

ED RENDELL DEFENDS MATERIAL SUPPORT OF THE “RIGHT” TERRORISTS

When I first read that Treasury is investigating Ed Rendell for his paid speeches supporting the MEK, I was gratified that the government might finally be showing some balance in its pursuit of terrorists.

Mr. Rendell, who asserts that he has done nothing illegal, said the Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control issued a Feb. 29 subpoena seeking “transactional records about what payments we received for speaking fees.”

The subpoena was sent to the office of Thomas McGuire, an attorney for the Los Angeles-based talent agency William Morris Endeavor Entertainment, which handles all of Mr. Rendell’s speaking engagements, including those in which he has advocated on behalf of the MEK.

But this is the Moonie Times and Rendell alerted the press himself. So in truth, this is just an opportunity for him and Tom Ridge (who, as another paid MEK supporter, presumably would also be under investigation) to support MEK by saying that even though it is a designated terrorist organization, it doesn’t matter if people flout the law and provide it support.

“I’ve been in politics 34 years, and I can tell you right now that I would not jeopardize my reputation for any amount of money,” said Mr. Rendell. “I did my research extensively on this issue before I ever agreed to speak on it, and I am 100 percent convinced that the MEK shouldn’t be on the foreign terrorist

organization list.”

As to the extent to which accepting payments for such advocacy may or may not be legal, Mr. Ridge said it is a “moot question.”

“Assuming there may be a question, and we don’t think there is, the bigger question is: Does the MEK belong on the list?” he said. “It’s kind of curious that those who don’t like our advocacy are suggesting that we might be doing something wrong.”

Ed Rendell is a lawyer. Yet when he did his research, he did not check whether doing paid speeches for MEK would be lawful. No, he says, he did research and is convinced that MEK shouldn’t be on the list. Tom Ridge, also a lawyer—not to mention a former top counterterrorism official who can’t claim to be ignorant of the law—says it’d be “moot” if it were illegal to give paid speeches in support of MEK, because the group shouldn’t be on the terrorist list.

But it is.

What’s funniest about this article—and the reason why this article would probably only appear in the Moonie Times—is that it makes no peep of recent allegations (confirmed by two US officials in the article) that MEK has been partnering with Israel to assassinate Iranian scientists.

Deadly attacks on Iranian nuclear scientists are being carried out by an Iranian dissident group that is financed, trained and armed by Israel’s secret service, U.S. officials tell NBC News, confirming charges leveled by Iran’s leaders.

The group, the People’s Mujahedin of Iran, has long been designated as a terrorist group by the United States, accused of killing American servicemen

and contractors in the 1970s and supporting the takeover of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran before breaking with the Iranian mullahs in 1980.

Mind you, this may well be where this argument is going. The US pretends it has had nothing to do with the serial assassinations of these scientists—in spite of hints to the contrary or an apparent CIA exception allowing assassination in non-terrorism contexts. While that puts the legal pressure on the US to delist the MEK in different light, it also means that the US will probably once again apply its own terrorist laws selectively, allowing our larger support for this particular terrorist to—as Ridge predicts—moot the law prohibiting material support—even if it involves just speech—for terrorism.

Update: Glenn Greenwald catalogs Fran Fragos Townsend's hypocrisy on this issue in all its glory:

How reprehensible is the conduct of Fran Townsend here? Just two years ago, she went on CNN to celebrate a Supreme Court decision that rejected First Amendment claims of free speech and free association in order to rule that anyone – most often Muslims – can be prosecuted under the “material support” statute simply for advocacy for a Terrorist group that is coordinated with the group. And yet, the minute Fran Townsend gets caught doing exactly that – not just out of conviction but also because she's being paid by that Terrorist group – she suddenly invokes the very same Constitutional rights whose erosions she cheered when it came to the prosecution of others.