

State Department Documents Expose Iranian Terror Group

by **Kenneth R. Timmerman** (June 2011)

An Iranian group that has attracted high-level support from former White House and senior national security officials, was dealt a body blow last week in its effort get off the terrorism list, when the State Department released a series of documents the group had sought under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

According to the documents the group, known as the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK, or MKO), supported the takeover of the U.S. embassy in Tehran in November 1979 – not a position to endear itself to U.S. diplomats – before its “gradual elimination from the ruling coalition” by Ayatollah Khomeini less than two years later.

The new documents describe the MEK terror campaign against the Islamic regime during the 1980s and 1990s, and the group’s alliance with Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

According to hundreds of Iranians interviewed by State Department “Iran watchers” in Dubai, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Germany, the ties to Saddam were the most damning.

“Ordinary Iranians were almost uniformly dismissive of the MEK, reacting with either disdain or apathy,” [one cable states](#).

Some of the MEK escapees said they had been “lured from Iran with promises of study abroad opportunities” or “by offers of travel abroad.” Others were Iranian POWs captured by the Iraqis during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war who were sent to Camp Ashraf with a promise they would soon be repatriated to Iran or resettled in a third country.

The defectors “reaffirmed existing perceptions of the MEK as a cult-like organization that thrives on maintaining control of its members and those lured to Ashraf under false pretenses,” the cable states.

Allan Gerson, a Washington, DC attorney representing the group in its efforts to get removed from the State Department’s list of international terrorist organizations, dismissed the new documents as “much ado about nothing” when he released them at a lavish Capitol Hill reception last Wednesday.

“The question is why, when every single Camp Ashraf residents were taken outside [sic], and interviewed by the U.S. military in American controlled facilities in 2003 and 2004, and each were given the choice to leave, none of those individuals had done so?” Gerson asked.

But the State Department cable that recounts the stories of the MEK escapees, flatly contradicts Gerson’s assertion.

“The defectors confirmed that this was their first encounter with any foreign mission and welcomed future visits,” the cable states. “The defectors were all unified in their desire to leave Iraq... Many accurately pointed out that their failed resettlement has offered little incentive for other residents to leave Ashraf, fearing similar hopelessness and 'purgatory' in Iraqi hotels.”

The undated cable, signed “Hill,” appears to have been written in 2009 or 2010, when Christopher Hill was the U.S. ambassador to Baghdad.

Already in 1994, the State Department sent a