

# US Officials Speak at Iran Regime Change Conference

Conference hosted by controversial Iranian opposition group MEK

By [Dave DeCamp](#)

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*An exiled Iranian opposition group [held its annual Free Iran conference](#) online on Friday featuring speeches from an array of former US politicians and military officials. The conference was held by the National Council of Resistance of Iran, a coalition led by the People's Mujahedin of Iran, or MEK (Mujahedin-e Khalq), a controversial group widely considered to be a cult, and up until 2012, designated as a terrorist organization by the US government.*

The MEK is considered the top Iranian opposition group in Washington, and if Iran hawks had their way, the MEK would replace the current Islamic regime in Tehran. Trump administration officials like Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have [appeared at events with MEK](#) members. After the assassination of Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani in January, [it was reported](#) that President Trump sought advice on Iran from MEK-linked allies, like his personal attorney and former mayor of New York City Rudy Giuliani.

A frequent guest of the MEK, Giuliani spoke at Friday's conference, calling for regime change and railing against the mullahs.

"To me, the mullahs are like the people who ran the mafia, the people I prosecuted who ran the mafia and extorted their people," [Giuliani said](#).

The former mayor also praised Maryam Rajavi, the MEK's leader.

"Regime change in Iran is within reach. That's the goal of NCRI and Maryam Rajavi."

Senator Martha McSally (R-AZ) and Rep. Lance Gooden (R-TX) also spoke at the conference, the only sitting members of Congress to attend.

"Thank you to Madame Rajavi on everything she's done. I want to encourage young people to continue your fight, your resistance ... the people of the United States are with you," [Gooden said](#).

Other speakers from the US included former Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman, former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, former New Jersey Senator Robert Toricelli, and others.

The MEK pays well for these short speeches. President Trump's Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao [collected \\$50,000 from the MEK](#) for a five-minute speech in 2015. Although he was missing from this conference, former National Security Advisor John Bolton is a MEK favorite and has delivered many speeches to the group. Records show the MEK has paid Bolton at least \$180,000 for speeches over the years.

From the MEK's compound in Albania, in front of hundreds of screens, [Rajavi addressed the conference](#).

"Our first commitment is that we, the Iranian people and the Resistance, will overthrow the clerical regime and will reclaim Iran," Rajavi said. "The final word is that the mullahs have no solutions and their regime is doomed to fall in its entirety."

The MEK is now based out of Albania, [but for many years they operated in Iraq](#) after the group was kicked out of Iran in the 1980s. The MEK started as a leftist organization in the 1960s and carried out attacks on the US-backed Shah's police force throughout the 1970s. The group played a role in the 1979 overthrow of the Shah but ultimately opposed the new Islamic government and carried out major attacks against the mullahs.

The MEK was welcomed into Iraq by Saddam Hussein, who gave them refuge at a military base, Camp Ashraf. From their base in Iraq, the MEK carried out terrorist attacks inside Iran and took Hussein's side in the brutal eight-year war between Iran and Iraq war. For these reasons, it is believed the MEK has little or no support inside Iran today. The MEK is also [suspected of being involved](#) in assassinations of Iranian nuclear scientists that took place in 2012.

After the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the US government [commissioned a report](#) on the MEK from inside their former headquarters at camp Ashraf. The report concluded that the MEK has "many of the typical characteristics of a cult, such as authoritarian control, confiscation of assets, sexual control (including mandatory divorce and celibacy), emotional isolation, forced labor, sleep deprivation, physical abuse and limited exit options."

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