

Former top US government officials urge President Obama to stand with the Iranian people, unshackle Iran's main opposition at ExecutiveAction conference

WASHINGTON--(BUSINESS WIRE), 22February 2011--In a conference in Washington, DC, Saturday, a number of former top officials of the current as well as Clinton and Bush administrations, expressed solidarity with the people of Iran and urged the Obama Administration to adopt a proactive policy in support of millions of Iranians who are demanding change in Iran.

Echoing the recent remarks by Secretary Clinton on 14 February



Former US Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Hugh Shelton

2011 that the Obama Administration "very clearly and directly supports the aspirations of the people who are in the streets," the speakers offered the third option, namely, reaching out to the Iranian people and the organized opposition, and lifting the terrorist designation of the principal Iranian opposition movement, the Mujahedin-e Khalq (PMOI/MEK). Lee Hamilton, former Chair, House Foreign Affairs Committee; Bill Richardson, Governor of New Mexico (2003-2011); Gen. Michael Hayden, Director of NSA (1999-2005), Director of CIA (2006-2009); Michael Mukasey, Attorney General of the United States (2007-2009); Walter Slocumbe, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy (1994-2001); Amb. Dell Dailey, Coordinator for Counterterrorism, State Department (2007-2009); Gen. Peter Pace, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (2005-2007); and Gen. Hugh Shelton, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (1997-2001), were among the speakers.

Former New Jersey Senator Robert Torricelli moderated the event, entitled, "Middle East in Transition: Prospects for Iran?" and organized by the ExecutiveAction, LLC. "A rising tide of human expectation and thirst for freedom is now approaching the shores of Iran. What once seemed impossible somehow begins to look inevitable, said Senator Torricelli in his opening remarks, adding, "It is at a minimum to correct a great injustice. We all understand the truth. The MeK was placed on a terrorist list as a strategy of appeasement towards Teheran. It failed and it is time to end it." Referring to the Iranian opposition, Amb. Dailey said, "The **PMOI** [MEK] and the Iranian opposition are the best instruments of power to get inside the Iran of mullahs and unseat them... The people of Iran with a recent history of throwing off their rulers can respond. We should capitalize on this. The use of the Iran opposition through the **PMOI** is a powerful counterbalance to Iran."

In part of his remarks, Governor Richardson noted, "I sense this momentum with what's happening in the Middle East, what's happening in Iran, the repressive nature of the regime responding to the protesters. First, is the delisting [of the MEK] and we should do something about [the protection] of Camp Ashraf. This is a movement that doesn't want any money. This is a movement that doesn't want weapons. This is a movement that just wants to be allowed to roam, to do your democratic thing."

Judge Mukasey emphasized that "We need to overcome our own hypocrisy inherent in our policy regarding the Iranian opposition. The State Department maintains the MeK on the list of terrorist organizations. That has the effect of pushing Iran's largest and most organized opposition group which is feared by the ruling mullahs out of the political debate."

"I believe the best chance for the United States to move forward in its relationship with Iran is to

support the opposition in Iran. We must insist, of course, that the Iraqi government live up to its commitment to protect those who live in Ashraf," Mr. Hamilton underscored. Pointing to the MEK's terrorist designation, he added, "I do not understand why the United States has kept the MeK on the terrorist list for all of these years. I have had access to classified information... but I am not aware of any facts that require the MeK to be on the terrorist list." In part of his remarks, General Shelton said, "by placing the MeK on the FTO list we have weakened the support of the best organized internal resistance group to the most terrorist oriented anti-western world antidemocratic regime in the region. That's a disgrace... When you look at what the MeK stands for, when they are antinuclear, separation of church and state, individual rights, MeK is obviously the way that Iran needs to go." Former CIA Director, Michael Hayden, added, "Iran is on a path to nuclear capability... It was the policy of the Iranian government approved at the highest level of that government to facilitate the killing of American and coalition soldiers in Iraq, period." "Some folks said to me this week if the United States government took the MeK off the terrorist list it would be a signal to the Iranian regime that we had changed from a desire to see changes in regime behavior to a desire to see changes in regime. My response to that is: Sounds good to me," Gen. Pace said. Noting that he had visited Camp Ashraf, Mr. Slocombe stressed, "The United States has made a commitment to the protection of the people who are there. Somehow we have to find a way to ensure that those people are protected and that that commitment is made." These officials join an increasing number of former officials from both parties, including Secretary Tom Ridge, Rudy Giuliani, Amb. John Bolton, James Woolsey, Louis Freeh, Frances Townsend and Mitchell Reiss, who have urged that the *MEK* be delisted.