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TWO INDIVIDUALS SENTENCED IN CONNECTION WITH WORK ON BEHALF OF IRAN

WASHINGTON – Ahmadreza Mohammadi-Doostdar, 39, a dual U.S.-Iranian citizen, and Majid Ghorbani, 60, an Iranian citizen and resident of California, have been sentenced to prison terms of 38 months and 30 months, respectively, for their criminal convictions relating to their conduct conducting surveillance of and collecting identifying information about American citizens and U.S. nationals who are members of the group Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK).

On Jan. 15, 2020, the Honorable Paul L. Friedman sentenced Doostdar to 38 months in prison and Ghorbani to 30 months in prison.

On Oct. 8, 2019, Doostdar entered guilty pleas to one count of acting as an agent of the government of Iran without notifying the Attorney General, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 951, and one count of conspiring to violate that statute, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 371. On Nov. 4, 2019, Ghorbani entered a guilty plea to one count of willfully violating the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), 50 U.S.C. § 1705, and the Iranian Transactions and Sanctions Regulations 31 C.F.R. Parts 560.204 and 560.206.

“This case illustrates Iran’s targeting of Americans in the United States in order to silence those who oppose the Iranian regime or otherwise further its goals,” said Assistant Attorney General for National Security John C. Demers. “The defendants, working for Iran, gathered information on Americans that could then be used by the Iranian intelligence services to intimidate or harm them or their families. These prosecutions should serve as a reminder to anyone here working covertly for Iran that the American law enforcement will pursue you to protect this country, its citizens and the First Amendment principles upon which it was founded.”

“The sentences in this case illustrate the high cost to those who act as agents of the

Iranian government in the United States or provide services that benefit the government of Iran, especially when those activities target the free speech and peaceful assembly rights of people in the United States,” said Jessie K. Liu, U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia. “We will continue to thwart efforts by foreign governments to endanger our national security and to stifle the freedoms that all Americans cherish.”

“The FBI will not tolerate surveillance being conducted here in the United States at the behest of foreign nations like Iran,” said Jay Tabb, Executive Assistant Director of the FBI's National Security Branch. “Such activity is intimidating, particularly to individuals who exercise their constitutional rights to free speech and criticize the Iranian government. The FBI will continue to pursue such activity on U.S. soil and disrupt efforts by any individuals who take such actions on behalf of Iran.”

As part of his plea, Doostdar admitted under oath that he traveled to the United States from Iran on three occasions in order to meet with Ghorbani and to convey directions for Ghorbani's activities on behalf of the government of Iran. Prior to Doostdar's first trip to the United States, his handler with the government of Iran identified Ghorbani by name, showed Doostdar a photograph of Ghorbani, and told him where Ghorbani worked.

During Doostdar's first trip to the United States in July 2017, Doostdar met Ghorbani at Ghorbani's workplace. Doostdar admitted that, during a subsequent conversation, Ghorbani told Doostdar that he was willing to work for the government of Iran in the United States.

On Sept. 20, 2017, Ghorbani attended a rally in New York City organized by the Mujahadeen-e-Khalq (MEK). The rally consisted of constitutionally-protected activity, including U.S. citizens denouncing the Iranian regime. At the rally, Ghorbani photographed rally attendees, including MEK leaders.

In December 2017, during Doostdar's second trip to the United States as part of the conspiracy, Doostdar met with Ghorbani and collected the rally photographs from Ghorbani. The photographs depicted MEK leaders and included hand-written notes identifying the individuals and listing their positions in the group. Under oath, Ghorbani admitted to attending the September 2017 MEK rally and to photographing and gathering information on rally attendees to provide to Doostdar and ultimately to individuals in Iran. Doostdar paid Ghorbani \$2,000 for his work, which Doostdar admitted had been provided by Doostdar's government of Iran handler.

During this December 2017 trip, Ghorbani and Doostdar also discussed Ghorbani's planned travel to Iran in March 2018, and Ghorbani offered to provide an in-person briefing on rally attendees during this trip. Later in December 2017, Doostdar departed the United States for Iran with the photographs and handwritten notes provided by Ghorbani.

In May 2018, Ghorbani traveled to another MEK rally, this time in Washington, D.C., where he again collected information on participants critical of the Iranian regime. Following that rally, Doostdar admitted that he and Ghorbani spoke by telephone

and discussed the methods that Ghorbani could use to provide the information collected at that rally to Doostdar in Iran.

Doostdar further admitted that, during his travel to the United States to task Ghorbani with collecting information on U.S. persons on behalf of the Iranian regime, he communicated with his government of Iran handler through another co-conspirator. Doostdar's handler relayed instructions and encouragement and answered Doostdar's questions that came up during his mission in the United States.

The investigation into this matter was conducted by the FBI's Washington Field Office and Los Angeles Field Office. The case is being prosecuted by the National Security Section of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia and the Counterintelligence and Export Control Section of the National Security Division of the Department of Justice.

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