

# Is Ashcroft Protecting Iranian Terrorists?

by Nancy Spannaus

Evidence made available to *EIR* indicates that it is time to investigate Attorney General John Ashcroft for ties to the Iranian terrorist group, the Mujaheddin e-Khalq Organization (MEK). While Muslim groups around the United States are having their bank accounts seized, members arrested, and otherwise being harassed by the Justice Department on the basis of rumors or innuendo, the MEK, an organization which has been on the State Department's Foreign Terrorist Organizations list since 1997, is being permitted to operate openly, down the street from the White House!

The MEK was recently shut down in France with a massive raid, on charges that it was running an international terrorist command post, and was planning terrorist attacks against Iranian embassies in Europe. We don't know if that is true, but throughout its history, which began in the 1960s, the MEK has functioned openly as assassins, allies of Ayatollah Khomeini, and also as military operatives for Saddam Hussein. More recently, some observers and former members have charged that the MEK has become a cult, whose leaders, husband-and-wife team Massoud and Maryam Rajavi, control whom their members marry, and keep their members isolated in their compounds. The group's cult-like nature is more than indicated by members' post-raid attempts at self-immolation in various nations, including at a demonstration at the French Embassy in Washington.

In a September 2002 article entitled "Ashcroft's Baghdad Connection," *Newsweek* pointed out that Attorney General John Ashcroft was one of a number of U.S. Congressmen and Senators who have openly supported the cause of the MEK and its front-group, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI). Ashcroft issued a statement of support which was read at an MEK/NCRI rally in September 2000, and earlier that year, he had written a letter to then-Attorney General Janet Reno protesting the detention of an MEK spokeswoman. Ashcroft called the woman a "highly regarded human-rights activist." An MEK/NCRI spokesman said he had had several meetings with Ashcroft's Senate office, and that he viewed Ashcroft as a "supporter." In December 2001, the FBI raided his home, seizing boxes of documents, including files on MEK's dealings with members of Congress. One of the files was labelled "ASHCROFT."

Recent support for the MEK has also come from such leading neo-conservatives as Daniel Pipes and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy's Patrick Clawson, who, in the immediate aftermath of this spring's assault on Iraq, called



*Fanatical Congressmen like Sam Brownback (R-Kan.), and the Pentagon's intelligence unit—run by Undersecretaries Douglas Feith (left) and William Luti—are demanding the U.S. support the anti-Iran terrorist group MeK, who were Saddam Hussein's ally!*

for the U.S. military and intelligence community to maintain the MEK as an organized group in camps in Iraq, as a way of intimidating and gaining leverage over Tehran. Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.), a leading advocate of war against Iran, has taken a high-profile stance in protection of the MEK as well, issuing a public letter attacking the French crackdown.

After an initial announcement that the U.S. Army had reached a ceasefire with the MEK, such a scandal was created, that Washington was forced to change tactics.

But apparently, that was only a temporary retreat. According to a well-placed Washington source, the Office of Special Plans at the Pentagon—the nest of intelligence manipulators run by avowed Leo Straussian Abram Shulsky—has come up with a proposal for the U.S. government to begin covertly backing the MEK. The Washington source indicated that former Director of Central Intelligence and leading neo-con James Woolsey has been functioning as a Washington advocate for various Iranian opposition groups, and is working as a consultant to the OSP on such matters.

Pursuant to such an attempt, it is reported that Doug Feith, the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, and the Defense Department official who created the OSP, recently took the scheme for using the MEK to President Bush's National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, and, according to our source, "she laughed him out of the room."

But, the neo-cons persist in promoting the use of the MEK, despite major exposés of the group's cult-like nature, and its terrorist past and links. These ideologues are reportedly supported by up to 100 Congressmen, who are ready to sign on to any cockamamie scheme "against" the Iranian government.

When State Department spokesman Philip Reeker was asked on June 17, if the United States was going to take action against the MEK terrorists, who are operating openly in Washington, despite its being listed on the State Department's terrorist list, Reeker repeatedly told his questioners to ask that question at the Justice Department. It's not a bad suggestion.