



Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade

Ed Royce (R-CA)

The State Department's Counterterrorism Office:
Budget, Reorganization, Policies

Date Thursday, April 14, 2011

Witnesses The Honorable Daniel Benjamin

Coordinator for Counterterrorism
U.S. Department of State

Ranking member Brad Sherman: “.....In the early hours of Friday last week, Iraqi forces entered Camp Ashraf which houses members of the Iranian opposition group known as the MEK. Some 34 residents were killed, 300 wounded. **In private discussions, the Iraqi ambassador’s office has said the blood is not on the hands of the Iraqi government but is at least partially on the hands of the State department because the MEK is listed as a terrorist group and accordingly, Iraq doesn’t feel that it has to respect the human rights of those in the camp.** At a Foreign Affairs hearing on March 1st, I pressed the Secretary of State to personally review the decision of the US Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit which ordered the State department to review its decision with regard to keeping MEK on the list. A similar list is maintained by Europe and they have removed the MEK. This court decision is unprecedented. Courts loathe to involve themselves in our foreign policy. And so I believe that the office represented here is the only office to have its processes and decisions questioned by the second most important court in the United States. And I would point out for the record the MEK’s usefulness in reporting what was going on in Natanz back in 2002 and what is going on in Taba today. The State department’s job is not just putting people on the list, and I think that MEK was put on the list not on the merits but rather as to placate Tehran, but also decide who stays on the list.....”