Daily Mail

By Robert Verkaik



A British housewife and her husband have been accused of spying for Iran in a leaked US government report.

Anne Singleton, 53, is alleged to have been blackmailed into training with the Iranian secret service during a visit to Tehran in 2002.

The Pentagon-commissioned report claims that Mrs Singleton and her Iranian husband, Massoud Khodabandeh, 56, agreed to work for the regime in return for saving the life of his jailed brother.

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Iranian agents are also said to have threatened to confiscate his mother's extensive property in the Iranian capital. Mrs Singleton strenuously denies the allegations.

The report, written by the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress and privately circulated in Washington, says the couple agreed to spy on opponents of the Iranian regime, including the People's Mujahideen of Iran (MEK), of which Mrs Singleton and her husband were once members.

The report alleges that: 'In 2002 Singleton met in Tehran with Ministry of Intelligence and National Security of the Islamic Republic of Iran [MOIS] agents who were interested in her background. She agreed to co-operate with them to save her brother-in-law's life.'

It adds: 'During her stay in Tehran, she received training from MOIS. After her return to England, she launched the iran-interlink.org website in the winter of 2002.

'Afterwards, she made many trips to Iran and Singapore – the country where the agency contacts its foreign agents.'

Iran sponsors terrorism all over the world and last year was behind a bus bombing in Bulgaria. As tension between the West and Iran increases over Tehran's nuclear programme, British security agencies are keeping a watch on MOIS activities.

Last year Iran was forced to downgrade its diplomatic presence in the UK after the British Embassy in Tehran was attacked. Since then it has struggled to secure intelligence on dissident groups.

Security sources said last night that the Iranian regime relies on agents in the West to spy on dissidents and conduct propaganda operations to discredit opponents.

Last night the couple, who run a Middle East communications company from their Victorian semi-detached home in Leeds, threatened to take legal action over the claims.

Mrs Singleton, a mother of one, said: 'The report was withdrawn. It wasn't published anyway. It was leaked deliberately by a journalist in America.'

She added: 'The MEK just made all that up. Yes, I have been to Iran, but they have concocted a picture which is entirely false.'

David Osborne, chief of the Federal Research Division which compiled the report, told The Mail on Sunday: 'The report was revised on the Division's own initiative and resubmitted to the Pentagon. I do not know when it will be reposted to the US government site.'

By her own admission, Mrs Singleton once belonged to the MEK and was trained at its camp in Iraq to fire weapons. She later fell out with the group, describing it as a cult.

The couple were also named in a 2007 report by the British Parliamentary Committee for Iran Freedom called Spying For The Mullahs: Iran's Agents In The UK.

The report said: 'Khodabandeh and Singleton appear to lead a small number of individuals in an aggressive demonisation campaign against the MEK.'

Lord Carlile QC, a former independent reviewer of terrorism legislation and a member of the Parliamentary Committee for Iran Freedom, has lobbied to have the People's Mujahideen of Iran removed from a list of banned terrorist organisations.

'They are a credible opposition to the regime,' he said. 'To call them a cult is like saying that any political party is a cult.'