

INSTEAD OF ARAB-SPECIFIC SARS, IRAN SHOULD BE ON ALERT FOR ANTHRAX

On Tuesday, I wrote about the suggestion published by Iran's PressTV that Israeli and British scientists are seeking to develop a version of the SARS virus that would attack only people of Arab descent. Such an approach is not genetically feasible. If Iran wants to be on alert against a potential biological attack, there is a much more likely source and a more likely biological agent they should be monitoring.

In today's articles on the Mehr News website, there is a piece going into how hypocritical it was for the US to delist the MEK as a terrorist organization. One small detail in the article that I had missed in previous MEK discussions stood out to me:

So why has this obviously irrational delisting of the MKO taken place? Just as the Afghan mujahedin were used in a covert U.S. war to overthrow the Soviet-aligned government in Afghanistan, the MKO is being used in conjunction with Mossad to fight a covert war against the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. And the U.S. trained members of the MKO at the U.S. Department of Energy's Nevada Security Site under the auspices of the Joint Special Operations Command between 2005 and 2008. According to an unnamed source, as a result of the Nevada JSOC training, "MKO now has a capacity for efficient operations that it never had before."

I had missed the suggestion that MKO members were trained by JSOC in the Nevada desert (but

of course Marcy hadn't missed it). At least one source for Mehr News in making this statement appears to be this article by Sy Hersh:

From the air, the terrain of the Department of Energy's Nevada National Security Site, with its arid high plains and remote mountain peaks, has the look of northwest Iran. The site, some sixty-five miles northwest of Las Vegas, was once used for nuclear testing, and now includes a counterintelligence training facility and a private airport capable of handling Boeing 737 aircraft. It's a restricted area, and inhospitable—in certain sections, the curious are warned that the site's security personnel are authorized to use deadly force, if necessary, against intruders.

It was here that the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) conducted training, beginning in 2005, for members of the Mujahideen-e-Khalq, a dissident Iranian opposition group known in the West as the M.E.K.

As mentioned by Hersh, the Nevada National Security Site once was used for nuclear testing. In fact, its previous name is the Nevada Test Site. But Hersh's list of the facilities at that site is missing one key facility. We learned from Judy Miller on September 4, 2001 that the Defense Threat Reduction Agency built a fully functional fermentation facility that was capable of producing anthrax. That facility was built at the Nevada Test Site. As I have mentioned previously, this site stands out as a very likely source for the anthrax that was used in the 2001 attacks.

Because we already have strong suspicions that the MEK played some sort of role in the assassinations of Iranian nuclear scientists, it doesn't seem to be too large a leap to think that they could have a supply of weaponized anthrax produced in Nevada that they intend to

release inside Iran. Instead of worrying about the biologically impossible Arab-specific SARS, Iranain biodefense personnel should be preparing for a rapid response to a release of anthrax.