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Special Report

US-backed groups organize regime change in Iran

By Trish Schuh

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July 19, 2005—Like the color-coded terror alert system, the technicolor Velvet Invasions blink warning. Despite receiving an ugly bruise in Uzbekistan, the CIA and its NGO (non-governmental organization) regime change industry hope to stage another cardboard coup in Iran. But it could be a Black & Blue Revolution.

Citing a 'mission accomplished' in Iraq, President Bush told 25,000 soldiers in Fort Hood, Texas; "The establishment of a free Iraq is a watershed event in the global democratic revolution. That success is sending a message from Beirut to Tehran."

Tasked by the Bush administration with sending that message from America to Tehran, and "winning hearts and minds" is 'swiftboat veteran' author Jerome Corsi. On May 16, Corsi's NGO, The Iran Freedom Foundation, inaugurated a 12-day "Iran Freedom Walk" from Philadelphia's Liberty Bell to Washington, D.C.

Dipping two fingers in red paint, Corsi waved a peace sign in solidarity "with the blood of oppressed Iranians" and called on "the spirit of Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King." He declared; "I love the Iranian people. America does not hate the Persian people. We love the Persian people. We want peace and we love the Persian people." Corsi's voice then dropped to a whisper; "We stand here today and we pray in the name of the Gods. I embrace Jesus Christ as my savior—and we also pray in the name of Allah, Zoroaster, and the B'hai."

But Corsi has expressed very different opinions on Islam in the past. According to his own postings on

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FreeRepublic.com, on November 18, 2001, Corsi used a racial slur to define Arabs; "Ragheads are Boy-Bumpers [sodomizers] as clearly as they are Women Haters—it all goes together." In November 2002, Corsi said; "They think the liberals will never let out that these two were lovers . . . typical Islamic boy-bugging. Older man with younger man—black Muslims . . ." Using the incendiary style he perfected for 'swiftboat veteran' TV attack ads, Jerome Corsi continued; "Islam is a peaceful religion as long as the women are beaten, the boys bugged, and the infidels killed." Comparing Islam to a disease, he added; "How's this for an analogy? The Koran is simply the 'software' for producing deviant cancer cell political behavior and violence in human beings" and "Islam is like a virus. It affects the mind. Maybe even better as an analogy: it is a cancer that destroys the body it infects. No doctor would hesitate to eliminate cancer cells from the body." In April 2004, Corsi added; "Let's see why it isn't the case that Islam is a worthless, dangerous, Satanic religion. Where's the proof to the contrary?"

Surrounding Corsi at his 'Freedom Walk' were three dozen Los Angeles Iranian dissidents and pro-monarchists interviewed by an Orthodox Jewish journalist and by the CIA-backed Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Farda. The Los Angeles Times of March 20, 2005, revealed that 'Tehrangeles' has become a crucial recruiting ground for Iranian expatriates who gather information for the US intelligence community. Also providing assistance are various Farsi language media who broadcast messages against the Iranian government into Iran.

According to the March 4, 2005, Los Angeles Times, the US currently spends \$14.7 million a year on Farsi "opposition broadcasts" into Iran. The Voice of America's Farsi service reaches an estimated 15 million Iranians with news programs and websites, and the Bush administration has recently requested an additional \$5.7 million in 2006 to expand the hours of transmission.

Los Angeles Farsi radio station KRSI noted the similarity between current US efforts and the CIA's 1953 overthrow of Iran's democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadeq. When asked if he was CIA affiliated Corsi replied; "No I'm not. I've never held a government position, never had any

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government position at all. I've been in universities. I'm an author. I'm in business. I'm not related to the CIA. It's just not true."

But when later asked how he became so committed to Iranian liberation, he explained; "When I was a young man I was an expert in antiterrorism and political violence. I had a top secret clearance when I was in universities and I worked to assist the State Department and the government." Corsi's publisher, Cumberland House, states in his biography that Corsi's top secret clearance came from the government agency USAID. USAID has often served as a conduit for American covert operations funding, under humanitarian auspices.

I then asked Corsi about the Iran Freedom Foundation's funding. He said the money came from sales of his book "Atomic Iran" and from private donations, adding that the IFF would apply for government funding when it became available.

That government funding may be on the way. On February 11, 2005 a promoter of the Iran Freedom Foundation, Worldnetdaily.com announced that Corsi had helped Republican Senator Paul Santorum write the Iran Freedom and Support Act of 2005. The legislation was to authorize \$10 million in assistance to pro-democracy NGOs that challenge the Iranian regime. Corsi called that figure a "starting point."

It was an accurate projection. According to the May 5 Financial Times article, "US offers grants to help oppose clerics," Guy Dinmore reported that lawmakers demanded a bill aimed at overthrowing the Iranian government be increased to \$50 million. This did not include the millions of dollars provided by the State Department's Middle East Partnership Initiative. "We have turned opposition into a profession," commented Ray Takeyh of the Council on Foreign Relations. "This money is going to go up."

Such "soft power" opposition activities are escalating. The May 29 New York Times quoted R. Nicholas Burns, under secretary of state for political affairs, as saying the Bush team was "taking a page from the playbook" of colored revolutions where the US funded pro-democracy NGOs helped nonviolently overthrow noncompliant governments.

The Iran Freedom Foundation lists several such activities on its website. Corsi's book "Atomic Iran" is being translated into Farsi for clandestine distribution in Iran, there is an online petition targeting the mullahs, IFF university associations are mobilizing college students, and a national speakers bureau to educate Americans on Iranian atrocities has been deployed. The IFF is also filming a documentary and has begun running TV ads entitled; "An Atomic 9–11: When Evil is Appeased" accusing Iran of plans to detonate a 150 kiloton nuclear bomb in New York City. (When I reminded Corsi that it was the US who began Iran's nuclear program in the 1970s, and that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld sat on the board of ABB which sold North Korea its nuclear reactors in the 1990's, he refused to address the issue.)

The IFF's efforts are supplemented by an array of related sister organizations such as Regime Change Iran, Alliance for Democracy in Iran, Iran of Tomorrow Movement, the Iranian Opposition Council, and "The 70 Million People of Iran" who are organizing an election for a secular interim government in exile "ready to assume Iran's governmental functions." The group has also issued an ultimatum letter to world leaders, demanding they void all contracts with Iran. (Halliburton contracts in Iran were not mentioned). This small US-backed group, presuming to speak for 70 million Iranians, even borrowed State Department lingo urging "the removal of the Islamic Republic to win the 'War on Terror.'"

The goal of these strategies, Corsi announced at his event, was to incite mass protests against Iran's June 17 presidential elections and thus destabilize the regime. Iranian dissident Ghassem Sholeh Sadi agreed. In the New York Sun article, "Iranian dissidents asking aid from Bush," Sadi explained; "After the events in Kyrgystan, there is an idea to try to turn the elections into a referendum and uprising."

As early as 2003, Reuters printed allegations that the US had infiltrated several million dollars into the country to bribe officials and pay protestors. The Economist of June 13, 2003, headlined; "More unrest on the streets of Tehran. Is America pulling the strings?"

America is pulling strings, with Israeli assistance. The former head of Mossad's Foreign Intelligence Division, Uzi Arad, told Worldnetdaily.com; "Support of Iranian opposition by the international community could be an effective way to handle the current regime" and that "its stability can be greatly reduced by the people themselves." Pro-Israel lobbyist Michael Ledeen wrote for the neoconservative American Enterprise Institute; "Mr. Bush is correct that we should actively help the brave Iranians who are leading demonstrations against the regime . . ."

Israel's Student Solidarity Movement and The Jewish Agency recently staged protests at Iranian embassies worldwide. The Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz reported "AIPAC [American Israel Political Action Committee] is spurring Congress to pass a sanctions bill against Iran." AIPAC is also pressuring the US to support the Iranian Mujahedin-e-Khalq (National Council of Resistance of Iran) for use against Iran's mullahs.

MEK has been legally designated a terrorist organization since 1997 for killing US citizens, for its role in the 1979 seizure of the US embassy in Tehran, and for attacking coalition troops in Iraq. Human Rights Watch recently condemned them for use of torture, bombings and assassinations. Nevertheless, 150 congressmen have petitioned Bush to remove them from the terrorism list, and several lawmakers spoke at their 2005 convention in Washington, D.C.

The Israeli Communication Ministry's R.R. Sat provides transponder capability to the MEK to broadcast programming on its two channels. Iran-interlink.org even hints that Ariel Sharon personally approved funding for the broadcasts, because of his alliance with MEK founder Maryam Rajavi.

On May 28, The Iran Freedom Foundation's "Freedom Walk" reached the White House. The closing rally featured Richard Perle, former assistant secretary of defense and pro-Israel architect of Bush's Middle East policy. Jerome Corsi then phoned the White House where President Bush congratulated the marchers and offered support. Vice President Cheney's office also thanked the IFF. Corsi vowed; "If we can find sufficient monetary resources, we plan to send funds inside Iran to support those

oppressed."

In response, USAToday reported that Iranian Ambassador to the UN Mohammad Javad Zarif denounced these types of US measures as a violation of the Algiers Accords. The Algiers Accords freed 52 American embassy hostages in exchange for a US promise "not to intervene directly or indirectly, politically or militarily, in Iran's internal affairs." Iran may file a complaint with the International Court of Justice in the Hague to stop US interference.

According to Reuters, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi threatened; "Iran has always defended its interests with full power and will continue to do so. It won't hesitate even for a fraction of a moment to defend itself" and Iran's government has pledged harsh resistance. If the CIA and its associated regime change NGOs succeed, it could be a very bloody black & blue coup.

Trish Schuh has worked with ABCnews, Al Arabiya, Tehran Times, Syria Times and Iran News Daily. She recently observed the presidential elections in Iran.

The views expressed herein are the writers' own and do not necessarily reflect those of Online Journal.

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