



IRAN TODAY & TOMORROW

WEEKLY NEWS BULLETIN

The Committee in Support of Referendum in Iran (CSRI), a 501(c)(3), non-profit and independent group, is committed to advance change in Iran through an internationally monitored referendum as the only peaceful means to bring democracy and establish a secular and representative government in Iran.

MAY 21, 2004

No. 105

Terrorism

Khamenei's mouthpiece: Eliminate US, Britain in Iraq

Jomhuri Islami daily, May 15 – Isn't it time to declare *jihad* (holy war) on the occupiers?... Essentially, Bush and Blair have no clue about humanity to be able to think about the oppressed Iraqi nation... The religious order for occupying an Islamic territory is clear and the Muslims' duty vis-à-vis the occupiers is determined. That is why the *ulema* (scholars) of Islam, including Shiite and Sunni, have sanctioned suicide operations for fighting against the Zionists and consider dying in this path as martyrdom.

The same situation exists in Iraq. Those who stand up against the occupiers are holy fighters in God's path and their death is martyrdom... In these circumstances, shouldn't one befriend and support those who sacrifice their lives to combat the aggressive occupiers who are torturers!... If you think that one must not provoke the US, this is a false notion... It is at this very juncture that the Satan's horns must be broken. Shiites and even all the Muslims are ready to implement the religious authorities' orders. Undeniably, their power can eliminate the US and Britain in Iraq as they are unable to counter this power. It is time to take action and if there are shortcomings in this phase, everyone will be regretful.



Darkness in Iran-Kuwait relations

Al-Hayat daily, May 14 – Sheikh Mohammad Salem As-Sabah, Kuwait's foreign minister, said that after the fall of Saddam Hossein, Iran's government is a strategic threat for the Persian Gulf countries... Sheikh Mohammad Salem As-Sabah said Iran's government is a military threat for the entire region that has the serpent of terrorism up its sleeve. Kuwait's foreign minister said the Iranian ambassador in Kuwait has crossed the red line of normal relations between Kuwait and Iran. Kuwaitis have the right to be sensitive on the Iranian embassy's measure in Kuwait because they fear that Iraq's unrest, particularly what Muqtada Sadr and his supporters are doing in Iraq, will expand in to Kuwait.



Tehran's Hidden Hand - Iran's mounting threats in Iraq

National Review Online, May 10, by Jonathan Schanzer - In February 2004, during a Washington Institute fact-finding mission to Iraq, one Coalition official reported that Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) offices were spotted in the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala. Moreover, officials noted an immense amount of Hezbollah activity in the city of Karbala... The group now receives financing, training and weapons from Iran, and has a rapidly growing presence in the Shi'a south....When the U.S. struck the Ansar al-Islam enclave in March 2003, Iran permitted many Kurdish fighters to flee across the border. They were later assisted back over the border — with the help of Iran's Revolutionary Guards — so that they could fight against American soldiers in the heart of Iraq. Kurdish intelligence has since intercepted between three and ten foreign fighters crossing Iranian border each week.

- Jonathan Schanzer recently took part in a 12-day fact-finding mission to Iraq, sponsored by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.



Iran actively supports terrorism

VOA News, editorials, May 7 - Iran is the world's "most active state sponsor of terrorism." In its latest "Patterns of Global Terrorism" report, the U.S. State Department says that in 2003, Iran's "Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Ministry of Intelligence and Security were involved in the planning of and support for terrorist acts." The report says Iran backs terrorist groups that target Israel and harbors senior members of al-Qaida. Cofer Black, the U.S. Coordinator for Counterterrorism, says that the Iranian government's many security agencies do much more than collect information: "They have developed relationships with terrorists and terrorist groups to be in a position to command and control terrorist actions in response to national command authority."

Ambassador Black says the U.S. takes Iranian support for terrorism seriously: "These guys are very dangerous. They operate globally. They have killed people. They take actions that directly impact innocent men, women, and children."

Link between Tehran nukes and Iraq

Al-Ahram weekly, May 5 - At the outset, resistance against the US-led occupation seems a purely Iraqi concern, just as the nuclear question seems purely an Iranian concern. But the two issues are intrinsically linked. The Iraqi resistance and its toll on US occupation forces have been growing in tandem with international pressure on Iran over its alleged possession and production of weapons of mass destruction....In Iraq, the Mahdi Army's actions are serving Iranian interests, at least in the short term, by diverting attention away from the Iranian nuclear issue. Seen against this background, one can understand in part why, in his Friday sermon two weeks ago, Hashemi Rafsanjani described the movement as "heroic". Rafsanjani's pronouncement came only a few days after IAEA Director Mohamed El-Baradei declared that, "the patience of the international community towards the Iranian nuclear programme is nearing an end."



Iran's stirrings

Middle East Media Research Institute, May 4 - With the downfall of its nemesis Saddam Hussein, Iran can now pursue two principal objectives in Iraq: the first is to stir up problems for the Americans to keep them pinned down and divert their attention from its nuclear program. The second is to assert its influence over the Hawza, or the Shi'a religious centers in the two holy cities of Najaf and Karbala, and to prevent the emergence in these cities of an independent religious and spiritual leadership with the Iranian city of Qum... In Iraq's eastern and southern fronts, both Iranian intelligence agents and Iranian-sponsored terrorists have been able to enter Iraq at will... Operating in a friendly milieu in southern Iraq, which is inhabited predominantly by Shi'a Muslims, Iranian intelligence officers have used a combination of incentives and coercion to widen the base of collaborators. The Iraqi daily Al-Nahdha estimates the number of Iranian agents operating in Iraq at 14,000... Pilgrims are also known to have brought to Iraq hundreds of remote controls devices capable of activating explosives.

Nimrod Raphaeli is a Senior Analyst at MEMRI.



Neighbor and intentions

Al-Nehdha daily (Iraq), May 4 - (Weapon suppliers want) to turn Iraq into a land of unrest to occupy everyone so they would not pay attention to what is going on in neighboring countries and governments regarding the establishment of democracy in Iraq and its expansion

into their own country...

At least hundreds of Iranian security, military, Revolutionary Guard and intelligence elements enter Iraqi soil and bring various types of weapons and ammunition including ground to air and ground to ground missiles, explosive devices, and remote control explosives as if they are bringing in sewing needles...

Giving medals to the intelligence officers that have successfully executed their plans in Iraq and announcing it in the press will put us in a position to keep an eye on our neighbor - the eye of one who is enraged.

Mullahs' nuclear deception

UN nuclear head says not ready to clear Iran



Reuters, May 14, New York - The United Nation's nuclear watchdog is not ready to clear Iran over whether or not its nuclear program is weaponized, the head of the agency said on Friday. "We will close the file when we have dealt with all the issues that require to be investigated," said ElBaradei, whose board of governors will meet in June on Iran's nuclear activities... "It will come to an end when it comes to an end -- when I am satisfied based on the technical advice I get that 'yes' now we can bring that issue to a close and 'yes' we can say that Iran's program is dedicated exclusively for peaceful purposes and we are not there yet," ElBaradei said.

Iran may have tried to make bomb-grade uranium

AFP, May 14, Vienna - UN atomic energy inspectors see a pattern of radiation contamination in Iran which could indicate attempts to enrich uranium to bomb-grade level, diplomats close to the agency said as it waits for a report from Iran on its nuclear program...Reflecting the current thinking of investigators, one diplomat said that if the Iranians "weren't working on something that hasn't been declared, the contamination should be evenly spread throughout Iran's nuclear installations."

Radioactive dust spreads in a uniform pattern but particles of highly enriched uranium have been found in specific sites, hinting that "someone brought material or equipment and then removed it." IAEA inspectors have reported two such concentrations -- at a Kalaye Electric Company workshop in Tehran and at the Natanz pilot fuel enrichment plant 250 kilometres (150 miles) south of the Iranian capital.

Not unreasonable Iran could develop nuclear weapons - Blix

The Associated Press, May 13, Stockholm - Former chief U.N. weapons inspector Hans Blix said Thursday that it wasn't unreasonable to think that Iran could develop a nuclear weapon within two years. The former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, made the assessment in an interview Thursday with Swedish public radio, which had cited an anonymous official in Iran as saying that secret experiments were being conducted in underground laboratories in the country.

The man, interviewed by phone from Iran, suggested the experiments were linked to advanced centrifuges Iran had developed to enrich uranium - the process that can be used either to develop nuclear fuel or warheads. Blix said if that is the case, he wasn't surprised. "It does not sound completely unreasonable... Any information that any country is building a plant for enriching uranium raises questions about the intention," Blix said.

Protest and demonstrations

Shahin Shahr residents clash with SSF

Iran National TV, May 15 - In a large act of protest, the people and youth of Shahin Shahr clashed with the State Security Forces. At 10:30 pm Thursday night, government agents began harassing two women on charges of mal-veiling and arrested them. The measure faced protest and resistance by the women, people and youth in the area.

Fearing the spread of protests, the agents requested reinforcement. When the additional forces arrived, people clashed with them. People broke the windows of the government buses and vehicles during these clashes, which continued until 12 midnight.

"Irrepressible" in fight for democracy

The New York Times, May 15, By Nicholas D. Kristof, Op-Ed Columnist - I had just about convinced myself that Iran is not a police state — and then the authorities detained me for a second time. The first time was in Isfahan, for committing journalism... The second time was at Tehran's airport as I was trying to leave... After hinting for 90 minutes that I was a spy and a liar, and that they might hold on to me indefinitely, the interrogators finally let me board my plane... That episode crystallized an impression that had been forming during my trip through Iran: ... It cracks down episodically, tossing dissidents in prison and occasionally even murdering them (like a Canadian-Iranian journalist last year).... In one country after another (including Iran in 1979), repressive governments have tried to buy time by easing up a tad, and dissidents have used that as leverage to oust the oppressors. I'm convinced that Iran will be the same....

Young people constantly told me how they scolded their parents for backing the Islamic Revolution in 1979. As a young woman, Sogand Tayebi, put it, "Those who backed the revolution are now sorry about that." In the end, I find Iran a hopeful place. Ordinary people are proving themselves irrepressible, and they will triumph someday and forge a glistening example of a Muslim country that is a democracy in the Middle East.

Bam, Iran: Gone and nearly forgotten?

Voice of America, May 7 - Last December, a powerful earthquake hit the ancient Iranian city of Bam... Bam is no longer in the headlines, but the suffering of the survivors continues. The city has not been rebuilt, and not all the aid that was promised has materialized. Life is tough for the 100,000 people made homeless by the earthquake that struck Bam last December...BAM RESIDENT: "I don't know what we should do. By God, we're stuck. No one heeds our cries. No one..." Many people complain about the Iranian bureaucracy. This man said he had to get six signatures from local officials just to get a tent. BAM RESIDENT: "We run around a lot from this office to that. Go to this person, get approval, go to that person, get a signature."

Human right violations

Continuing unrest in Iraq reduces pressure on Tehran

Sharq daily, May 13 – If the development of nuclear programs during the past year has imposed a great deal of pressure on Iran, the United States' war in Iraq has proved to be a suitable outlet for lessening the pressures on Tehran. An outlet the capacity of which was apparently undisclosed for those in charge of Iran's foreign policy, even until the past few months. With the start of clashes in Najaf and Karbala and subsequent unrest in most Shiite neighborhoods, affecting the disintegrated body of Iraq, the Islamic Republic's diplomats saw it an appropriate atmosphere to show Tehran's potential to control the situation to the Coalition forces, headed by the United States and Britain, by utilizing Iran's traditional influence among Iraqi Shiites and with the relatively precise knowledge of the country... Although Iran's envoys held no important meetings with Iraq's religious authorities, other meetings were held during the trip that fulfilled Iran's main goal of directing the situation by influencing Iraq.



Dissident graveyard

National Review Online, May 4, by Nir Boms & Erick Stakelbeck - Khatami's "vision": "I never said that we have no political prisoners. We have them, and that is incontestable. They have been jailed for what they believe in." With this admission, made during an April 27 event marking Iran's "National Youth Day," Iranian President Mohammed Khatami merely acknowledged what the rest of the world has known for the past 25 years: The Islamic Republic is a graveyard for political dissidents... The most publicized incidence of Iranian barbarity was carried out with the help of another torture-friendly Middle Eastern dictatorship: Syria. In April 2003, Jamil Bassam and Abraham Khodabandeh, two Iranian political refugees and democracy activists

who had lived in Britain for over 30 years, were visiting family in Syria when they were arrested at their Damascus hotel. After two months of solitary confinement in a Syrian prison, the two men were flown — in violation of international law — to Tehran on a Syrian jet and into the waiting arms of Iranian authorities. Bassam and Khodabandeh are currently being held in Ward 102 of Evin Prison, where they are reportedly being tortured severely while awaiting trial on unspecified charges...Two weeks ago, protests were held by Iranian activists in Washington, D.C., London, Stockholm, Oslo, Rome, Frankfurt, Berlin, and the Hague to condemn the two men's handover by Syrian authorities and the lack of a response from the British government on the matter thus far. Further demonstrations were held on April 25, when, in a rare show of civil disobedience, 300 people gathered in front of the United Nations offices in Tehran to demand the immediate release of all Iranian political prisoners....

The U.S. regularly condemns Iran's human-rights record but has done little to encourage the country's democracy movements. As for the European Union, it recently chose not to table a United Nations resolution censuring flagrant Iranian human-rights violations.

- *Nir Boms is a fellow at the Council for Democracy and Tolerance and the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies. Erick Stakelbeck is senior writer for the Investigative Project, a Washington, D.C.-based counterterrorism research institute.*

US commission slams Iran for abuses of religious freedom

AFP, May 12, Washington - A semi-official US religious freedom watchdog on Wednesday heavily criticized Saudi Arabia, Iran and Egypt for discrimination....

Iran has been designated a "country of particular concern" for abuses of religious freedom since 1999, and the panel once again recommended that it be identified as such.

"The government of Iran engages in systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom, including prolonged detention, torture, and executions based primarily or entirely upon the religion of the accused," the commission said.

In particular, it noted continued persecution by the Islamic republic's conservative Shiite religious leadership of the members of the Baha'i faith as well as discrimination against Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians in addition to minority Sunni and Sufi Muslims.

Political prisoner testifies on 1988 massacre

Iran va Jahan, May 11 - Testimony by Mr. Hossein Mokhtar, a survivor of the 1988 massacre in Iran: I am one of some 900 survivors of the massacres of almost 30,000 helpless political prisoners who were executed by the Islamic regime. Most of these victims were killed in less than 10 days in July and August of 1988. These killings were done by shooting, hanging or even by grenade and TNT explosives. The executions were carried out in the hills surrounding Evin... It is interesting to know that those who are running the government today are the same people in charge of that massacre...Khatami, Rafsanjani and Khamenei were among the masterminds of the massacre and should be brought to justice as Iranian people are going to eventually do that...Many political prisoners still linger inside prisons of the Islamic regime. Some have been killed by the regime's secret agents, and made it look like a car or other types of accidents.

