



British Parliamentary Committee for Iran Freedom

**SPYING FOR THE MULLAHS:
IRAN'S AGENTS IN UK**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The Iranian Regime

Islamic Fundamentalism

TERRORISM

THE MULLAHS' MINISTRY OF INTELLIGENCE

USE OF AGENTS

THE MULLAHS' AGENTS IN BRITAIN

Massoud & Anne Khodabandeh (nee Singleton)

DISTURBING FOREIGN OFFICE LINKS

RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

In its 'Annual Report 2005-2006', the Parliamentary Intelligence & Security Committee referred to increasing international tension over Iran's nuclear programme and its backing for terrorist groups in the Middle East. The Committee stated:

"There is a possibility of an increased threat to UK interests from Iranian state-sponsored terrorism should the diplomatic situation deteriorate."

The threat is often repeated by officials of the Iranian regime. On 16 April 2006, The Sunday Times reported Dr Hassan Abbasi, head of the Centre for Doctrinal Strategic Studies in the Revolutionary Guards, as saying that 29 western targets had been identified for suicide attacks. He added: *"We are ready to attack American and British sensitive points if they attack Iran's nuclear facilities"*. Abbasi warned would-be martyrs to *"pay close attention to wily England"* and vowed that *"Britain's demise is on our agenda"*.

The threat is why the government and security services must properly investigate agents of the Ministry of Intelligence operating in Britain and take steps to stop their activities.

This paper concentrates on the role played by the Ministry of Intelligence in terrorist atrocities across the world. It also identifies agents of the regime operating in Britain and the steps needed to deal with the threats they pose.

IRANIAN REGIME

Islamic fundamentalism

Islamic fundamentalism and the terrorism emanating from it represent the greatest threat to peace and stability worldwide. The heart of this ideology, which subverts true Islam, beats in Tehran and took shape following the Iranian revolution when the mullahs seized power. Khomeini's regime transformed the idea of creating global Islamic rule to an achievable goal and gave Islamic fundamentalist groups global backing.

Iran was home to the first Islamic fundamentalist regime in the world and the mullahs use the powers, resources and facilities of a state to achieve their ambitions. Tehran continues to act as the heartland of the extremist Islamic fundamentalist movement around the world.

Recent years have seen a resurgence in the Iranian regime's fundamentalist ideology, which has reached its pinnacle with the instigation of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as President. Early in his Presidency, Ahmadinejad proclaimed:

"Thanks to the blood of the martyrs, a new Islamic revolution has arisen and the Islamic revolution of 1384 will, God willing, cut off the roots of injustice in the world...The wave of the Islamic revolution will soon reach the entire world."

Ahmadinejad has also spoken of the Middle East conflict as being "the locus of the final war" between Muslims and the west.

Terrorism

Terrorism has been the main instrument of the Iranian regime in pursuit of its expansionist ideology. The regime has long used terrorism as a policy instrument to deal with challenges to its survival at home and abroad. At home, the regime uses terrorism to confront rising public discontent, while boosting the morale of its oppressive forces, in particular the Revolutionary Guards. Abroad, the regime uses terrorism to blackmail and gain concessions from western countries. Some of the earliest examples of this were in the early 1980s when the regime manufactured the hostage crisis in Lebanon. In exchange for the release of western hostages, the regime secured concessions from governments including the United States and France.

It is widely acknowledged within the international community that the regime is the most active state sponsor of terrorism, having been responsible for more than 450 terrorist atrocities worldwide resulting in thousands of deaths. Whether assassinating Iranian dissidents in the heart of Europe or carrying out terrorist bombings across the world, each terrorist operation starts in Tehran where the regime's most senior leaders choose their targets and develop their operations. Based on arrest warrants and investigations conducted by European security services into assassinations of Iranian dissidents in Europe, it is clear that the highest ranks of the Iranian regime are involved in each terrorist operation. This includes the Supreme Leader, the President, the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Intelligence and the Qods Force of the Revolutionary Guards.

THE MULLAHS' MINISTRY OF INTELLIGENCE

The mullahs' Ministry of Intelligence receives extensive state funding and spearheads terrorist operations at home and abroad. The Foreign Ministry uses diplomatic privilege to move agents sent by the Ministry of Intelligence into countries where terrorist attacks are planned and to coordinate operations out of Iran's embassies.

According to an April 2006 international arrest warrant issued by a Swiss judge, Ali Fallahian, who currently serves as a security advisor to Iran's Supreme Leader, masterminded the assassination of Professor Kazem Rajavi, the representative in Switzerland of the Iranian regime's main opponents, the National Council of Resistance of Iran. Fallahian was Iran's Minister of Intelligence at the time of the assassination.

In the spring of 1997, a Berlin Court ruled that the regime's top leaders, including the Supreme Leader and Fallahian, were part of a "special operations committee" that ordered the murder of four Iranian Kurds in a restaurant in Germany in 1992. Other Iranian dissidents assassinated in Europe include Mohammad-Hossein Naghdi, former diplomat and representative of the NCRI in Italy, who was assassinated in Rome, Zahra Rajabi, member of the NCRI, who was assassinated in Istanbul, and Abdul-Rahman Qassemlou, secretary general of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan, who was assassinated in Vienna. These cases illustrate the role played by the Ministry of Intelligence in terrorist operations in the heart of Europe.

Dissidents inside Iran were also the victim of death squads sent by the mullahs' Ministry of Intelligence. At the end of 1998, a number of intellectuals were brutally murdered in Tehran, in what became known as the "chain murders". A year later, the regime was forced to admit that the ring leader of the murder gang was none other than the Deputy Intelligence Minister, Saeid Emami.

But, the crimes of the mullah's Ministry of Intelligence stretch much further. Suicide attacks incited by Islamic fundamentalist ideology are a hallmark of Iran's terrorism. Two of the earliest and largest ever suicide bomb attacks carried out by agents of the regime were on the US Embassy and then the US Marine Headquarters in the Lebanon in 1983, which killed 258 Americans, including 241 US marines. Again, the mullahs' Ministry of Intelligence was directly involved.

In 2005, the Revolutionary Guards announced the formation of a 'Martyrdom-seekers' garrison, for the training of suicide bombers for operations against "Islam's foes". On 13 February 2006, speaking to a group of suicide volunteers, a senior commander of the Revolutionary Guards and the commander of Martyrdom-seekers Garrison, Mohammad-Reza Jaafari, stated:

"Now that America is after gaining allies against the righteous Islamic Republic and wants to attack our sanctities, members of the martyrdom-seeking garrisons across the world have been put on alert so that if the Islamic Republic of Iran receives the smallest threat, the American and Israeli strategic interests will be burnt down everywhere...The only tool against the enemy that we have with which we can become victorious are martyrdom-seeking operations and, God willing, our possession of faithful, brave, trained and zealous persons will give us the upper hand in the battlefield."

The Ministry of Intelligence was also responsible for the most deadly terrorist attack against Jews, which took place in Buenos Aires in July 1994, when a suicide bomber blew up a community centre killing 85 people and injuring a further 151. This was the worst terrorist attack on Argentine soil. On 9 November 2006, Argentine Federal Judge Rodolfo Canicoba Corral, issued an international warrant for the arrest of former Iranian President Ali Akbar Rafsanjani and eight other senior officials, including the then Minister of Intelligence, on charges of masterminding the attack.

Apart from carrying out its own terrorist operations, the Iranian regime has long used foreign groups in the Middle East and elsewhere to carry out terrorist attacks abroad. These groups, funded and armed by the regime, have operated throughout Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Over the past couple of years, the Iranian regime, and in particular its Ministry of Intelligence and the Revolutionary Guards, have been most active in Iraq and Afghanistan, where terrorists armed and funded by the regime are responsible for widespread killing of civilians and deadly attacks on Coalition forces.

USE OF AGENTS BY THE MULLAHS' MINISTRY OF INTELLIGENCE

The regime and its Ministry of Intelligence have focused considerable resources in recruiting agents in Europe for use against its main opponents and Iranian refugees. This is a matter to which Interior Ministries and intelligence services in Europe have drawn attention.

In its May 2002 annual report, the German Interior Ministry repeated findings made previously that the Iranian regime's Intelligence Ministry had been active in Germany. In its report under the heading, '*People's Mojahedin of Iran, prime target of surveillance operations*', the German Interior Ministry states:

“The Iranian opposition in exile in Germany remains the focus of surveillance activities of the Iranian Intelligence, VAVAK (the Ministry of Intelligence),... which keeps them under systematic surveillance and observation.”

The report also said that the main target of these surveillance and other activities are the NCRI and its largest member organisation, the PMOI, which it described as being active around the world. The report added:

“VAVAK is apparently concentrating its efforts at the moment on neutralising opposition groups and their political activities. VAVAK is directing and financing a misinformation campaign which is also carried out through former opponents of the regime. As in previous years, the Iranian intelligence service is trying to recruit active or former members of opposition groups. This in many cases is done by threats to use force against them or their families living in Iran ... Iranian diplomatic missions and consulates in Germany provide a suitable base for the country’s intelligence services to gather information on Iranian dissidents living in Germany. A large quantity of interesting information can be gathered within the framework of consular services to Iranians. This information is analysed by Iranian secret service agents working under cover in Germany and is enriched with complimentary information. Final decisions on suggestions on recruitment are made by VAVAK’s headquarters in Tehran. Freer travel between Germany and Iran has provided good facilities for VAVAK agents to establish their contacts and recruit agents”.

In its May 2002 annual report, the Dutch Internal Security Service (BVD) exposed the illegal and secret activities of the regime’s Ministry of Intelligence in Europe, and in particular in the Netherlands. The report stated:

“One of the tasks of the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security is to track down and identify those who are in contact with opposition groups abroad. Supporters of the most important opposition group, the People’s Mojahedin, are especially under scrutiny of Iranian Security Services more than any other group.”

The report added that officials of the Iranian regime:

“...exert pressure on Western countries to condemn and ban this group [PMOI]. The Intelligence Ministry tries to gather information on the People’s Mojahedin Organisation [and its members]. They are trying therefore, to destabilise the organisation and demonise the Mojahedin in the host country and thus end their political and social activities. The Mojahedin are aware of these activities...Through the National Council of Resistance of Iran, they inform the authorities of host countries of the secret activities of the Iranian Intelligence Ministry which is trying to spread negative information against them.”

More recent reports record the extensive activities of the Ministry of Intelligence in Europe. European security services have warned agents of the mullahs about their links with the Iranian regime. In February 2000, an agent called **Shams Haeri** was interrogated by the Dutch security services about his contacts with the ministry.

Another agent, **Karim Haqi**, was warned about his activities against Iranian refugees and opponents of the regime living in Europe. In a publication, ‘Peyvand’, which is published by Haqi he wrote:

“On Tuesday, 1 February 2000, around 4:30 pm, a Dutch undercover security agent went to Karim Haqqi’s residence in the Elst Township... After reading a list of names, the agent added: ‘All of you have ties with the Iranian regime and have formed a large network...’ The security agent said: ‘we have sufficient information that you have relations with the [Iranian] regime and it [the regime] pays for your publication. We also know that Mr. Shams Haeri is connected with the [Iranian] Intelligence Ministry and his brother is the contact person...’ The security agent said: ‘we want a calm Netherlands and are not interested in demonstrations and clashes here. It would suit you better to stop this kind of work and go after your normal business and think about the future of your children”

Lord Avebury, who has extensively researched and written about Iran’s misinformation campaigns against the PMOI, said about such individuals in his book ‘Iran: State of Terror’,

“These persons, due to their low or non-existent motivation to continue the struggle and maintain their principles, allowed themselves to be bought by the regime at a later stage. Such people have so far provided the regime’s terrorists in Europe with most extensive intelligence and political services.”

THE MULLAHS’ AGENTS IN BRITAIN

In witness statements provided to a British Court by members of the British Parliamentary Committee for Iran Freedom, MPs and Peers set out the ways in which the regime and its Ministry of Intelligence operate in Britain.

Win Griffiths, a respected former Member of Parliament who has a great deal of expertise in Iranian affairs, set out his own experience and that of his Parliamentary colleagues. Mr. Griffiths explained that whenever a Member of Parliament expresses support for the goals of freedom and a secular democracy for Iran, as espoused by the NCRI and PMOI, they are bombarded with misinformation about Iran’s main opposition. On some occasions MPs and Peers are contacted directly by the Iranian Embassy in London, while more often they are approached by people claiming to be disaffected former members of the PMOI who have been recruited by the regime.

He added that on other occasions, Parliamentarians are approached by organisations that claim to be human rights organisations or NGOs. These front organisations for the Iranian regime include **Nejat Society**, **Peyvand** and **Aawa Association**. He also exposed the details of numerous websites used by the Iranian regime to spread misinformation against the PMOI. The list included:

<http://www.irandidban.com/index-e.asp>

<http://www.iran-interlink.org>

http://www.nejatngo.org/index_en.php

<http://www.theblackfile.com/edefault.asp>

<http://www.habilian.com/default-en.asp>

<http://www.negaheno.net/>

<http://www.banisadr.info/>

<http://hasanzebel.blogfa.com/>

<http://82.182.32.11/falagh/index.php>

<http://www.zarrebin.com/>

<http://www.zarrebin.com/English/default.asp>

<http://www.iranpeyvand.com/index.html>

<http://www.survivorsreport.org/>

<http://www.irane-ayandeh.com/>

<http://www.mehdis.com/>

Massoud and Anne Khodabandeh (nee Singleton)

According to a witness statement filed with a British Court in 2003 by his own brother, Massoud Khodabandeh is an agent of the Ministry of Intelligence who operates in Britain. Massoud Khodabandeh was born in Tehran in 1956 and left Iran for Britain in 1974. In 1981, he joined the Muslim Iranian Students Society, an organisation that was supportive of the PMOI. In 1986, at his own request, he travelled to PMOI camps on the Iran-Iraq border. However, during the Gulf War in 1990 he wrote to the PMOI and admitted taking drugs and saying he had lost his motivation to continue opposing the regime. Although the PMOI played no part in the Gulf War, they were nevertheless in a country that was heavily bombed and so conditions were difficult. The PMOI facilitated his return to Europe.

In 1998, using the cover of attending the International Labour Confederation, he went to Singapore where, according to the witness statement produced by his brother, he met secretly with representatives of the Ministry of Intelligence. It was then that Massoud Khodabandeh was recruited and began to act as an agent of the Ministry of Intelligence. His instructions were to act against the Iranian opposition and refugees living in Britain and other parts of Europe.

Massoud Khodabandeh is married to Anne Khodabandeh (nee Singleton). During the 1980s, Anne Singleton had assisted associations that supported the PMOI. However, for a variety of reasons, she was expelled from these associations. Again, according to the witness statement filed by Massoud Khodabandeh's brother, after their marriage Anne Singleton travelled to Iran regularly. On one occasion in 2001, she stayed in Iran for a couple of months, which is when she received instructions to set up the 'Iran-Interlink' website.

According to the witness statement of Win Griffiths, *"Massoud Khodabandeh and Anne Singleton, through their website, as well as other activities, appear to lead a small number of individuals engaged in an aggressive demonisation campaign against the PMOI"*. The Iranian regime has no credibility whatsoever and so it uses these individuals as a cover for its activities against the opposition and refugees.

In June 2004, Win Griffiths was amazed to see Anne Singleton in the mullahs' notorious Evin prison. In his witness statement to the court, Win Griffiths said about Evin prison: *"Evin prison is recognised as one of the most secretive and brutal prisons in the world. Tens of thousands of political prisoners have been tortured and*

executed in the prison. Evin prison is where Canadian-Iranian photojournalist, Zahra Kazemi met her brutal death in July 2003.”

Mr. Griffiths went on to explain how between 14 and 17 June 2004, he visited Iran on a humanitarian mission to meet two NCRI members who had been kidnapped in Syria and in breach of international law sent to Iran. One of these individuals was Abraham Khodabandeh, the brother of Massoud Khodabandeh.

Mr. Griffiths added, “I was surprised to see Anne Singleton in Evin prison. She even had her young son with her. She was moving around freely and was in direct contact with Iranian officials in the prison. This is surprising when it is a known fact that the relatives of political prisoners find it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to visit their relatives who are incarcerated. Zahra Kazemi’s body was not even returned to her family. Moreover, international human rights organisations are denied access to Evin prison.”

Mr. Griffiths further explained that Abraham Khodabandeh was not comfortable with the presence of Anne Singleton and he could not recall a single instance when they spoke to each other. He concluded: *“Anne Singleton and the Iranian regime had ulterior motives for my visit and hoped to turn it into a propaganda opportunity for the Iranian regime. Following my return from Iran, I had to spend a considerable amount of time rebutting false and misleading reports of my visit made by Anne Singleton, “Iran-Interlink” and “Iran-Didban”.*

Abraham Khodabandeh had also written about contacts made by the Ministry of Intelligence with his mother with the aim of recruiting Massoud Khodabandeh. He stated:

“About 5 years ago the intelligence ministry contacted my mother in Tehran and asked her to contact Massoud and tell him he was pardoned and he could return to Iran. They have nothing to do with him. After some time they contacted my mother again and said we know he has married a foreign national and wants to stay in England. No problem. He can come and see that the situation has changed and go back and live there....

Massoud contacted his mother once and told her that he had financial difficulties and asked her to sell their small home and send the money to him and his mother wanted to do that. But the intelligence ministry contacted the mother and intimidated her and said you want to sell the home and give the money to the PMOI and so she changed her mind and in fact she couldn’t give any money to Massoud.

In the six years since Massoud expulsion from the PMOI, my mother visited Massoud in Britain three times. The first time Massoud was in a very bad financial situation and was living with the help of my own old friend in Newcastle. At that time Anne Singleton was in London. But the third time he had purchased a big home and this is while his wife was not working.

Last year Anne Singleton went to Iran with the excuse of showing her baby to my family and stayed for a month or so. She also visited Khomeini’s tomb.”

In November 2005, through Massoud Khodabandeh and Anne Singleton, the Iranian regime attempted to hold a meeting in Parliament to spread misinformation against the PMOI. They were not ultimately permitted to hold the meeting, because of disquiet amongst Parliamentarians, and moved the meeting to a hotel.

Lord Corbett, the Chairman of the British Parliamentary Committee for Iran Freedom, said in a statement issued on 9 November 2005:

“The British Parliamentary Committee for Iran Freedom has been informed that known agents of the Iranian Intelligence Ministry known as Iran Interlink, a suspected group related to the mullahs’ regime, are supposed to have a conference on November 10, 2005 in Fielden House in Westminster. These people have been dispatched to justify the Iranian regime President’s remarks inciting terrorism ... It is unbelievable that those who use terror inside the country and incite it outside the country, think that any sane person would listen to them...Their hysteric accusations about the People’s Mojahedin Organisation of Iran is indicative of the success of the Iranian resistance in revealing nuclear deception of the mullahs, their responsibility for killing British military forces in Iraq and increasing human rights abuses.”

In March and April 2004, Iran mobilised its agents inside and outside the country to carry out acts against the opposition. Massoud Khodabadeh was one of the agents who travelled to Paris from the UK. He and others travelled to Auvers-sur-Oise, which is where the NCRI’s headquarters are located. Local mayors and town hall officials refused to meet them and told them they had to leave the town and that their activities were illegal. Apart from Massoud Khodabandeh, about ten others had gone to Auvers-sur-Oise that day. They were mainly from the Iranian regime’s embassy in France, although some had been dispatched from Tehran.

Massoud Khodabandeh also wrote in a letter that was published in his own site, Iran Interlink, to Javad Hasheminejad, who is a torturer in the Ministry of Intelligence. In Mr. Khodabandeh apologised for his past involvement with the PMOI and had made an appointment for cooperation with Hasheminejad. Khodabandeh and his wife regularly publish the Iranian regime’s propaganda on their Iran-Interlink website. They are also regularly interviewed by the Iranian regime’s media, which describes them as Iran experts.

In June 2007, Massoud Khodabandeh and his wife Anne Singleton took part in a meeting organised by the Ministry of Intelligence in FIAP hall in Paris along with some thugs and knife-wielders from the regime’s embassy in Paris. Before the meeting began, political refugees and opponents of the regime were attacked. They used knives, tear gas and knuckle-dusters. Some refugees were hospitalised. Three of the regime’s agents were arrested and are being prosecuted. When the French police arrested the three knife-wielders of the regime, Massoud Khodabandeh and Anne Singleton fled.

DISTURBING FOREIGN OFFICE LINKS

In proceedings before the court in 2007, documentation was disclosed evidencing disturbing links between officials at the Foreign Office and agents of the regime, including Massoud Khodabandeh and Anne Singleton.

The links arise from the failed policy of appeasement adopted by the Foreign Office in respect of Iran, which at its peak involved the unjustified proscription of the PMOI. In his witness statement to the Court, Win Griffiths stated:

“It is clear from the content of the emails recently disclosed by the Secretary of State and Anne Singleton’s involvement in the previous proceedings before the Commission, that Massoud Khodabandeh and Anne Singleton have close contacts with the Foreign Office. In light of the fact that the Foreign Office refuses to have any form of contact with Iranian individuals or organisations who express any form of a positive view about the PMOI, the contacts between the Foreign Office and Massoud Khodabandeh/Anne Singleton is peculiar to say the

least, especially if it is correct that these individuals are associated with MOIS [Ministry of Intelligence & Security]...There is no doubt in my mind that both Massoud Khodabandeh and Anne Singleton are running a systematic campaign of falsifying information about the PMOI. This places serious doubt on their credibility and places serious question marks around contacts between these individuals and the Foreign Office.”

In a witness statement filed on behalf of the Foreign Office by Benjamin James Fender in June 2007, Mr Fender accepts that foreign policy considerations played a part in the decision in 2001 to proscribe the PMOI. Moreover, Mr Fender stated that Iranian Ministers and officials have chosen to discuss the PMOI with their counterparts from the UK and other EU Member States on countless occasions. He also admitted that in 2001 the regime lobbied for the PMOI to be proscribed.

At the time when Iran kidnapped British sailors in Iraq, was responsible for the deaths of British troops in Iraq and Afghanistan and was recognised as the most active state sponsor of terrorism, Mr Fender stated in his witness statement: *“For our part, we have taken the view that the fight against terrorism is an area where we share some mutual interests with Iran and offers some potential for cooperation.”*

RECOMMENDATIONS

The BPCIF warns of the threats from the Ministry of Intelligence and its agents in Britain. It urges the government to act upon the resolution passed by the European Union confirming the commitment of all member countries to take “unified action to expel and prevent the entry of Iran’s intelligence and security personnel to member countries of the European Union”.

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