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Subject: FW: Most Iranian dissidents moved from Iraq camp (Reuters)

From: OpsNewsTicker@state.gov [mailto:OpsNewsTicker@state.gov]
Sent: Sunday, September 16, 2012 9:56 AM
To: NEWS-Iraq; NEWS-Mahogany
Subject: Most Iranian dissidents moved from Iraq camp (Reuters)

BAGHDAD (Reuters) - Iraq has moved most Iranian dissidents out of a camp they have lived in for decades to a former U.S. military base in Baghdad, ending a lengthy standoff with the group once sheltered by Saddam Hussein, officials said on Sunday.

Around 680 people were moved from Camp Ashraf on Saturday, the last large group to leave the camp which had been home to the People's Mujahideen Organisation of Iran (PMOI), which fell out of favour after the Iraqi dictator's downfall.

"Of the 3,280 residents originally in Camp Ashraf, only a small group now remains on a temporary basis to arrange the details pursuant to the closure of the camp," said Martin Kobler, special representative of the U.N. Secretary General in Iraq.

The Iranian group, which calls for the overthrow of Iran's clerical leaders and fought alongside Saddam's forces in the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, is no longer welcome in Iraq under the Shi'ite Muslim-led government that came to power after Saddam's ouster in 2003.

Clashes between Ashraf residents and Iraqi security forces last year killed 34 people.

The United States added the PMOI, also known as the Mujahadin-e Khalq (MEK), to its list of foreign terrorist organisations in 1997, but the group has since said that it has renounced violence and has mounted a legal and public relations campaign to have the designation dropped.

The group surrendered weapons to U.S. forces after the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The fate of Ashraf's residents has been in question since Iraq took over the camp from U.S. forces in 2009 under a bilateral security pact.

Ashraf residents agreed in February to move to the new camp, where the United Nations intends to process them for refugee status in other countries, but they complain that the conditions at the new base are poor and that they have not been permitted to bring many of their personal belongings.

There is now a small number of remaining dissidents left to deal with, some personal property and the need to formally hand over Camp Ashraf to the local authorities, said Uday al-Khadran, mayor of the nearby town of Khalis.

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