

Iran's mullahs plan global religious terrorism war

by Thierry Lalevée

Hojatessalam Hashemi-Rafsanjani, speaker of the Iranian parliament and strong-man of Khomeini's regime, announced May 18 that should "America or second-rate powers get involved in the Gulf, the consequences cannot be predicted. Iran will wage a war throughout the world." On May 20, Iranian President Ayatollah Khamenei warned the United States that should it become involved, "it will be presented with a disaster worse than Lebanon"—evoking the April and October 1983 suicide-commando operations against the U.S. embassy and the Marine compound which killed more than 300 Americans in Beirut.

These are no idle threats, and the Iranian terrorist capabilities are backed up by those of Libya and Syria. While Iran has been concentrating its terrorist actions in the Middle East and neighboring regions over recent months, it has been building an apparatus which could be deployed worldwide.

Gathering the foot-soldiers of a new international army was a series of conferences in February of this year, dubbed by the Italian press a "Fifth International." In seminars chaired by Khomeini's official heir Ayatollah Montazeri, Islamic fundamentalist groups from all over the world gathered to elect a common secretariat. There were representatives of the Egyptian fundamentalist groups such as Al Jihad (Holy War), Al Takfir wal Higrā (Flight and Repentance), and al Tahrir al Islami (Islamic Liberation Party) who, several weeks later, were arrested in Cairo; Jordanian representatives of Al Jihad who were arrested in May for plotting the assassination of political leaders; representatives of groups from Morocco, involved a few weeks earlier in the instigation of riots; and representatives from the Gulf, several African countries, Europe, and the United States.

Among them were new converts, including women members of a training camp led by the wife of the Iranian prime minister, who were interviewed on Iranian television on Feb. 16 pledging "to form suicide-commando squads and to die for Islam," in the words of one Fatima (formerly Bernadette) Dulan from England.

From May 6 to May 16, the religious controllers of these foot-soldiers met in Teheran under the leadership of Ayatollah Montazeri and Ayatollah Khalkhali, chairman of the Fedayeen-e-Islam organization (the Iranian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood). Gathering no fewer than 400 Imams from 65 different countries, the conference was titled the World Congress of the Friday Imams and Prayer Leaders, referring to those few Imams who have the right to lead the Prayer on the holy day. The *Jerusalem Post* reported May 17 that the congress decided that "Mosques should not only be places of prayers but, as in Prophet Mohammed's times, centers of political, cultural, and military activities."

Under the leadership of Montazeri, special schools were established in Iran's religious center of Qom to train students and would-be Imams in theology and "methods of armed insurrection." Sources report that at least 620 foreign students are attending these classes, of which 70 are from Europe and the United States, from groups such as the French Antilles independence movement, the Irish Republican Army, and the Black Panthers. It was under such guidance that a small group of Black Muslims recently attempted to establish an "Iranian" Islamic Republic in Trinidad, with the help of the Iranian embassy in Caracas.

After its public sessions concluded, the congress continued to meet in closed session to discuss the creation of "Action Committees" under the leadership of the new chairman of the permanent secretariat, Hojatessalam Mohammed Moghadam, an old friend of the late Ayatollah Beheshti, founder of Iran's ruling Islamic Republican Party, who was killed in the June 1981 explosion in the party headquarters.

Mohammed Moghadam was, like Beheshti, based in West Germany for many years. Today he is the Imam of the Mosque of Hamburg, director of the Islamic Center of Northern Germany and editor of its publication *Al Fajr* (Dawn).

Moghadam was appointed chairman not merely because of the particular importance of the Hamburg mosque as one of Iran's chief centers of influence in Europe, but also because of Moghadam's connections to East Germany. Both he and Beheshti made regular pilgrimages to Leipzig more often than to Mecca, informed sources report. Leipzig is the center of East German and also many important Soviet operations in the Middle East. Following Beheshti's death, Moghadam has maintained the tradition and meets regularly with what is now the new leadership of Iran's communist party, the Tudeh, reconstituted in exile under the leadership of Prince Kajar Eskandari. Eskandari was secretary general of the Tudeh until August 1978, when he was replaced by current Tudeh chief Kianouri because of Kianouri's religious connections. Eskandari was picked by the East Germans in early 1984 to chair a new central committee meeting in East Berlin.

Prompting the Montazeri/Khalkhali gang to go for an all-out global terror war is their analysis that only through a direct confrontation between Iran and the Western world can the Khomeini revolution be bolstered, as it was during the

hostage crisis. This faction is expected to authorize further provocations in the Gulf in an attempt to create a deeper international crisis. Though Iran lacks the military means to confront either the Arab Gulf countries or the United States, Khomeini and his close allies are convinced that the martyrdom of Iranians would spark a world Islamic revolution.

Factional resistance to the mullahs

This grouping confronts growing criticism inside Iran of the policies followed by the mullahs. Most military advisers are known to oppose a full confrontation in the Gulf out of fear that Iran would simply collapse. Iran's inability to launch its "Dawn 8" offensive against Iraq earlier this month was the result of sharp differences between the military and religious leadership of the army. The mullahs have been organizing for a new offensive in the southern part of the country, with the aim of reaching the holy Shi'ite cities of Kerbala and Najaf and creating an independent Iraqi Shi'ite republic. This has been strongly advised by the leaders of the Iraqi Shi'ites in exile in Teheran (like Ayatollah Bakr Hakim), who form the hard core of Iran's terrorist apparatus.

The army has argued against such plans, saying that Iran is "no martyr factory," in reference to the mullahs' human-wave tactic on the battlefield. On the grounds that all offensives in the south have been repelled, the military called for an offensive on other parts of the front instead. The fight seems to have ended some weeks ago when Khomeini purged 60 colonels, replacing the leaders of entire units with mere sergeants who were considered "religiously reliable."

But this did not solve the crisis within the army. Since May 14, five jetfighter pilots have defected to the Gulf countries along with their jets, dramatically reducing Iran's air-war capabilities. In the same period, two patrol boats stationed off the Strait of Hormuz defected to Oman. Growing anger within the population over the use of Iran's children in human-wave tactics has forced the mullahs to enroll Afghan workers as martyrs instead, 30,000 of whom were presented with the choice of dying on the Iranian front or being handed over to the Soviets in Afghanistan.

Montazeri and Khomeini's Islamic Republican Party lost seats in the last elections to smaller formations such as the Association of the Hojatiyah, consisting of more moderate religious figures, led by Ayatollah Halabi, whom Khomeini had purged from the government a year and half ago. The Hojatiyah seem to be coming back stronger than ever and are known to be supported by the Bazaaris, the tradesmen whose support is vital to the regime.

Standing in the middle, between the Hojatiyah and the factions of Ayatollah Madavi-Kani and Montazeri, is strongman Hojatessalam Hashemi-Rafsanjani, who bides his time. The mad mullahs on top want a spectacular action soon to shore up their sagging political support. The war with Iraq, its extension into the Gulf, and global terrorism are the cards they will play soon, if they are not stopped.

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