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US Government Bribe to Ayatollah Sistani

Hani Fakhouri

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Donald Rumsfeld's recently published memoir reflects his role in the Iraq war when he was Secretary of Defense during President George W. Bush's administration. The book reveals some interesting and secretive information that took place when he was in the Pentagon.

Mr. Rumsfeld stated that the U.S. government paid the leading religious Shiaa imam, Ali al-Sistani, \$200 million to issue fatwas in support of the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. According to Mr. Rumsfeld, the religious fatwas helped the fall of Iraq and solidified the occupation of Iraq by allied forces. Mr. Rumsfeld also pointed out that he established a personal relationship with the Ayatallah Sistani in 1987, before the Gulf War invasion. After Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, that relationship, according to Rumsfeld, was established through Jawad al-Mahri, Mr. Sistani's secretary in Kuwait. It was through him that the \$200 million was sent to Ayatallah Ali Sistani. Mr. Rumsfeld and President Bush were aware of the strong relationship between those who took the money and Iran. When the gift was acknowledged by Sistani, President Bush established a new desk at the CIA, which was refereed to as the link to Mr. Sistani, headed by retired admiral Symon Poland.

The emphasis of such a relationship is to encourage Sistani to inform his Shiaa followers not to target American soldiers.

According to Mr. Rumsfeld, Admiral Polandi was connected directly with Imam Sistani's elder son Mohammad Ridda in one of the palaces of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad. Sometimes the admiral also met the secretary in Najaf with Imam Sistani.

According to Rumsfeld, Saddam Hussein left more than 6 million weapons in the hands of Iraqis who posed a threat to the safety of the allied forces in Iraq. As a result, Imam Sistani issued a fatwa prohibiting the use of these arms against the allied forces.

Mr. Rumsfeld's book is 800 pages long, and the BBC, New York Times and Washington Post revealed some of the information in it. Nevertheless, Mr. Rumsfeld remained defiant in his justification of the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Furthermore, Rumsfeld noted that he met with President Bush 15 days after 9/11 in which he was told to plan for the invasion of Iraq. As the BBC's Steve Kingstone says, the memoir reinforces the view that President Bush was already looking ahead to Iraq, even as his administration planned the war against al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. (www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada.print-true, 8/4/2011).

It is unfortunate to read about high-ranking religious individuals who abuse their religious role under the banner of religion. If Ayatallah Sistani did what has been revealed, it is an act of treason against his country that has led to the deaths of more than one million Iraqis and he should be prosecuted for it.

I wonder how many fatwas Imam Sistani issued for the \$200 million he received. It will be of interest for the readers to find out how many dollars each fatwa ended up costing the politically uninformed Americans.