

ParsBrief

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Iraqi protesters demand MKO expulsion

PressTV - Fri January 7, 2011

Iraqi protesters in the north of the country have called for the expulsion of anti-Iranian terrorist group Mujahedin Khalq Organization (MKO) from Iraq.

Scores of protesters gathered outside Camp Ashraf in Diyala on Friday and called for the expulsion of the notorious MKO terrorists from the country, a Press TV correspondent reported.

MKO members responded by throwing rocks at the demonstrators.

Among the protesters were the Iranian relatives of some MKO members, who were calling for the release of their loved ones said to be held inside the camp against their will.

Diyala has been the scene of similar protests against the presence of MKO members, whose camp used to be guarded by American forces after the US-led invasion of the country in 2003.

Iraqis accuse the terrorist organization of involvement in the killing of their compatriots during the Ba'ath rule of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

The group is especially notorious in Iran for having sided with Saddam during the 1980-1988 Iraqi-imposed war on Iran.

It has also claimed responsibility for numerous terrorist attacks and the assassination of significant figures in Iran over the past three decades.

The Mujahedeen Khalq Organization is listed as a terrorist group by Tehran and much of the international community.

MKO terrorists clearly connected to CIA and MOSSAD

PressTV - January 8, 2011

Interview with former US Senate candidate Mark Dankof

Dankof: Mojahedin Khalq terrorist organisation clearly connected to CIA and MOSSAD

The US administration is ramping up a "secret war on terror groups" in hot spots around the globe by establishing a new military targeting center, officials say.

The following is Press TV's interview with former US Senate candidate Mark Dankof regarding the matter:

Press TV: Some have predicted a positive response from the US public because this is "the only tool where we can see immediate, positive results." Is that true?

Dankof: I think if you count this as a positive result, all the political blowback that is going to occur has already occurred as a result of these previous drone strikes. The fact of the matter is that the military knows and our politicians know that we have already spent one trillion dollars in barred money in both Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, under very dubious circumstances and now we are resorting to something that frankly is going to get a lot of innocent people killed and I think there is going to be an even bigger backlash against what the United States is doing in both of these countries.

So, I think over the long haul, this is going to be more of the same and nobody seems to have an idea as to how to extricate the United States from both of these situations and I think also the question again is how much money we are spending; to what extent the Israelis are going to be involved in these operations and frankly you should look both at Iraq and Afghanistan. We do not know how much this joint strike operation and joint strike command is going to cost; how many people are working for it and frankly who is going to be making the decisions and who gets targeted and when the shooting starts.

Press TV: Some reports say task force 373 has killed many people in Afghanistan without even firing a single shot; is this an example of the kind of operations that the new global task force may conduct?

Dankof: Presumably so, and I think it is worthy if you take a look at what was said in AP intelligence writer Kimberly Dozier's release to the press today that becomes clear that the United States is not simply stepping on the gas in Iraq and Afghanistan and Pakistan with these types of operations, but now we are hearing more about Somalia and Yemen and there is also talks about these operations quite possibly being used domestically within the United States according to the Ms Dozier's report today.

This is all very very ominous and again it seems to me that we have a foreign policy that continues to drain the American economy and drain the American political will and credibility and the whole thing in my judgment is going to be proved to be a complete disaster.

Press TV: NATO says 80 percent of targeted operations result in capture, but as is well reported, the result is actually massive civilian-deaths. Is the public being kept in the dark about the extent of this problem?

Dankof: I think that they are. Quite frankly, I turned to alternative media sources to try to get any semblances of truth as to what is actually going on in these situations. Ex CIA agent Philip Giraldi who writes for The American Conservative and ex CIA agent Ray McGovern have done serious studies about what we are doing with these drone strikes. Paul Craig Roberts is another source that I consult and inevitably the view that they are bringing to the table is being kept out of American corporate media much to the detriment of the information of the American people who are not holding either the president of the United States or our military or our Congress accountable for things that are being done under their name.

Press TV: Sovereignty is an issue for the Afghans and Pakistanis. Does Washington feel these countries long ago gave this up?

Dankof: Sovereignty is a very very important issue and it is an important issue when Iran is involved. The Mojahedin Khalq or MKO, which is a terrorist organization despite the attempts of many in the American government and in the European Union to say it is not, has been doing a series of things in your country in conjunction with this Jundollah group, which is absolutely reprehensible and frankly, as Mr. Giraldi, Mr. McGovern and Mr. Paul Craig Roberts have been covering these things. It becomes clear that there is an American and Israeli intelligence connection to the MKO and to the Jundollah and to many of these individual atrocities that this group has been committing within Iranian borders. So, I think sovereignty is an issue and because it is an issue, there is going to be even more militancy among indigenous groups in these countries, who are frankly sick of these foreign military incursions and a total disrespect for their own nation and their own institutions.

MKO Terrorists Attack Iraqi Tribal Leaders, Reporters

FNA – January 10, 2011

Members of the anti-Iran terrorist Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO) attacked a group of Iraqi protestors outside MKO's main training camp in Northern Iraq and injured several people, including a reporter.

The incident occurred on Saturday after thousands of Iraqi tribal leaders and figures along with a number of reporters had gathered outside the Camp of New Iraq (formerly known as

Camp Ashraf) in Iraq's Northern province of Diyala to call for the expulsion of the terrorist group from the country's soil, an informed source told FNA on Sunday.

The members of the terrorist group attacked the protestors by throwing stones, glass splinters and also sticks and injured a number of demonstrators, among them the Al-Alam TV channel reporter.

The Saturday rally was the second day of Iraqi peoples' gathering outside the terrorist group's hub during which the protestors condemned the direct interference of MKO in the internal affairs of Iraq and demanded the Baghdad government to expel the group from their country.

Caretaker of the Iranian Foreign Ministry Ali Akbar Salehi said on Saturday that Baghdad officials have reached a consensus that based on the country's constitution and the parliament's approvals, no terrorist group can be sheltered in Iraq, specially those which seek to carry out terrorist operations against the neighboring countries.

"Iraqi officials vowed to explore ways to resolve the issue of Monafeqin (hypocrites, as MKO members are called in Iran) as soon as possible based on the international laws and Iraq's internal rules and constitution," he added.

Earlier this week, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari had expressed hope that Baghdad would expel the anti-Iran terrorist Organization from Iraq soon in future.

Speaking to reporters after a meeting in Baghdad with visiting Iranian Foreign Ministry Caretaker Ali Akbar Salehi last Wednesday, Zebari said that he and his Iranian counterpart have discussed expulsion of MKO from Iraq at their meeting.

Asked about the fate of the MKO, Zebari said the two sides "hope to find a way to close the MKO's case in Iraq as soon as possible".

"There are some humanitarian commitments to which our government is loyal, but fulfilling these undertakings should not harm Iraq's national sovereignty," he said.

The MKO has been in Iraq's Diyala province since the 1980s.

The MKO, whose main stronghold is in Iraq, is blacklisted by much of the international community, including the United States.

Before an overture by the EU, the MKO was on the European Union's list of terrorist organizations subject to an EU-wide assets freeze. Yet, the MKO puppet leader, Maryam Rajavi, who has residency in France, regularly visited Brussels and despite the ban enjoyed full freedom in Europe.

The MKO is behind a slew of assassinations and bombings inside Iran, a number of EU parliamentarians said in a recent letter in which they slammed a British court decision to remove the MKO from the British terror list. The EU officials also added that the group has

no public support within Iran because of their role in helping Saddam Hussein in the Iraqi imposed war on Iran (1980-1988).

Many of the MKO members abandoned the terrorist organization while most of those still remaining in the camp are said to be willing to quit but are under pressure and torture not to do so.

A May 2005 Human Rights Watch report accused the MKO of running prison camps in Iraq and committing human rights violations.

According to the Human Rights Watch report, the outlawed group puts defectors under torture and jail terms.

The group, founded in the 1960s, blended elements of Islamism and Stalinism and participated in the overthrow of the US-backed Shah of Iran in 1979. Ahead of the revolution, the MKO conducted attacks and assassinations against both Iranian and Western targets.

The group started assassination of the citizens and officials after the revolution in a bid to take control of the newly established Islamic Republic. It killed several of Iran's new leaders in the early years after the revolution, including the then President, Mohammad Ali Rajayee, Prime Minister, Mohammad Javad Bahonar and the Judiciary Chief, Mohammad Hossein Beheshti who were killed in bomb attacks by MKO members in 1981.

The group fled to Iraq in 1986, where it was protected by Saddam Hussein and where it helped the Iraqi dictator suppress Shiite and Kurd uprisings in the country.

The terrorist group joined Saddam's army during the Iraqi imposed war on Iran (1980-1988) and helped Saddam and killed thousands of Iranian civilians and soldiers during the US-backed Iraqi imposed war on Iran.

Since the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, the group, which now adheres to a pro-free-market philosophy, has been strongly backed by neo-conservatives in the United States, who also argue for the MKO to be taken off the US terror list.

Iraqi security forces took control of the training base of the MKO at Camp Ashraf - about 60km (37 miles) north of Baghdad - last year and detained dozens of the members of the terrorist group.

The Iraqi authority also changed the name of the military center from Camp Ashraf to the Camp of New Iraq.

WITH “ENGAGEMENT” FAILING, WASHINGTON VOICES URGE OBAMA TO EMBRACE THE MEK AND REMOVE ITS TERRORIST DESIGNATION

Flynt Leverett and Hillary Mann Leverett, January 25, 2011

Predictably, the Istanbul talks have ended without positive results. And, it seems clear that the discussion came to a dead end over two issues:

–the Islamic Republic wanted explicit recognition of its right to enrich uranium which the United States (at least) was not prepared to do; and

–the United States proposed a plan for refueling the Tehran Research Reactor that was more demanding on and less rewarding for Iran than the plan advanced last fall.

As it is not clear when the P-5+1 might meet again with the Iranians and the Obama Administration’s efforts to “engage” Tehran are increasingly being written off as a failure, public discourse in the United States is already turning to a consideration of non-diplomatic “next steps”. The Obama Administration will almost certainly push to expand U.S. and international sanctions against the Islamic Republic. Beyond that, we also anticipate that there will be increasing calls for the Administration to embrace “regime change” as the declared goal of America’s Iran policy.

On this front, one of the more noteworthy developments is an accelerating campaign to remove the *mojahedin-e khalq*, or MEK, from the U.S. Government’s list of foreign terrorist organizations. Over the last few months, a number of prominent Republicans—including John Bolton, Newt Gingrich, Rudy Giuliani, former Attorney General Michael Mukasey, former White House homeland security and counterterrorism coordinator Fran Townsend, and new House Foreign Affairs Committee chair Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen—have been publicly agitating to delist the MEK. But this effort has now gone bipartisan and big time, including engaging the services of a Washington, DC consulting firm.

To document this last point, we link here to the video of an event held in Washington last week, clearly designed to build public support for delisting the MEK as part of a U.S.-led campaign for regime change in Tehran. The event was organized by Executive Action, LLC, which describes itself as “a McKinsey & Company with muscle, a private CIA and Defense Department available to address your most intractable problems and difficult challenges”. (Exactly who engaged Executive Action’s services for this event is not clear.) Featured speakers included not only Republican figures like Mukasey, but also retired U.S. Marine Corps General Anthony Zinni; former New Mexico Governor, Clinton Administration cabinet officer, and Democratic presidential candidate Bill Richardson; former Democratic New Jersey Senator Robert Torricelli; and retired Marine Corps General James Jones—

who just stepped down, in November 2010, as President Obama's first national security adviser. All of the speakers argued for bringing down the Islamic Republic and forging a new political order in Iran—and for embracing the MEK as the foundation of a new Iranian “opposition” capable of bringing about both of these objectives.

History, Mark Twain allegedly observed, doesn't repeat itself—but it does sometimes rhyme. We are struck by how much the ongoing campaign to rehabilitate the MEK in Washington, as part of a broader, regime-change-in-Iran strategy, “rhymes” with a similar campaign in the 1990s and early 2000s to promote Ahmad Chalabi's expatriate Iraqi National Congress (INC) to overthrow the Iraqi government. That campaign featured high-profile Washington lobbyists, lawyers, and public relations specialists, extensive use of media, and the recruitment of high-profile political figures and former U.S. Government officials to sell both the dangerous idea that coercive regime change was the optimal U.S. policy option and a completely detached-from-reality assessment that Chalabi and the INC could deliver on the ground in Iraq. The United States will truly deserve what it gets if it falls for this again with regard to the MEK and Iran.

Jones' participation in the event is particularly appalling, and should unsettle those who reflexively defended the seriousness of President Obama's commitment to “engage” Tehran, and kept insisting that Obama's approach to Iran was fundamentally different from that of George W. Bush. After listening to his remarks, we challenge anyone to make the case that, for the Obama Administration, “engagement” with the Islamic Republic was ever anything but a Dennis Ross-style, “check the box” exercise.

Beeman--Mojaheddin-e Khalq (MEK) Can Never Rule Iran

Bill Beeman - University of Minnesota - Tuesday, January 25, 2011

Foreign Policy Analysts Flynt and Hillary Mann Leverett reported in a recent blog post:

. . .one of the more noteworthy developments is an accelerating campaign to remove the mojahedin-e khalq, or MEK, from the U.S. Government's list of foreign terrorist organizations. Over the last few months, a number of prominent Republicans—including John Bolton, Newt Gingrich, Rudy Giuliani, former Attorney General Michael Mukasey, former White House homeland security and counterterrorism coordinator Fran Townsend, and new House Foreign Affairs Committee chair Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen—have been publicly agitating to delist the MEK. But this effort has now gone bipartisan and big time, including engaging the services of a Washington, DC consulting firm.

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<http://www.raceforiran.com/with-%e2%80%9cengagement%e2%80%9d-failing-washington-voices-urge-obama-to-embrace-the-mek-and-remove-its-terrorist-designation>

I really don't know what to say to the fans of the MEK in Washington. They apparently have no ability to look at this situation from the viewpoint of the Iranian people. The MEK was a rival for power during and after the Iranian Revolution. They fully expected to take over the government from the "mullahs" and the secular nationalists. They were ousted and purged during the hostage crisis. They went to Iraq where Saddam Hussein gave them support, and a place to mount their attacks against the Islamic Republic. The fact that they stayed in Iraq under Saddam's protection during the Iran-Iraq war caused widespread expressions of hate for them in Iran. Of course they are completely guilty of terrorist operations in the pre-Revolutionary days, and they continue to take credit for bombings and civil unrest in Iran--which I guess doesn't count as terrorism since it is directed at Iranian citizens.

But the most important fact that Bolton, Ros-Lehtinin and others fail to comprehend is that the MEK could never, never in a million years form an alternative government in Iran. The Iranian people mistrust them at best, and most thoroughly despise them and think them to be traitors. Their supporters are largely cynical "get rid of the Mullahs at any price" types who also don't believe in their "cause" whatever that is.

Not only that, but they are aging, and not recruiting new supporters. This is a bankrupt group that is not going to do what the Right Wing neo-con dead-enders in Washington

hope they will do. It is sad and pitiful for anyone to be hitching their horse to this group. I only wonder who is paying the lobbyists and others trying to gin up their empty cause. It is also sad that Washington politicians waste their energy on cockamamie schemes such as getting this group off the terrorist list so that we can throw millions of taxpayer dollars down their rat hole in the utterly vain hope that they will bring about regime change in Iran rather than seriously trying to engage Iran ourselves.

State Dept: Mojahedin Khalq backers claims not true

Eric Lach, TPM, February 01, 2011

State Dept. Refutes Ridge Claim That MEK Has Special Protection Under Geneva Convention

When a who's who of Washington heavyweights spoke at a panel two weeks ago on behalf of the MEK, an Iranian opposition group currently considered a terrorist organization by the State Department, former Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge made a claim that the members of the group who currently reside in Iraq enjoy special protection under the Geneva Convention. But the State Department tells TPM that's not true.

During his remarks, after reading aloud portions of the MEK's ten-point plan for the future of Iran, which includes calls for a "pluralist system," "separation of church and state," and an Iran "devoid of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction," Ridge made a plea:

That's the Iran that the resistance, the People's Mojahedin, MEK, have fought for, believe in. Remember they relinquished their arms. They're protected under the Geneva Convention. We have to send a message to Al-Maliki and to the Iraqi government. The United States troops handed responsibility of protecting these individuals, who are protected under the Geneva Convention, to you. How can you tolerate those loudspeakers, and what about these incursions that precipitated some problems inside Camp Ashraf? You must heed the admonition. You promised to protect them under the Geneva Convention. Right now, one wonders the sincerity of that initial promise

Ridge was referring to the 3,400 or so MEK members who currently live at Camp Ashraf, north of Baghdad, and who were recently attacked. But the State Department says the Geneva Convention claim is wrong.

"MEK members are not 'protected persons' under the Fourth Geneva Convention," a State Department official in the Counterterrorism Office told TPM in an email. "After the end of

the occupation of Iraq, the Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) continued to treat the MEK as 'protected persons' as a matter of policy, not as a matter of legal obligation, until MNF-I's UN mandate expired at the end of 2008."

In 2007, the department's terror list included a sentence that the Camp Ashraf residents "have been designated as 'protected persons' under Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention." But in 2008, the list stated that Camp Ashraf residents "have been treated as 'protected persons' consistent with provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention." And the 2009 list makes no mention of the Geneva Convention.

As State Department official explains it, "With the expiration of MNF-I's UNSCR mandate, the Government of Iraq assumed security responsibility for Ashraf on January 1, 2009. The Government of Iraq assured the USG in writing that it will treat the MEK humanely and will not forcibly transfer them to any country where they will be tortured or be persecuted based on religious or political beliefs."

MEK members went to Iraq in 1986, after they were forced to leave France. They were offered safe haven by Saddam Hussein, who armed them and deployed them against Iran in the Iran-Iraq war. According to the State Department, Hussein also used MEK forces to crack down on Iraqi Shia and Kurds in the early 1990s, and the group received millions of dollars in Oil-for-Food program subsidies from Hussein. Earlier this month, MEK supporters accused Iraqi special forces and Iranian agents of orchestrating an attack on Camp Ashraf and injuring 175 people.

At the D.C. event, former Attorney General Michael Mukasey also mentioned the Geneva Convention in regard to the residents of Camp Ashraf, but his take was more nuanced.

"In 2003, when the United States invaded Iraq, the residents of Camp Ashraf surrendered their weapons, the weapons they had to defend themselves, and accepted written confirmation from the then deputy Commander of allied forces in Iraq, General Jeffrey Miller, on behalf of the United States, that they were protected persons under the Fourth Geneva Convention," Mukasey said. "From 2003 until 2009, the United States protected the residents of Ashraf and fulfilled the solemn obligation that we had undertaken in 2003. But in January 2009, as some of you may know, the United States turned over responsibility for safety and security to Iraqi security forces."

And Former New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson mentioned "protecting the rights of those at the camp," though he added it was "something that I was not aware of until this morning."

On 'Material Support' And The MKO

Matt Duss - Wonk room - January 3, 2011

Asking the same question I did last month, Georgetown Law Professor David Cole wonders, "Did former Attorney General Michael Mukasey, former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, Tom Ridge, a former homeland security secretary, and Frances Townsend, a former national security adviser, all commit a federal crime last month in Paris when they spoke in support of the Mujahedeen Khalq [MKO] at a conference organized by the Iranian opposition group's advocates?"

Free speech, right? Not necessarily.

The problem is that the United States government has labeled the Mujahedeen Khalq a "foreign terrorist organization," making it a crime to provide it, directly or indirectly, with any material support. And, according to the Justice Department under Mr. Mukasey himself, as well as under the current attorney general, Eric Holder, material support includes not only cash and other tangible aid, but also speech coordinated with a "foreign terrorist organization" for its benefit. It is therefore a felony, the government has argued, to file an amicus brief on behalf of a "terrorist" group, to engage in public advocacy to challenge a group's "terrorist" designation or even to encourage peaceful avenues for redress of grievances.

As Cole notes, he himself represented the Humanitarian Law Project in the Supreme Court case that affirmed Mukasey's and Holder's definition of "material support":

[T]he Supreme Court ruled against us, stating that all such speech could be prohibited, because it might indirectly support the group's terrorist activity. Chief Justice John Roberts reasoned that a terrorist group might use human rights advocacy training to file harassing claims, that it might use peacemaking assistance as a cover while re-arming itself, and that such speech could contribute to the group's "legitimacy," and thus increase its ability to obtain support elsewhere that could be turned to terrorist ends. Under the court's decision, former President Jimmy Carter's election monitoring team could be prosecuted for meeting with and advising Hezbollah during the 2009 Lebanese elections.

While I agree with Cole's argument here in regard to the counter-productivity of the Mukasey-Holder definition (it would, for example, make you or me a criminal if we were to advise a Hamas activist to embrace non-violence) and his suggestion that Congress should reform the laws governing material support of terrorism to "make clear that speech advocating only lawful, nonviolent activities... is not a crime," it's worth noting that this would still place some of the MKO's advocates on the wrong side of the law.

For example, one of Washington's most vocal MKO advocates, Raymond Tanter, has suggested that the U.S. should assist the group in launching a cross-border insurgency against Iranian regime targets.

In November, Rep. Michelle Bachmann, by way of advocating that "the Islamic regime of fraudulently-elected President Ahmadinejad must be removed now, before it is too late," called on the Obama administration to support the MKO, lamenting, "We have shackled this freedom-seeking group which has the ability to help Iranians rise up against that tyrannical regime."

In my view, it shouldn't be illegal to suggest such things, it should just be recognized as extraordinarily dumb. (Is it really that hard to understand why an Iraq-based organization backed by Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq war might not be embraced by Iranians as tribunes of freedom?) But it is curious why Tanter, Bachmann and other MKO supporters seem able to flout the current law as currently defined.