said the MEK’s Washington representatives “conceal [the group’s nature] by covering it in an anti-Iranian message.”

“I don’t give a shit if they are undemocratic,” Representative Gary Ackerman (D-NY) told the The Village Voice in December of 2001. He said, “OK, so the [MEK] is a terrorist organization based in Iraq, which is a terrorist state. They are fighting Iran, which is another terrorist state. I say let’s help them fight each other as much as they want. Once they all are destroyed, I can celebrate twice over.”

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

1. This is not the only example of the Pentagon’s support for the MEK undermining the Iraqi government’s attempts at sovereignty. In the summer of 2005, for example, as part of a new cooperative counterterrorism effort between Iraq and Iran, the Iraqi government promised to prevent MEK from attacking Iranian interests. Such attacks, however, reportedly were, and still are, being launched on behalf of the United States.

2. While most reports have placed the Department of Defense in charge of the MEK operations, former United Nations weapons inspector Scott Ritter reported in June 2005 that the MEK units were working for the CIA’s Directorate of Operations.

3. Philip Giraldi, a former CIA counterterrorism official, has corroborated the reports of the MEK being used for intelligence gathering purposes.

4. This April, Hersh reported that “American combat troops have been ordered into Iran, under cover, to collect targeting data and to establish contact with anti-government ethnic-minority groups. ... If the order were to be given for an attack, the American combat troops now operating in Iran would be in position to mark the critical targets with laser beams, to insure bombing accuracy and to minimize civilian casualties. As of early winter, I was told by the government consultant with close ties to civilians in the Pentagon, the units were also working with minority groups in Iran, including the Azeris, in the north, the Baluchis, in the southeast, and the Kurds, in the northeast. The troops “are studying the terrain, and giving away walking-around money to ethnic tribes, and recruiting scouts from local tribes and shepherds,” the consultant said. ...”

“‘Force protection’ is the new buzzword,” one former senior intelligence official told Hersh. This former official, as Hersh notes, was referring to the fact that these clandestine activities are being broadly classified as “military, not intelligence, operations, and are therefore not subject to congressional oversight.”

5. Ignatius’ account of the botched MEK/al-Qaeda deal has been corroborated by Flynt Leverett, a former senior CIA official who recently discussed the issue with Time magazine and The American Prospect.

6. Ghorbanifar, a central figure in the Iran-contra affair along with Ledeen, has admitted to having secret discussions with Rhode and Franklin regarding regime change in Iran. Furthermore, an article from the upcoming June 2006 issue of The American Prospect places MEK representatives at one of the meetings.

7. The IPC consists of former military and intelligence officials, most of whom now work in the private sector and four of whom also work as military analysts for Fox News. In addition, the MEK’s former U.S. representative is also working for Fox News as a foreign affairs analyst.

Interestingly, in December of 2004, Sasan Fayazmanesh, a professor of economics at Fresno State University, wrote an article for Counterpunch in which he commented on the MEK’s activities: “Every few weeks these Chalabi-like, men-in-black characters-and also Fox News commentators-come up with some ‘top secret satellite photos’ showing non-existent nuclear weapons sites in Iran (how a US designated terrorist organization gets top secret satellite photos is, of course, beyond one’s imagination).”

8. The MEK’s supporters, operating under a number of fronts, have funneled out more than \$204,000 in campaign contributions in an attempt to get their terrorist designation lifted, Front Page Magazine reported.

It should be noted that the article’s author, Kenneth R. Timmerman, is the founder of the Foundation for Democracy in Iran (FDI), which shares the goal of “revolution” in Iran with many hawks in Washington. Timmerman, however, disagrees with supporting the MEK. “When making a revolution, it is critical to choose one’s allies well,” he wrote for the conservative magazine.