



Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center

Spotlight on Iran

February 2010—Esfand 1388
Week of February 25-March 4, 2010
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Iran accuses US of supporting terrorism following Rigi's arrest

The arrest of Jondollah leader Abdolmalek Rigi and his admission of alleged contacts with US intelligence services have been used this week by conservative elements in Iran to once again lash out against the US and accuse it of supporting anti-Iranian terrorism.

In a public announcement aired on Iranian TV last weekend, Rigi admitted to contacts with the US. Following Barack Obama's victory in the US presidential race, Rigi related, he was contacted by the US intelligence services in Pakistan and offered to cooperate in exchange for

financial and military assistance. They even offered him a base near the Afghanistan-Iran border to carry on with his operations. Rigi further stated that the American elements who he had met with indicated to him that Iran was a top priority for the US. However, being unable to carry out a military assault on Iran, the US is interested in assisting elements able to act against Iran and pose difficulties to the Tehran regime (Press TV, February 26).

In response to Rigi's admission, senior Iranian officials strongly criticized the US, accusing it of supporting terrorism. Speaking at a Majles meeting held Sunday (February 28), Majles speaker Ali Larijani said that Iranian authorities had to investigate Rigi's contacts with the US and NATO as well as with countries in Europe and the Middle East. Larijani noted that Rigi's admission corroborated intelligence information which Iran had on the close cooperation between the Jondollah terrorist organization and the US, and that the US had to provide explanations on that issue (IRNA, February 28).

Majles member Parviz Sorouri also lashed out against the US, saying that Rigi's admission exposed the hypocritical face of the US, proving that it had no intention of fighting terrorism but rather create terrorism in the region. In an interview granted by the conservative Majles member to the IRNA news agency, Sorouri said that Rigi's arrest was a shock to the West, proving that it was a big mistake on the part of Western countries to exploit him for anti-Iranian purposes. He added that the US sought to provoke differences of opinion between the countries of the region and to create a rift between Shi'ites and Sunnis through its support of terrorist elements (IRNA, February 27).

Rigi's admission of cooperating with the US also evoked strong reactions from the conservative press. An editorial published earlier this week by the daily Keyhan says that the admission shows that despite the US claims of opposing terrorism, it is in fact the main force supporting it and providing it with assistance. Iran must bring the US support of the Jondollah terrorist organization to the attention of the international community and take legal action against it. However, it is unable to do so seeing as Western powers, specifically the US, control the international judicial bodies. The international system, the UN, and the international judicial bodies operate in a way that does not permit action against the overt and covert crimes of Western countries, which is evident in the failure of those bodies to take legal action against Israel for its crimes against the Palestinians in the past several decades. In light of that reality, Iran is faced with difficulties when it comes to acting on the legal front against the US; however, it must nevertheless use all of its diplomacy, law, and intelligence systems to present its allegations against the US on various international forums, including the Islamic Conference Organization and the UN General Assembly (Keyhan, February 28).



From the Talkhandak blog, February 25

The daily Jomhuri-ye Eslami also accused the US of supporting terrorism. According to an editorial published by the conservative daily, Rigi's admissions demonstrate once again how the US meddles in Iran's internal affairs, being yet another testimony of its crimes against Iran. The regional developments over the past eight years indicate that not only does the US not fight terrorism, it is the leader of state-sponsored terrorism. The daily also made accusations against Arab intelligence services, specifically the Saudi intelligence services, claiming they supported Jondollah as well. The emergency meeting summoned by Saudi top intelligence and defense officials following Rigi's arrest demonstrates their concern over his admissions, said the article. The daily advised the leaders of Middle Eastern countries to learn the lesson from the failure of using terrorism against the Islamic republic, to end their support of US-led terrorism, and to cooperate with Iran in the fight against it (Jomhuri-ye Eslami, February 27).

Conservatives-only press: reformist daily E'temad joins list of periodicals closed down by Iran's authorities

This week, the Press Monitoring Council in the Ministry of Islamic Guidance announced the closing down of the reformist daily E'temad, affiliated with opposition leader Mehdi Karoubi. In an interview granted to the ILNA news agency, the daily's editor-in-chief Behruz Behzadi confirmed that the periodical had been closed down on the basis of a letter sent to the editorial staff on March 1 by the Press Monitoring Council.

The letter stated that the daily violated section 6 of the press law, which is why it was decided to close it down. Section 6 lists 12 various offenses for which a periodical may be closed down, including publishing articles contradicting the principles of Islam or compromising the principles of the Islamic republic, publishing images which contradict public

ethics, causing disagreements between various segments of society, encouraging activities which contradict state security and interests, publishing classified information, offending Islam, the Supreme Leader, and top clerics, publishing accusations against official authorities, organizations, or institutions or offending individuals and institutions by publishing images and cartoons, citing and translating the views of anti-Islamic publications and organizations, spreading rumors, and publishing reports which contradict the principles of the constitution. The letter sent to the E'temad staff did not specify which offenses were committed by the daily (ILNA, March 1).

At the same time, the Press Monitoring Council revoked the license of the women's weekly Irandokht, which was directed by Mohammad-Hossein Karoubi, Mehdi Karoubi's son.

In the past eight months, over ten periodicals affiliated with the reformist camp have been closed down in Iran, including the dailies Sarmayeh, E'temad-e Melli, and Hayat-e Now.

Politically-motivated technological independence: "Iranian Google" to launch soon

The director of one of Iran's software companies announced this week that Iranian experts would soon launch an independent Iranian search engine and e-mail service. In an interview to the Shebke-ye Iran news website, Mehdi Farshbaf said that launching an "Iranian Google" was one of the top priorities in the development of Iranian "electronic culture" and information technology, and that Iranian IT experts were currently working on the development of software that would make it possible to start using the service in the near future (www.inn.ir, February 28).

In the past several weeks, several news websites have reported that Iran intended to launch an "Iranian Google" and completely block access to Google over authorities' claims that Google services were used for the reformist opposition's struggle. The conflict between the Iranian authorities and Google reached new heights several weeks ago, when the Google Earth service showed satellite images from the Revolution Day processions held on February 11 in the Azadi square in Tehran. The images suggested that the number of demonstrators who had come to show support for the government was much smaller than what the authorities published. And in June, the launch of Google Farsi, a service for translating web pages from English to Persian, caused concern among Iranian authorities.

In recent months, the authorities have occasionally blocked access to Google services, including the e-mail service Gmail. According to reformist opposition figures, the blocking was designed to prevent demonstrators and opposition activists from using those services.



Cartoon by Nikahang Kowsar, Rooz Online, September 18, 2007

On the backdrop of reports on the intention to operate "national" e-mail services and search engine, the Mehr news agency strongly questioned Iran's ability of finding a worthy substitute for Google and Yahoo. According to Mehr, while technically feasible, it would require considerable expenses and providing users with advanced technology that is likely beyond Iran's capabilities at this point. Furthermore, the social networks offered by Western companies which also operate e-mail services provide web surfers with new opportunities that an Iranian national e-mail service would be unable to provide. According to the assessment of an IT expert interviewed by Mehr, the plan to operate an "Iranian Google" will fail and no Iranian e-mail service will be able to compete successfully with Western companies that provide similar services. He advised the government to settle for operating limited e-mail services for the use of the various government ministries (Mehr, March 1).

New initiatives to reinforce gender segregation

In the past week, Iranian media reported on several new initiatives designed to reinforce gender segregation in Iranian society. A senior Ministry of Science official announced last week that his ministry was looking into a plan to establish single-gender universities (for women or men only) across Iran. He said that his ministry had so far received requests for licenses for two such universities in Tehran and two universities in other provinces. He noted that the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution had already approved the establishment of two women's universities in Tehran and that the Ministry of Science was examining requests to establish such universities elsewhere (Alef, February 28).

The debate on gender segregation in Iran's universities has resumed in the last several months. Last November, two senior officials spoke in favor of gender segregation: the

Supreme Leader's deputy representative on research in universities and the Supreme Leader's representative in Khaje Nasir Toosi University. Reformist elements, on the other hand, criticized the proposal, claiming that it was both impossible and undesirable to separate men and women everywhere. It should be noted that over 60 percent of Iran's entire student population are women. In recent years the Majles has discussed a bill to impose quotas for women admitted to some university faculties to maintain a balanced ratio between men and women.

At the same time, Energy Minister Majid Namjou announced this week that women employed at the Energy Ministry would soon be working from home. Speaking at a meeting of the Energy Ministry advisors on women's affairs, the minister said that his ministry had taken a number of steps to allow women to work from home and improve their work conditions (Khabar Online, February 27). Zahra Sharafadin, a member of the center for women's affairs in the president's office, also spoke in favor of women staying at home. She said that the number of women in management positions was not an indicator of Iran's level of progress, and that measuring the success of a society by the presence of women in management positions was a Western concept. She further noted that the housewife should be presented as a role model and women should be encouraged to take a major part in running the house and the family. Non-observance of modesty, extra-marital men-women relations, and obscene messages sent by women to their male co-workers are the main contributing factors to the increase of divorce rate in Iranian society, Sharafadin said (Mehr, March 2).

In recent years, conservative circles in Iran have called to reinforce gender segregation in public places, including hospitals, public parks, public transportation, and education institutions.

Meanwhile, new dress models for working women have been introduced in Tehran this week:



Pictures of the week: "National and Islamic Unity for the Future of Palestine" conference in Tehran

