



IRAN TODAY & TOMORROW

WEEKLY NEWS BULLETIN

The Committee in Support of Referendum in Iran (CSRI), a 501(c)(4), 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

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Iran's nuclear threat

Iran to Start Assembling Centrifuges, IAEA Says



January 27, 2007-DAVOS- Switzerland- Iran plans to begin work next month on an underground uranium enrichment facility, as part of a plan to create a network of tens of thousands of machines turning out material that could be used to make nuclear arms, U.N. officials said Friday. "If Iran takes this step, it is going to confront universal international opposition," warned U.S. Undersecretary of State R. Nicholas Burns.

UN atom agency's Iran section head must go - Tehran



January 26, 2007-VIENNA- Iran has demanded the removal of the U.N. official overseeing nuclear inspections in the country, accusing him of breach of trust, and barred all inspectors from nations behind sanctions, diplomats said on Friday. Tehran's moves, following a ban on 38 inspectors from four major Western nations announced on Monday, appeared aimed at testing Western resolve over its disputed nuclear activity while stopping short of violating the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

U.S. says Iran must talk or face tougher sanctions



January 23, 2007-The United States urged Iran on Tuesday to sit down for talks on its nuclear programme or face tougher sanctions in winter. "We say to the Iranians, please reconsider your state of confrontation with the rest of the world on proceeding with your nuclear programme. Please negotiate with us," U.S. Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns said. "If Iran does not negotiate, if (IAEA head) Dr Mohamed ElBaradei reports to the Security Council in February that it is not complying with the request of all of these countries then Iran will face a new sanctions resolution of tougher sanctions in the Security Council in the winter."

EU plans 'topping up' of sanctions against Iran



January 22, 2007-The European Union plans to increase sanctions against Iran's nuclear programme at a meeting of foreign ministers today. Suspicions that Iran is secretly developing nuclear weapons culminated on Dec 23 in a UN resolution demanding that Teheran halt uranium enrichment by Feb 21. EU diplomats are looking to go further by hitting Iranian officials or scientists connected to the programmes with travel bans and by extending sanctions beyond people on the UN blacklist.

Iranian lawmakers feared 'social upheaval' from sanctions: report



January 21, 2007- PARIS - An Iranian parliamentary report several months ago warned the powers in Tehran that heavy international sanctions could trigger internal instability and a social upheaval, the French daily Le Monde reported. The newspaper said it learnt the text of the document, which was produced by the Iranian parliament's Foreign Affairs and Defence Commission, "from Middle Eastern sources". Stretching to more than 100 pages and published at the beginning of September, the report was the result of six months of work by economic and oil experts, Le Monde said in its edition dated Sunday-Monday.

Iran's meddling in Iraq and Lebanon

Iranian reveals plan to expand role in Iraq

The New York Times
ON THE WEB **January 29, 2007- BAGHDAD**

Iran's ambassador to Baghdad outlined an ambitious plan on Sunday to greatly expand its economic and military ties with Iraq — including an Iranian national bank branch in the heart of the capital — just as the Bush administration has been warning the Iranians to stop meddling in Iraqi affairs.

Iran's plan, as outlined by the ambassador, carries the potential to bring Iran into further conflict here with the United States, which has detained a number of Iranian operatives in recent weeks and says it has proof of Iranian complicity in attacks on American and Iraqi forces.

The ambassador, Hassan Kazemi Qumi, said Iran was prepared to offer Iraq government forces training, equipment and advisers for what he called "the security fight." In the economic area, Mr. Qumi said, Iran was ready to assume major responsibility for Iraq reconstruction, an area of failure on the part of the United States since American-led forces overthrew Saddam Hussein nearly four years ago.

"We have experience of reconstruction after war," Mr. Qumi said, referring to the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s. "We are ready to transfer this experience in terms of reconstruction to the Iraqis."

Mr. Qumi also acknowledged, for the first time, that two Iranians seized and later released by American forces last month were security officials, as the United States had claimed. But he said that they were engaged in legitimate discussions with the Iraqi government and should not have been detained.....

President Bush has said the American military is authorized to take whatever action necessary against Iranians in Iraq found to be engaged in actions deemed hostile.

The political and diplomatic standoff that followed the Dec. 21 raid until the Iranians were released nine days later has contributed, along with a dispute over the Iranian nuclear program, to greatly increased tensions between the United States and Iran. This month, American forces detained five more Iranians in a raid on a diplomatic office in the northern city of Erbil.....

In a surprise announcement, Mr. Qumi said Iran would soon open a national bank in Iraq, in effect creating a new Iranian financial institution right under the Americans' noses. A senior Iraqi banking official, Hussein al-Uzri, confirmed that Iran had received a license to open the bank, which he said would apparently be the first "wholly owned subsidiary bank" of a foreign country in Iraq....

He would not provide specifics on Iran's offer of military assistance to Iraq, but said it included increased border patrols and a proposed new "joint security committee."

Iranian opposition group claims Iran has thousands of agents in Iraq



January 26, 2007- PARIS

By Jamey Keaten - Iran has thousands of paid operatives working in neighboring Iraq, an Iranian opposition group based in France said Friday, and it released the names of nearly 32,000 people it alleged were involved.

The National Council of Resistance's allegations could not be independently verified. And a press officer at the Iranian Embassy in Paris, speaking on condition of anonymity because of embassy policy, called the claims "completely false" and said Tehran supports stability in the region.

The council is the political wing of the People's Mujahedeen of Iran, which advocates the overthrow of Iran's Islamic government. The council has been based in France since shortly after the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Mohammad Mohaddessin, who heads the council's foreign affairs committee, alleged that thousands of Iraqis are working on Iran's behalf.

"The clerical regime, faced with intensifying domestic crisis and isolation inside Iran, views its only chance for survival in the establishment of a proxy regime in Iraq," Mohaddessin said at a news conference in Paris.

The council released the names, alleged dates of recruitment by Iran and the supposed salaries of 31,690 Iraqis. It claimed that most were paid by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, Qods Force — a faction of the Iranian military that the U.S. military says bankrolls militants in Iraq and equips them with weapons.

It said that in Iraq, the alleged operatives were mostly affiliated with the Badr Brigade, the Iranian-trained military wing of Iraq's most powerful Shiite political group, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq.

Mohaddessin said the list was compiled in 2003 and 2004 by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, and obtained by the council's "sources" within it, declining to elaborate. He alleged that most of those named were still working on Iran's behalf

Iran employs 32,000 'agents' in Iraq: opposition group



January 26, 2007- BERLIN - The main exiled Iranian opposition group published a list of nearly 32,000 Iraqis who it said were "agents of the mullahs" employed by Iran to destabilize its neighbor.

At a news conference in Berlin, the spokesman of the German chapter of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), Javad Dabiran, said the agents were employed by the Qods force, which is affiliated with Iran's elite ideological army, the Revolutionary Guards.

He said the NCRI had obtained the list of 31,690 members, which only included people "directly enlisted by the Qods force in Iran".

Disrupting Iran's networks that are making highly explosive devices



US State Dept. website, January 26, 2007--QUESTION: You've identified -- your government has identified Iranian influence as a major source of support for the insurgents. How far is the Administration willing to go now with 20,000 new troops coming and interrupting that influence that support? SECRETARY RICE: Well, we're going to be very active in disrupting the networks that are making these highly explosive devices that are causing casualties to our troops. It's a matter of troop protection. And we are also concerned about some of the efforts to arm militias that are putting forward death squads. We're responding to something that Iran is doing that is very dangerous to our forces. And no commander, no government would sit idly by while this was done to their forces.

A mountain of evidence about Iran's interference



US State Dept. website, January 26, 2007-- Sean McCormack, Spokesman: We are in the process of taking a look at the mountain of evidence that we do have and seeing what it is that we can cull from that in a declassified form so that we can make very clearly connect the dots between the EFD networks and Iranian influence over them. So we are working through that progress -- that process. A mountain of evidence, yes, indeed. A substantial body, convincing, clear evidence. I mean, you know, we can keep on going down the line.

Trying to Cool Beirut's Sectarian Rage

The New York Times

January 26, 2007-- Hizballah was born with Iranian assistance in the early 1980s, to resist Israel's occupation of Lebanon. And by the 1990s, the dynamism of Hizballah and the demographic advantage of the Shi'ites had begun to eat away at the historical Sunni dominance of Lebanon's Muslim communities. Stepped up diplomatic contact between Iran and the Saudis has also fueled considerable speculation that a face-saving compromise may be in the works end the political crisis in Lebanon. But as Thursday's unscripted surge of sectarian violence demonstrated, a political deal may come too late to cool the seething passions on the streets of Beirut.

Iran providing devices that help insurgents detonate IEDs in Iraq

Newsweek

January 24, 2007- Why is the Bush administration escalating its accusations that Iran is backing Shiite extremists inside Iraq? One reason: mounting intelligence indicating Tehran has been supplying insurgents with electronic sensors that trigger roadside bombs used against U.S. troops. Over the past year, U.S. forces in Iraq have repeatedly fallen victim to sophisticated homemade bombs—known as IEDs, or improvised explosive devices—which are often rigged with passive infrared sensors. Recent reports from U.S. intelligence agencies show that Iranian agents or brokers have ordered the devices in bulk from manufacturers in the Far East, said one U.S. counterterrorism official, who asked not to be identified discussing sensitive matters.

US envoy says Iran's power boosted by turmoil in Iraq

AFP

January 24, 2007 -- The turmoil in Iraq is boosting Iran's clout in the region, US ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad said on Wednesday. "Historically, Iraq has played a balancing role vis-a-vis Iran. Now that Iraq is a weakened state, it is helping the rise of the relative power of Iran," Khalilzad told Western reporters in Baghdad. US officials in Iraq have repeatedly warned that Iran is supporting renegade Iraqi Shiite militias and providing weapons technology used by anti-US forces in Iraq.

US says its has proof Iran is interfering in Iraq

AFP

January 25, 2007-- The United States Wednesday said it had proof of Iran's interference in Iraq, promising soon to publish details of Iranian networks in its strife-torn neighboring country.

"There is solid evidence that Iranian agents are involved in these networks and that they are working with individuals and groups in Iraq and that they are being sent there by the Iranian government," said State Department spokesman Sean McCormack.

"And I would expect that ... in the near future, we are going to try to talk a little bit more in public -- to the extent that we can because, again, you're dealing with intelligence information -- about what we know of Iranian support for these networks," he added.

Lebanese PM blames Iran, Syria for deadly protest

AFP

January 24, 2007- - Lebanon's embattled premier has pinned the blame on Iran and Syria for a Hezbollah-backed nationwide opposition strike during which three people died, in remarks published here Wednesday. Lebanon has "been paying the price of imposed decisions coming from outside countries, like Iran and Syria," Prime Minister Fuad Siniora told Japan's Kyodo News. "The decisions made by the opposition in Lebanon are decisions coming from outside like Iran and Syria," he was quoted as saying.

Jordan king urges Iran to avoid 'rattling' stability in region

AFP

January 24, 2007- Jordan's King Abdullah II called on Iran to avoid "rattling stability" in Iraq, the Palestinian territories and Lebanon, in an interview published Wednesday. "We wish to see positive and balanced relations between Iraq and Iran, and between Arab countries and Iran," the monarch told the London-based Arabic daily Asharq Al-Awsat, also carried by Jordan's Petra news agency. "We believe that Iran must refrain from seeking to rattle stability in Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq and any other part of the region so that we can make progress towards building such relations," he said.

Iraqi police detain 3 Iranians in Mosul

AP

January 21, 2007--BAGHDAD, IRAQ - Iraqi police detained three Iranians who were found without documentation in the northern city of Mosul, a provincial commander said Sunday.

The three were seized Saturday after they were found without passports while riding with a Kurdish driver, said Maj. Gen. Wathiq al-Hamdani, the police commander for Ninevah province.

New Iran-Iraq policy

Troops authorized to kill Iranian operatives in Iraq

Washington Post, January 26, 2007-The Bush administration has authorized the U.S. military to kill or capture Iranian operatives inside Iraq as part of an aggressive new strategy to weaken Tehran's influence across the Middle East and compel it to give up its nuclear program. For more than a year, U.S. forces in Iraq have secretly detained dozens of suspected Iranian agents, holding them for three to four days at a time. The "catch and release" policy was designed to avoid escalating tensions with Iran and yet intimidate its emissaries. Gen. Michael V. Hayden, the director of the CIA, told the Senate recently that the amount of Iranian-supplied materiel used against U.S. troops in Iraq "has been quite striking." The new "kill or capture" program was authorized by President Bush meant to curtail Iranian influence from Kabul to Beirut and, ultimately, to shake Iran's commitment to its nuclear efforts.

Washington has warned Maliki to go after Shi'ite militias as much as he deals with Sunni Arab insurgents.

The New York Times, January 25, 2007- At least 34 people were killed in bomb attacks in Baghdad on Thursday but the prime minister said a security crackdown in the capital would leave militants nowhere to hide. Some fear that militants may simply avoid confrontation in the crackdown, betting that eventually U.S. troops will leave. "There is a ... concern they might be lying low, avoiding conflict now in order to fight another day," U.S. ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad said on Wednesday. Criticized for not doing enough about Shi'ite militias linked to some of his allies, Maliki has vowed to take on armed groups regardless of sect or political affiliation. Washington has identified the Mehdi Army, a militia loyal to radical Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, as the greatest threat to security in Iraq and has warned that the success of Maliki's plan depends on his going after Shi'ite militias with as much determination as he deals with Sunni Arab insurgents.

A successful democracy in Iraq would send a signal to people of Iran

The White House website, January 22, 2007- Press Briefing by Tony Snow:

Tony, is Iraq the most important issue facing the U.S.?

MR. SNOW: It's hard to say. Iraq certainly is the central front in the war on terror. If you take a look at the country that's bracketed by Iran and Syria, a nation where a successful democracy would send a very powerful signal, including to people in Iran and Syria who would love to see democracies in their own countries, that's -- it's a vital concern.

Q Tony, Iran decided to block IAEA inspectors from entering the country. How concerned are you about this? And does this require further action from the U.N. Security Council?

MR. SNOW: We've made it very clear what we think the Iranians need to do. And, furthermore, we're not only -- there's a Chapter 7 Resolution that's been adopted by the U.N. Security Council.

Iranians' struggle for freedom

The Women's Revolution in Iran: Interview with Ramesh Sepehrrad

GLOBAL POLITICIAN

, January 25, 2007-Ramesh Sepehrrad** is political scientist and president/founder of the oldest Iranian women's Organization in Washington DC

RM: What is the state of women's rights in Iran?

RS: The current status of women in Iran can be described in one phrase: system of gender apartheid. The regime in Tehran has institutionalized violence against women in its laws and regulations.

RM: How strong is the movement for democratic change in Iran?

RS: Given the women-hating nature of the regime in Tehran, one can measure the strength of democratic movements in Iran through the active involvement of women in both leadership or other ranks of the organized resistance movement. Tehran's regime has the highest number of female political execution in the world, even higher than China.

They also have a very strong presence outside of Iran. For example, Maryam Rajavi, leader of the organized Iranian resistance movement in exile, has held numerous international conference and seminars since 1990's to raise awareness on the threat of Islamic Fundamentalism.

Abbe Pierre, French Homeless Defender, Dies at 94

Bloomberg web site, January 22, 2007-Abbe Pierre, a French Catholic priest who became one of the country's most popular personalities through more than half a century of work to help the homeless, died today aged 94. President Jacques Chirac said in a statement that he was "overwhelmed" by news of the death. France "has lost an immense figure, a conscience, and incarnation of good," Chirac said. Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin and Socialist Party presidential candidate Segolene Royal also issued statements lauding the memory of Abbe Pierre.