

## When Is A Terrorist No Longer A Terrorist?

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Theme: [Terrorism](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [IRAN: THE NEXT WAR?](#)

Question: When is a terrorist a terrorist?

Answer: When the US government says so.

When the Mujhadeen in Afghanistan were assassinating members of their government and the Russian troops dispatched to support it, they were, in Washington's view, freedom fighters, even as their enemies branded them terrorists.

When they turned against an Afghan government imposed by the United States or revolted against a US invasion, they were once again branded terrorists.

When armed groups battling Gadaffi's government were supported by NATO, they were called freedom fighters. When some recently and allegedly turned violently against the United States which is now dominating Libyan politics, they are once again castigated as terrorists.

And now, the United States Government through a decision by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has decided that the Iranian group Mujahedeen Khalq, or People's Mujahedeen, that had been on the US State Department's terrorist list for years, has now been taken off the list.

That means they will no longer face financial and legal sanctions.

One day they were feared terrorists, the next day they were not. The "bad guys" became "good guys" with the swipe of a pen.

The New York Times says this feat was accomplished through what it describes as an "extraordinary" lobbying effort costing millions over many years.

Reports the Times: "The group, known as the M.E.K., carried out terrorist attacks in the 1970s and 1980s, first against the government of the Shah of [Iran](#) and later against the clerical rulers who overthrew him. Several Americans were among those killed. In the 1980s, it allied with Saddam Hussein, who permitted it to operate from Camp Ashraf.

But by most accounts, the M.E.K. has not carried out violent attacks for many years. While it is described by some critics as cult-like and unpopular with Iranians both inside and outside the country, the group has been able to gather large crowds at rallies in the United States and Europe to press its bid to reverse the United States' terrorist designation, imposed in 1997."

The decision comes just before an October 1 cut off date ordered by a Federal appeals court

US News explains: “As recently as 2007, a [State Department report](#) warned that the M.E.K., retains “the capacity and will” to attack “Europe, the Middle East, the United States, Canada, and beyond.

The M.E.K., which calls for an overthrow of the Iranian government and is considered by many Iranians to be a cult, once fought for Saddam Hussein and in the 1970s was responsible for bombings, attempted plane hijackings, and political assassinations. It was listed as a foreign terrorist organization in 1997.

If the State Department does decide to delist M.E.K., whose name means “People’s Holy Warriors of Iran,” it will be with the blessing of dozens of congressmen.”

No less than 99 members of Congress—Democrats and Republican alike—signed to a Congressional resolution to take the “holy warriors” off the list.

Just last week at a rally in Paris, none other than former House speaker and hyper conservative Republican presidential candidate New Gingrich, now scurrying to pay off his campaign debts, was caught on camera bowing to the French based movement’s leader Maryam Rajavi.

Top lobbying firms have been paid high fees for rounding up support for M.E.K

US News explains: “Victoria Toensing of DiGenova & Toensing, a lobbying shop famous for its involvement in the Bill Clinton-Monica Lewinsky scandal, was paid \$110,000 in 2011 to lobby for the resolution. The firm Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld dedicated five lobbyists to getting signatures for the resolution, and was paid \$100,000 in 2012 and \$290,000 in 2011 to do so. Paul Marcone and Association similarly lobbied for the resolution, and received \$5,000 in 2010 and \$5,000 in 2011 for its efforts.”

Glenn Greenwald has reported on Salon, “That close association on the part of numerous Washington officials with a Terrorist organization has led to a [formal federal investigation](#) of those officials,,,, paid MEK shill Howard Dean (a former Democratic liberal presidential candiate) actually [called on](#) its leader to be recognized as President of Iran while paid MEK shill Rudy Giuliani has continuously hailed the group’s benevolence.”

The Pro-publica not for profit media organization has also revealed that a very prominent liberal journalist known for his Watergate reporting was paid to speak up for M.E.K

“On a Saturday afternoon last February, journalist Carl Bernstein got up on stage at the grand ballroom of the [Waldorf Astoria](#) in Manhattan and delivered a speech questioning the listing of an obscure Iranian group called the Mujahadin-e Khalq (MEK) on the U.S. government list of officially designated foreign terrorist organizations.

The speech, before a crowd an organizer put at 1,500, made Bernstein one of the few journalists who has appeared at events in a years-long campaign by MEK supporters to free the group from the official terrorist label and the legal sanctions that come with it. He told ProPublica that he was paid \$12,000 for the appearance but that, “I was not there as an advocate.”

Bernstein told the crowd that, “I come here as an advocate of the best obtainable version of the truth” and as “someone who believes in basic human rights and their inalienable

status.” He also challenged the State Department, saying that if the agency “has evidence that the MEK is a terrorist organization, have a show-cause hearing in court, let them prove it.”

Listening to the talk was a bi-partisan group of prominent pols including ex-New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, former congressman Patrick Kennedy, D-R.I., former Attorney General Michael Mukasey, and former House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-III.

This is a line up that is hard to rent, much less buy, but M.E.K and its well connected lobbyists have shown how money makes things happen in Washington.

It shows how porous the terrorism issue too is subject to how changes in political fashions, and how little the media knows or remembers and how open it is to being influenced by insiders, especially when there’s money to be paid for a few hours work.

It also shows the politics of provocation in action, part of a larger strategy of escalating tensions. The tactics range from sending a naval armada to menace Iran, perhaps in hopes of staging a contemporary “Tokin Gulf” incident in which any Iranian defensive maneuver –or attack by “militants” could be projected as an act of aggression justifying air strikes and drone attacks.

Even the decision to refuse visas to Iranians coming to a UN meeting seems part of the same strategy designed to show critics in Israel, and Republicans that the US is ready to get tough.

The delisting of an Iranian terror group fits right in to an approach that could lead to a “October Surprise” designed to get voters to rally behind the flag and their Commander in Chief.

*News Dissector **Danny Schechter** blogs at [www.newsdissector.net](http://www.newsdissector.net). His latest books are *Blogothon* and *Occupy: Dissecting Occupy Wall Street*. He hosts a show on Progressive Radio Network (PRN.fm) Part of this piece appeared on PressTV.com Comments to [dissector@mediachannel.org](mailto:dissector@mediachannel.org)*

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