

Iranians plead guilty after arrest for spying on dissidents

Author:

AFP

ID:

1573074618888003100

Wed, 2019-11-06 20:30

WASHINGTON: Two men arrested last year for spying on Iranian dissidents in the United States have pleaded guilty to charges in a Washington court, the Justice Department announced Wednesday.

Iranian-US dual citizen Ahmadreza Mohammadi Doostdar and Majid Ghorbani, an Iranian resident of California, tried to penetrate the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK), a group of Iranian dissidents in exile, in New York and Washington from 2017-2018, according to the department.

Doostdar traveled to the United States from Iran on three occasions to recruit Ghorbani and give him instructions and thousands of dollars in payments, according to the charges.

Ghorbani attended MEK rallies and events, taking pictures of participants and collecting information for Doostdar.

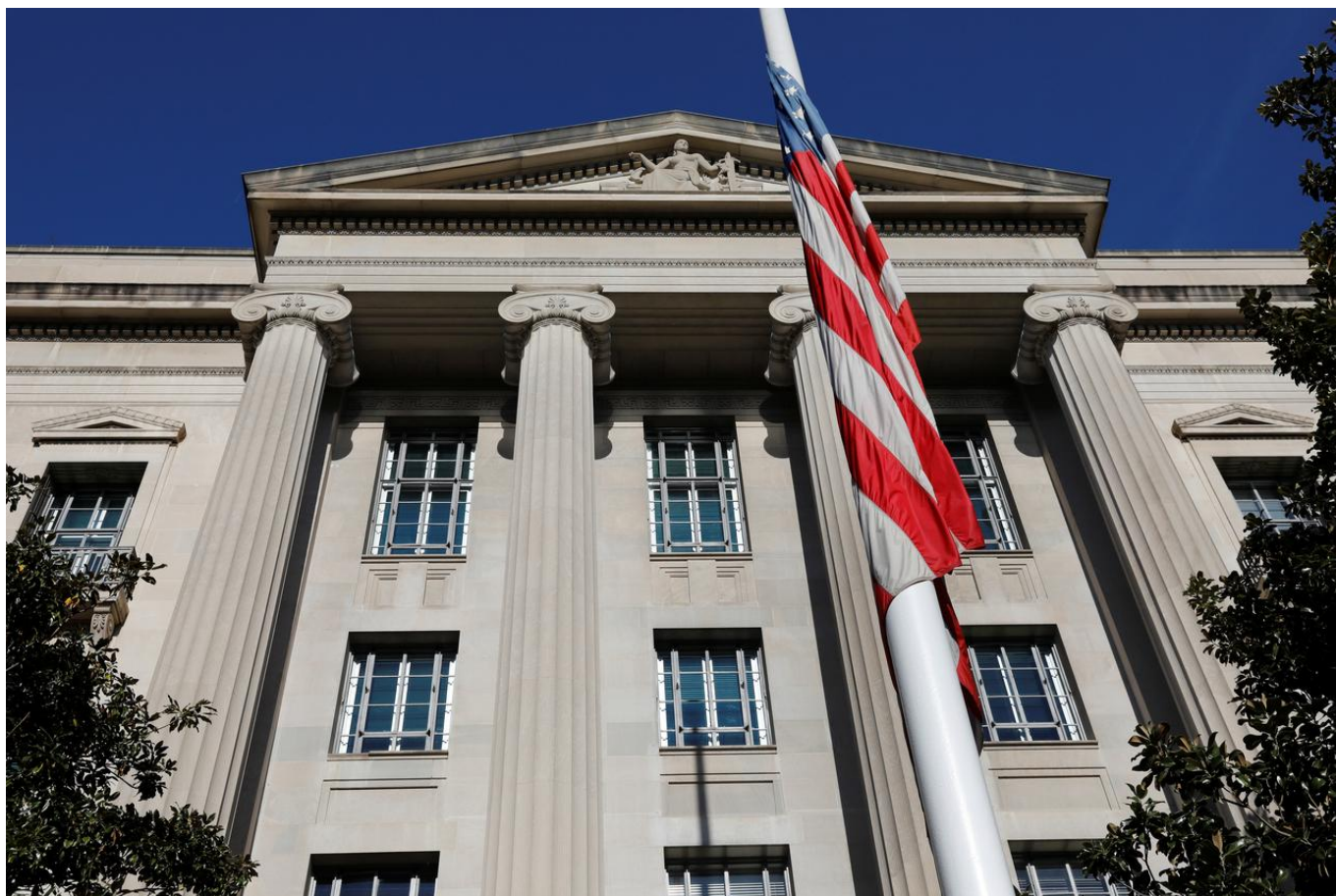
Doostdar pleaded guilty to charges of acting as an unregistered agent of the government of Iran, while Ghorbani pleaded guilty to violating US sanctions laws with respect to Iran.

In announcing their guilty pleas, the Justice Department did not repeat allegations made when the two were arrested that Doostdar had also surveilled Jewish Institutions in Chicago during a 2017 visit.

Doostdar faces up to 15 years in prison while Ghorbar could be jailed for a maximum 20 years.

"The Iranian government thought it could get away with conducting surveillance on individuals in the United States by sending one of its agents here to task a permanent resident with conducting and collecting that surveillance," said Jessie Liu, the US attorney for Washington.

"This case highlights our efforts to pursue those who threaten national security and disrupt foreign governments that target US persons."



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Iran starts enriching uranium at Fordow amid reports UN nuclear inspector detained
US accuses Iran of 'nuclear extortion' with enrichment step

[Houthi militants attack Yemen government forces, 8 killed](#)

Author:

By AHMED AL-HAJ | AP

ID:

1573070385277577600

Wed, 2019-11-06 19:45

SANAA: Yemen's Houthi militants staged missile and drone attacks Wednesday on forces allied with the country's internationally recognized government in a Red Sea town, killing at least eight people, including three civilians, and

causing large fires, military officials said.

Wadah Dobish, a spokesman for government forces on Yemen's western coast, told The Associated Press at least four missiles fired by the Iran-backed Houthis struck warehouses used by the allied force known as the Giants Bridges in the port town of Mocha. He said their defenses intercepted at least three other missiles.

Dobish said at least three Houthi drones also took part in the attack, which caused huge explosions and fires that spread to residential areas. The media arm of the Giants Bridges force posted footage online showing flames and explosions were heard apparently from the warehouses.

Officials said at least 12 people, mostly fighters, were wounded in the attacks.

A statement from the government forces on the western coast said the attacks also targeted a refugee camp and a hospital run by Doctors Without Borders in the town.

The medical aid group did not immediately respond to an AP request seeking a comment.

Houthi officials, meanwhile, said Giant Bridges fighters fired dozens of shells at the rebel-held town of Durayhimi, just south of the Hodeida port city.

All officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media.

The escalation could jeopardize a UN-brokered cease-fire in Hodeidah. The port city is the main entry point for humanitarian aid to Yemen, where more than five years of war have spawned the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with near-famine conditions in some areas.

Last year heavy fighting erupted in Hodeidah after government forces backed by the Saudi-led coalition moved in to wrestle control of the strategic city from the Houthis.

After month of clashes, the two sides reached a cease-fire agreement for the city, and both also agreed to withdraw their forces from the port and the two smaller ports of Salif and Ras Issa.

The conflict in Yemen began with the 2014 takeover of the capital, Sanaa, by the Iranian-backed Houthis. A Saudi-led coalition allied with the government has been fighting the Houthis since March 2015.



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[Trump meets Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan officials over dam dispute](#)

Wed, 2019-11-06 22:17

President Donald Trump said on Wednesday he held talks with officials from Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan over a new dam being built on the Nile River. "The meeting went well and discussions will continue during the day!" Trump said in a Twitter post. Egypt fears its water crisis could worsen as Ethiopia starts filling the reservoir behind a giant dam upriver. Nile-user Sudan also has an interest in the hydropower project.

Just had a meeting with top representatives from Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan to help solve their long running dispute on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, one of the largest in the world, currently being built. The meeting went well and discussions will continue during the day! pic.twitter.com/MsWuEBgZxK

– Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [November 6, 2019](#)



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Egypt, Ethiopia to meet in Washington over Nile dam
Egypt to press for outside mediator in Ethiopia dam dispute

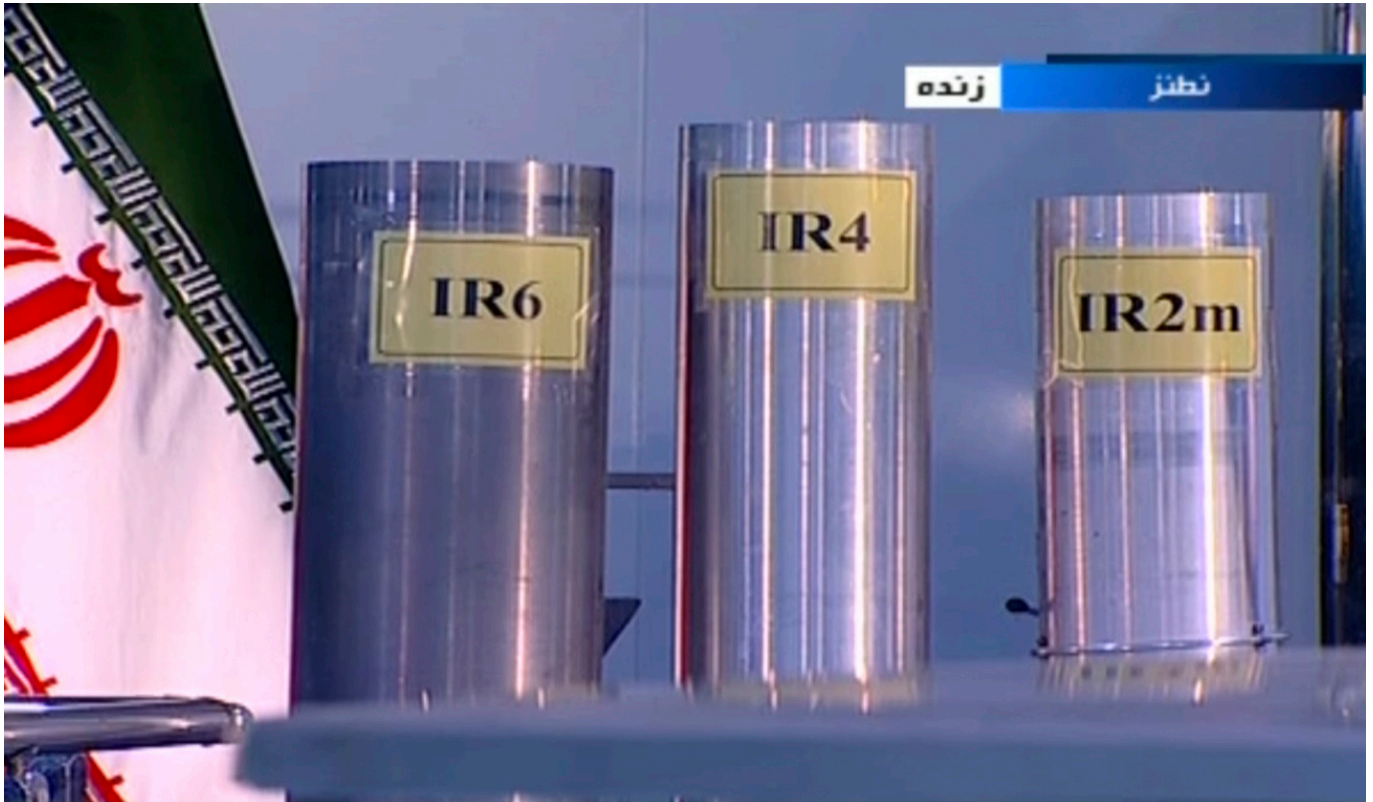
[US accuses Iran of 'nuclear extortion' with enrichment step](#)

Author:
Wed, 2019-11-06 01:19

WASHINGTON: The United States accused Iran on Tuesday of "nuclear extortion"

and vowed no let-up in pressure after the clerical regime said it would resume uranium enrichment at the key Fordow plant.

“Iran has no credible reason to expand its uranium enrichment program, at the Fordow facility or elsewhere, other than a clear attempt at nuclear extortion that will only deepen its political and economic isolation,” a State Department spokesperson said.



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The enduring stain of the 1979 Iran hostage crisisIran bans cooperation with British Council

[The enduring stain of the 1979 Iran hostage crisis](#)

Wed, 2019-11-06 01:10

DUBAI: Forty years ago, a mob of Iranian students seized the US Embassy in Tehran and took dozens of staff members hostage. On Monday, demonstrators chanting “Down with USA” and “Death to America” gathered in front of the same building as state TV aired videos from other Iranian cities.

Many of the ugly sentiments from 1979 remain today amid renewed tensions

between the two countries, following the unraveling of Iran's 2015 nuclear deal and the re-imposition of US sanctions on the Iranian economy.

"Thanks to God, today the revolution's seedlings have evolved into a fruitful and huge tree. Its shadow has covered the entire Middle East," said Gen. Abdolrahim Mousavi, the commander of the Iranian army, in what was a clear allusion to the "crescent of power" that today stretches from Tehran all the way to the Mediterranean Sea.

There is no denying that 40 years after the Islamic Revolution, Iran's "shadow" covers large expanses of the Middle East. It has expanded since the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq. But to those living under Iran's shadow, the "fruitful and huge tree" stands for a combination of religious fundamentalism, cross-border terrorism, domestic repression and foreign meddling.

Iraq and Lebanon are witnessing massive anti-government demonstrations. While those protests are fueled by local grievances and mainly directed at political elites, they pose a clear danger to Iran, which backs both governments and powerful militias in each country.

"Although many originally came out over issues of jobs, the cost of living and failing services, the protests evolved into an existential confrontation with the agents of Iran and their malign impact on society," wrote political commentator Baria Alamuddin for Arab News.

If there is a specific date for the beginning of Iran's "malign impact," it is arguably Nov. 4, 1979.

FORTY YEARS OF ANIMOSITY

1979 – The Shah of Iran, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, forced to leave country on Jan. 16 after months of protests and strikes.

1979 – US diplomats and citizens taken hostage after Iranian students seize US Embassy on Nov. 4 in Tehran in violation of Vienna Convention, demanding return of the shah to stand trial.

1980 – US cuts diplomatic ties with Iran, seizes Iranian assets and restricts trade with the Islamic Republic. Failed US mission on April 24 to rescue the hostages results in several deaths.

1981 – On Jan. 20, 52 US hostages freed after spending 444 days in captivity as part of a "final complete agreement."

1984 – Iran listed by the administration of US President Ronald Reagan as a state sponsor of terrorism.

1985-86 – Iran-Contra scandal sheds light on secret deal during Reagan's presidency to ship weapons to Iran in exchange for help in freeing US hostages held by Hezbollah militants in Lebanon.

1988 – Mistaking an Airbus A300 for a fighter jet, warship USS Vincennes shoots down Iran Air flight in the Gulf on July 3, killing all 290 on board.

2002 – Iran, along with Iraq and North Korea, branded "axis of evil" by US

President George W. Bush.

2002 – Iran accused by US of having a clandestine nuclear weapons program after opposition group reveals details of uranium enrichment facilities.

2012 – New law allows US President Barack Obama to sanction foreign banks if they fail to reduce their Iranian oil imports.

2013 – Obama speaks by phone with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in September.

2015 – Iran signs deal – called JCPOA – with world powers, including the US, to limit its nuclear activities and allow international inspectors.

2016 – US lifts nuclear-related sanctions on Iran. **2018** – US President Donald Trump abandons nuclear deal and reinstates sanctions against Iran and countries that trade with it.

2019 – In April, US designates Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps a terrorist organization. Additional sanctions imposed in May.

2019 – Iran shoots down US military drone over Strait of Hormuz on June 20.

2019 – Iranian demonstrators mark 40th anniversary of hostage crisis with slogans of "Down with USA" and "Death to America" in front of the former US Embassy in Tehran.

The assault that day on the US Embassy in Tehran was the culmination of protests by supporters of the revolution, demanding the extradition of the shah, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, who was in the US receiving treatment for cancer.

According to an AP report from the time, "a mob of Iranian students overran US Marine guards in a three-hour struggle Sunday and invaded the American Embassy in Tehran, seizing dozens of staff members as hostages, Tehran Radio reported." After seven days, the women and African-Americans were freed. In April 1980, US President Jimmy Carter cut diplomatic ties with Iran, imposed more sanctions and ordered all Iranian diplomats to leave the US. The same month, a failed US mission to rescue the hostages resulted in several deaths, including eight US soldiers.

Finally, on Jan. 20, 1981, after secret negotiations that resulted in the signing of an agreement to free Iranian assets, the remaining 52 Americans were flown to Wiesbaden air base in Germany.

The hostage-taking marked the moment US-Iranian relations began deteriorating sharply.

Opinion

This section contains relevant reference points, placed in (Opinion field)

Under the shah, relations were good, as Iran was more or less Washington's main strategic ally in the region, having a status equivalent to, if not higher than, Israel.

The release of the hostages marked the end of a traumatic chapter in US diplomatic history, but for the rest of the Middle East, it marked the beginning of an era of terrorism, sectarianism and conflicts that continue to this day.

A demonstration on Monday outside the Iranian consulate in Iraq's holy city of Karbala saw protestors spray-painting "Karbala is free, Iran out!" on walls. Posters of the Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei have been burnt – the protests have cost the lives of more than 250 people.

In Lebanon, a movement against corruption and the official confessional system has paralyzed the country for three weeks. Along with demands for a non-sectarian government, protesters have aimed anger at Tehran. "Iran wants to close its ears as it has caused poverty, militia dominance in other countries and government failure. The accusations match reality," wrote Arab News columnist Abdul Rahman Al-Rashed on Oct. 31.

In retrospect, the hostage crisis came as a major shock to the West. US intelligence had failed to anticipate it or the revolution. The consequences of that reverberate to this day across the Middle East. Attacking diplomatic posts remains an Iranian tactic. A mob stormed the UK Embassy in Tehran in 2011, while Saudi Arabian diplomatic posts were attacked in 2016.



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Iranian president announces another break from nuclear deal
Iran bans cooperation with British Council