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Iran: Information request

The purpose of this tasking is to give an assessment of Iran's current interests and activities in South Africa, and give guidance as to elaborate and gain on information collection efforts in order to determine the full extent of their activities. Reference is made throughout report to information received from CI20.

Doc dated 11 Jan 08:

The Iranian Department of Foreign Affairs conducted an internal conference/discussion in the course of the last six months of 2007. This conference addressed the issue of Iran's strategic geopolitical relations, and emanating from that as a matter of policy a process of aligning itself closer to China, began. China's quiescent backing of Iran in the course of its "argument" with the United States concerning its nuclear program, together with direct backing from the Russian Federation in terms of the concrete workings of its civilian nuclear program, may be two of a much more complex set of factors that has brought Iran to this point. Furthermore, Iran's Africa policy would also have given a boost as a component part of the strategic reorientation of Iran's foreign relations. **Did this strategic geopolitical policy translated into their intelligence activities in SA and how did the MOIS go about it? Will this change after the re-election of the President AHMADINEJAD? How is their shifting towards China realising in SA as well as with the Russians?**

Doc dated 11 Jan 08:

Iran has been of the opinion that President Jacob ZUMA has good relations with Muslims. It has been stated that a more popular South African president with a leftist political orientation (or, at least the backing of leftist forces in the ANC alliance) is much more acceptable than a Western oriented businessman who will in all likelihood follow blindly in the footsteps of the MBEKI administration when it comes to macro-economic policy.) **What is their most recent opinion of the new SA Government?**

Doc dated 13 March 08

indicated in this report that people in Iran, and some Iranian government officials are not very impressed by the leadership of Mr. AHMADINEJAD. He says that the president is much more popular outside Iran than he is inside. The internal opinion is very much defined in the following way:

- That Mr. AHMADINEJAD and his advisors have broken down all the bridges his predecessor, Mr. KHATTAMI with his discourse on the 'dialogue among civilisations', tried to build to the outside world
- The fact that Iran has not had any effective diplomatic relations with the USA since 1979 has had a negative impact because there are no formal channels through which political disputes or differences can be resolved
- That the current round of sanctions, inspections of shipments going into Iran, and related military strategies led by the USA in the Middle East are doing major damage to Iran's economy, and society

He is of the opinion that the current Iranian president is personally responsible for leading Iran into a very tight spot of international isolation. **After President AHMADINEJAD's re-election as President – what is the current feeling? Will his re-election effect MOIS operations in SA and Africa (also seen in light of the sacking of Gholam Hossein Mohseni EJEI, the head of the MOIS on 12 June 2009 as well as the dismissal of Intelligence Minister Mohsen EZHEIE (27 June 2009) and subsequent appointment of Majid ALAVI as acting Intelligence Minister on 28 June 2009).** **Who is his successor?**

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Doc dated 16 April 08: It is stated in this report that Iran is political positioning themselves within the South African foreign policy framework and that the Embassy in SA is following this initiative. It is implied that their deliberations on strategies to promote and boost the image of Iran will necessitate engagements with media, civil-society, governmental, and business networks in the country. It obviously makes South Africa an important target in Iran's current struggles in the world political system. Several questions about the structure and reach of the Independent Newspaper group were posed. If Iran is seeking to position itself in South Africa, the strategy may be complicated by this country's own political transition problems in the ruling party. This may to some extent explain their urgent need to develop deeper insight into the workings of the South African media, and avenues at the disposal of the embassy to extend its reach and consequently influence.)

What developments took place in relation to their influencing activities since the reporting date?

Doc dated 13 May 08: Interest has been shown to meet journalists from SABC radio, to access leading figures in the local community, e.g. to leaders of cultural organizations and to arrange for a dinner/s where the ambassador can interact with other influential people such as newspaper editors. **Was this avenue operationally pursued?**

Doc dated 3 June 08: [REDACTED]
In discussions on the issue of Xenophobia, many questions about the anti-US sentiments in South Africa and Southern Africa were asked. It is mentioned the fact that SADC leaders' rejection of the establishment of bases for Pentagon's African Command (AFRICOM) in SADC member states' territory, may be creating a situation where the US will engage in covert activities to destabilise countries opposed to its security paradigm in Africa. **What kind of covert activities? Did the person elaborate on this?**

11 June 2008: [REDACTED]
The company [REDACTED] does exist and the co directors of [REDACTED] are:

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and used to be a NIA target but was removed from the Target list as no information on him was forthcoming. **What is the nature of the relationship between [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] What is the links to MOIS? At the time there has been a request for investigation from the operational structures? Was this investigation done and if so, what transpired?**

Doc dated 24 July 08 [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] was investigated as a suspected member of MOIS and one of the known modus operandi of the MOIS is to use IRNA as a cover for intelligence activities.

[REDACTED] also a suspected MOIS-member/Agent. Another partner is [REDACTED] who used to be a senior official in the South African Department of Trade and Industry.) **Could more information on [REDACTED] be obtained? Do [REDACTED] have links to DTI? [REDACTED] is opening an office in the Waterkloof area, specific location not yet determined which is funded, rent etc, by the Iranian Embassy but would operate under its own name. **Was this information ever operationally pursued by an investigation?****

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18 November 2008

A new official at the embassy [REDACTED] has been appointed at the Iran Embassy. The discussions centred on changes in the SA political landscape. [REDACTED] mentioned in the course of the conversation that he is a marketing expert. This was said in the context of a discussion we had on dynamics in Africa's mining sector. He expressed a lot of interest in this, requested information on developments in mining, and related political dynamics. Like [REDACTED] earlier in 2008, one of his first business-related questions in the African context dealt with Israeli activity and influence in Africa. **What has happened since then? Seeing that all the Iranian Diplomats so far have requested [REDACTED] specifically regarding the Israeli activities in Africa was [REDACTED] asked to ask them specifically in what regarding the Israeli's they are interested in. What is latest on this?**

Doc dated 20 January 2009, refer

[REDACTED] is back in South Africa running his own private [REDACTED] company, [REDACTED] in order to develop business relations between Iran and South Africa. Concern is expressed in the report that [REDACTED] may be a front company of the Iranian MOIS. **What is current status of [REDACTED] and what do we know of the activities of [REDACTED] Why do we suspect [REDACTED] to be a front for MOIS? Is anything being done operationally regarding the rumours regarding [REDACTED] environmental scanning, etc?**

1 June 2009

The Iranian Embassy has undergone a clean-up and several diplomats whose loyalty towards President AHMADINEJAD were questioned, were sent home. Names mentioned are [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] as well as [REDACTED] who is described as the head of the local Revolutionary Guard. [REDACTED] has a gambling problem and is closely watched by [REDACTED] also planned to terminate his placement in South Africa but because of [REDACTED] political contacts, he could not. [REDACTED] now ensures that [REDACTED] is not compromised by building up bad dept. Some diplomats, [REDACTED] name was mentioned, are allegedly concentrating more on their own interest than spending time on the Embassy/Iran's interests. The declared MOIS-member, [REDACTED] has been active liaising with his counterparts from African Countries in South Africa. The purpose is to promote Iran as Iran wants to expand their presence, trade etc in SADC as well as in the AU. Iran is actively trying to exert its influence in the previous USSR Muslim Countries, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and Kazakhstan that forms together with the Russian Federation the countries of the Caspian rim. The purpose is to neutralise the Russian influence on these countries.

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