



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on February 15, 2009

Talking With Iran's Terror Regime

Ahmadinejad's remarks came hours after President Obama said he would pursue diplomacy with Iran. "My expectation is, in the coming months, we will be looking for openings that can be created where we can start sitting across the table, face to face," Obama said at a February 9 news conference.

As President Obama made these remarks, the Russian-owned ship *Monchegorsk* was being detained in the port of Limassol, Cyprus, for transporting weapons from Iran that U.S. officials suspect were [destined for Syria and Hamas](#) terrorists in Gaza. The U.S. Navy stopped and boarded the Cypriot-flagged ship last month in the Red Sea. Reportedly, they found artillery shells and other arms on board, but could not legally detain the ship, so they asked Cyprus to do so when it arrived at port. Cyprus yielded to the U.S. request and has been holding the vessel and its contents since its arrival at Limassol on January 29. But being a small, divided island state, and not wishing to invite reprisals from Iran and Syria, Cyprus punted the matter to the United Nations, requesting the UN Security Council to provide guidance on how to deal with the *Monchegorsk*. On February 10, Cypriot Foreign Minister Markos Kyprianou said the ship had violated a UN ban on Iranian arms exports but did not specify what arms were found aboard the vessel. On February 13, Cypriot authorities announced the *Monchegorsk's* cargo was being removed from the ship and would be stored at a naval facility on the island.



What has gone unreported in the spotty coverage of the *Monchegorsk* affair is that the ship is a vessel of the Russian-owned Murmansk Shipping Co., which according to the company's website, is composed of three companies with a total of 303 ships. Controlling interest in Murmansk Shipping is owned by Russian oil giant LUKoil. As with all Russian companies, state-owned and "private," Murmansk Shipping and LUKoil are run by oligarchs who are current or "former" KGB-FSB-SVR-GRU



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officers, or who, at any rate, answer to the Russian intelligence services. Thus, the most important question that no one seems interested in asking, is: "What is the Russian government's involvement in this apparent arming of terrorists?"

While the *Monchegorsk* affair was going on, the leader of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) was being hosted in Tehran. On February 12, Ramadan Abdullah Shallah, leader of the PIJ, arrived in Iran, where he was treated to an audience with Ayatollah Ali Khomeini, and meetings with President Ahmadinejad, Iranian parliament Speaker Ali Larijani, and other top officials. Shallah, who is on the FBI's "Most Wanted Terrorists" list, posed as a peaceful professor at the University of South Florida in Tampa, before leaving in 1995 to take over leadership of the PIJ, a group well known for bombings, suicide bombings, kidnappings, murder, and extortion.

The government-run *Tehran Times* [featured Shallah's visit](#) prominently, with a photo of Shallah and Khomeini sitting and speaking together under a portrait of the late Ayatollah Khomeini. In the accompanying article, Khomeini, known in Iran as the "Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution," enthused about the "miracle" of the recent Palestinian "victory" in Gaza. "What really happened in Gaza was truly like a miracle," Khomeini said in congratulatory greetings to Shallah.

Both Israel and Hamas have declared victory in the 22-day war. Militarily, Israel was clearly the winner, Hamas being completely overwhelmed by Israeli firepower and tactics. However, Hamas, by surviving, has won a huge propaganda victory that has boosted its status in Gaza and the West Bank. And it scored huge propaganda victories worldwide from publicity of civilian casualties suffered from the Israeli invasion. The *Tehran Times* reported that Ayatollah Khomeini made note of the importance of gaining "world public opinion." According to the *Times*:

Ayatollah Khomeini also said the effect of the world public opinion was very influential in the Gaza event. One of the main successes of the resistance movement was that it attracted the support of the world public opinion and through this it torpedoed efforts by Israel to depict Palestinians as troublemakers, the Leader explained. The Leader advised Palestinians to remain in constant contact with the world public opinion and called on Palestinian officials to counter efforts by Israel and its supporters who are trying to depict resistance movement as responsible for the sufferings of the Gaza residents.

Iran's official IRIB News Agency similarly reported on February 12 about the meeting between Shallah and Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani, who declared that "the majority of political experts in different societies have come up with the belief that without considering Hamas and resistance forces in Palestine, the Middle East crisis is irresolvable." In his press treatment and his photographs with Larijani and other Iranian leaders, Shallah was elevated to the status of a head of state.

Photo of Ahmadinejad: AP Images

For more information, see "[Iraq Elections No Victory for U.S.](#)" and "[Baghdad-Tehran Axis Grows.](#)"



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