

Iran's armed forces receive covert aid from Washington

by Robert Dreyfuss

In the heavy border fighting that flared between Iran and Iraq at the beginning of September, the most important unanswered question is: where did Iran get an army?

Unlike previous clashes in the border region, where rebellious Kurdish tribesmen have been resisting Teheran's authority with aid from Iraq, this time the fighting was not led by the Revolutionary Guard, the paramilitary militia under the command of the Islamic Republican Party and the mullahs. Instead, the regular Iranian armed forces engaged in tank battles, aerial clashes, and missile duels with Iraqi forces across a broad front.

Observers of the Iranian situation have long been aware that the overwhelming majority of the Iranian armed forces is strongly opposed to rule by the Ayatollah Khomeini, and for that reason the Islamic Republic has dealt most brutally with the top officers of the armed forces.

Literally thousands have been executed or jailed, and thousands more forced to flee the country. Since coming to power, the mullahs have relied almost entirely on the Revolutionary Guard to suppress opposition and rebellions from leftists, moderates, ethnic groups and so forth. During that time, the armed forces have been considered almost an enemy of the regime, and consequently it has been disorganized, fragmented, its leadership decimated, and its officer corps terrorized by incessant, arbitrary arrests and summary executions.

The Carter connection

Now, suddenly, Iran is beginning to reassemble a

regular army loyal to the Khomeini regime.

The startling thing is that the effort to rebuild the Iranian army is, according to information from Iranian former military officers and Washington intelligence sources, a project being coordinated by the U.S. State Department and National Security Council. In recent weeks, the United States has quietly begun a major military airlift to resupply the Iranian armed forces with spare parts, arms, and ammunition, including heavy weapons. American C-130 air transport planes are ferrying this equipment to at least three secret NATO bases, including a location in the Azores, where the cargo is then transferred to Iranian transports for the rest of the journey!

At the same time, additional U.S. military supplies are being sent to Iran through Great Britain and Italy, whose governments are shipping arms to Iran out of NATO stockpiles.

The strategy behind the Carter-Khomeini connection is as follows. For the time being, the Carter administration has made a determination that for the foreseeable future the clergy in Iran—and eventually throughout the Middle East—is the power with which the United States must ally in order to control the area. From the beginning of the Khomeini revolution, the State Department and Brzezinski's NSC were in full agreement on the need to support the Muslim Brotherhood forces around Khomeini. During 1978, some opposition to that policy was expressed by the Pentagon and the CIA. Now, even that is changing.



Photo: Kaler/Sygnia

Iranian Air Force members demonstrating in support of Khomeini in February 1979.

"The State Department and the NSC believe that the key for defending the Khomeini regime now is to give 'em a good army," said a Washington source. "The Pentagon guys originally put up a fight, but now they are going along. The CIA is grumbling, but they have caved in as well to the overall policy." In fact, he said, almost no one in Washington officialdom is prepared to launch a serious challenge to the administration's pro-Khomeini strategy.

According to Iranian sources, the Carter administration is working on a timetable that ideally would have the Khomeini regime release the U.S. hostages before the November elections, in exchange for concrete U.S. guarantees to support and defend the Khomeini forces afterward. But the success of that strategy depends on several factors. The chief consideration is that which concerns internal equilibrium in Iran: if it appears in the next few weeks that a workable arrangement of Iran's secular and religious forces and the army can be assembled to hold the Khomeini regime together, then it is likely that Carter and Khomeini will agree on the release of the hostages. Otherwise, both Carter and Khomeini will prefer that the hostages remain in Iran to provide a rallying point for the population.

The letter to Iran last week from Secretary of State Edmund Muskie, addressed to newly designated Prime Minister Mohammed Ali Rajai, said that the United States is prepared to negotiate a release of the hostages, and hinted that the U.S. might be prepared to issue some sort of apology to Iran for alleged past U.S.

misdeeds in Iran. The Iranian response, though equivocal, was carefully studied by the State Department, which issued optimistic forecasts. And, it was announced in Teheran that the Islamic Assembly might begin to consider the hostage question as early as Sept. 15.

Khomeini-army deal?

In the midst of these U.S.-Iranian flirtations, the Ayatollah Khomeini issued an unprecedented declaration concerning the Iranian armed forces. Henceforth, he said, the officers of the armed forces would be exempted from arrest and trial by the civilian courts and instead would be subject only to internal military discipline. The Khomeini decision removed perhaps the major source of resentment in the armed forces against the Islamic government, namely, its penchant for purges of the military command through civilian channels.

The decision by the Ayatollah, channeled through Chief of Staff General Valiollah Fallahi, was a major concession by the clergy to the army command.

At the same time, top commanders of the army forces fighting in western Iran's Kurdistan region issued a joint declaration demanding that Khomeini put an end to the factional squabbles that have rent Iran since the naming of Prime Minister Rajai's cabinet, and they declared that they could not pursue the military campaign against Iraq and the Kurds as long as the political leadership of the country was in such disarray. Such a

statement from the army in Iran is totally unprecedented since the revolution.

Meanwhile, perhaps significantly, the prime minister and President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr managed to agree on the naming of a defense minister, Col. Javad Fakuri, to head the government's military command. Immediately after being named, Col. Fakuri and Gen. Fallahi left on an extended visit to Kurdistan, the scene of the fighting.

The extent of the fighting in Kurdistan indicates that Iran's once decimated armed forces may be fairly advanced in the process of rebuilding. For the first time since the start of the Iran-Iraq clashes that began immediately after the Islamic revolution, both Iran and Iraq reported aerial duels and the downing of some jet fighters on each side. Iran also reported aerial bombardment of Iraqi tank concentrations in the border region, and the Iraqis reported that for the first time Iran made use of ground-to-ground missiles to attack Iraqi border posts.

A dispatch from Iraq reported that Iran was using "rockets, armored vehicles, and sophisticated rifles," and Iraqi television showed large quantities of "American-made" weapons captured from the Iranian forces.

Nevertheless, it is still generally believed that the Iraqi armed forces are far superior to those of Iran, and that if a major war should erupt, Iraq would win handily. Iraq is issuing ominous warnings to Iran should the Khomeini madmen pursue the course of confrontation in the area. Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, while stating that Iraq "does not want war," said on Sept. 10 that Iran was occupying Iraqi territory illegally and that Baghdad intends to "recoup every bit of Iraqi territory now occupied by Iran." President Hussein noted that Iraq has a great deal of popular support inside Iran.

Iraq, of course, has become the base of operations for Iranian exiles who seek to topple the Khomeini regime.

Why Sullivan is protecting Brezezinski

by Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.,
Contributing Editor

William H. Sullivan, President Jimmy Carter's former ambassador to Iran, has published a series of unpardonable lies and distortions of the truth concerning the Iranian revolution that cannot be allowed to go unanswered.

Writing in the current issue of the magazine *Foreign Policy*, Ambassador Sullivan purports to present his personal account of the events in which he participated during the rise of the Khomeini dictatorship in Iran. Although the article is filled with a string of witting falsehoods, the ambassador's lies break down roughly into two categories. First, those designed to protect Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski from criticism of his central role in installing the Khomeini regime; and second, those designed to facilitate what appears to be an imminent consolidation of a public U.S.-Iranian alliance.

Let us consider these two issues separately.

Among those even casually familiar with the background to the Khomeini revolution, it is generally recognized that Brzezinski's National Security Council was instrumental in coordinating almost every dimension of the so-called "Islamic revolution." On several occasions during 1978 and 1979, Dr. Brzezinski stated his belief that "Islamic fundamentalism" is a "bulwark against communism." Yet Ambassador Sullivan, in his account, maintains that Brzezinski was working to oppose the Khomeini takeover, that Brzezinski was in favor of supporting the government of Prime Minister Shahpour

Administration overtures to Khomeini regime

The White House, Justice Department, State Department, and Treasury Department have made significant gestures over the past two weeks toward Iran. The first gesture occurred on Aug. 29, when the Justice Department ordered the release from federal detention of Horace Butler, one of the defendants in the late-July slaying of Iran Freedom Foundation head Ali Tabatabai. By insisting that Butler could

only be tried in a *local* court, Justice prevented the creation of a federal grand jury.

On the same day, the Justice Department filed "suggestions of intent" with American courts to try to prevent these courts from hearing cases of claims made by American firms for compensation of business lost when Carter froze Iranian assets earlier this year.

On Sept. 5, in response to a question from *EIR*, the State Department noted that "the Justice Department, after consulting with the Departments of State and Treasury and receiving supporting factual statements from Messrs. Miller [of Treasury] and Christopher [of State], filed 'suggestions of intent' in cases