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“Middle East in Transition: Prospects for Iran” - Washington, February 19, 2011

Former top US Government officials support change in Iran, protection of Camp Ashraf, de-listing of PMOI/MEK

General Peter Pace

*Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
(2005-2007)*

Some say removing PMOI from terror list would signal to the Iranian regime that we desire changes in regime. My response: Sounds good to me

Lee Hamilton

*Former Chairman, US House
Committee on Foreign Affairs*

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*Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (1997-
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Iran's current regime is clearly a government that needs to change. The MeK provide hope for the Iranian people



From left: Dell Dailey, Bill Richardson, Lee Hamilton, Robert Torricelli, General Hugh Shelton (at the podium), Michael Mukasey, General Michael Hayden, General Peter Pace, and Walter Slocombe

Michael Mukasey

Former US Attorney General

What is necessary is that we offer support and encouragement and that we stand with those who stand for freedom and demand regime change.

Bill Richardson

*Former Energy Secretary, US
Ambassador to UN (2005-2006)*

Iranian regime is not interested in negotiating... So there's no reason to pursue what is called the dialog for now

General Michael Hayden

*Director, Central Intelligence Agency
(2006-2009)*

The government in Iran is actually incapable of stopping the nuclear trajectory... the regime behaviors give us little hope for a changed relationship

“Middle East in Transition: Prospects for Iran” - Washington, February 19, 2011

Former top US Government officials support change in Iran, protection of Camp Ashraf, de-listing of PMOI/MEK

In a major conference in Washington on Saturday, February 19, former US administrations officials and policymakers addressed the current situation in the Middle East and North Africa and expressed support for democratic change in Iran. While expressing concern against threats posing Camp Ashraf, they underscored the need to de-list the PMOI in the United States as a force for change in Iran. Speakers called on the US to stand alongside the Iranian people and their just demands for democracy.

Participants in the conference included distinguished experts on international law, terrorism, foreign policy, national security, and diplomatic representatives from Europe and the Middle East as well as experts from think tank foundations.

The conference was chaired by Bob Torricelli, former Democratic member of the US Senate. Excerpts of speeches follow:

Robert Torricelli

Former Senator

The end of Tehran regime is already sealed

In his opening remarks he said, “I will confess to you during those years the possibility of real political change in Iran, the ending of that tyrannical regime seemed unlikely but the wheels of history turn. A rising tide of human expectation and thirst for freedom is now approaching the shores of Iran. What once seemed impossible somehow begins to look inevitable.”

Before inviting the first speaker he stressed, “We as Americans have a role. It is at a minimum to correct a great injustice. We all understand the truth. The PMOI was placed on a terrorist list as a strategy of appeasement towards Tehran... It failed and it is time to end it.”

“We all have our roles in this struggle. For some people it will mean enormous sacrifices. What happened in Egypt will not happen as easily in Tehran. It may be inevitable but lives will be lost. No one asked us to lose our lives. Only to stand up for truth and to correct this injustice,” he said.

Concluding the conference he reiterated, “The end of the regime in Tehran is already sealed. The heroes that will take them down are probably only known to themselves but they are out there on the streets or in universities or, as we speak, meeting in basements across Iran. Some things never get held back; Human freedom. The Persian people have been a great people through all human experience. This nightmare is almost over.” He closed the session by saying, “I am not pleased with what my country has done with this terrorist list. It is not right, not fair, and it is not just.”



Ambassador Dell Dailey

Former Coordinator for Counterterrorism, US Dept. of State

US must revoke PMOI's terror designation

The regional actors, European Union, United Nations, United States need to put pressure on the Iraqi government to treat the Camp Ashraf residents with dignity, care, restraint and respect.

PMOI has the contacts, incites, cultural awareness and a proven past record of providing the United States and hence the world with previously unknown information about Iran.

This effectively reliable source of information should be used to the maximum by the nations that are threatened by Iran. No other internal or external organization has been this productive in obtaining such information. We should not let it fall idle. To best make this Iranian opposition effective the United States must revoke the terror designation which is now in effect.

The use of the Iran opposition through the PMOI is a powerful counterbalance to Iran. It has already shown its success. This opposition is an important target of the Iranian mullahs.

The PMOI and the Iranian opposition are the best instruments of power to get inside the Iran mullahs and unseat them.

the Iraqi government continues with the unacceptable raids into Camp Ashraf. They do so because the United States has identified the residents as terrorists and the Iraqi government justifies treating terrorists the way the United States thinks they should be treated.



Bill Richardson

Former Energy Secretary, US Ambassador to the UN (2005-2006)

The first step has to be delisting PMOI

The Istanbul talks showed that the Iranian regime is not interested in negotiating. So there's no reason to pursue what is called the

dialog for now. I see it as pointing to our policymakers that the negotiations have not worked.

The fact that the PMOI has provided intelligence information to the United States, valuable on nuclear issues in Iran, and so the first step has to be the delisting and that's where I hope we can all work together and make this happen soon.

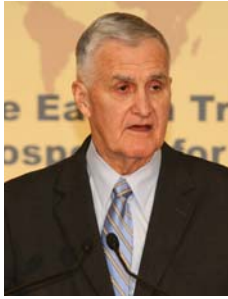
This is a movement that doesn't want weapons. This is a movement that just wants to be allowed to roam, to do your democratic thing.

Have you ever heard of a movement that doesn't ask for money? I haven't. You're the first.

Things are going our way. The Middle East situation, the Istanbul talks, Secretary Clinton's great speech on Iran, more people knowing about this issue. So it has to end up working well.

General Hugh Shelton

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1997-2001)



Lee Hamilton

Member of Congress (1965-1999), served as Chair of Select Committee on Intelligence, Select Committee to Investigate Covert Arms Transactions with Iran, and Committee on Foreign Affairs



Michael Mukasey

Former US Attorney General

The Iranian rulers are fearful that the United States would start siding with the organized Iranian opposition.



PMOI is the organization that mullahs fear... PMOI is obviously the way that Iran needs to go

The Iranian people cannot be worse off than they are with the current Iranian regime. Today Iran suffers from a regime that is a mixture of theocracy and autocracy and that continues to defy the international community. I believe that the Iranian people both inside and outside the country are in favor of change and not tomorrow, but today.

The largest organized resistance to Iran's current regime has been put on the list - the MeK. Ambassador Dailey, when he was serving the office, recommended they be taken off. His recommendation was not followed which in my opinion was a mistake that we should rectify immediately.

Yet by placing the MeK on the FTO list we have weakened the support of the best organized internal resistance group to the most terrorist oriented anti-western world anti-democratic regime in the region. That's a disgrace.

On top of that we stood by as the Iraqis invaded Camp Ashraf as they killed unarmed Iranian civilians living there, individuals that had been promised protection by the United States, individuals that had supplied us with invaluable information during the toughest days of the Iraq war.

Iran's current regime is clearly a government that needs to change. The MeK is the organization that they fear. When you look at what the MeK stands for, when they are antinuclear, separation of church and state, individual rights, the MeK is obviously the way that Iran needs to go.

The MeK is not a perfect organization. They've made mistakes. So have we, but I think the MeK provide hope for the Iranian people that far exceeds anything we can offer excluding direct intervention at this point.

Iraqi government must protect Ashraf residents, US must insist upon it

I don't know of any country that has caused us more heartburn, more anguish over a longer period of time than Iran. All the world today is very much focused on what it's planning to do with regard to nuclear materials.

We must insist that the Iraqi government live up to its commitment to protect those who live in Ashraf... The safety and the security of those people must be assured and the United States must insist upon it.

I think it's very important that we particularly tighten sanctions on Iran with regard to financial flows and institutions. These sanctions coupled with covert actions, have had an impact in delaying the nuclear program in Iran.

The next thing we have to do is support the opposition in Iran.

The United States must see this as an opportunity to stand up for our core values in this country and we must support those people in Iran who seek freedom and democracy and respect for human rights.

The best chance for the United States to move forward in its relationship with Iran is to support the opposition in Iran in very specific ways. Removing barriers to the opposition acquiring the latest technology in, in getting the word out throughout the country might be another and we should never let up on our support for human rights.

I believe that the United States understands that the ingredients in Iran today are there for the support of change. They have a frustrated, young, well educated, not employed, technically savvy, restless group of people in that country. Change will come to Iran. It is only a matter of time. The future of Iran is to be decided by the Iranian people.

I do not understand why the United States has kept the MeK on the terrorist list for all of these years. I have had access to classified information... I simply do not understand, but I am not aware of any facts that require the MeK to be on the terrorist list.

With Teheran trying to exploit the situation in Mid-East, US should empower PMOI

Even before Iranians went into the streets the mullahs executed people in record numbers and called for the execution of anyone who dissents, in particular they have executed several members of Iran's main opposition, the PMOI, who were involved in last year's antigovernment demonstrations in Tehran and had relatives at Camp Ashraf where residents are holding out despite the efforts of Iran and its collaborators among the Iraqi authorities to drive the residents back to Iran or to destroy them altogether.

We need to overcome our own hypocrisy inherent in our policy regarding the Iranian opposition. The State Department maintains the PMOI on the list of terrorist organizations. That has the effect of pushing Iran's largest and most organized opposition group which is feared by the ruling mullahs out of the political debate.

As a result, in essence for the past 14 years the bulk of the resources of the group has been consumed not in fighting the Iranian regime but in fighting the consequences of the terrorist designation to get itself delisted.

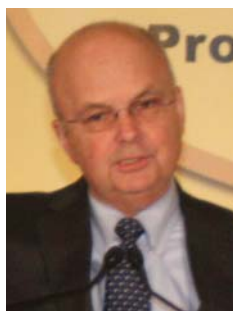
In other words, the Iranian regime now has the Great Satan working for it even as the Iranian people are in the streets demanding regime change.

As you are aware, the approximately 3400 members of PMOI who now live at Ashraf in Iraq close to the border of Iran are in a precarious position.

Iraqi forces have placed at the gates of the camp some 180 loudspeakers that go 24 hours a day to harass the residents day and night to prevent them from sleeping.

With Tehran trying to exploit the situation in the Middle East, America should empower the main Iranian opposition as the Iranian people are preparing for further antigovernment demonstrations.

What is necessary and to make it clear in word and deed that we offer support and encouragement and that we stand with those who stand for freedom and demand regime change.



General Michael Hayden
Director of the Central Intelligence Agency from 2006 to 2009

I think the first thing is that Iran is on a path to nuclear capability. The second truth is that there is the very real possibility that this government in Iran is actually incapable of stopping that trajectory. Recall after the Obama administration came in

Iranian government approved at highest level to facilitate killing of American and coalition soldiers in Iraq

we offered the Iranian government an arrangement and that deal had nothing to do with stopping the centrifuges spinning which used to be the American red line. We had moved our red line dramatically, had not challenged their right to spin centrifuges. They were unable to pick up what was I think by any objective measure a powerful concession.

A third truism is regime behaviors in a whole bunch of other areas give us little hope for a changed relationship with this group, well known support for Syria, Hezbollah, Hamas. How about this? We were talking about the darkest days in Iraq, the IED's which were designed by the Iranian regime. It was the policy of the Iranian government approved at the highest level of that government to facilitate the killing of American and coalition soldiers in Iraq, period.

I was often asked in government if the Iranians get a weapon could we deter their using it? I think if you are talking about deterrence here, we're not talking about deterring Iran. We're talking about Iran deterring us.

Which brings us to the fourth truism, how do we deal with the current events? How brutal is this regime? Our comments now about Iran, it's about Iranian behavior towards the demonstrators.

That leads to some very real questions. If a nuclear Iran is unacceptable and there are three successive American presidents who have said that's unacceptable, if it is unacceptable, if Iranian decision-making is unable to stop this process, if the opportunity for regime transformation is allowed to pass then in 2012 or 2013 or 2014 or 2015 and whoever is President at that point has only two choices: Do something or do nothing, and at that point those are both very bad.



Walter Slocombe
Under Secretary of Defense for Policy from 1994 to 2001

US has made a commitment to protect people of Ashraf. We have to ensure that commitment is met

Nuclear weapons are a grave threat but the military option to stop them is immensely unattractive.

Negotiations, which were to be fair, have not been successful. Sanctions have some hope but for a variety of reasons they were a long shot.

This regime is incapable of abandoning its nuclear weapons ambitions voluntarily something has to change inside Iran and the best thing for that is a change which is produced by the people of Iran, and the United States cannot produce that change itself.

That means it has to happen from inside Iran. But while the United States can't lead, it must, I think it was Governor Richardson who said it has to be on the right side and show that it's on the right side.

General Peter Pace
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 2005 until 2007



The overriding reason to be here this morning for each of us is our passionate desire to see the Iranian people live their lives the way they want to in freedom.

Given the definition of threat, of, A) capability and B) intent, is the current regime in Iran a

I have found no convincing reason for my government to continue listing PMOI

threat? Absolutely.

Look in the region. They provide weapons and instruction and sometimes personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan specifically to make it difficult for the governments in both of those countries to grow their democracies, specifically to kill Americans and our coalition partners, specifically to impose their will on their neighbors.

So there is a very real threat to the region, to Europe and to the United States in both the current capabilities and the capabilities that are on the drawing board.

What are our possible responses? First, there is the possibility of a military response. It is the least best option. Next are negotiations. The entire Iranian nuclear program has been undertaken during negotiations. It is important to continue to talk but I don't see where a nation, if it has, determined that it will have nuclear weapons would be dissuaded by negotiations.

That leaves why you are all in this room. Uprising of the people.

I try to understand when I knew I was going to be part of this panel today why is it that my government continues to list the MeK as a terrorist organization. I have not found the reason that convinces me.

The ten points that were read today are wonderful. I would support each of those points if I were an Iranian citizen and I certainly do as a citizen. Some folks said to me this week if the United States government took the MeK off the terrorist list it would be a signal to the Iranian regime that we had changed from a desire to see changes in regime behavior to a desire to see changes in regime. My response to that is: Sounds good to me.