

## Shultzies Want Iranian Group Off Terror List

by William Jones

With the drumbeat building for a U.S. destabilization of Iran, but with invasion of Iran deemed a highly risky venture, the Washington friends of George Shultz are pushing to drop an anti-Tehran terrorist organization, the Mujahedin e-Khalq (MEK), from the State Department's list of foreign terrorist organizations, in order to utilize them to overthrow the Iranian regime. On Feb. 10, representatives from a gaggle of neo-conservative organizations announced the formation of the Iran Policy Committee (IPC). The committee encompasses people from Shultz's newly revived Committee on the Present Danger, Frank Gaffney's Center for Security Policy, the International Republican Institute, and the Nuclear Control Institute, most of whom have served as officials at the Pentagon, State Department, or intelligence agencies.

Their purpose seems to be to build political support for a more forceful policy toward Iran, including possible military operations. But their "best-case scenario" is to promote regime change by popular revolt. If this sounds like Richard Perle's "Iraq cakewalk" all over again, it's because it is. As a matter of fact, Perle was a speaker at one of the events organized by an MEK front group on Jan. 24 at the Washington Convention Center. When it was exposed in the *Washington Post* that the organizers of the event, allegedly a fundraiser for the survivors of the Bam earthquake, were connected to the MEK, Perle claimed ignorance. The event was not shut down by U.S. authorities, although this option was considered, and FBI and Treasury agents did attend in order to keep an eye on it.

### The MEK, Terrorism, and the Neo-Cons

The MEK has had quite a long history of involvement in terrorism. Founded in the 1960s in Iran as a Marxist-Leninist organization, it was expelled with the fall of the Shah in 1979. In the early 1980s, it was involved in bombings and assassinations against Iranian officials, including President Mohammed-Ali Rajaei, Prime Minister Mohammad-Javad Bahonar, and Justice Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti. During the Iran-Iraq War, the MEK was operating out of Iraq as a tool of Saddam Hussein against Iran, and assisted him in suppressing the Kurdish and Shi'ite uprisings in 1991. In 1992, the group conducted attacks against Iranian embassies in 13 countries. In April 1999, it targeted military officials and assassinated

the deputy chief of the Armed Forces General Staff.

The MEK has been on the State Department's terrorist list since 1997, although a key appendage of the group, the National Council of Resistance in Iran (NCRI), had been operating quite openly in Washington for years, and has made a name for itself in "exposing" hidden Iranian nuclear facilities. Finally, in August 2003, the State Department added the NCRI to the terrorist list.

And yet, after George W. Bush decided to move into Iraq, there was some ambiguity with regard to the MEK cells active there. Bush ordered that their camps in Iraq be disbanded and their people arrested, but over time, and with a growing interest in military planning for operations against Iran, there has developed a symbiosis between the MEK and U.S. special forces in Iraq, operating on the Iranian border. The idea is to use the MEK as a "fifth column" in the destabilization of Iran, which seems to be in hot competition with Syria as the next target of Washington's neo-conservatives.

There has also been a steady stream of rumors in the region that U.S. special forces are preparing contingency plans for operations against Iran, and are grooming and probably training MEK operatives in Iraq for that purpose. There are credible stories surfacing that MEK is already being used in cross-border and reconnaissance operations, of the type reported by Seymour Hersh recently in *New Yorker* magazine. One of the members of the Iran Policy Committee, Maj. Gen. Paul Vallely, who is also chairman of the Military Committee of Frank Gaffney's Center for Security Policy, indirectly corroborated what Hersh had been saying, by noting in regard to a possible air strike on an Iranian nuclear facility or facilities, that "the targeting has already been done."

### Goal Is 'Regime Change'

Such operations would have the same chance of success of upsetting the Iranian regime as did Ahmed Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress of overthrowing Saddam Hussein—unless the U.S. military is thrown into the picture. Although an invasion of Iran is not the preferred Iran Policy Committee alternative, there are a variety of economic and political measures, as well as covert and special operations, including a blockade of Iranian ships through the Gulf of Hormuz, which might be implemented, in concert with political instability, which the IPC hopes would bring down the Iranian regime.

While the IPC, like the Bush Administration, focusses on the alleged "nuclear threat" posed by Iran, the real purpose of the operation is "regime change." Paul Leventhal, the president of the Nuclear Control Institute and one of the spokesmen for the new committee, admitted this, when *EIR* pointed out that nuclear energy, including development of the full fuel cycle, is supported by the overwhelming majority of the population, even those who are opposed to the mullahs. If it were a "democratic Iran" that had nuclear weapons, Leventhal replied, it would not necessarily be such a threat, but in the hands of the mullahs, this was unacceptable.