

Tillery, Monica J

RELEASED IN PART

From: Dibble, Philo L (NEA)
 Sent: Monday, July 26, 2004 5:45 PM
 To: Shore, Rhonda H (NEA/PPD); Dorosin, Joshua L
 Cc: Ng, David C (NEA/PD); Jost, Aaron W (NEA/NGA); Olson, Richard G (NEA); Sutphin, Paul R; Satterfield, David M; Schlicher, Ronald L (NEA/FO); Bruder, Jason E (NEA/ARP); Jones, Deborah K (NEA/ARP)
 Subject: RE: AFP, AP, Reuters: MEK stories

B5, B7(A)

SLST

We lost the spin on this one.

-----Original Message-----

From: Shore, Rhonda H (NEA/PPD)
 Sent: Monday, July 26, 2004 4:53 PM
 To: Dorosin, Joshua L
 Cc: Ng, David C (NEA/PD); Jost, Aaron W (NEA/NGA); Olson, Richard G (NEA); Sutphin, Paul R; Satterfield, David M; Schlicher, Ronald L (NEA/FO); Dibble, Philo L (NEA); Bruder, Jason E (NEA/ARP); Jones, Deborah K (NEA/ARP)
 Subject: AFP, AP, Reuters: MEK stories

a few bits are highlighted.

US grants protection for anti-Tehran group in Iraq

Publication: Reuters

Date: 07/26/2004

PARIS, July 26 (Reuters) - The U.S. military has granted "protected status" under the Geneva Convention to members of an exiled Iranian opposition group interned in Iraq, France-based exiles and U.S. officials said on Monday.

The U.S. head of detainee operations in Iraq, Major-General Geoffrey Miller, told the People's Mujahideen Organisation (MKO) its members held at a base in eastern Iraq had been recognised as "protected persons under the Fourth Geneva Convention."

"(This is a) triumph for the Iranian Resistance and the Iranian people," Maryam Rajavi, head of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), said in a statement.

The United States confirmed it gave 3,800 Iranian rebels at the Ashraf base in Iraq protected status because Washington believed they had not been combatants in the war when U.S.-led forces invaded Iraq.

The decision will allow detainees from the group access to the Red Cross and the U.N. refugee agency, the UNHCR.

But a U.S. State Department spokesman said the protected status did not affect the group's designation by Washington as a "terrorist group" and its members in Ashraf were still being vetted to determine what crimes they may have committed.

Iran regards the MKO fighters in Iraq as one of its biggest external threats and wants the group's members handed over.

Diplomats say Tehran offered to exchange al Qaeda prisoners it is holding for MKO leaders but Washington refused the swap.

What to do with the rebels was a "conundrum," a State Department official who asked not to be named, said.

"They probably have a well-founded fear of persecution in Iran. Iraq does not want them. And a lot of countries have not yet agreed to take them -- and wherever they go it has to be voluntary," he said.

Iranian government spokesman Abdollah Ramazanzadeh said the U.S. move to grant the MKO protected status undermined Washington's claims to be fighting terrorist groups.

"I hope those who claim they are combating terrorism prove the truth and confront the ones who have committed extensive crimes against the Iranian nation," he told a news conference.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 REVIEW AUTHORITY: HARRY R MELONE
 DATE/CASE ID: 16 DEC 2004 200303827

1

UNCLASSIFIED

DOS-001754

UNCLASSIFIED

In August last year, the United States closed the Washington offices of the NCRI and MKO, also known by its Iranian name Mujahideen-e Khalq (MEK).

French intelligence suspected the group of planning to make its Paris base a centre from which to launch attacks on Iranian embassies in Europe. The group denies any such ambition.

(Additional reporting by Saul Hudson in Washington)

Reut15:15 07-26-04

US confirms protected status for Iranian opposition forces in Iraq

Publication: Agence France-Presse

Date: 07/26/2004

Author: Matthew Lee

WASHINGTON, July 26 (AFP) - The United States on Monday confirmed it had granted protected status to nearly 4,000 members of the People's Mujahedeen, Iran's main armed opposition group, now confined to a military-run camp in Iraq.

The State Department stressed, however, that the move, which drew a warning from Tehran, has no effect on the US "foreign terrorist organization" designation for the group, also known as the Mujahedeen-e-Khalq (MEK) or National Council of Resistance of Iran.

"The 3,800 members of the MEK that are in (Camp) Ashraf have been granted protected persons status," deputy spokesman Adam Ereli said, adding that the move gives the militants rights under the Geneva Conventions but would not shield them from eventual prosecution on possible terrorism charges.

"This does not relate to their membership in a terrorist organization," Ereli told reporters.

"The MEK continues to be a designated foreign terrorist organization," he said. "We will continue to treat individuals who can be determined to have been involved in terrorist incidents with the MEK consistent with the laws that apply."

Ereli noted that each of the 3,800 militia members were being vetted to determine if they had been involved in terrorist incidents and that those implicated in attacks would be dealt with under applicable laws.

"Protected status does not mean we are protecting these people," he said. "It means we have determined that they were not belligerents in this conflict and we are according them the human rights protections consistent with the Geneva Conventions.

"When individuals are classified as protected persons, it does not in any way attenuate our actions in holding these people to account for activities that they committed as MEK members that were terrorist in nature."

Earlier Monday, Iranian government spokesman Abdollah Ramazanzadeh gave a cautious warning to the United States against making any concessions towards the group, which Tehran refers to as "hypocrites."

"The attitude towards the hypocrites in Iraq will show the truth of the claims from anybody who claims to be fighting terrorism globally," he said.

Iran has been pushing for repatriation of the several thousand Mujahedeen fighters under US military guard at Camp Ashraf northeast of Baghdad, and last December Iraq's coalition-installed interim leadership voted unanimously to expel them.

But human rights watchdogs have called on the coalition not to hand over the fighters to an uncertain fate at the hands of their archfoes in Tehran.

The People's Mujahedeen set up base in Iraq in 1986 and carried out regular cross-border raids into Iran, with which Iraq fought a bloody war between 1980 and 1988.

The group also participated in Saddam Hussein's crackdown on an uprising by Shiites and Kurds in 1991. Several thousand Mujahedeen militiamen were disarmed by US forces following the fall of president Saddam Hussein's regime in April 2003 and barred from undertaking military operations.

Ereli said the protected status -- announced by the group in Paris on Sunday -- had been accorded to the

militants because they had been classified "non-belligerents" during last year's US-led invasion of Iraq. "It was determined that they were not belligerents, and therefore as non-belligerents fall into this category with respect to the conflict with Iraq," he said.

The fate of the group's members has been a prickly question for Washington as it prosecutes its worldwide war on terror, with some US officials espousing their possible use against Iran -- lumped into an "axis of evil" by US President George W. Bush -- should "regime change" in Tehran become a formal US policy.

mvl/kd

US-Iran-opposition-Iraq

AFP 261958 GMT 07 04

US confirms protected status for Iranian opposition forces in Iraq

Publication: Agence France-Presse

Date: 07/26/2004

Author: By Matthew Lee

WASHINGTON, July 26 (AFP) - The United States on Monday confirmed it had granted protected status to nearly 4,000 members of the People's Mujahedeen, Iran's main armed opposition group, now confined to a military-run camp in Iraq.

The State Department stressed, however, that the move, which drew a warning from Tehran, has no effect on the US "foreign terrorist organization" designation for the group, also known as the Mujahedeen-e-Khalq (MEK) or National Council of Resistance of Iran.

"The 3,800 members of the MEK that are in (Camp) Ashraf have been granted protected persons status," deputy spokesman Adam Ereli said, adding that the move gives the militants rights under the Geneva Conventions but would not shield them from eventual prosecution on possible terrorism charges.

"This does not relate to their membership in a terrorist organization," Ereli told reporters.

"The MEK continues to be a designated foreign terrorist organization," he said. "We will continue to treat individuals who can be determined to have been involved in terrorist incidents with the MEK consistent with the laws that apply."

Ereli noted that each of the 3,800 militia members were being vetted to determine if they had been involved in terrorist incidents and that those implicated in attacks would be dealt with under applicable laws.

"Protected status does not mean we are protecting these people," he said. "It means we have determined that they were not belligerents in this conflict and we are according them the human rights protections consistent with the Geneva Conventions."

"When individuals are classified as protected persons, it does not in any way attenuate our actions in holding these people to account for activities that they committed as MEK members that were terrorist in nature."

Earlier Monday, Iranian government spokesman Abdollah Ramazanzadeh gave a cautious warning to the United States against making any concessions towards the group, which Tehran refers to as "hypocrites."

"The attitude towards the hypocrites in Iraq will show the truth of the claims from anybody who claims to be fighting terrorism globally," he said.

Iran has been pushing for repatriation of the several thousand Mujahedeen fighters under US military guard at Camp Ashraf northeast of Baghdad, and last December Iraq's coalition-installed interim leadership voted unanimously to expel them.

But human rights watchdogs have called on the coalition not to hand over the fighters to an uncertain fate at the hands of their archfoes in Tehran.

The People's Mujahedeen set up base in Iraq in 1986 and carried out regular cross-border raids into Iran; with which Iraq fought a bloody war between 1980 and 1988.

The group also participated in Saddam Hussein's crackdown on an uprising by Shiites and Kurds in 1991. Several thousand Mujahedeen militiamen were disarmed by US forces following the fall of president Saddam Hussein's regime in April 2003 and barred from undertaking military operations.

UNCLASSIFIED

Ereli said the protected status -- announced by the group in Paris on Sunday -- had been accorded to the militants because they had been classified "non-belligerents" during last year's US-led invasion of Iraq. "It was determined that they were not belligerents, and therefore as non-belligerents fall into this category with respect to the conflict with Iraq," he said.

The fate of the group's members has been a prickly question for Washington as it prosecutes its worldwide war on terror, with some US officials espousing their possible use against Iran -- lumped into an "axis of evil" by US President George W. Bush -- should "regime change" in Tehran become a formal US policy.

mvl/kd

US-Iran-opposition-Iraq

AFP 261958 GMT 07 04

-----Original Message-----

From: Shore, Rhonda H (NEA/PPD)

Sent: Monday, July 26, 2004 4:36 PM

To: Dorosin, Joshua L

Cc: Ng, David C (NEA/PD); Jost, Aaron W (NEA/NGA); Olson, Richard G (NEA); Sutphin, Paul R; Vasquez, Edgar J(PA Press); Reside, Julie M(PA/PRESS); Satterfield, David M; Schlicher, Ronald L (NEA/FO)

Subject: today's briefing: MEK section

QUESTION: Adam, do you know anything about the people's Mujahedin claiming to -- this might be better addressed to the Pentagon -- but **claiming to have received protected status as non-combatants in Iraq.** They said this on Sunday, apparently.

MR. ERELI: I do have something on that. **I believe the U.S. military has confirmed that protected person status has been -- or that the 3,800 members of the MEK that are in Ashraf have been granted protected person status. I would note that this means that an individual who enjoys protected person status is entitled to protections of the Geneva Conventions. There aren't any other connotations to this designation. It's a designation, another important point to make here, it's a designation that applies to individuals and not to groups.**

Moving on to the -- but I think the bigger picture is -- and in that sense, there's not a lot of change -- is that the MEK members remain as before limited to Camp Ashraf under multinational force control. The multinational force continues to ensure that the -- that the members of these groups cannot pose a threat to individuals inside or outside Iraq. We are working with the international -- with the government of Iraq and international organizations to look at eventual repatriation of these individuals.

QUESTION: Well, I'm not -- I don't understand -- how does this square with the terrorism designation?

MR. ERELI: It's really unrelated to it. It's unrelated to it.

QUESTION: I mean, presumably, if these --

MR. ERELI: The point here is --

QUESTION: Well, presumably, if these people are -- this group is designated as a terrorist organization, that means that its members are, in U.S. eyes, terrorists, correct?

MR. ERELI: Let me -- let me clarify the distinction for you.

QUESTION: And if they are, why are they given -- why have they been given this status, considering that other terrorists have been treated (inaudible) much differently, as enemy noncombatants.

MR. ERELI: This status -- right. **This status does not -- their status as protected persons relates to their involvement in an activity as belligerents in the conflict between the coalition and Iraq. So it was determined that they were not belligerents and therefore, as nonbelligerents, fall into this category with respect to the conflict with Iraq.**

This does not relate to their membership in a terrorist organization. **The MEK continues to be a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization. We will continue to treat its -- treat individuals who can be determined to have been involved in terrorist incidents with the MEK consistent with the laws that apply. And in the case of the MEK members in Camp Ashraf, as you know, there was a vetting process underway to determine who, among those 3,800, might have been involved in terrorist incidents, and once those individuals have been determined, to deal with them as required by law.**

So in that sense there's no -- how shall I say? There should be no conflict or confusion between the two issues.

QUESTION: All right. Well, maybe my memory is faulty but I don't -- was the MEK -- were members of the MEK actual belligerents in the war?

MR. ERELI: No, and that's what -- that's what this designation --

QUESTION: So this relates to their status as nonbelligerents?

MR. ERELI: Right. This is what this designation refers to.

QUESTION: When you talk about repatriation, are you trying to get them to go back to Iran?

MR. ERELI: That issue is still being worked on, where they would go is something that has to be settled between the government of Iraq, the MNF and eventual countries of resettlement. But, of course, it has to be voluntary, as consistent with international practice.

QUESTION: And when you're doing the vetting, are you vetting to see which of the people in Ashraf actually belongs to the Mujahedin, or are you just trying to vet what type of crime they have committed as the terrorists that you recognize they are?

MR. ERELI: My understanding is it's the latter.

QUESTION: And Iran says that the fact that you're giving these individuals protected status undermines your claim that you're fighting terrorism because it brings up a bit of contradictions that Matt was --

MR. ERELI: Right, and I tried to clarify those contradictions as saying protected status does not mean we are protecting these people. It means we are according them -- we have determined that they were not belligerents in this conflict, and we are according them the human rights protections as required by the Geneva -- consistent with the Geneva Conventions. When persons are -- when individuals are

UNCLASSIFIED

classified as protected persons, it does not in any way attenuate our actions and holding these people to account for activities that they committed as MEK members that were terrorist in nature.

QUESTION: While we're on Iraq, the President of the Philippines -- has this come up yet?

MR. ERELI: No.

QUESTION: Could we just continue on that for a moment?

QUESTION: Sure, go ahead, please. I'm sorry.

QUESTION: How are their camps and how are they supervised? Are they under any kind of supervision? Is it an Iraqi supervision or a coalition supervision? That's one. And how does that relate in any way to what the Iraqi interim minister, in an interview, he said that Iran was enemy number one. So are the two related?

MR. ERELI: For logistical details on how the Camp Ashraf is run and what are the -- what are the procedures and limitations of movement and things like that, I'd refer you to the multinational force. The important point is that, a) they're disarmed; b) they are not, as I said earlier, that they are not in a position to pose a threat to individuals inside or outside Iraq. And that's the critical consideration in our view.

QUESTION: When you say disarmed are they still allowed to have rifles?

MR. ERELI: They are -- they do not pose a threat due to arms, I think is the --

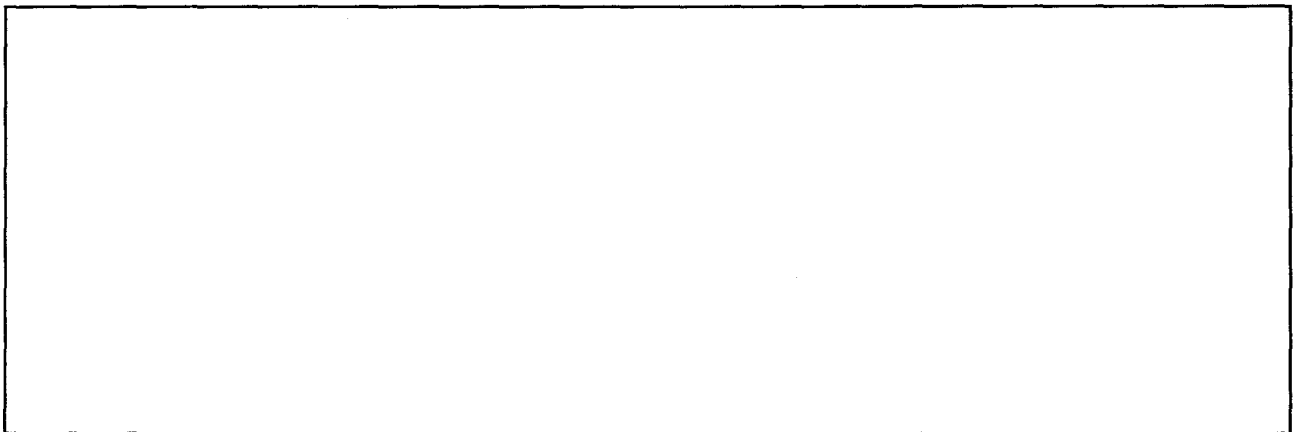
QUESTION: So the tanks and stuff are in another place, but they still have firearms?

MR. ERELI: I think they've been disarmed to the extent that they cannot pose a threat. But if you ask me what -- do they have any caliber bullets, again, I'd refer you to the MNF.

-----Original Message-----

From: Shore, Rhonda H (NEA/PPD)
Sent: Monday, July 26, 2004 4:31 PM
To: Erel, Joseph A(PA FRONT)
Cc: Ng, David C (NEA/PD); Jost, Aaron W (NEA/NGA); Olson, Richard G (NEA); Dorosin, Joshua L; Sutphin, Paul R; Vasquez, Edgar J (PA Press); Reside, Julie M(PA/PRESS)
Subject: TQs on MEK

B5, B7(A)



-----Original Message-----

UNCLASSIFIED

From: Borek, Ted A (L/NESA)
Sent: Monday, July 26, 2004 3:40 PM
To: Shore, Rhonda H (NEA/PPD); NEA-NGA-DL
Cc: Schlicher, Ronald L (NEA/FO); Dibble, Elizabeth L (NEA/FO); Satterfield, David M; Greene, David J; Dorosin, Joshua L; Cummings, Edward R (Main State); Newman, David S
Subject: RE: action: TQs on MEK and Iraq/Israeli stamp on its passports B5, B7(A)



-----Original Message-----

From: Shore, Rhonda H (NEA/PPD)
Sent: Monday, July 26, 2004 3:33 PM
To: NEA-NGA-DL
Cc: Schlicher, Ronald L (NEA/FO); Dibble, Elizabeth L (NEA/FO); Satterfield, David M; Greene, David J; Borek, Ted A (L/NESA)
Subject: action: TQs on MEK and Iraq/Israeli stamp on its passports B5, B7(A)



NEA/NGA:

Did the U.S. have anything to do with Iraq lifting restriction on its citizens being able to have an Israeli stamp on their passports.

-----Original Message-----

From: Vasquez, Edgar J
Sent: Monday, July 26, 2004 3:14 PM
To: PAPress_TaskingList
Subject: 07-26-04 Taken Questions from Daily Press Briefing

FOR POSTING:

NEA: What rights are now afforded the MEK given that they have been granted "protective person" status under the Geneva Conventions?

PM: Today, the removal of sanctions on the South African defense company, Fuchs, was announced. Why was it left off last week's list?

EUR: What is U.S. policy on the Ohrid Agreement? How does it relate to issue of giving Albanian language rights to Albanian minority in Macedonia?

SA: Has the Government of Bangladesh requested U.S. aid for flood victims?

AS GUIDANCE:

EUR: Does Alex Rondos work for the U.S. embassy in Athens?

NEA: Did the U.S. have anything to do with Iraq lifting restriction on its citizens being able to have an Israeli stamp on their passports.

Today's Duty Officer is Brenda Greenberg.