

# ParsBrief

Number 78

March 2014

1. Obama pushes Israel to stop assassinations of Iran nuclear scientists – report
2. John Kerry Gets Pressed To Grant Asylum To Former Terrorist Group Mojahedin Khalq
3. Iraq urges UN to speed up relocation of MKO terrorists
4. Iran can demand extradition of MKO members: Iraqi min.
5. Mojahedin Khalq threatens French group protesting their presence in France
6. UNHCR thanks Italy for welcoming Iranian refugees
7. Manufacturing a Narrative for War – Gareth Porter on Reality Asserts Itself (2/3)



Brief No.78

[WWW.nejatngo.org/en/](http://WWW.nejatngo.org/en/)

March 2014

### UNHCR thanks Italy for welcoming Iranian refugees

Gazzetta del sud, Rome, March 07, 2014

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on Tuesday thanked Italy for welcoming seven Iranian refugees from Camp Hurriya in Iraq. In a statement issued by UNHCR Italia, the agency welcomed the Italian government's decision to let into the country a total of 15 Iranian refugees from Iraq, including the seven latest arrivals. This is giving "hope to Iranian citizens still living in Camp Hurriya whose safety is in grave danger," said Laurens Jolles, UNHCR delegate for southern Europe. Camp Hurriya near Baghdad has been repeatedly targeted for attack, including a deadly rocket bombardment in December, prompting the UN refugee agency to ask Iraqi authorities to ramp up security at the camp. The UN refugee agency has also called on the international community to help relocate its 3,200 residents to safe locations outside Iraq. Former Camp Ashraf, where residents were previously staying, mainly hosted Iranian exiles including several members of a group known as the People's Mojahedeen of Iran. More than 3,000 residents were subsequently relocated to Camp Hurriya, previously known as Camp Liberty, while the UNHCR determined their refugee status to resettle them outside the country, under an agreement signed in December 2011 between the UN and the Iraqi government.

### Obama pushes Israel to stop assassinations of Iran nuclear scientists – report

Russia Today, March 3, 2014

President Barack Obama is pressuring Israel to stop carrying out assassinations of top nuclear scientists in Iran as the Islamic Republic continues its negotiations with world powers over its uranium enrichment program, according to a new book.

Apart from pressure from Washington that Israel give up the assassination program, sources close to Israel's intelligence agencies told CBS News's Dan Raviv that Mossad itself viewed the campaign as too dangerous to continue. Raviv, who was updating a book he co-wrote about the history of Israel's intelligence agencies, said the pressure from the Obama administration was "more than a hint."

Mossad itself was apparently undergoing a sea change regarding the program. Fearing their 'best combatants' – Israel's term for its most accomplished spies – could be captured and hanged, the agency is reportedly set to shift its focus to other activities. According to security sources, Netanyahu ordered the intelligence agency to focus its efforts on proving the Islamic Republic is cheating on a landmark preliminary agreement made with six world powers in November to curtail its uranium enrichment program in return for limited sanctions relief.

At least five Iranian nuclear scientists have been killed since 2007, with men on motorcycles sticking magnetically attachable bombs to their victims' cars. The head of the country's ballistic missile program was also killed, while in October Mojtaba Ahmadi, who served as commander of the Cyber War Headquarters, was found shot dead. No Israeli national has ever been arrested in collusion with the targeted assassination program, which is reportedly intended to thwart advances in Iran's nuclear program and dissuade Iran's best and brightest from working in the sphere.

The killing of Ahmadi was widely viewed as an attempt to derail nuclear negotiations between Tehran and the P5+1 – the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany.

Israel has never publically claimed responsibility for the attacks.

In 2012, however, an NBC News report concluded that "deadly attacks on Iranian nuclear scientists are being carried out by an Iranian dissident group that is financed, trained and armed by Israel's secret service."

The report cited two senior Obama administration officials as confirming that Mojahedin-e-Khalq (MEK) is behind the killings, though the officials denied the US played any role in the program.

Mohammad Javad Larijani, a senior aide to Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, told NBC that Mossad worked through the MEK because "Israel does not have direct access to

our society. [The MEK], being Iranian and being part of Iranian society, they have ... a good number of places... to get into touch with people.”

The MEK has denied colluding with Israel, though Israeli officials have confirmed links between MEK and Israeli intelligence.

Meanwhile, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani told defense officials on Saturday the country had given up its nuclear program because owning weapons of mass destruction is a sin.

“Even if there were no NPT (nuclear non-proliferation treaty) or other treaties, our belief, our faith, our religion and principles tell us not to seek weapons of mass destruction,” Rouhani said.

In November, Iran agreed to stop enriching uranium beyond 20 percent and to dilute its already enriched stockpiles in return for an estimated \$7 billion in sanctions relief. That deal came into effect January 20.

Following the latest round of Iran nuclear talks in Vienna on February 20, Iran and the P5+1 agreed to a framework on which to strike a final agreement within the coming months. Both sides have agreed to hold an additional round of talks in Vienna later this month.

#### John Kerry Gets Pressed To Grant Asylum To Former Terrorist Group Mojahedin Khalq

Christina Wilkie, huffington post, March 14 2014

WASHINGTON — In what has become an all-too-familiar sight on Capitol Hill, at least a half-dozen members of the exiled Iranian group Mujahedin-e Khalq, or MEK, arrived at Thursday’s hearing of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, all dressed in their trademark yellow shirts.

For most of the past 15 years, the group had been designated as a terrorist organization by the U.S. government. But in September 2012, as the U.S. prepared to pull troops out of Iraq, then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton revoked the terrorist designation, part of a diplomatic effort to persuade MEK leadership to begin moving their 3,000-plus members out of Iraq. Ever since the American pullout, the MEK has found itself under threat from Iraqis who vividly recall its decade-long alliance with Saddam Hussein.

MEK members attended Thursday's hearing to advance a bold proposition: that the thousands of their adherents still living in Iraq should be granted asylum and moved to the United States.

Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.) emerged Thursday as the most vocal proponent of this plan, which was also championed at the hearing by Reps. Ted Poe (R-Texas) and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.). Rohrabacher aimed his questions at the only witness testifying that day, Secretary of State John Kerry.

"I've introduced legislation, H.R. 3707, which would grant asylum to these people in Camp Ashraf, who are obviously in danger," Rohrabacher said. "Is the administration supporting this concept?"

Kerry sidestepped the question in his typically diplomatic way. "There's one solution to the problem [of the MEK], and that is that we need to relocate those folks," he said.

"Can't we relocate them here? Why not?" Rohrabacher shot back.

"That's one of the things we're looking at," Kerry replied.

Kerry went on to describe a new position he had created within the State Department, that of senior advisor for Mujahedin-e Khalq resettlement. In October of last year, he appointed Jonathan Winer, a longtime Kerry adviser and an expert in international law, to the position.

Rohrabacher's bill is co-sponsored by many of the same lawmakers who initially backed delisting the MEK from the terrorist roll. As of Thursday, there were 46 co-sponsors.

But administration officials privately suggest that Rohrabacher's bill, and any other efforts to grant asylum to the MEK in the United States, face nearly insurmountable odds.

"It's one thing to unfreeze their assets [by removing the terrorist designation], but asylum is a whole different ballgame," an administration official said, speaking on background to The Huffington Post. To illustrate how limited U.S. asylum policy is in practice, the official noted that out of the more than 135,000 applications received from individuals fleeing Syria's bloody civil war, only 31 were admitted in the last fiscal year.

"The policy concern with asylum is what kind of precedent that might set for the future. By those standards, the MEK isn't looking very good," said the official.

So far, Winer has managed to secure visas from the Albanian government for more than two dozen MEK members.

Other than that, however, it's been an uphill climb to convince other countries to accept MEK members, due to their cult-like characteristics and near-religious devotion to the Paris-based Maryam Rajavi and her husband, Massoud Rajavi. Under the Rajavis, MEK members have instituted forced celibacy, mandatory divorce and gender segregation,

according to a 2009 report from the nonpartisan Rand Corporation. The MEK is also still widely viewed as a militant organization with a “cultic focus on suicide,” wrote the Rand authors, despite the group’s having formally renounced violence in 2003.

But long odds don’t mean the MEK won’t keep trying to gain asylum in the United States. No longer restricted by the terrorist designation, they are now free to spend their millions of dollars — the source of which remains murky — without fear of Treasury Department scrutiny. In 2013, they opened a formal office in a high-rent building on Pennsylvania Avenue and set about expanding their already large cadre of prominent Washington lobbyists.

Around Washington, the MEK is known for having spent millions of dollars on a highly visible advocacy campaign to help secure their delisting as a terrorist organization. To plead their case, the group hired dozens of former administration officials turned government affairs consultants, including Andrew Card, onetime chief of staff to President George W. Bush, and James Jones, former national security advisor to President Barack Obama.

#### Iraq urges UN to speed up relocation of MKO terrorists

PressTV , Feb 21, 2014

Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari has called on the United Nation to speed up efforts to relocate the members of the terrorist Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO) to third countries.

During a meeting with Special Adviser of the UN Secretary-General for relocation of camp Hurriya (Liberty) occupants in Baghdad on Wednesday, Zebari stated that the UN needs to expedite the resettlement of the MKO terrorists outside Iraq, noting that the Iraqi government has fulfilled all its obligations in this respect.

He also emphasized Iraq’s support for all efforts aimed at relocating the MKO terrorists to outside the Arab country.

Zebari further noted that the Baghdad government has recently made a financial contribution of half a million dollars to a trust fund proposed by the UN chief to cover the costs related to the MKO relocation.

In a press release on December 27, 2013, the UN refugee agency said that UNHCR and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) had relocated 311 out of 3,200 residents of the Camp Hurriya (Liberty) to third countries.

In December 2011, the United Nations and Baghdad agreed to relocate some 3,000 MKO members from Camp New Iraq, formerly known as Camp Ashraf, to the former US-held Camp Hurriya.

The last group of the MKO terrorists was evicted by the Iraqi government in September 2013 and relocated to Camp Hurriya to await potential relocation to other countries.

The MKO is listed as a terrorist organization by much of the international community and has committed numerous terrorist acts against Iranians and Iraqis.

The group fled Iran in 1986 for Iraq, where it received now-executed Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's support and set up Camp Ashraf near the Iranian border.

Iran can demand extradition of MKO members: Iraqi min.

PressTV, March 3, 2014

Iraqi Minister of Justice Hassan al-Shammari says the Islamic Republic of Iran can demand the extradition of members of the terrorist Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO).

On Sunday, Shammari stated that under an agreement signed between Iran and Iraq on the swap of prisoners and criminals, Tehran can ask Baghdad to extradite MKO members. He further noted that Iraq will hand the terrorists over to Iran should the Islamic Republic ask for their extradition.

On February 19, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari called on the United Nations (UN) to speed up efforts to relocate MKO members.

Zebari further noted that the Baghdad government has recently made a financial contribution of half a million dollars to a trust fund proposed by the UN chief to cover the costs related to the MKO relocation.

In a press release on December 27, 2013, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said that the agency and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) had relocated 311 out of 3,200 residents of the Camp Hurriya (Liberty) to third countries.

In December 2011, the UN and Baghdad agreed to relocate some 3,000 MKO members from Camp New Iraq, formerly known as Camp Ashraf, to the former US-held Camp Hurriya.

The last group of the MKO terrorists was evicted by the Iraqi government in September 2013 and relocated to Camp Hurriya to await potential relocation to other countries.

The MKO is listed as a terrorist organization by much of the international community and has committed numerous terrorist acts against Iranians and Iraqis.

The group fled Iran in 1986 for Iraq, where it received now-executed Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's support and set up Camp Ashraf near the Iranian border.

#### Mojahedin Khalq threatens French group protesting their presence in France

Ramin Mazaheri, Press TV, Paris, March 13, 2014

A French group which warns against violent cults recently faced the dangers of the Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization, an anti-Iranian terrorist group whose leadership is based just outside of Paris. Association PEACE bravely held a demonstration in the MKO's hometown, and was quickly confronted by the routine violence of their members.

Association PEACE studies cults and warns people to prevent further indoctrinations and more ruined lives. Considering that the MKO is composed of Iranian citizens who fought alongside Iraq in the Iran-Iraq War, many are painfully aware of their violent history. But Association PEACE says many French people are kept in the dark. Despite the mass graves recently uncovered at the MKO's Camp Ashraf in Iraq, their massacre of Iraqi Kurds for Saddam Hussein and the assassination of Iranian citizens and leaders, the MKO still has friends in high places. Those friends do not include any Iranian citizens, but they do include France's political elite.

#### Fact Corner

The anti-Iran terrorist group the M-K-O has tried for years to whitewash its bloody and treacherous past, and they have even been removed from the terrorist list of the European Union and the United States. But when they were confronted with a demonstration against their presence in France, members of the group resorted to their usual violent tactics.



## Manufacturing a Narrative for War – Gareth Porter on Reality Asserts Itself (2/3)

The Real News, March 18 2014

Mr. Porter tells Paul Jay about his new book “Manufactured Crisis: The Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare”

Bio

Gareth Porter is a historian and investigative journalist on US foreign and military policy analyst. He writes regularly for Inter Press Service on US policy towards Iraq and Iran. Author of five books, the latest of which is Manufactured Crisis: The Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare.

Transcript

PAUL JAY, SENIOR EDITOR, TRNN: Welcome back to The Real News Network. I’m Paul Jay in Baltimore. And this is Reality Asserts Itself with our guest, Gareth Porter, who joins us in the studio.

Thanks for joining us, Gareth.

GARETH PORTER, INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST: Thanks again.

JAY: So, one more time, Gareth is a historian, an investigative journalist. He covers U.S. and foreign and military policy. His most recent book is Manufactured Crisis: The Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare.

So, in the first part we talked a bit about Gareth’s background, but we got up to the point where it was clearly the policy of the American neocons, of Israel—and I think we now know the Saudis were very much on board—from the late 1990s, at least, if not before, regime change in Iran was the big foreign policy objective. We talked about the Project for the New American Century, which kind of laid this all out fairly clearly, a document created by neocons towards the end of the Clinton administration. As the weapons of mass destruction narrative helped Bush and Cheney invade Iraq, they needed a narrative for an attack eventually on Iran. And that begins what Gareth picks up in his new book.

So thanks, Gareth.

So they needed to manufacture a whole narrative that would justify war. So how do they go about doing that?

PORTER: They went about doing it first of all by establishing John Bolton, who was the primary policymaker on WMD for the Bush administration, was—.

JAY: Who helped manufacture the whole Iraq narrative.

PORTER: He was the person who was coordinating this on the American side with Israel, working very closely with them, clearly. And his first move was to make sure that the IAEA

would not be able to allow Iran to get by without being accused of having a nuclear weapons program, and he didn't believe that would be possible unless some special moves were made.

JAY: Okay. Just a little bit of context. In 1968, under the Shah, Iran signs the NPA, the non-proliferation agreement, and agrees not to proliferate nuclear weapons technology and not to build weapons. Just for a little piece of context, it's around—not that much later than that, but certainly Israel does not sign the agreement and, as we now all know, has many nuclear weapons—I think, what, it's at least 200, if not more. So does India and Pakistan develop nuclear technology. Pakistan, and probably India, but certainly Pakistan directly with American assistance developed nuclear technology, do not sign the NPA. And I'll repeat it again, but we're going to pick up the story now: not any real evidence that Iran has ever violated the NPA, even though people keep suggesting they are.

Alright. Pick it up.

PORTER: So what Bolton was concerned about was that the IAEA's handling of the Iran file was too easy on Iran. He was demanding actual evidence, actual proof that Iran had a covert nuclear weapons program. And, in fact, in 2003, the IAEA published a report, in November '03, that said, you know, Iran had not reported all of its experiments using nuclear material during the previous years, but that it did not have any evidence that Iran had in fact done this in order to carry out a nuclear weapons program. There was no evidence of that.

So the Bush administration people were apoplectic about that, and particularly John Bolton. And so he was determined to move that file out of the IAEA into the UN Security Council. He talks about this in his memoirs, that he would make sure that Mohamed ElBaradei, the director-general of the IAEA at that point, would not be able to frustrate the strategy that they had in mind, which was to build a case that Iran was in fact a would-be nuclear power, to use that as a basis for, as you have pointed out, the military option against Iran, which it was understood in the inner core of the Bush administration that they might have to use military force as Iran got closer and closer to what they said was a bomb. And that, of course, was the Israeli position as well at that point. So that was the initial phase of this.

And around the same time, the Israelis then had a brilliant idea, which was that in the absence of any proof that they could come forward with to show that Iran was, you know, trying to get nuclear weapons, they would create a file of documents, a cache of documents, which would be attributed to a covert nuclear weapons program on the part of

the Iranians. They would give it to the Mojahedin-e-Khalq, the terrorist organization, so-called—not just so-called, but listed as a terrorist organization, with good reasons, by the State Department and other European countries. And then that would be passed on to Western intelligence, ultimately to be used to make the public case by the United States [crosstalk]

JAY: How do we know that the documents the MEK handed over came from Israel?

PORTER: Well, that's what I'm getting to, because that's the major revelation in my book. I learned this from a former senior foreign office official in Germany named Karsten Voigt. He was in charge of coordination of German-U.S. relations and had been since 1997, until he retired in 2010. He was the only person who had held that position all that time. And I interviewed him in March 2013. (7:01) He told me that in November 2004, after Colin Powell had made a public statement basically invoking this information from these documents without mentioning them specifically, and talked about Iran trying to mate a missile with a weapon, the BND, the German intelligence service, got in touch with him, and they were quite alarmed about this, because, they said, we know all about these documents; they came from one of our sources, who was somebody that we didn't really trust; we knew he was a Mojahedin-e-Khalq member. (7:46) And therefore they did not think that this source was trustworthy. And so now they find Colin Powell invoking this information, looking like he was trying to build a case for war against Iran.

And, of course, only two years earlier the same thing had happened on Iraq. The BND had a source, now known as Curveball, who had made up these stories about mobile bioweapons labs that Colin Powell had then used in the UN speech. So they were afraid that the Bush administration was going to do the same thing on Iran that it'd done on Iraq. And so they were alarmed. And they were going to him because he was the U.S. guy in the foreign office. They told him about this, and he understood from this that they wanted him to do something to warn the Americans.

JAY: What year are we in?

PORTER: November 2004. So a few days after that meeting with the BND people, senior members of the BND, this guy, Carson Voigt, went to The Wall Street Journal and told them—he was quoted as saying, in The Wall Street Journal, the United States and Europe should not make their policy on the basis of these documents; they were brought in by a dissident group, an Iranian dissident group. That's all that—that's the way it was printed in The Wall Street Journal. So he was doing his part to try to warn the Americans.

But, of course, we know that the BND had warned the CIA, George Tenet, two years earlier about Curveball and he didn't do anything about it. So it's clear that the CIA knew

about this as well, they knew this came from the MEK, and they weren't going to do anything about it either.

JAY: What is the attitude towards all this of the American intelligence agencies? 'Cause it's not too much later, in 2007, their national security estimates come out and clearly say there is no weapons program. There may have been something before '73, which the Iranians, I believe, deny, but the American intelligence agencies concluded that there was something pre-'73.

PORTER: Two thousand three, yes.

JAY: Yeah.

PORTER: Two thousand three.

JAY: I'm sorry. But nothing now. So they seem to have discounted this material.

PORTER: Well, here's what actually happened. I mean, I've gotten the full story about that 2007 national intelligence estimate from Thomas Fingar, who was in charge of it and who I interviewed last year when he was in the U.K.—I happened to be there as well at the same time. And Fingar told me that, in fact, although the people doing the estimate were committed to members of Congress, senior people in Congress, who they promised this estimate to, they said they were going to reevaluate Iran's nuclear intentions, and very thoroughly. They weren't going to depend on previous estimates. They weren't going to even pay any attention to previous assessments. They were going to start afresh and evaluate on the basis of whatever information they could find, carefully evaluate and analyze the intentions of Iran. They didn't do it. He said, six months after they had started, when they did a first draft, they had essentially reaffirmed the previous judgments of the intelligence community, which had said Iran does have, in fact, a nuclear weapons program. They did in 2001. Two thousand five, again they reaffirmed that there was an Iranian nuclear weapons program. So they didn't do what they had set out to do.

JAY: Which is telling Bush–Cheney what they wanted to hear.

PORTER: Well, in a sense I think they had become captive to this narrative that they had internalized in the intelligence community.

But there's another factor here, which relates precisely to the previous theme that we'd been talking about, and that is that I ask specifically to Fingar: what about the laptop documents, this set of documents which had been used to show that Iran had a secret nuclear weapons program? He said, well, yes, I mean, this was a very significant part of our thinking, because before those documents, there had been some ambiguity about the Iranian nuclear intentions with those documents that was clearer. So they obviously took

them seriously. They believe they're authentic. And they were relying on them in large part in making their judgments.

So this is an NIE that is seriously flawed. It's based on false information. It's based on false analysis of [crosstalk]

JAY: This is '07?

PORTER: The '07.

JAY: Well, when does the estimate come—when is the estimate when they say there is no weapons program?

PORTER: Well, they were saying that there was a weapons program in 2003, 2001 to 2003, in this 2007 estimate. But then they said they found—and this is what changed things—they found information—they obviously cracked somebody's computer, although they're not—they never said that. They cracked some computers in Tehran, and they were able to get a rather angry statement by somebody who had been involved in doing research related to nuclear weapons, saying, we've been shut down, I can't do this anymore, and they were upset about it. And so that, apparently, was the basis for the people doing the NIE to say, we can now confirm that there was a nuclear weapons program from 2001 to 2003.

But that's not the whole story. And what I show in my book is that the evidence that there was an actual nuclear weapons program, rather than independent work by a few people or, you know, possibly, you know, one or two people doing experiments or whatever, we don't know what they did. I couldn't find out from him, you know, what kind of evidence—I don't think they knew anything about what was actually done. So the evidence of an actual nuclear program, even 2001 to 2003, is extremely weak.

JAY: Okay. But let's—whether there was or wasn't, the '07 intelligence estimate concludes that there isn't now.

PORTER: There was not then, that there was not then. That's precisely right.

JAY: Yeah, which took a lot of the wind out of the Cheney–Bush sails heading towards war with Iran.

PORTER: But until they found that evidence, they were still saying that there is a nuclear weapons program today. As of mid 2007, they were still saying it on that first draft. But they changed it after they got the new evidence.

JAY: But coming out and saying that was—flew in the face—

PORTER: That's right.

JAY: —of the whole official narrative and everything Bush and Cheney wanted.

PORTER: My point is that they came very close—

JAY: I get it.

PORTER: —to reaffirming that there was still a nuclear weapons program in mid 2007.

JAY: Based on this MEK stuff.

PORTER: Right. Right.

JAY: But then they must discount the MEK stuff, then.

PORTER: But they didn't. They didn't discount it.

JAY: No, but when they finally come out—

PORTER: No, they didn't discount it, they still didn't discount it, because it was about 2001 to 2003.

JAY: Oh, the MEK stuff was about the earlier period.

PORTER: Yes.

JAY: At any rate, the NIE does come out in '07, and it certainly takes the steam away from what—if Cheney was heading towards war with Iran, which a lot of people think that's what he wanted. And in the next part of our interview, I guess, we will get into all this, because it seemed pretty clear they wanted this war and didn't get it. And my question will be: why? And that's what we're going to pick up on the next segment of our series of interviews on Reality Asserts Itself on The Real News Network.