

ParsBrief

Number 66
June 2012

1. State to decide on Mujahedin-e Khalq terror delisting in 4 months
2. U.S. to decide Iranian group's fate after camp closes
3. MKO terrorists receive funds from Saudi Arabia, Israel: MKO defector
4. 1000 MKO terrorists seek pardon from Iran
5. Testimony of Ambassador Daniel Fried on the Status of Processing of Camp Ashraf Residents
6. Terrorist group puts out propaganda report claiming Iranian secretly advancing nuclear weapons program
7. MEK and the Unspeakable Chaos of the Rule of Law
8. Hillary's Terrorists



State to decide on Mujahedin-e Khalq terror delisting in 4 months

Jewish Telegraphic Agency - June 05, 2012

WASHINGTON - The State Department plans to comply with a court's order to decide the status of a group that opposes the Iranian regime and that it lists as terrorist.

In an unsigned statement issued June 1, the spokesman's office said that it "intends to comply" with a ruling earlier that day by the D.C. Circuit's Court of Appeals ordering the State Department to decide within four months whether Mujahedin-e Khalq, or MEK, should be removed from its designated terrorist group list.

The court, which had first issued an order in 2010 demanding a decision within 180 days, expressed its frustration with the delay.

"We have been given no sufficient reason why the Secretary, in the last 600 days, has not been able to make a decision which the Congress gave her only 180 days to make," it said, and ruled that if the department failed to decide within four months, the group would automatically be delisted.

A number of pro-Israel figures in recent years have joined the effort to delist the MEK, saying that it has reformed since its days under the shah when it targeted Americans.

They note also that the MEK base in Iraq has disarmed, per U.S. requests, and say delisting is vital now as the pro-Iranian Iraqi regime consolidates power and the thousands of residents of the MEK camp in Iraq are left defenseless, because removing the group from the terrorist list facilitates travel for its members.

Iraqi forces killed 34 camp residents in a raid last year.

The MEK is reportedly assisting Israel in exposing and sabotaging Iranian nuclear facilities.

Opponents of delisting say it serves no useful purpose, saying that MEK's alignment with Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war has led to it being universally reviled, even among opponents of the theocracy.

They say that delisting would only needlessly provoke Iran during a period of sensitive negotiations over making its nuclear program more transparent.

MEK welcomed the judge's decision. "The judgment once again demonstrated that maintaining the terrorist designation on the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK) is absolutely illegitimate and unlawful, and is guided by ulterior political motives," it said in a statement.

U.S. to decide Iranian group's fate after camp closes

By Jeremy Pelofsky ,Reuters – May9,2012

WASHINGTON - Secretary of State Hillary Clinton plans to rule on whether to remove an Iranian dissident group from a U.S. terrorism blacklist about two months after its refugee camp in Iraq closes, the Obama administration said on Tuesday.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit heard arguments on a petition from the group, Mujahadin-e Khalq, or MEK, which is seeking an order forcing the State Department to either remove it from the list or require action within a specified period on its request to be delisted.

Iranians who belong to the group have been moving out of its Camp Ashraf base in Iraq to a processing center at a former U.S. military base in Baghdad, and the remaining 1,200 or so are expected to be moved in the next nine weeks or so, the administration said.

Clinton plans to decide on the group's request to be delisted from the U.S. Foreign Terrorist Organization list "no later than 60 days after the last move," Robert Loeb, a Justice Department lawyer representing the administration, told the appeals court that heard oral arguments on the issue.

It appeared to be the first time that the State Department had publicly given a rough timeline for making a decision on the matter.

Loeb acknowledged that a 60-day period for a decision "may not be realistic" because they could find additional evidence that needs to be weighed, but that Clinton had authorized him to tell the court of her plan.

Loeb said the administration has been carefully weighing whether the group has fully renounced its violent past and given up any weapons. He denied that the process was without an end. Clinton said in February the camp move was a "key factor" to making a decision.

"We're not citing world peace" as a goal to determine the fate of the designation, Loeb said.

Also known as the People's Mujahideen Organization of Iran, the group led a guerrilla campaign against the U.S.-backed Shah of Iran during the 1970s that included attacks on U.S. targets. It was added to the list in 1997, but the group has said that it has renounced violence.

UNWELCOME IN IRAQ

The group, which has pushed for the overthrow of Iran's clerical leaders, found itself no longer welcome in Iraq under its new Shi'ite-led government that came to power after Saddam Hussein's downfall in 2003.

As a result of the MEK's listing as a foreign terrorist organization, Americans are barred from supporting the group, and its members or representatives are banned from entering the United States.

A lawyer for the group, Viet Dinh, pressed a three-judge appeals court panel to force the Obama administration's hand and said that the terrorism designation has "severe implications on constitutional liberties" for the group.

He denied that the MEK members at the base were armed and saying that "the group for a decade has renounced violence."

The three judges appeared skeptical of both sides during the arguments, acknowledging that it was not as if the Obama administration was "sitting on their hands", as Judge Karen LeCraft Henderson put it during the nearly hour-long arguments.

Judge David Tatel raised the possibility of establishing a deadline for when Clinton must rule or take the Obama administration's backup suggestion to require regular progress reports to the court.

But he questioned whether the group wanted a decision that could go against the group now but in a few weeks or months could be reversed.

Dinh argued that the law required Clinton to make a decision within short order and that the group wanted a decision made even if it was not to delist it because then it could appeal it in the courts. "Any decision would be better," he said.

Tatel also pressed Loeb on why the administration just did not deny the application so the appeals process could move, but the lawyer said that the situation was "fluid" and did not want to risk hurting cooperation to close Camp Ashraf.

(Additional reporting by Arshad Mohammed in Washington; Editing by Philip Barbara)

MKO terrorists receive funds from Saudi Arabia, Israel: MKO defector

PressTV - May 13, 2012

A Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization defector says the terrorist group receives funding from Saudi Arabia and Israel, emphasizing MKO's role in the suppression and massacre of Iraqis under the former Baath regime.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with Ashraf News website in the Iraqi capital Baghdad on Saturday, Maryam Sanjabi said there is evidence about the relations and cooperation between the MKO and the Saudi kingdom.

She added that the group has used the tactic of establishing relations with Jordanian lawmakers in order to expand their activities in Jordan with the help of Riyadh.

She also called on the remaining MKO members in camp Liberty in Iraq to think rationally and take advantage of the Iraqi government and UN decisions about their re-settlement in another country.

MKO members have now a better chance of escaping in the wake of their transfer from Camp New Iraq, formerly known as Camp Ashraf, situated about 120 kilometers (74 miles) west of the border with Iran, to the Camp Liberty, the former MKO leadership council member said.

The group fled to Iraq in 1986, where it enjoyed the support of Iraq's executed dictator Saddam Hussein, and set up its camp near the Iranian border.

The organization is known to have cooperated with Saddam in suppressing the 1991 uprisings in southern Iraq and carrying out the massacre of Iraqi Kurds. The group has also carried out numerous acts of violence against Iranian civilians and government officials.

1000 MKO terrorists seek pardon from Iran

PressTV - May 5, 2012

Nearly 1000 members of the terrorist Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO) have expressed willingness to return to Iran and seek the Islamic Republic's pardon.

The development comes as the fifth group of the MKO terrorists was transferred to the Camp Liberty [TTL] near Baghdad Airport on Friday, the governor of the Iraqi city of Khalis, Oday al-Khedran said.

Al-Khedran added that 416 MKO members, including 350 women, were moved from the Camp New Iraq, formerly known as Camp Ashraf, to the new location, IRIB reported on Saturday.

According to the report, only 100 MKO members have been relocated to third countries.

Some of the MKO terrorists have also surrendered themselves to Iraqi forces after escaping the camp.

The MKO, which has carried out numerous acts of terror and violence against Iranian civilians and government officials, fled to Iraq in the 1980's, where it enjoyed the support of Iraq's executed dictator Saddam Hussein and set up Camp Ashraf in the Diyala Province, near the Iranian border.

The group is also known to have cooperated with Saddam in suppressing the 1991 uprisings in southern Iraq and the massacre of Iraqi Kurds.

Testimony of Ambassador Daniel Fried on the Status of Processing of Camp Ashraf
Residents

U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee- May16, 2012

House Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
May 16, 2012

Chairman Rohrabacher and Ranking Member Carnahan, thank you for the opportunity today to testify before this Subcommittee. I welcome this occasion to report on the significant progress made in the Administration's ongoing efforts to support a humane, peaceful, and durable solution for the residents of Camp Ashraf, as well as on the challenges that remain.

In early December 2011, when I last appeared before this Subcommittee to discuss the situation at Camp Ashraf, the potential for a humanitarian crisis appeared dominant. The Government of Iraq had announced its intention to close Camp Ashraf by December 31, and there were valid concerns, based on previous incidents, that this could result in bloodshed. At that time, the United States and the UN recognized the need to develop and support on an urgent basis a mechanism to achieve the safety and security of Ashraf's residents. Members of this Committee appeared to share such concerns. It was under these circumstances that Secretary Clinton instructed me to work with Ambassador Jeffrey and the United Nations to avert a humanitarian catastrophe.

Given that context, I am relieved to report significant progress, while recognizing that the job is not yet done. On December 25, the Government of Iraq and the United Nations signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that provides the mechanism and path forward for the safe relocation of Ashraf's residents out of Iraq. Secretary Clinton quickly and publicly announced our support for this MOU, and we were shortly joined in this support by key partners in the international community, especially the European Union. We called upon the Iraqi government to respect the terms of the MOU and upon the residents of Camp Ashraf to cooperate in its implementation. With the signature of the MOU, the Iraqi government lifted the December 31 deadline for Ashraf's closure.

Under the terms of the MOU, the residents of Camp Ashraf have been provided a temporary transit facility – Camp Hurriya (formerly called Camp Liberty) adjacent to the Baghdad International Airport – to which to relocate under guarantees of security. The MOU also provided for regular, in-person human rights monitoring by the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI), headed by the able and energetic Ambassador Martin Kobler, and the ability to participate in a Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process to be undertaken by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Additionally, through the MOU, the Iraqi Government made a commitment to the principle of non-refoulement. These were important steps forward by the Iraqi government.

Following conclusion of the MOU, the Iraqi Government worked with the UN and the residents of Camp Ashraf to begin the moves to Camp Hurriya. The first convoy to Hurriya occurred February 18, with nearly 400 people. Despite some complications and delays, it took place peacefully and was observed by U.S. officials from Embassy Baghdad in addition to UN monitors. A second and similar convoy of nearly 400 residents occurred on March 8, followed by a third convoy on March 19, a fourth on April 16, and the fifth and most recent convoy on May 5. Together, nearly 2000 residents of Ashraf have moved to Camp Hurriya, which is well over half the total.

After the fifth convoy, the Department of State publicly welcomed the progress to date, including the continued cooperation of the Iraqi Government and the residents of Camp Ashraf with UNAMI in implementation of the MOU. Our statement also noted the need to increase our focus on our ultimate objective: the safe relocation of the residents from Camp Hurriya out of Iraq, and we joined the UN's call to member states to assist in this effort.

The process of relocating residents to Hurriya has had challenges. Each convoy, carrying approximately 400 Ashraf residents, their personal effects, and large quantities of cargo to Hurriya, has been a significant logistical undertaking. The Iraqi government has provided dozens of coach busses and cargo trucks and literally thousands of Iraqi security forces to provide for the convoy's security on the road. Accompanying each convoy are UN human rights monitors, who also observe the screening of residents and property as each convoy loads from Camp Ashraf and provide useful, neutral reports following each convoy movement. The preparation of each convoy is lengthy and disagreements, sometimes heated, have occurred between the Iraqi authorities and the residents about cargo,

screening procedures and other issues. The U.S. Embassy and Department of State followed the progress of each convoy closely, often in real time, in support of the UN; we are well aware of the difficulties involved. Given the history of Camp Ashraf, the emotions involved, and the fact that many of those at Camp Ashraf have resided there for years, this should not surprise us. Indeed, the fact of continued progress is more remarkable than the difficulties. Patience and compromise have been required, and will still be required, as the last convoys needed to close Camp Ashraf are organized.

Living conditions at Camp Hurriya have also had their challenges. Camp Hurriya, when under U.S. control, was part of the largest coalition base in Iraq, housing thousands of American and coalition forces during military operations in Iraq. The containerized housing units (CHUs), which the former Ashraf residents now occupy, previously housed our service personnel. Hurriya also includes among its living spaces a large dining facility, fitness facility, a mosque, and recreational space for the residents. The UN studied the infrastructure before the first convoy and judged that the facility met or exceeded international humanitarian standards for such encampments to support the relocation of all Ashraf residents.

Nevertheless, some legitimate concerns were raised about conditions at Hurriya. There were early issues with water, sewage and electric power, though many of these have been resolved. There were early concerns about the location and size of Iraqi police units at Camp Hurriya, though here, too, a satisfactory resolution was worked out. Both Camps Ashraf and Hurriya have internet connectivity to the world.

Still, some issues remain. For example, greater attention needs to be paid to the repair of air conditioning units by the Government of Iraq, and other basic welfare needs, such as accommodations for the disabled, ought to be addressed. With the onset of hot weather, requirements of electric power and water deliveries will increase, and the number of needed utility vehicles for provision of water and removal of sewage therefore will grow. The Iraqi government needs to work with the UN to address ongoing humanitarian concerns as the population at Camp Hurriya grows amid hot weather. The residents meanwhile need to engage with the Iraqi government, the UN, and others on these serious issues in a focused manner.

The UNAMI monitors, who visit Hurriya daily, and U.S. Embassy officers, who also visit frequently, have been invaluable in working out problems and keeping us informed about the details of issues that develop. UNAMI, with active U.S. support, is working at high-levels with the Iraqi government to ensure the welfare of the residents is not compromised and to resolve issues that arise. Continued efforts will be needed, especially now that the hot season has arrived.

It is important that the final convoys from Ashraf take place and that Camp Ashraf be closed. Our efforts do not end, however, with Camp Ashraf's closure. Indeed, we must not lose sight of our purpose: the relocation of Camp Ashraf residents out of Iraq. The way for residents out of Iraq lies through the UNHCR process. With start-up issues largely

resolved, the UNHCR has intensified its efforts and increased its resources to interview and review residents for refugee status eligibility, the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process.

The next great task in this effort requires continued participation of the residents in the UNHCR process, and the diplomatic work of relocating those residents out of Iraq. For our part, the United States has informed the UNHCR and our international partners that we will receive UNHCR's referrals of some individuals.

These referrals will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, consistent with applicable U.S. law. Other governments have stated their intention to take similar actions, and some have begun the process of reviewing residents.

Let me be clear: it will be critical for the United States to demonstrate leadership in this area. Our doing so will be essential to finding a solution. We hope to have the support of the Congress and all who in the past have expressed concern for the welfare of the residents of Camp Ashraf. We will also need the continued cooperation of the remaining Ashraf residents to move swiftly to relocate to Hurriya, and the cooperation of the residents of Camp Hurriya with the UNHCR.

The next stage of the process will be challenging. Some in Camp Hurriya may choose to return voluntarily to Iran. Others may find that they have credentials and connections to European or other nations and can resettle there. Still others will require resettlement as refugees or other permission to reside in third countries through the UNHCR's good offices. Some of our European partners have already indicated that they will interview residents to determine eligibility for resettlement within their respective countries. In all these cases, the United States will encourage prompt and secure relocation of the residents of Hurriya and, again, we must be prepared to do our part, hopefully with support of Congress.

I want to commend the extraordinary work being done by the UNAMI and UNHCR missions in Iraq, and the intense engagement of U.S. Ambassador Jeffrey and his dedicated team. Their diligence, creativity, and commitment have been essential to the progress made thus far. They routinely mediate disputes – from the mundane to the more serious – and without their leadership at all levels this process would be immensely more difficult, and human lives would be in greater jeopardy.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, this is in the nature of an interim report. Much has been achieved since last December's hearing. Much remains to be done. This is a complex and dynamic issue, and it consumes an enormous amount of resources, for UNAMI, for UNHCR, and for the UN writ large; and the U.S. is devoting attention commensurate with the need.

Our paramount interest in this situation is humanitarian. We have much still to do, and the potential for serious trouble remains. The difficult history of the MEK in Iraq is a matter of

record. But at last we are on a road to resolve this problem through the relocation of Ashraf residents out of Iraq.

Thank you for this opportunity and I welcome your questions.

Terrorist group puts out propaganda report claiming Iranian secretly advancing nuclear weapons program

By Madison Ruppert, Editor of End the Lie – May14, 2012

The National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) – the political arm of the Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization (MEK or MKO) often known as the People’s Mujahedin of Iran (PMOI), a terrorist organization trained by the United States and the Israeli Mossad to carry out assassinations and other covert operations in Iran – has put out another propaganda report dealing with the Iranian nuclear program.

In their latest report, which a top U.S. nuclear expert already said should be treated with great skepticism according to Haaretz, claims that there are 60 scientists and engineers currently playing a role in the alleged Iranian nuclear weapons program.

Of course, in reality, the United States Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta has confirmed that Iran is not pursuing nuclear weapons on multiple occasions. Similarly, the United States intelligence community does not have any evidence indicating that Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons.

Even the Israeli military chief Benny Gantz shares this position, making the claims from the NCRI highly suspicious at best.

The NCRI’s track record is far from one which would inspire confidence in the accuracy of their claims.

Since the revealed that uranium enrichment was occurring at the Natanz facility in 2002, they have essentially been unable to produce anything other than propaganda intended to push the international community into attacking Iran and/or ousting Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Even Haaretz has to highlight that the latest report is filled with details which “could not be verified” and it indeed “appeared timed to encourage a tougher line at talks with Iran the UN nuclear watchdog will have in Vienna on Monday and Tuesday and six world powers will hold in Baghdad on May 23.”

The six page report was shown to Reuters and it cited sources allegedly in the Iranian government and military who claim that a massive team of around 60 individuals are actively pursuing research related to nuclear weapons across 11 agencies, all operating in secret under the control of the defense ministry.

One can make any manner of wild claims while citing supposed insider sources. As long as the details can't be verified – and thus, cannot be falsified – they can never be challenged.

Unfortunately, some people seem to apply this knowledge selectively, in some cases choosing to give credence to claims made with no evidence while categorically dismissing such claims in other cases.

“Information [...] shows that the clerical regime has expanded the organization responsible for nuclear weapons development,” said the report. “This finding reveals a complete and elaborate, and highly [...] secret research structure and a network for procurement of the required parts and equipment.”

“So far, the identities of 60 directors and experts working in various parts of the New Defense Research Organization and 11 institutions and companies affiliated with it have been detailed,” the report added.

Now, this mind sound compelling, but the simple fact is: not a single one of these claims can be substantiated.

If I told you my high-level government contacts inside the Pentagon told me that all canines are actually hybrid robot-aliens sent to siphon the psychic energy of humans, would you believe me?

While that obviously sounds absurd to many people, there is just as much evidence to support claims such as these as there is to support the claims made by this terrorist group.

Interestingly, the document took a tactic right out of the U.S. government playbook – creating diagrams supposedly showing the hidden command structure, scientists and engineers involved in this alleged secret program.

These sound much like the completely fraudulent diagrams and drawings created in order to trick people into buying the justification for invading Iraq.

The NCRI has called on the United Nations nuclear watchdog agency the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to carry out a “robust probe” into the Iranian nuclear program and all involved.

While it is often claimed that Iran is blocking an IAEA investigation, this approach is ludicrous given that Israel refuses to allow any of their facilities to be inspected.

The antagonistic Israeli approach to the Iranian nuclear program is far from constructive and is blatantly hypocritical to the point of absurdity.

Hopefully the West can begin to use at least something resembling reason and logic in this situation, or else I fear we might be heading towards a confrontation the likes of which the world has never seen.

As always I hope, above all, that I am completely wrong and that these tensions quickly dissolve and the world can move forward into an era free of incredibly destructive nuclear weapons technology.

Did I forget anything or miss any errors? Would you like to make me aware of a story or subject to cover? Or perhaps you want to bring your writing to a wider audience? Feel free to contact me at admin@EndtheLie.com with your concerns, tips, questions, original writings, insults or just about anything that may strike your fancy.

MEK and the Unspeakable Chaos of the Rule of Law

By John Glaser, Anti War - May 04, 2012

Via Glenn Greenwald, Daneil Denvir writes about former Governor Ed Rendell trying to explain why he shouldn't be indicted for providing "material support" to the Iranian cult terrorist group MEK:

One 10-minute speech earned Rendell \$20,000, and he frequently flew to Europe to call for MEK's removal from the terror list. That would appear to fall within the extraordinarily broad definition of "material support" used by the Obama administration.

Rendell calls that "ludicrous." He says, "The only thing we've done is spoken out on their behalf. And you certainly can't in any way encumber free speech in America. You know that ? you're a journalist."

I do sort of know that?you shouldn't be able to encumber free speech. But the Supreme Court did just that, and Muslims have been prosecuted for doing less: a satellite TV salesman sentenced to five years for broadcasting Hezbollah's TV channel; a man indicted for favorable web comments on shooting U.S. soldiers.

..."Whatever one's views are on this ruling, it is now binding law. To advocate on behalf of a designated Terrorist group constitutes the felony of 'providing material support' if that advocacy is coordinated with the group," writes Salon blogger and constitutional law attorney Glenn Greenwald. "They're providing more substantial 'material support' to this Terrorist group than many people ? usually vulnerable, powerless Muslims ? who are currently imprisoned for that crime."

..."If you indict me, [Rendell explained] I hope you know, you have to indict 67 other Americans who did the same thing, including seven generals ... [who] served in Iraq. You'd have to indict James Jones, President Obama's first NSC chief adviser, you'd have to indict former Attorney General [Michael] Mukasey, former FBI Director Louis Freeh ...

the whole kit and caboodle.” That caboodle is voluminous and high-powered, including Tom Ridge, UN Ambassador John Bolton, Rudolph Giuliani and Howard Dean, among others.

Seriously, don't tease me...

“You tell me that anyone has the right to restrict my freedom of speech and I'll tell you you're dead wrong,” Rendell insists.

I wish I were wrong. The Supreme Court's three dissenters protested that the decision “gravely and without adequate justification injure[s] interests of the kind the First Amendment protects.” So it does. It's a frightening law and a horrible ruling that pulverizes First Amendment free speech protections. But as long as political nobodies face prosecution for speech crimes, so should elites. Indict Rendell ? and Ridge, Mukasey, Giuliani, etc. ? or repeal this law.

See here for background on the push inside elite U.S. circles to get the MEK delisted from the State Department's list of terrorist organizations.

It should be well known that the law simply doesn't apply to elite members of the American political community. But I just think it's fascinating that Rendell actually used the argument that, if you indict him, you'll have to then apply the law to other important people! At least 67 of them! Oh, the unspeakable chaos!

Hillary's Terrorists

by Justin Raimondo, Antiwar.com - May 16, 2012

Hillary Clinton is about to delist a dangerous terror group

On May 21, 1975, Col. Paul Shaffer, a military attaché to the US mission in Iran, kissed his wife and two children goodbye, and entered a waiting car with his colleague, Lt. Col. Jack Turner, whose wife was getting their three children ready for school. It was the last time the families of these two US servicemen would see them alive.

As the Iranian driver pulled into a side street to avoid traffic a car blocked their passage and another car rammed them from behind. Three gunmen appeared and fired at the two Americans pointblank, killing them instantly: the three escaped in a third car, leaving a leaflet on the blood-drenched seat. The leaflet denounced “US imperialism” and bore the imprint of the Mujahedin-e-Khalq (MEK), or “People's Crusaders,” a Marxist-Islamist group led by Massoud and Maryam Rajavi.

All in all, the MEK killed 6 Americans in Iran: Lt. Col. Louis Lee Hawkins, an Army comptroller, cut down by gunman in front of his Tehran home, and William Cottrell, Donald Smith, and Robert Krongard, all employees of Rockwell International. They wounded Air Force Gen. Harold L. Price, and tried and failed to kidnap the US ambassador, Douglas

MacArthur II. After the Iranian Revolution, the MEK supported the takeover of the US embassy in Tehran, opposed the release of the diplomats – calling a mass demonstration in protest – and demanded their execution.

Today, the MEK is campaigning to be taken off the US State Department's list of terrorist organizations – and they're on the brink of success. According to the Wall Street Journal:

“Senior U.S. officials said on Monday that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has yet to make any final decision on the MeK's status. But they said the State Department was looking favorably at delisting MeK if it continued cooperating by vacating a former paramilitary base inside Iraq, called Camp Ashraf, which the group had used to stage cross-border strikes into Iran.”

What the article fails to mention is that those “cross border strikes into Iran” took place during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, when the MEK enjoyed the patronage of Saddam Hussein: MEK cadre fought on the Iraqi side during that conflict. They also were useful to Saddam in repressing internal enemies of the regime: after the 1991 Gulf war, MEK fighters were used by Saddam to crush uprisings in the south and in Iraqi Kurdistan. Maryam Rajavi told her followers: “Take the Kurds under your tanks, and save your bullets for the Iranian Revolutionary Guards.”

MEK has been described as a cult, most notably in a scary report by Human Rights Watch, a fascinating Al Jazeera video report, and in a remarkable piece by Elizabeth Rubin in the New York Times. Rubin relates the testimony of Salahaddin Mukhtadi, an Iranian historian living in exile, who says dissident MEK members “are locked up if they disagree with anything. And sometimes killed.” In the MEK cult, having particular friendships is strictly forbidden: sitting and talking together is considered a crime, especially when the subject is one's past life before joining the cult. Wives are ordered to divorce their husbands, celibacy is mandatory, and families are broken up: nothing must come between the members and their devotion to the cause. Forced confessions and “criticism sessions” occur on a daily basis, in which participants are subjected to group abuse called “ideological cleansings.”

After the American invasion and occupation of Iraq, Massoud Rajavi ordered his followers to greet the Americans as liberators – and promptly went into hiding. He has not been seen since, but is said to retain his control over the cult, using his wife, Maryam – who has been proclaimed the self-styled “President” of Iran by the group – as a front. The US government took charge of the MEK facility, known as Camp Ashraf, and, although the Bush administration continued to characterize the group as a terrorist organization, President Bush cited Massoud's cult as the source of “intelligence” on Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program. Prominent neoconservatives began agitating for utilizing the MEK the way the Bush administration had used Ahmad Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress, but efforts to openly put them on the CIA payroll stalled, along with the administration's war plans. Somebody in the Bush administration must have figured out that funding and

supporting a terrorist group that had killed Americans would not sit well while we were conducting an international “war on terrorism.”

However, it turns out the Bush administration secretly brought MEK cadre to the US for military training, including communications intercepts and other clandestine cloak-and-dagger stuff: the program supposedly ended just before the Obama administration took office. Apparently the MEK were turned over to the Mossad, who utilized them to carry out the assassination of Iranian nuclear scientists in Iran.

The MEK’s campaign to get their terrorist group legitimized has been characterized by large cash payments to prominent politicians and public figures in both parties: the list of MEK endorsers reads like a political Who’s Who of Washington bigwigs. The payments are ostensibly for speaking engagements at MEK rallies, but the size of these disbursements – ranging upward from \$50,000 – indicates some good old-fashioned bribery.

There is an awful lot of MEK cash sloshing around the halls of Congress, and the cultists haven’t been shy about handing it out. Whether the Clinton Foundation or some Clinton-affiliated “charity” has partaken of the MEK’s largesse is presently unknown, but, as they say at the National Enquirer, “inquiring minds want to know.”

It’s fair to ask: where is all this unaccounted for cash coming from? While the Rajavi-ites use the familiar methods employed by cults to strip their members of all their assets – see the Al Jazeera video for a heart-rending account of how a major MEK spokesman ripped off his own elderly parents – it seems likely that, during their sojourn as Saddam Hussein’s favorite assassins, the MEK received compensation from the Iraqi dictator for slaughtering the Kurds and other regime opponents so efficiently and ruthlessly. Which means people like former Pennsylvania governor Ed Rendell, who has shilled for the MEK, and former Democratic party chairman Howard Dean, are recipients of Saddam’s gold.

Like so much of US foreign policy, the idea that the US would legitimize a crazed cult like the MEK sounds like the plot of a bad thriller. Yet it’s all about the timing: as the US-Iran nuclear talks loom, the prospect of our State Department in effect legalizing the MEK and its activities in the US is an open provocation that could possibly shut down the sensitive negotiations – and pave the way for war with Iran. No doubt hardliners within the Obama administration are using the MEK issue as a backdoor way to torpedo the Baghdad talks: whether they will succeed remains to be seen. As one State Department official told the Wall Street Journal: “To make that assertion on your own that the MeK will be removed is a realistic one. But in policy making you never know for sure what will happen.”

I have to add that the MEK, while claiming to have “renounced” terrorism, exists in an atmosphere seething with violence, and my own experience with them has borne this out. Whenever I have written about them I have invariably received emails from MEK supporters laden with explicit threats of violence. This is to be expected from members of a psycho cult, but in the case of the MEK it’s not like they’ve never killed any Americans

before. Just ask the families of Paul Shaffer, Jack Turner, Louis Lee Hawkins, William Cottrell, Donald Smith, and Robert Krongard.