

Iran's Dialogue of Deceit

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Articles & Testimony

On June 17, European foreign ministers agreed to fast-track a new trade pact with Iran. European Union officials such as External Affairs Commissioner Chris Patten lobbied hard for the deal, arguing, "There is more to be said for trying to engage and to draw these societies into the international community than to cut them off." It took less than a week for the European Union to have egg on its face.

On June 23, Copenhagen's TV2 reported that four Iranian intelligence agents had sought asylum in Denmark. The four arrived with diplomatic passports on flights from Ankara and Frankfurt.

During their debriefings, the Iranian intelligence agents told Denmark's Police Surveillance Agency (PET) of Iran's decision to assassinate the US-based Reza Pahlavi, son of the late shah and leading Iranian opposition figure; London-based journalist Ali Nourizadeh; and an unnamed manager of an Iranian opposition Internet site.

Such threats are no mere exaggeration.

In 1993, an Iranian death squad assassinated Iranian dissidents in a Berlin cafe. After a lengthy trial, a German judge found that a council consisting of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Intelligence chief Ali Fallahian, and Foreign Minister Ali Velayati ordered the hit. On June 24, citing Swedish and Danish intelligence, Denmark's daily Politiken reported that the Islamic Republic's agents and embassy personnel now regularly monitor Iranian dissidents throughout Scandinavia.

Many European officials like to work under the illusion that the Islamic Republic is moderating, but the truth is actually quite the opposite.

Proponents of critical dialogue with Iran base their optimism upon the lofty rhetoric of officials such as Iranian President Muhammad Khatami, often labeled a reformer by the Western press. Much of what Khatami says does sound good. Addressing the Italian parliament in March 1999, he declared, "Tolerance and exchange of views are the fruits of cultural richness, creativity, high-mindedness and harmony. One must recognize this opportunity."

Unfortunately, like Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat, Khatami reserves his conciliatory tone for gullible foreign diplomats, parliamentarians, and academics. He speaks with a far different voice in Farsi to his domestic audience. In a televised address on October 24, 2000, for example, he declared, "In the Koran, God commanded to kill the wicked and those who do not see the rights of the oppressed... If we abide by human laws, we should mobilize the whole Islamic World for a sharp confrontation with the Zionist regime... If we abide by the Koran, all of us should mobilize to kill."

The 2001 State Department's annual Patterns of Global Terrorism once again labeled Iran as "the most active supporter of state terrorism."

Following the Karine-A incident, there is no question that Iran actively bankrolls Palestinian rejectionist groups. On June 8, three days after an Islamic Jihad-claimed bombing killed 17 on a public bus near the Megiddo junction in Israel, the Iranian government announced a 70-percent increase in allocation for the group. US intelligence officials

reported in April that Iran's annual contribution to Lebanese Hizbullah now exceeds \$100 million. Two months after the September 11 attacks in New York and Washington, Khatami openly endorsed anti-Israel terrorism, telling Iranian television, "It is now clear that the joint position of Iran and Syria against the Zionist regime was the correct one."

Iran continues to host terrorist mastermind Imad Mughniyeh, director of Hizbullah special operations and chief suspect in a series of car bombings, kidnappings, and hijackings that resulted in several hundred deaths in the 1980s. While the European Union continues to curiously insist that Hizbullah is not a terror group, Mughniyeh is chief suspect in the 1994 bombing of the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires that killed 92.

According to a report in yesterday's New York Times, the Iranian government went far beyond harboring Mughniyeh in its involvement with the 1994 bombing. Citing the secret court testimony of Abdolghassem Mesbahi, a high-level defector from the Iranian intelligence service, the report reveals that the bombing was planned by officials in Iran's embassy in Argentina and in Iran's intelligence agency. Mesbahi further testifies that Iran paid former Argentinian president Carlos Saul Menem \$10 million to cover up Iran's involvement.

The State Department report errs, though, in documenting only Iran's anti-Israel terror. While annihilation of the "cancerous tumor" of Israel remains a pillar of the Islamic Republic, Iranian terror reverberates throughout the region.

Last February, Jordan's King Abdullah II presented the White House with evidence that Iran had sponsored at least 17 attempts to launch rockets and mortars from Jordan into Israel. Jordan sought American help against the instability wrought by Iranian agents inside the moderate Hashemite kingdom. That same month, Al-Sharq al-Awsat reported that Iran and Libya had agreed to cooperate in surface-to-surface missile production. Iran reportedly pledged to help Libya develop a 1,500-kilometer-range missile, capable of hitting not only Israel, but also most of Southern Europe. It's good to know Iran is using the proceeds of European trade so well. Increasingly unpopular at home, the Iranian government is actively seeking to subvert Turkey. Despite continued economic and political woes, secular Turkey remains far more successful than the neighboring theocracy, and so poses an unacceptable ideological challenge to the Islamic Republic.

Teheran has responded by increasingly supporting anti-Turkish terror. In December 2000, for example, Iran allowed followers of Metin Kaplan, the so-called "Caliph of Cologne," to transit Iran and settle in the mountains along the Iran-Iraq border. In a phone interview with Turkish television, Kaplan outlined his vision for the future of Turkey: "We have declared jihad. Everybody who opposed Islam and an Islamic state will die."

Likewise, Iran has allowed free transit for al-Qaida-trained fighters from the virulently anti-Western Jund al-Islam, currently based in Iraqi Kurdistan, flush against the Iranian border. The group's platform called for death to "the blasphemers and the secularists," and it has shown itself willing to back rhetoric with action.

On September 23, Jund al-Islam captured, beheaded, and mutilated 43 secular Iraqi Kurdish prisoners. In April, Jund al-Islam operatives sought to assassinate the Iraqi Kurdish prime minister. That Shi'ite Iran would never back a Sunni movement is belied by its 23-year sponsorship of Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

Iran also hosts the virulently anti-Turkish Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). The PKK claims to represent Turkey's Kurds, but has a sorry history of killing anyone Turk or Kurd who opposes the group's Stalinist leadership.

In late 2000 and early 2001, Iran resupplied the PKK as it did battle with the secular and Western-oriented Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which administers much of northern Iraq. That living standards in PUK-administered northern Iraq, despite international sanctions and without access to oil, can outpace those in Iran was simply too much for the leadership in Teheran to bare.

On April 15, France, Belgium and four other EU members endorsed a UN Human Rights Commission resolution condoning "all available means, including armed struggle" to establish a Palestinian state. With billions of dollars of trade at stake, European foreign ministers and commentators seek to excuse Iranian-funded anti-Israel terror as a "liberation struggle," despite the deliberate targeting of civilians. Such self-delusion is made easier because Khatami projects a gentle image of Iran with lofty rhetoric of a "Dialogue of Civilizations."

Sometimes, though, action speaks louder than words. There has been no decline in Iranian terrorism; under Khatami, it has surged, although often outside the spotlight of the West. Teheran has interpreted Europe's engagement as a license to conduct business as usual. If Europe's rapprochement with Iran continues, not only will Israel remain a victim of an unrepentant Iran, but also Jordanians, Turks, Kurds, and Iranians living abroad will have a very real reason to live in fear.

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