

Middle East Report by Robert Dreyfuss

Iranian exiles miss the boat

An investigation into the gunboat hijacking has revealed some strange goings-on and stranger collaborators.

One of three French-built gunboats sold to the Khomeini regime and en route to Iran is stormed and hijacked by anti-Khomeini Iranians on the high seas off the coast of Spain. Iranian exiles around the world cheer. It is heady stuff, this hijacking: the first action ever by the opposition abroad to challenge the Khomeini dictatorship.

What the Iranian community fails to realize is that it was taken for a ride. Not only that: it was taken for a ride by the very same political figures who installed Khomeini into power in the first place.

According to intelligence insiders, the main purpose of the gunboat hijacking was to boost the image in Iranian opposition circles of Adm. Ahmad Madani, who was played up prominently as one of the masterminds of the operation.

In reality, the masterminds behind the operation were Secretary of State Alexander Haig, his British oligarchical string-pullers led by Lord Carrington, and Haig's house social democrats such as Michael Ledeen who backed the overthrow of the Shah in 1979. Now Haig and company are plotting the shape of post-mullah Iran. According to reports, they intend to install Madani in power as a fascist leader à la Zia ul-Haq in Pakistan and then use Iran as a battering ram and staging ground for operations against the Soviet Union in accordance with his insane strategy for a regional anti-Soviet "strategic consensus."

Madani is the perfect choice for such an operation. Known for his extreme opportunism, Madani cooperated fully with the Khomeini regime, serving the Ayatollah as defense minister and governor of Khuzestan province. Soon after he was tapped by Bani-Sadr to assume the post of prime minister, Madani quit Iran. Although he is now masquerading as an opposition leader, to this day he has not broken with the Islamic constitution of the mullahs' Islamic "republic."

Intelligence sources say the gunboat operation was run out of the United States, with French intelligence cooperation, through the offices of two admirals, Kamal Habibollahi and Mowaghary. Habibollahi, former commander of the Iranian navy, is notorious for having cooperated with U.S.'s Gen. Robert Huyser in Iran to neutralize the Shah's army just prior to the Khomeini takeover. Mowaghary is the former naval attaché in Washington.

About three weeks ago, Habibollahi and Mowaghary left Washington for Paris, where they reportedly sold the bizarre hijacking plan to another opposition figure, Gen. Bahram Aryana and his followers. They also sold Aryana on backing the Khomeini-tainted Madani, who is also an asset of British Petroleum and the British Admiralty.

Facilitating Habibollahi's and Mowaghary's shuttle across the Atlantic was none other than Haig

confidant Michael Ledeen at the State Department.

The Turkish government was also said to be involved in the hijacking operation, in particular that country's naval intelligence networks. According to Iranian sources, Madani, Habibollahi, and Aryana were all in Turkey in recent weeks meeting with officials and Iranian exiles there. Several sources linked the arrival in Washington last week of Adm. Nejat Tumer, commander of the Turkish navy, to the Iranian hijacking operation.

Despite the decision by the widely respected Aryana to cooperate with Madani, and despite the euphoria in the Iranian exile community following the gunboat's capture, a number of Iranian military men are expressing suspicion about who is behind the moves that are being taken to overthrow Khomeini. Their fear is that they may be used to install a regime far worse than that of Khomeini. Their fear is not unfounded.

As George Ball revealed in the *Washington Post* Aug. 19, the Haig-Carrington faction view a Mujaheddin "nationalist socialist" government as the likely—and actually desired—outcome of the chaos currently overtaking Iran. In the eyes of the oligarchs, a Mujaheddin government with Madani at the helm is the perfect combination for provoking the Soviets. It would result in "a protracted struggle between the regime in power and the Soviet-directed Tudeh Party," writes Ball. This would "seriously menace Soviet solidarity by providing an Islamic Titoist model to inspire Muslim minorities within the Soviet Union and elsewhere that are already restless under Soviet rule."