

## PKK, Clash in Southeast Turkey Leaves 12 Dead

Contributed by Jpost  
 Saturday, 25 August 2007  
 Last Updated Sunday, 02 September 2007

ANKARA, Turkey - A clash between troops and Kurdish rebels near Turkey's southeast border with Iraq left 10 rebels and two soldiers dead, the military said Saturday.

The fighting erupted Friday near Uludere, a town in Sirnak province, when the troops called for the rebels to surrender but were met with gunfire, the military said in a statement on its Web site.

It was the number of casualties in a single clash in recent months.

The rebels of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, have been fighting for autonomy in southeast Turkey since 1984. The conflict has killed tens of thousands of people.

Kurdish rebels have killed about 80 soldiers since January, most in roadside bomb attacks on military vehicles.

Turkey has threatened to invade northern Iraq to eradicate rebel bases there if U.S. or Iraqi forces do not crack down on the PKK.

During a visit by Iraq's prime minister to Ankara last week, the two countries agreed to try to root out the rebels. But Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki said the Iraqi parliament would have the final say on efforts to halt the guerrillas' cross-border attacks into Turkey.

The military statement said troops were pressing ahead with anti-rebel offensives in Sirnak, but gave no further details.

Associated Press 08.25.07, 8:24 AM ET

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 Documentary - PKK / Kurdistan

{youtube}Hd3A39Dnq\_l{/youtube}

Documentary - Iran bombing Kurds in N. Iraq

{flv}Iran-Bombs-Iraq{/flv}

Iran shells Iraqi territory

{youtube}0Ugsa0E2ZgM{/youtube}

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 Lunch with Komala

Any proper visit to Iraq should include a call on one of the many armed guerrilla groups that inhabit the mountainous Kurdish region in the north. With the right contacts and a sturdy car, you can meet with members of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) - a terrorist organization that has been at war with Turkey for 23 years - in their de-facto autonomous region high in the Kandil Mountains. Granted, a trip to their camps might be interrupted by the occasional shelling from Turkey or Iran, or an unpleasant encounter with an uppity young guerrilla at a checkpoint.

Alternatively, one phone call and a 10-minute drive from the city of Suleimaniya can get you a lunch date with a group of revolutionaries dedicated to the overthrow of the Iranian state. And while the PKK only offers its guests flat Coca-Cola in small glasses, these guys will give you a full meal.

A colleague and I recently decided to begin a tour of the mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan with a visit to Komala. It is a small guerrilla outfit - roughly 800 strong - made up exclusively of Iranian Kurds who have fled the Kurdish regions of western Iran into Iraq. The group has been operating out of the foothills of the Karadagh Mountains, 50 kilometers from the border with Iran, since it was forced out of the country in the bloody aftermath of the 1979 revolution.

Eager to gain a glimpse into the complex world of domestic Iranian politics and opposition movements - a world that is almost impenetrable to the Western observer - we scheduled an interview with Komala's leader Abdullah Mohtadi and were escorted up to the group's hideout early one Wednesday morning.

We found the camp at the end of a dusty mountain road, where soldiers in green fatigues carrying Kalashnikovs - a sight I was well accustomed to after only a few days in Iraq - stopped our car and asked our driver what we were doing there. To my amazement, a female guerrilla stood guard at the camp's gate, over which the Kurdish flag and the flag of Komala - a red, Soviet-esque strip of cloth with a large star in the middle - flew together. She too was equipped with an AK-47 and wore the normal military fatigues, without any hijab covering her hair and neck. Only later would I learn that several of the secular guerrilla groups in the region, including the PKK, employ female fighters.

As we got out of the car, the soldiers shuffled us into an office adorned with posters of Che Guevara and long-dead Iranian revolutionaries. They searched our bags for weapons and bombs, all the while apologizing for the inconvenience and promising we could take pictures once inside. As I would quickly learn, Komala - one of the few Iranian dissident groups to which journalists have access - is desperate for greater attention and support in the West, and its leaders go out of their way to accommodate the rare few who decide to come and listen to their story. Accordingly, the guards treated us gently and quickly sent us on our way to Mohtadi's office, where we were greeted with great hospitality. Tea was instantly served and a large bowl of fruit was passed around the room.

The office was strikingly sophisticated. Instead of machine guns and rockets, its only advanced technology was a modern, flat-screen computer monitor. The bookshelves were stacked with memoirs by American statesmen and books by popular journalists. In between volumes in Kurdish and Farsi, an enormous Oxford English Dictionary stuck awkwardly out into the room.

Mohtadi, who sat with co-revolutionary Muhammad Shafei, spoke English with a perfect British accent. Having spent many years in the UK, he had acquired the air of an intellectual-cum-rebel: a well-educated and cultured man who had traded a comfortable life in the West for armed struggle against the Iranian state. Although himself a Kurd, Mohtadi insisted that his battle was not simply for Kurdish rights or autonomy within Iran; instead, Komala is dedicated to the complete overthrow of the religious regime in Teheran and its replacement with a democratic government that respects the rights of all of the country's many minority groups. This end has remained the same since the party's founding in 1969 and motivated its early struggles against the oppressive, American-backed Shah Reza Pahlavi.

"We actively took part in the Iranian revolution," Mohtadi told us. "There were no social or political freedoms [under the shah]. We had economic development, but no political development."

Komala was one of several secular, leftist revolutionary groups that helped overthrow the shah, but its prominence was quickly overshadowed by the popularity of the rising Ayatollah Khomeini. And as the direction the revolution would take became clear, Mohtadi told us, the political differences between Komala and the ascendant Islamist parties became too great to ignore.

"Directly after the revolution, there was a divergence between the Kurdish and the Islamist movements," he said. "We could not expect dictatorship. It was an anti-dictatorship movement. But political Islam led by Khomeini overwhelmed the whole movement."

"No one expected the revolution to be hijacked by the clergy," Shafei piped in.

"The nature of the revolution in [Iranian] Kurdistan was quite different from that in Teheran," Mohtadi continued. "In Kurdistan, the whole movement was democratic and secular. [But the clergy] could not tolerate a peninsula of democracy and political freedom in their country."

Thus, shortly after securing power in Teheran, Khomeini turned his forces on the democratic holdout in Kurdistan, eventually managing to occupy the region and to force Komala across the border into Iraq. By that time, the Iran-Iraq War had begun and Saddam Hussein was more than willing to harbor the anti-Khomeini rebels. But Komala's relationship with him was always precarious: Saddam often tried to enlist Komala in covert Iraqi operations within Iran, only to shell and bomb the group - once even with chemical weapons - when he suspected it of encouraging the

separatist tendencies of Iraq's Kurdish population.

Since 1991, when Iraqi Kurdistan won limited autonomy from the Baghdad government at the conclusion of the first Gulf War, Komala has been able to operate with more freedom and security. The group is often penetrated by Iranian spies and assassins, however, one of whom was caught trying to poison its leadership.

BUT KOMALA is not without its own agents in Iran, we were told. More than 95 percent of the group's activities take place across the border, they pointed out, and agents are constantly mobilizing the Kurdish population to resist the regime. "We are organizing people in Iran and we are doing it around the clock," Mohtadi said. "What you see here is only the tip of the iceberg."

Komala's activities are now mostly organizational: mobilizing Iran's Kurdish population against or in favor of a certain measure or candidate, encouraging a low voter turnout in general elections or calling for demonstrations or a general strike. The group also prints a newspaper and has TV and radio transmitters from which subversive programs, in both Kurdish and Farsi, are broadcast into Iran.

Komala's leaders last tasted the fruits of their labor in a 2005 uprising in Iranian Kurdistan. The rebellion was instigated by the brutal torture and murder by Iranian agents of Shivan Qaderi, a Kurdish opposition member, and erupted into clashes between Iranian forces and the population of the predominantly Kurdish city of Mahabad. Mohtadi's group quickly seized the opportunity and helped spread the unrest throughout the region.

"Nearly a month [the uprising] continued," Mohtadi said. "It spread all over Kurdistan. There were demonstrations and protests."

"It became so large we didn't know how to cope with it," Shafei added.

Mohtadi quickly realized, however, that the uprising was not widespread enough, nor was Komala strong enough, to bring down the regime. And he became increasingly worried that continued revolt would bring brutal reprisals against the Kurds. So Mohtadi ordered the rebellion to culminate in a general strike, after which it would end.

The uprising was not a complete failure, he and Shafei told us - it helped unify Kurds throughout Iran against the regime - but ultimately it fell short of Komala's revolutionary goals. Witnessing its only partial success, it became clear to Mohtadi that his group could not by itself bring revolution to Teheran.

"It is not possible to topple the regime by the Kurds alone," he said. "[But] the Kurdish movement can be a vital part in building coalitions in Iran. It can be a catalyst to a broad democratic front."

In Iran, he pointed out, there are "six main nationalities, all with their own culture, land and history. That's why we advocate a democratic, federal system in Iran. We have friendly relations with different nationalities in Iran and are building an umbrella front - the Congress of Nationalities for a Federal Iran."

KOMALA'S PUSH for greater cooperation between different ethnic groups seems surprising for a guerrilla group that is composed exclusively of one ethnicity itself. But while its leadership may be ecumenical in its worldview, the Komala guerrillas we spoke to at the camp saw their struggle against the mullahs through a distinctly Kurdish lens.

When we asked Amjad Hussein, a young insurgent with whom we shared a spartan lunch of chicken and rice that afternoon, why he crossed the border to join the group, he told us, "Because Kurds are considered second-class citizens. It's a tragic life to live in Iran and to deal with this regime. Being a Kurd is reason enough for them to abuse you. We heard about Komala from our parents and relatives, and when we grew up, we had to choose how to live. I chose to join the peshmerga."

Hussein tellingly used the traditional Kurdish word for armed warrior, which translated literally into English means "one who faces death," to describe the Komala guerrillas. And while he could rattle off the group's party line on its official political ends - bringing back political freedom and democracy to all Iranians - he clearly saw his battle as one for the rights of his own people.

His body bore the marks of his convictions. Tattooed across his right hand was "Long live Kurdistan!" in Arabic letters, the script used by the dialect of Kurdish spoken in Iran. If caught by Iranian authorities with his tattoo, he told us, his hand would be burned until all traces of the ink were removed.

Yet even in its most stridently nationalistic moments, Komala makes no claim to being a pan-Kurdish movement. Unlike the PKK - whose activities have been primarily directed against Turkey but who now support a sister organization, Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK), operating inside Iran - Komala does not fight for worldwide Kurdish liberation.

"The Kurds are a nation but are separated into different countries," Mohtadi told us. "We support the Kurdish people in

Turkey, but we think there is no need for a war. It is better for the Kurds to take their place in the political process in Turkey."

He reserved particular ire for the PKK, whom he saw as involving itself where it did not belong in the affairs of Komala's Iranian Kurdish constituency. "We will have no coordination with [the PKK], unless they commit themselves to the principle that they should not interfere with the affairs of the Iranian Kurds," he said. "We are a different culture in a different situation. Every part of Kurdistan should have the right to run [its] own affairs."

Furthermore, Mohtadi continued, Komala and the PKK do not share the same philosophy of resistance. Unlike the PKK, which has been responsible for numerous suicide bombings, kidnappings and assassinations over the years, Mohtadi's group completely rejects terrorism. Indeed, despite training in the use of AK-47s, RPGs and anti-aircraft guns, Mohtadi claims that Komala is not now engaged in any violent conflict with the Iranian state.

"The time is not yet ripe for widespread peshmerga operations," he said. "We want to give political activities and mass movements a chance. We think military operations could be counterproductive."

"It gives them an excuse to sanction Kurdistan," Shafei added.

But how could their non-violent measures against a brutal theocracy lead to anything more than a limited uprising like that of 2005? Mohtadi was adamant: His tactics would work and the regime would fall if the opposition could work better together.

The Iranian regime, he said, is "not that strong. It benefits from the weakness of the opposition because it is not united and strong enough." This weakness could be compensated for, Mohtadi added, through the support of Western countries that are at odds with the Iranian regime. On a recent trip to the US to speak with State Department officials, he made a case for increased American support for the opposition, but received in return only vague expressions of sympathy.

With his list of grievances against the Iranian regime, which includes many points in common with that of the Bush administration - its pursuit of nuclear weapons, support for Hizbullah and Hamas and refusal to recognize Israel - Mohtadi's group would be a logical destination for several million dollars of US funds earmarked in 2006 to support democracy promotion in Iran. But so far, his pleas seem to have fallen on deaf ears.

"The question is, while the international community is suffering from this regime," he said, "it is very inactive and indifferent to what goes on among the opposition groups. I would ask the whole international community to support students, workers, women and the people. Morally, politically, materially."

He did point out, however, that UN-backed sanctions against Iran were beginning to take effect, and Shafei described with thinly-concealed glee the chaos that had broken out across Iran the night before when a gasoline-rationing law went into effect. On this front, Mohtadi had a very clear prescription for the international community: "Stop every single economic support of the Iranian regime."

We pressed Mohtadi for his opinion on a possible US military strike against Iran. While the official stance of Komala is firmly opposed to the idea, Mohtadi was unsure what the effect of a US attack would be. He admitted that it could conceivably help incite revolution, but that there were better - and safer - ways to do so.

"If people realize that the government is weak enough - by whatever means: a US attack, the impact of economic sanctions, a general strike - they will rise. I deeply believe this."

When would that be? "Nobody knows," Mohtadi said, "I hope it's not too long."

Until that moment, however, Komala will bide its time in the safety of its Iraqi home away from home, printing newspapers, training peshmerga and entertaining the occasional Western guest. Even after nearly 25 years of waiting, the revolutionary fervor of its leaders has not waned.

But if you do decide to visit their tiny mountain village of Zirgwezala - whose name in Kurdish, Mohtadi told me, means "little wild walnut tree" - you should probably do it soon. Mohtadi did not expect his group to be waiting forever.

"Everybody senses change in Iran and everybody is waiting for this change," he told us with passion as we finished our tea and readied to leave. "Millions are ready."

JAMES MARTIN, Special to The Jerusalem Post , THE JERUSALEM POST Aug. 23, 2007

This article can also be read at

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1187779142196&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

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Articles Archived:

Kurds flee homes as Iran shells Iraq's northern frontier

The Guardian, Aug 18, 2006

Turkey and Iran have dispatched tanks, artillery and thousands of troops to their frontiers with Iraq during the past few weeks in what appears to be a coordinated effort to disrupt the activities of Kurdish rebel bases.

Scores of Kurds have fled their homes in the northern frontier region after four days of shelling by the Iranian army. Local officials said Turkey had also fired a number of shells into Iraqi territory.

Some displaced families have pitched tents in the valleys behind Qandil Mountain, which straddles Iraq's rugged borders with Turkey and Iran. They told the Guardian yesterday that at least six villages had been abandoned and one person had died following a sustained artillery barrage by Iranian forces that appeared designed to flush out guerrillas linked to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), who have hideouts in Iraq.

Although fighting between Turkish security forces and PKK militants is nowhere near the scale of the 1980s and 90s - which accounted for the loss of more than 30,000 mostly Turkish Kurdish lives- at least 15 Turkish police officers have died in clashes. The PKK's sister party in Iran, the Kurdistan Free Life Party (Pejak), has stepped up activities against security targets in Kurdish regions. Yesterday, Kurdish media said eight Iranian troops were killed.

Rostam Judi, a PKK leader, claimed yesterday that no operations against Turkey or Iran were being launched from Iraqi territory. "We have fighters across south-eastern Turkey. Our presence in Iraq is purely for political work."

Frustrated by the reluctance of the US and the government in Baghdad to crack down on the PKK bases inside Iraq, Turkish generals have hinted they are considering a large-scale military operation across the border. They are said to be sharing intelligence about Kurdish rebel movements with their Iranian counterparts.

"We would not hesitate to take every kind of measures when our security is at stake," Abdullah Gul, the Turkish foreign minister, said last week.

There has been sporadic shelling of the region since May but officials worry that concerted military action against PKK bases in Iraq could alienate Iraqi Kurds and destabilise their self-rule region, one of few post-invasion success stories. Some analysts say Ankara and Tehran may be trying to pressure Iraq's Kurds, afraid that their de facto independent region would encourage their own Kurdish population.

Khaled Salih, the spokesman for the Kurdistan Regional Government in Irbil, said: "We condemn the shelling and urge the Iraqi government to demand the neighbours to respect our sovereignty."

Despite its support base in Turkey's impoverished south-east, the PKK is regarded by Ankara, Washington and the EU as a terrorist organisation. Mr Judi said the PKK was seeking a peaceful and democratic solution to the Kurdish issue in Turkey, and would welcome mediation from the US or Iraq's Kurdish leaders.

Last week, the Iraqi government said it had closed offices run by PKK sympathisers in Baghdad, and another office was shut by Kurdish authorities in Irbil.

The US is also to appoint a special envoy to find a solution to the PKK problem, but that may not be enough. Ilnur Chevik, editor of the New Anatolian newspaper in Ankara, said: "There is huge public pressure on the Turkish government to take action." But he doubted whether Turkish forces would mount a full-scale invasion. "The build-up of troops is designed to say to the Americans and the Iraqis, the ball is in your court." Tehran was also taking advantage of the situation, he said, "to show Turkey that it was taking action against its shared enemy, while the US, Turkey's ally, has done nothing".

Meanwhile those displaced wonder when they can resume a normal life. "We know that the PKK are around here," said Abdul-Latif Mohammed, who fled the village of Lowan with his family. "But they live in the mountains. So these bombs just hurt us poor farmers."

Michael Howard in Qandil Mountain  
Friday August 18, 2006  
The Guardian

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,,1852843,00.html>

PKK-PEJAK militants train for battle against Iran Print  
Monday , 05 February 2007

PKK-PEJAK militants train for battle with Iran

Deep in the mountains of eastern Iraq, a cluster of mud huts and the chatter of machine gun fire reveal another piece of the jigsaw puzzle called Kurdistan.

Here, recruits are training to fight Iran, one of the four countries that rule the fractured Kurdish people. And although they belong to an organization officially outlawed as terrorist by Washington, they appear to be operating unhindered either by Iraqi-Kurdish units or the limited U.S. force in Kurdish areas.

A boulder-studded road spirals up through sun-soaked mountains to a pale yellow building that flies the so-called flag of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), condemned as a terrorist organization by Turkey and its NATO ally, the US. A giant face of terrorist chieftain Abdullah Öcalan, the PKK founder who is serving a life sentence in Turkey, is painted on the mountainside. Sixteen kilometers (10 miles) farther on lies the Kandil range, which runs like a snow-dusted spine along Iraq's northern border with both Turkey and Iran.

In the camp, lugging heavy machine guns and AK-47 assault rifles, are men and women militants of the Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan, or PEJAK, an offshoot set up by the PKK in 2004 to fight for Kurdish autonomy in Iran.

The PKK and its affiliates are spread through a region of some "35 million Kurds" that straddles Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. PEJAK, the newest terrorist group, claims to number thousands of recruits, and targets only Iran - a mission which has made PEJAK the subject of intense speculation that it is being used to undermine the radical Islamic regime of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

In the Nov. 27 issue of The New Yorker magazine, investigative reporter Seymour Hersh wrote that PEJAK was receiving support from the U.S. as well as from Israel, which fears Iran's nuclear ambitions and Ahmadinejad's call to wipe the Jewish state off the map.

PEJAK says it regularly launches raids into Iran, and Iran has fired back with artillery. In October, the English-language Iran Daily, published by Iran's official news agency, said Iran accused PEJAK of killing dozens of its armed forces in insurgent attacks.

U.S. Congressman Dennis Kucinich, a longshot Democratic presidential hopeful who claims the White House is overplaying the Iranian threat, last year wrote to U.S. President George W. Bush expressing concern that the U.S. was using PEJAK to weaken Ahmadinejad.

James Brandon, an analyst for the U.S.-based Jamestown Foundation, an independent foreign policy think tank, told The Associated Press that PEJAK has refused to discuss its funding sources. But he said its greatest threat to Iran is not military. It has veins running deep into the Iranian Kurdish population and is offering to join forces with other restless minorities in Iran, he said.

Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Mark Regev said "Israel is not involved in any way in what's going on there."

Meir Javedanfar, an Israel-based Iran expert, noted however that Israel has a long-standing relationship with Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani and said: "It would not surprise me to discover that Israel is using the Kurdish areas of Iraq to undermine Iran's influence in Iraq and monitor what's going on along the Iranian border, as well as to undermine the Iranian government itself."

According to a PEJAK training camp commander, Hussein Afsheen, "PKK gives ideological and logistical support" while funding comes from Iranian Kurds. He said he did not know of any U.S. funding, but would gladly accept it.

The camp is designed to toughen up the new recruits, who numbered 38 during the recent visit. Beds are single wool blankets spread over a rough concrete floor, or over a narrow steel bench that hugs an icy mud wall. The only heat comes from a wood-fired potbelly stove.

It is still pitch dark and freezing at 5 a.m., when the fighters line up and pledge allegiance to the PKK's cause.

Soztar Afreen, a 22-year-old Syrian with a quick smile, says she joined five years ago and the first months were tough.

"I had trouble keeping up. You have to toughen yourself. The physical work is difficult but once you get used to it life here gets easier," she said.

She recalled that her parents, PKK sympathizers, sent her off with this plea: "Don't let down the struggle; make us proud."

Gunfire and explosions echo off mountainsides as recruits learn to fire artillery and rocket launchers and automatic rifles. They are taught to lay ambushes and to endure long hours isolated and in hiding.

Food is spartan - potatoes, tomato broth, onions and a lot of flat bread baked in a deep stone oven.

Much time is spent in ideological training and studying terrorist Öcalan's vision of a united Kurdistan, which the terrorists say has gradually shifted from demanding full-blown independence to settling for autonomy as a distinct culture within the various countries where they live.

PEJAK ideology is rigorously leftist and includes equality of the sexes - unusual in this region. The camp has two leaders, a man and a woman.

The male one, Afsheen, is a Turkish Kurd who joined the PKK in 1990, at age 19. He claimed he enlisted after Turkish soldiers herded him, his family and his neighbors into the town square and burned down their homes.

Four shepherds were coming home and "The soldiers just opened fire on them. I had inside of me a lot of anger. I promised I would get my revenge," claimed Afsheen.

In training, he said, "Recruits were put in a cave and left there for a month, allowed out only for half an hour each day. We walked for hours in frigid water."

Afsheen said he has made several forays into Iran, including one monthlong trek to the Iranian town of Shahha three months ago, not to attack Iranians but to organize Kurds. "We were discovered. There was a firefight and it went on until dark. We were pinned down, trapped," he said.

"At nightfall we found an opening and we tried to slip out but we were discovered. The firing went on again and they called in their helicopters. One of our friends was wounded and three Iranian security men were killed."

Afsheen's co-leader is Beridon Dersim, who grew up in Austria and found her identity with the separatist terror organization PKK.

"What I wanted I couldn't find from Turkey. I couldn't find from Europe. The PKK offered me answers about myself, about my ethnicity."

Dersim, 32, said she wanted to pick up a gun the day she joined the PKK at 17 but it was just before her 20th birthday that she was allowed into the terrorist ranks.

Unlike Afreen of Syria, she did not have her family's blessing, she claims, and her father, a Turkish civil servant, was tortured and left in a wheelchair. She said she has since fought in gunbattles.

The terrorist militants vow not to marry or visit their families lest they put them in danger or be distracted from their struggle. Afsheen said he has not seen his parents since their village was allegedly destroyed 16 years ago. "I was the youngest of nine children, but maybe there are more now. I don't know."

Dersim says her presence encourages Kurdish women but also frightens the men.

"We go to a village and when we speak they are surprised and they ask us: 'Where do you get such power to do this? How can you speak like this and in front of men?'"

Kandil Mountain (Iraq), AP with Today's Zaman  
5 February 2007

<http://www.turkishweekly.net/news.php?id=42401>

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August 06, 2007  
PKK's Iranian arm seeking US military support  
Monday, August 6, 2007  
ÜMÖT ENGÖNSOY  
- washington

Turkish daily news

The leader of the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party's (PKK) Iranian arm was quoted as saying over the weekend that his group requested military and financial assistance from the United States for its campaign to overthrow the Islamic regime in Tehran.

"We obviously cannot topple the government with the ammunition and the weapons we have now," Rahman Haj-Ahmadi, leader of the Free Life Party of Kurdistan (Pejak), said in an interview with The Washington Times, a conservative daily.

"Any financial or military help that would speed the path to a true Iranian democracy, we would very much welcome, particularly from the United States," he said.

Founded three years ago to fight the Tehran regime, Pejak is seen by many independent analysts as the PKK's Iranian arm, with the two groups involved in organic cooperation. Like the PKK, Pejak has a base on the Kandil mountain in Iraqi Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq, a region bordering Turkey and Iran.

But Haj-Ahmadi claimed that his group was a "completely independent organization" from the PKK, although it had good relations with other Kurdish organizations in the region.

The Washington Times said Haj-Ahmadi lived in Germany and was paying his first visit to Washington.

'Limited contact' with US:

Haj-Ahmadi said his group had only "limited contact" with the U.S. government, and his aides told the newspaper that they had received "no answer" from the State Department and other administration officials to their requests for meetings during their leader's visit.

He said seeking the creation of a "greater Kurdistan" was not an urgent agenda item for his group, but did not rule it out in the future.

"Right now, for us, democracy inside Iran is the issue," Haj-Ahmadi told the newspaper. "We will work with whoever we can to establish a just, democratic federal government to replace the Islamic regime."

If and when democracy takes hold in Iran and throughout the region, "we would then lean toward the idea of a greater Kurdistan as an aspiration," he said. Iranian officials have accused the United States of secretly funding Pejak as part of a campaign to undermine their regime, but State Department officials have denied such claims.

Haj-Ahmadi said the Tehran government was facing a growing domestic challenge to its power from the Kurds, Azeris and other minorities.

The United States accuses Iran of seeking to obtain nuclear weapons and supporting global terrorism, but so far pursuing a regime change in Tehran has not been Washington's official policy.

Some reports suggest that Turkey, fighting the PKK's terrorism originating from northern Iraq, and Iran are involved in tacit but limited cooperation against the PKK and Pejak in an area where Turkish, Iranian and Iraqi borders converge.

<http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=80148>

PKK's Iranian arm not on US terror list, but monitored for potential entry  
Saturday, August 11, 2007

Ümit ENGONSOY  
WASHINGTON - Turkish Daily News

The U.S. State Department said Thursday that the Free Life Party of Kurdistan (Pejak) — seen by many independent analysts as the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party's (PKK) Iranian arm — was not on its list of foreign terrorist organizations currently, but that the group's activities were being monitored, a process that could lead to the entity's inclusion on the list.

Pejak's Germany-based leader Rahman Haj-Ahmadi was in Washington recently, and in an interview asked for U.S. military and financial support for the group's campaign to topple the Islamic regime in Tehran.

The Turkish Daily News then asked the State Department to comment on how Washington viewed Pejak and how Haj-



Ahmadi could openly visit Washington.

In written answers sent to the Turkish Daily News, the State Department confirmed the Pejak leader's visit to Washington, but said it was not aware of any meetings between him and U.S. administration officials.

It said that Pejak was designated a foreign terrorist organization by U.S. counter terrorism authorities, but that it was being monitored.

"We are aware of the reports that Pejak perpetrated acts of violence and will continue to monitor its activities closely, along with other groups of concern," the State Department stated. "We are also aware of some reports that link Pejak with the PKK. The PKK is a designated foreign terrorist organization."

It also said that Haj-Ahmadi entered the United States using a German passport under the visa waiver program.

Pursuing U.S. backing:

In an interview with The Washington Times, a conservative daily, Haj-Ahmadi said Pejak was not able to overthrow the Iranian regime with the weapons it currently had.

"Any financial or military help that would speed the path to a true Iranian democracy, we would very much welcome, particularly from the United States," he said.

Founded three years ago to fight the Tehran regime, Pejak is seen to be in close cooperation with the PKK. And like the PKK, Pejak has a base on the Kandil mountain in Iraqi Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq, a region bordering Turkey and Iran.

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'Greater Kurdistan,' not now:

He said seeking the creation of a "greater Kurdistan" was not an urgent item on his group's agenda, but did not rule it out in the future. "Right now, for us, democracy inside Iran is the issue," Haj-Ahmadi said. "We will work with whoever we can to establish a just, democratic federal government to replace the Islamic regime."

If and when democracy takes hold in Iran and throughout the region, "we would then lean toward the idea of a greater Kurdistan as an aspiration," he said.

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<http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=80609>

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Links

Global Security: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/pkk.htm>

FAS: <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/pkk.htm>

Washington Institute: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2617>

Jamestown: [http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?issue\\_id=3766](http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?issue_id=3766)

PKK: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_the\\_Kurdistan\\_Workers\\_Party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Kurdistan_Workers_Party)

Pjak(Pejak): [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Party\\_for\\_a\\_Free\\_Life\\_in\\_Kurdistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Party_for_a_Free_Life_in_Kurdistan)

Casualties of the Turkey-PKK conflict: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casualties\\_of\\_the\\_Turkish-Kurdish\\_conflict](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casualties_of_the_Turkish-Kurdish_conflict)