

The Key To Defeating The Mullahs In Iran

By *Hedayat Mostowfi* - 5/3/2007

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the Tehran mullah regime's president, on Monday, April 16, 2007, vowed that the world powers would not be able to stop Iran's nuclear drive and that the Islamic Republic would defend its atomic program "to the end". Iranian made bombs, used by terrorists trained in Iran, explode daily in Iraq and kill innocent people. Yet there are still a few overly optimistic individuals that think if the Iranian mullahs and American officials sit around one table at the Iraq security summit beginning on Thursday, May 3rd in Sharm el-Sheikh, Iran will cease its nuclear weapons program and abandon terrorism after 30 years! The chances of such are less than nil.

As the tensions rise between Iran and the international community over Iran's clandestine nuclear program and its arming and supporting the Shiite extremist militias in Iraq, Iran is playing it tough. Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, threatens that if Iran is attacked, U.S. interests everywhere will be in danger. As arrogant as it seems, this bravado is nothing but a cover for a weak and fragile government on the brink of collapse. In reality, even the limited sanctions on Iran and the security operations in Iraq have weakened Iran's position immensely.

The mounting dissatisfaction and frustration among the Iranian people is spinning out of control. Tyrannical oppression, daily arrests and executions, ever-increasing corruption and a collapsing economy, have made the mullahs' exit a must for the Iranian people. In 2006 there were more than 4000 demonstrations and strikes demanding freedom and better living conditions. The teachers have threatened the government with a country-wide strike this week. The people of Oghlid city in central Iran clashed with the police, after their peaceful demonstrations were violently crushed. Only last week 150,000 women were arrested when they defied the government's new restrictions for hijab. The Iranian regime has no leverage inside Iran and no room for negotiations outside. Therefore, the mullahs try to play tough. Inside Iran they have escalated oppression and executions. Outside, they impose threats left and right and export chaos and instability wherever they can.

Iran's two main external threats are "the nuclear bomb" and the "Iraq insurgency". An atomic bomb will give Iran the weight and upper hand in negotiations with the West and the ability to blackmail the international community. In Iraq, Tehran's desire is to impose an Iran-like regime to increase its influence in the region. So far, the nuclear weapons effort has not borne fruit. This leaves Iraq as the main battlefield. Considering the fact that Iran's power has been challenged in Lebanon and Palestine, Iranian fundamentalism will prosper or vanish depending on what occurs in Iraq in the

near future.

Iraq was quickly occupied by Iranian agents, only a few weeks after the 2003 U.S. invasion. Tehran immediately started sending thousands of operatives to Iraq to establish a terror network. So too, Iran helped and hosted several extremist Shiite movement leaders for years. The Iranian opposition has recently published a list of 32,000 covert operatives on the Iranian regime payroll that have infiltrated into all sectors of Iraq's governing body and security apparatus. It also exposed several terrorist-training camps inside Iran along with the names of Iranian and Iraqi operatives.

On June 5, 2006, a unique and unprecedented alliance of Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds in Iraq, comprised of 121 political parties and social groups in Iraq, 700,000 women, 14,000 lawyers, 19,000 physicians, 35,000 engineers, 320 clerics, and 540 professors, as well as thousands more Iraqis came together to highlight Iran's threat to a secular Iraq. This gathering was organized by the main Iranian opposition, the Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK). The MEK is based in Camp Ashraf in Iraq and is an anti-fundamentalist and secular organization that is primarily lead by women. The outcome of that meeting included a declaration signed by 5.2 million Iraqi (about 50% of eligible voters forming an anti-fundamentalist movement in Iraq) giving full support to the MEK and calling for an end to Iran's interference in Iraq and stopping the violence. This unity was a crucial step to involve the Iraqi people in the fate of their own country and to fight against the Islamic fundamentalism spread by Iran in Iraq.

These facts explain why the Iranian government is infuriated and is using its proxies in Iraq to call for the extradition of the members of MEK to Iran. As long as the MEK is located in Camp Ashraf, the Tehran regime will be resisted in Iraq. The MEK not only actively opposes and exposes Iran's terrorist activities in Iraq, but also acts as a model for secular Iraqi Moslems. The moderate Shiite Moslem MEK deems itself as the antithesis of Tehran's fundamentalist mullah regime and seeks to create a secular, democratic Iran, a goal which appeals to the many moderate Iraqi Shiites and Sunnis. The MEK provides a humanitarian and peaceful alternative to the extremist and fundamentalist Islam presented by the mullahs.

The good news is that 50% of the Iraqi people are backing the MEK. The bad news is that the West is wasting this important opportunity by keeping the MEK on the list of terrorist organizations under false pretences and giving Iran the necessary ammunition to continue its destructive activities in Iraq. That the MEK was blacklisted to please the Tehran is an undisputed fact that has been stated openly by American and British officials. One must ask why--after all the crimes committed by Iran around the world and especially in Iraq--why is Iran's main opposition still blacklisted? Given the fact that providing incentives to the Iranian regime has never resulted in a positive change in the regime's behaviour in the past 28 years, why does anyone think it will change its behaviour now? This corrupt fundamentalist regime cannot reform itself any more than a leopard can change its spots.

The results of blacklisting the Tehran regime's main opposition and only

alternative are that it feels no threat. This allows the Tehran regime to take an offensive posture. The regime cunningly tries to use the list to push their only opposition in Iraq, the MEK members in Camp Ashraf, out of Iraq. If the regime succeeds, it can expand its extremist control into Iraq, without any opposition.

So what has to be done? There is a unique opportunity for the United States to end the violence in Iraq and bring our troops home safely. There are 5.2 million Iraqis who want to be involved in the decision-making process and want Iran and its agents out of Iraq. These 5.2 million Iraqis, from all walks of life, are united with the Iranian opposition in an anti-fundamentalist movement in Iraq.

Iraq is the final frontier for the Tehran regime. If it wins, there will be no end to the bloodshed and madness in Iraq. Fundamentalism will spread in the world, and the threat of a nuclear Iran and an imminent war in the Persian Gulf will be most real. On the other hand, a defeat in Iraq of the Tehran regime will give enough momentum to the opposition movements inside Iran to topple the mullah regime and bring peace and stability to the region and to the world. A victory in Iraq will not be possible for the Tehran regime as long as the Iranian opposition (MEK) is there, but the mullahs will always use the "terrorist list" to try to push the MEK out of Iraq.

To win in Iraq, the U.S. has to nurture the power of unity between the progressive Iranian and Iraqi Moslems in their battle against the fundamentalist mullahs. This will not be possible until the MEK is removed from the list of terrorist organizations, a ten year old mistaken political sop to the Islamic Republic of Iran that has been repaid with Tehran's drive for nuclear weapons and dominance of Iraq. In a speech at the demonstration of 30,000 Iranians in Brussels, Belgium, on Friday, March 9, 2007, Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, president-elect of the National Council of Resistance of Iran said: "Submitting to the mullahs' demand to restrict the main actor for change in Iran by labeling it as terrorist is to permit the spread of fundamentalism and terrorism across the region. It means giving the mullahs' regime the opportunity to obtain nuclear weapons, and intensify its meddling in Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine."

Removing the MEK from the list will unleash the power of the Iranian and Iraqi people to fight for their rights. The Iranian people will not believe any solidarity promises from the West while their best hope for a regime change in Iran and a secular government is restricted just to please the cruel mullahs of Iran. As simple as it seems, the West should recognize these realities.

Hedayat Mostowfi is the Executive Director of the Committee in Support of Referendum in Iran (CSRI). His e-mail is Mostowfi@referendum-iran.org. www.referndum-iran.org