

Pentagon Analyst Stops Cooperating In Israel Spy Case

Associated Press

02:26:45

By Richard B. Schmitt

October 6, 2004

WASHINGTON, DC -- A Pentagon analyst being investigated for allegedly passing secrets to Israel has stopped cooperating with authorities and retained a new lawyer to fight possible espionage charges, sources familiar with the case said Tuesday.

The analyst, Larry Franklin, has been a key witness in a continuing **FBI** investigation looking into whether classified intelligence was passed to Israel by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, an influential Washington lobbying group. Franklin has been accused of passing the contents of a classified document about U.S. policy on Iran to two AIPAC officials, who in turn may have given the information to Israeli officials in Washington, sources have said. Federal prosecutors had proposed an agreement under which Franklin would plead guilty to some of the charges. Such agreements usually are done in exchange for leniency and are accompanied by a pledge of continued cooperation. But sources said that Franklin has rejected a proposed deal because he believes the terms are too onerous. He recently replaced his court-appointed lawyer. "It looks like there is going to be a battle," a source familiar with the case said.

FBI officials have not yet sought charges against Franklin or anyone else in the case, although the breakdown of plea negotiations would appear to raise the odds that he could be charged soon. The scope of the investigation is believed to encompass a top diplomat at the Israeli Embassy in Washington; two high-ranking analysts at AIPAC; and the Pentagon office in which Franklin works as an Iran analyst, which is headed up by Defense Undersecretary Douglas J. Feith. The case has attracted widespread attention because it spotlights U.S. relations with a longtime ally and raises questions about whether those relations have become too close in recent years. Israel has become acutely sensitive to the growing nuclear capabilities of Iran, which it considers to be its most worrisome and deadly foe.

Both the Israeli government and AIPAC have denied that they engaged in any wrongdoing or were given unauthorized access to secrets. A spokesman for Paul McNulty, the United States attorney for the eastern district of Virginia, whose office has been assigned the case, declined to comment on the matter. A prominent Washington defense lawyer, Plato Cacheris, confirmed this week that he recently had been retained by Franklin. "We consider him a loyal American who did not engage in any espionage activities," said Cacheris, the first person representing Franklin to speak out on his behalf since the investigation surfaced a month ago. "Any charge of espionage will be met with fierce resistance."

Cacheris has represented a number of accused turncoats, including CIA operative Aldrich Ames, who was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1994 after confessing to years of spying for the Soviet Union. Cacheris also represented former **FBI** counterintelligence agent Robert P. Hanssen, who also was convicted of passing secrets to the Soviets and who received a life sentence in 2002. Cacheris' other clients have included Monica Lewinsky and Nixon administration Attorney General John Mitchell. Some U.S. officials familiar with the investigation have said there is little hard evidence that Franklin intended to commit espionage and no hint that he was paid for any role he might have played. U.S. officials believe there is more evidence that Franklin -- described by colleagues and friends as diligent and thoughtful yet periodically unreliable and disorganized -- might have handed over information without understanding the gravity of his actions.

During two decades at the Pentagon spent tracking threats, he was considered a journeyman analyst who often could be found in his office buried behind huge stacks of documents. The classified information he is suspected of sharing included the contents of a draft version of a national security presidential directive, or NSPD, on Iran. The draft advocated measures the United States could take to help destabilize the regime in Tehran, a subject of intense interest to the Israelis.

ⓧ
BMC

3/10

65R-WF-226315-NC

10/9/09 Dr SMC [Signature]

[Redacted Box]

10/6/2004

b6
b7c

But officials also have said that the draft, which originated at the Pentagon's Near East and South Asian Affairs office, where Franklin worked, contained little in the way of sensitive secrets that had not been reported by the media already. In addition, after more than two years of debate among top U.S. officials, an NSPD on Iran has yet to be agreed upon by top officials and signed by the president.

Daniel Ayalon, to correct myself. Mr. Ambassador, it's all over the press this week, the FBI is investigating an official of the Defense Department, Lawrence Franklin, for allegedly passing classified documents or materials or data from the White House that the White House plans -- regarding Iran -- the White House's plans on Iran and Israel.

Is Franklin spying for your country?

AMB. AYALON: No, not at all, John. I can tell you here -- and thank you for giving me this opportunity to say categorically and very authoritatively, Israel does not spy on the United States, nor do we gather any intelligence on the U.S. We do not do it because it's our best friend and ally. And secondly, we don't really need it because we are in such close, close relations -- strategic, political -- and we see eye to eye on most of the issues traveling the Middle East, whether it's terror or weapons of mass destruction, or Iran that we just talked about.

And also, John, you emphasized it's press reports. Let me also say here that I'm not going to contend with or argue with some anonymous leaks or some faceless allegations or sources. I can tell you here also that in all my contacts with the U.S. government, there was no way that formally or informally we were discussing any of these allegations.

So it's in the press. I don't know the motivations of it. I hope it will be revealed because there is nothing there whatsoever.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: There's no grand jury that's been impaneled?

AMB. AYALON: I have no details on that, and nor am I concerned because we know exactly what the facts are. And whoever is leaking, whoever is feeding the press on that, I would say it could be two reasons. Either it's some incompetence of not understanding reality or misunderstanding or misinterpreting the activities that we engage in with the U.S. government, or maybe even a malicious intent. I don't know.

BMK

But I can tell you again, officially we have not heard anything, neither formally nor informally.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: So we can regard this as an official denial on the part of the government of Israel, what you're saying?

AMB. AYALON: Yes. Yes. And I would say it's more than that; for us it's a non-issue.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: It's a non-issue?

AMB. AYALON: Exactly.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Now, you are aware, with all due respect, Mr. Ambassador, that Israel denied that Jonathan Pollard was a spy for 13 years, and then it concurred after that that he was a spy.

AMB. AYALON: That wasn't quite the case. We took responsibility -- it was a sad case. It was a sad case. And it was an isolated, very unique case of the past over 20 years ago, and we all bore the consequences

32
226315-NC

BMK
10/4/01
b6
b7C

for it.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Well, I think the general assumption is that nations spy on each other whether they're friendly or not.

AMB. AYALON: Absolutely.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: And there isn't very much doubt in my mind that we have our spies, if they are earning some of that \$40 billion that we put out for CIA, et cetera, there are spies in your government working for us. Absolutely?

AMB. AYALON: You're right that -- no, you're right that nations, even friendly ones, do spy on each other. This is a common, let's say, understanding. But after Pollard, I can tell you here again that Israel --

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: The Pollard case.

AMB. AYALON: After the Pollard case from 20 so years ago, we took -- Israel took a strategic defense -- strategic decision not to do any kind of intelligence gathering of that type on the United States, and we adhere to it and we don't want even anything which will be remotely close to such activity because of the unique relationship between Israel and the United States. The relationship is unique in terms of closeness.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: And precious.

AMB. AYALON: Not just the pressure.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Precious.

AMB. AYALON: Not just -- very precious, you're right. Very precious. We cherish it. We will not do anything to impair it. And again, nor do we --

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: I think those denials are reassuring. I'm not sure it clears my hurdle of that people in your station are required by the circumstances of your diplomatic status to automatically deny everything, but I think you've gone a step beyond that.

But I have a question with regard to AIPAC. AIPAC is a flourishing and very successful lobby. It does excellent work on the part of Israel, but it is -- it appears that AIPAC is functioning as an intermediary, as this story has been developed and put forward. Now AIPAC denied any involvement, but I want to read you the language:

"Any allegation of criminal conduct by AIPAC or our employees is false and baseless. Neither AIPAC nor any of its employees has violated any laws or rules, nor has AIPAC or its employees ever received information they believed was secret or classified."

Does that sound like a categorical denial to you?

AMB. AYALON: I think so. I cannot speak, of course, for AIPAC. I think it's a very, very good American organization, and we very much

appreciate its activity on behalf of the U.S. -- American strategic alliance. It is very important.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: But is it not curious that there is wiggle room in that statement, and the operative words are "they believed was secret or classified?" This puts the monkey on Mr. Franklin's back. AIPAC doesn't deny passing the information on to Israel; it denies that it did so knowing that the information was classified. They didn't know it was classified. So are you putting -- are you putting Franklin out to dry?

AMB. AYALON: I would -- you know, John, Washington is a place, like any other capital, of information sharing. Obviously, we do meet with AIPAC on a regular basis, like we do meet with other think tanks --

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Well, he -- Franklin --

AMB. AYALON: -- and with administration people --

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Yeah.

AMB. AYALON: -- Congresspeople, academic people, media people. They're all meeting and talking.

I don't think there was anything wrong with that, and we will continue to do that. And I think that the statement speaks for itself. I don't have anything to add. I'm not a spokesman for them.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: But you understand how that "they believed" provides that wiggle room? Can you see that?

AMB. AYALON: I -- no, I'm not sure that I fully understand, you know, this legalistic language.

I can tell you that --

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: But AIPAC is presenting itself as possibly an unwitting recipient of classified information, which it may have passed on.

see also: www.onpointradio.org/shows/2004/09/2004_0913_b_main.asp

Cloak and Swagger

The Larry Franklin spy probe reveals an escalating fight over control of Iran policy.

By Laura Rozen and Jason Vest

Issue Date: 11.02.04

Print Friendly | Email Article

To Washington's small and sometimes fractious community of Iran experts, it was becoming obvious: What to do about Iran and its fast-developing nuclear program was set to rival Iraq as the most pressing foreign-policy challenge for the person elected president in 2004. By the spring and early summer of this year, the city was awash in rival Iran task forces and conferences. Some recommended that Washington engage in negotiations with Tehran's mullahs on the nuclear issue; they drew scorn from the other side, which preached regime change or military strikes.

In late July, as this debate raged, a Pentagon analyst named Larry Franklin telephoned an acquaintance who worked at a pro-Israel lobbying group, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). The two men knew each other professionally from their long involvement in the Washington Iran and Iraq policy debates. A Brooklyn-born Catholic father of five who put himself through school, earning a doctorate, as an Air Force reservist, Franklin had served as a Soviet intelligence analyst at the Defense Intelligence Agency until about a decade ago, when he learned Farsi and became an Iran specialist. At their July meeting, Franklin told the AIPAC employee about his frustration that the U.S. government wasn't responding aggressively enough to intelligence about hostile Iranian activities in Iraq. As Franklin explained it, Iran had sent all of its Arabic-speaking Iranian agents to southern Iraq, was orchestrating attacks on Iraqi state oil facilities, and had sent other agents to northern Iraq to kill Israelis believed to be operating there. Iran had also transferred its top operative for Afghanistan to the Iranian Embassy in Baghdad. The move, Franklin implied, signified Tehran's intention to cause more trouble in Iraq.

A couple of weeks after this meeting, in mid-August, the AIPAC official was visited by two FBI agents, who asked him about Franklin. From the line of questioning, it wasn't clear to the AIPAC official whether Franklin was being investigated by the FBI for possible wrongdoing or if he was simply the subject of a routine background investigation for renewal of his security clearance.

(X)
Bmk

But on August 27, when CBS broke the story that the FBI was close to arresting an alleged "Israeli mole" in the office of the Pentagon's No. 3 official, Douglas Feith, it became clear that Franklin was in trouble. News reports said that the FBI had evidence that Franklin had passed a classified draft national-security presidential directive (NSPD) on Iran to AIPAC. What's more, reports said, the FBI wasn't just interested in Franklin. For the past two years, it had been conducting a counterintelligence probe into whether AIPAC had served as a conduit for U.S. intelligence to Israel, an investigation about which National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice was briefed shortly after the Bush administration came into office.

In the flurry of news reports that followed, the scope of the FBI investigation seemed potentially enormous. Citing senior U.S. officials, *The Washington Post* reported that "the FBI is examining whether highly classified material from the National Security Agency ... was also forwarded to Israel," and that the investigation of Franklin was "coincidental" to that broader FBI probe. *Time* magazine reported that Franklin had been enlisted by the FBI to place a series of monitored telephone calls (scripted by the FBI) to get possible evidence on others, including allies of Ahmad Chalabi, a favorite of Pentagon neoconservatives. Chalabi was alleged to have told his Iranian

331
250215-UC
b6
b7C
[Redacted Box]
[Handwritten signatures]

intelligence contacts that the United States had broken their communications codes -- a breach that prompted a break in U.S. support for Chalabi last spring -- and the FBI wanted to know who had shared that highly classified information with Chalabi. What's more, an independent expert on Israeli espionage said he had been interviewed by the FBI in June and in several follow-up calls, and that the scope of the senior FBI investigators' questioning was broad and extremely detailed.

In the wake of the first news reports, AIPAC strongly denied that any of its employees had ever knowingly received classified U.S. information. Israel also categorically denied that it had conducted intelligence operations against the United States since the case of Jonathan Pollard, a U.S. Navy intelligence analyst who was convicted of spying for Israel in 1987.

At the time the CBS report aired in late August -- incidentally, on the Friday evening before the opening of the Republican national convention -- custody of the Franklin investigation was being transferred from the head of the FBI counterintelligence unit, David Szady, to U.S. Attorney Paul McNulty, a Bush appointee, in Alexandria, Virginia, as the case moved to the grand-jury phase.

And then, in mid-September, news of the Franklin investigation went dark.

* * *

The classified document that Franklin allegedly passed to AIPAC concerned a controversial proposal by Pentagon hard-liners to destabilize Iran. The latest iteration of the national-security presidential directive was drafted by a Pentagon civilian and avid neocon, Michael Rubin, who hoped it would be adopted as official policy by the Bush administration. But in mid-June, Bush's national-security advisers canceled consideration of the draft, partly in response to resistance from some at the State Department and the National Security Council, according to a recent memo written by Rubin and obtained by *The American Prospect*. No doubt also contributing to the administration's decision was the swelling insurgency and chaos of postwar Iraq.

Rubin, in his early 30s, is a relative newcomer to the neoconservative circles in which he is playing an increasingly prominent role. Once the Iraq and Iran desk officer in the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans and later a Coalition Provisional Authority adviser in Iraq, these days the Yale-educated Ph.D. hangs his hat at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and serves as editor for controversial Middle East scholar Daniel Pipes' magazine, *The Middle East Quarterly*.

In an article published in the Republican-oriented quarterly *Ripon Forum* in June, Rubin suggests that the administration resolve its Iran waffling by turning against the current regime. "In 1953 and 1979," he wrote, "Washington supported an unpopular Iranian government against the will of the people. The United States should not make the same mistake three times." In other words, President Bush should step up his public condemnation of the Iranian regime and break off all contact with it in hopes of spurring a swelling of the Iranian pro-democracy movement. In short, Rubin, like his fellow Iran hawks, urges the administration to make regime change in Iran its official policy.

This invocation of "moral clarity" has a long intellectual pedigree among neoconservatives. It's the same argument they made to Ronald Reagan about the Soviet Union more than 20 years ago. "If we could bring down the Soviet empire by inspiring and supporting a small percentage of the people," Michael Ledeen, a chief neoconservative advocate of regime change in Iran and freedom scholar at AEI, recently wrote in the *National Review*, "surely the chances of successful

revolution in Iran are more likely.”

Was it to this end that Franklin was allegedly observed by the FBI passing the draft NSPD on Iran to AIPAC? Was he trying to inform AIPAC, or Israel, about the contents of the draft NSPD? Or rather, and perhaps more plausibly, was he trying to enlist the powerful Washington lobbying organization in advocating for a Iran-destabilization policy? In other words, is the Franklin case really about espionage, or is it a glimpse into the ugly sausage-making process by which Middle East policy gets decided in Washington and, in particular, in the Bush administration?

* * *

Arguably past the apogee of its power, AIPAC nonetheless remains one of Washington's most influential organizations. Successor to the Eisenhower-era American Zionist Council of Public Affairs, AIPAC came into its own during the Reagan years, thanks largely to the efforts of former Executive Director Thomas Dine. When Dine assumed his post in 1981, the organization had an annual budget of a little more than \$1 million, about two dozen employees, and 8,000 members; when he left in 1993, a budget of \$15 million was being administered by a staff of 158, and the committee had 50,000 members.

An assiduous networker and fund-raiser, Dine also quickly became indispensable to the Reagan White House as a promoter of various neoconservative foreign-policy initiatives. He also forged alliances between AIPAC and other interests, including the Christian right. (Another former AIPAC executive director, Morris Amitay, has long been active in neoconservative ventures, as both a business partner to Feith and Richard Perle and co-founder, with Michael Ledeen, of the Coalition for Democracy in Iran.) By the mid-'80s, AIPAC had been a prime mover in the defeat or crippling of initiatives and legislators not to its liking, and the passage of billions in grants to Israel. It had also taken on an increasingly pro-Republican (and pro-Likud) tilt.

While many regarded AIPAC's power as lessened during the Clinton administration, since 2001 AIPAC has been powerful enough that even the Bush administration couldn't get the committee and its congressional allies to tone down language in a 2002 resolution in support of Israeli military actions against the Palestinians. AIPAC's 2002 annual conference included 50 senators, 90 representatives, and more than a dozen senior administration officials; this year's conclave boasted President Bush himself, plus House Majority Leader Tom DeLay and an array of State and Defense department officials.

But while AIPAC is a powerhouse, it is not clear that it would have been the perfect vehicle for the kind of Iran-destabilization lobbying that some in Washington have been pushing. There are a wide variety of Israeli positions on how to deal with Iran. Many of Washington's Middle East hands who are pro-Israel believe destabilization will not likely succeed, and they fear it will not deal with what they consider the real threat from Iran: nuclear weapons.

“If you mean trying to promote the peaceful overthrow of the regime in Iran, I think the prospects for success are highly uncertain,” says Patrick Clawson, deputy director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a pro-Israel think tank. Pro-Israel activists in Washington want to make sure that the United States considers Iran's nuclear program first and foremost an American problem, the response to which could include, if necessary, air strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities. Iran's nuclear program, one such activist recently told the *Prospect*, “has to be seen as Washington's problem.”

There are other competing positions within the Israel-policy community. One Israeli official in Washington this summer for diplomatic meetings discussed regime change in Iran with a reporter from *The American Prospect* on the condition that his identity not be disclosed. He believes that Iran is ripe for democratic revolution, that it has one of the most pro-Western populations in the region, and that Iranian opposition forces would be electrified by a vigorous show of U.S. presidential support. But he believes that any sort of military intervention in Iran would set back considerably these promising regime-change forces. Still another group of Israeli policy-makers seem more inclined toward a military option, as evidenced by Israel's well-publicized purchase of 500 "bunker-buster" bombs from the United States in September and its failed efforts to launch a spy satellite to monitor Iran's nuclear-program developments.

Yet another policy position became evident in Seymour Hersh's article in *The New Yorker* in June, in which Hersh reported that Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, sensing that the U.S.-created chaos in Iraq could leave an opening for anti-Israel efforts in Iran, was pursuing a "Plan B" that had Israeli operatives covertly training and equipping Kurds in Iraq, Iran, and Syria for possible future covert action to counter any such measures. As Hersh reported: "Israeli intelligence and military operatives are now quietly at work in Kurdistan, providing training for Kurdish commando units and, most important in Israel's view, running covert operations inside Kurdish areas of Iran and Syria. ... Some Israeli operatives have crossed the border into Iran, accompanied by Kurdish commandos, to install sensors and other sensitive devices that primarily target suspected Iranian nuclear facilities."

The Israeli government insisted the story wasn't credible, and that it was sourced by Turkey, which is panicked, as ever, about foreign designs on Kurdistan. But a source told the *Prospect* that Franklin expressed the conviction that the United States has intelligence that affirms Hersh's report to be largely accurate. A second former U.S. diplomatic official who recently visited the area told the *Prospect* that there are Israeli intelligence officials operating in Kurdish Iraq as political advisers, and others under the guise of businessmen.

All of which raises questions, like what exactly was in the draft NSPD that Rubin wrote and Franklin allegedly shared with AIPAC? And does the destabilization plan pushed by neoconservatives in the draft NSPD in fact advocate that the United States or its proxies arm the Iranian opposition, including the Kurds, as part of its efforts to pursue regime change?

The public statements by the neoconservatives emphasize that regime change in Iran would not require U.S. military force. Then again, the neoconservatives' inspiration for the Iran plan has its roots in Reagan-era NSPDs that, while providing nonmilitary support to Poland's Solidary Movement, also had the CIA aggressively arming and training the Afghan mujahideen, the Nicaraguan Contras, and other anti-communist rebels. There's also no denying that some of the chief advocates of the Iran regime plot come out of the Pentagon, America's military command center. And some of those same Iran hawks have discussed the Iran regime-change issue, for instance, with Parisian-based Iran Contra arms dealer Manucher Ghorbanifar -- not exactly the kind of go-to guy for a nonviolent regime change plan, one might think.

* * *

Whatever the nuances, the neocons are facing one of their biggest challenges in Washington today: persuading the administration to adopt their regime-change policy toward Iran even while their regime-change policy in Iraq appears to be crumbling. Since the Iraq invasion, Feith's office has come under the intense scrutiny of congressional investigators, investigative journalists, and

Democratic critics for its two controversial prewar intelligence units, the Office of Special Plans and the Policy Counter Terrorism Evaluation Group. It was those units that had helped convince the Bush White House of an operational connection between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda -- a claim since disproved by the independent September 11 commission, among others. Those secretive intelligence units had also been among the administration's strongest champions of Chalabi, who allegedly told Iranian intelligence agents that the United States had penetrated Iranian communications channels.

An FBI counterintelligence investigation of who had leaked this information to Chalabi was reportedly under way by spring 2004, and many of Chalabi's neocon allies were incredibly anxious: Misjudgment about Chalabi's virtues or postwar Iraq planning was one thing; passing secrets to another nation would be an accusation of an altogether graver magnitude.

All of these investigations put Franklin and other neoconservatives associated with Feith at the white-hot center of a raging controversy: What would any second-term Bush foreign policy look like? Would controversial neocon figures like Feith remain in power? Or would it mark the rise of pragmatists and realists? For the neoconservatives, the fight to clear Franklin and themselves has become a fight against their internal administration rivals. And they're fighting it in classic neocon fashion: dirty and disingenuously.

Among intelligence professionals, it's hardly a state secret that even nations whose relationships go beyond mere alliance and constitute friendship spy on one another. That's one reason nations have counterintelligence capabilities as well. As such, investigations of espionage and mishandling of classified documents are not uncommon in Washington; the Bush administration's Justice Department, for example, has opened investigations to probe allegations of Chinese, Taiwanese, and Saudi espionage, including ones that involve ranking officials at the FBI and State Department. With the investigations into AIPAC and Franklin, the Justice Department has renewed its interest in snooping by our ally, Israel.

Since the Pollard case, U.S. intelligence and law-enforcement sources have revealed to the *Prospect* that at least six sealed indictments have been issued against individuals for espionage on Israel's behalf. It's a testament to the unique relationship between the United States and Israel that those cases were never prosecuted; according to the same sources, both governments ultimately addressed them through diplomatic and intelligence channels rather than air the dirty laundry. A number of career Justice Department and intelligence officials who have worked on Israeli counterespionage told the *Prospect* of long-standing frustration among investigators and prosecutors who feel that cases that could have been made successfully against Israeli spies were never brought to trial, or that the investigations were shut down prematurely. This history had led to informed speculation that the FBI -- fearing the Franklin probe was heading toward the same silent end -- leaked the story to CBS to keep it in the public eye and give it a fighting chance.

But the pro-Israel lobby and some neoconservatives, fighting for their political lives, have turned the leak on its head. They claim that the AIPAC and Franklin investigations have nothing to do with the substance of the Iran-related leaks. Rather, they say, investigators are going after Jews. In the current probes of Franklin and AIPAC, Michael Rubin has led the strident charge. On September 4, during the media flap over the investigations, Rubin sent an e-mail memo -- obtained by the *Prospect* -- to a list of friendly parties targeting two of Washington's more respected mainstream journalists, calling them key players in an "increasing anti-Semitic witch hunt." The memo fingered Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage as one likely source of the leaks about the investigation, and also urged that, if the accusations had any merit, the White

House demand the evidence be made public. "I'm increasingly concerned about the leaks spinning off from the Franklin affair," Rubin wrote. "It was bad enough when the White House rewarded the June 15, 2003, leak by canceling consideration of the NSPD. It showed the State Department that leaks could supplant real debate. ... Bureaucratic rivalries are out of control." Rubin's memo showed up in a similar form almost a month later in the op-ed pages of *The Washington Times* under the byline of *National Review* staffer Joel Mowbray, and echoes of it can be seen in the pages of the neocon-friendly *Jerusalem Post*.

Meanwhile, Franklin was involved in some pushback of his own. In late August, the Franklin case was referred from Szady to U.S. Attorney Paul J. McNulty, a Bush-Ashcroft appointee who heads the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia. A grand jury was seated on the case in September and had subpoenaed at least some witnesses to testify about Franklin. Then, on October 1, *The New York Sun* reported that Franklin had fired his court-appointed attorney (whom he had presumably retained for financial reasons), halting grand-jury proceedings while he found new counsel. On October 6, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Franklin had stopped cooperating with the FBI entirely. He had hired a high-profile lawyer, Plato Cacheris (of Aldrich Ames and Robert Hanssen fame), and had rejected a proposed plea agreement whose terms Franklin considers "too onerous," according to the *Los Angeles Times*.

Who pushed Franklin -- who for months seemed vulnerable -- to stop cooperating? And who is paying for his expensive new lawyer? At this writing, we do not know. Also unknown is the status of the larger FBI counterintelligence probe of alleged Israeli espionage into which Franklin stumbled. But we do know that his recent decisions would seem to immensely help any of the people against whom he could have testified. At least for now, that's a round won by a clique intent on pushing freelance crypto-diplomacy to its limits.

Laura Rozen reports on foreign-policy and national-security issues from Washington, D.C. Jason Vest is a Prospect senior correspondent.

Copyright © 2004 by The American Prospect, Inc. Preferred Citation: Laura Rozen and Jason Vest, "Cloak and Swagger", The American Prospect Online, Nov 1, 2004. This article may not be resold, reprinted, or redistributed for compensation of any kind without prior written permission from the author. Direct questions about permissions to permissions@prospect.org.

Search Within Results:

Search

[Edit Search](#) | [New Search](#)
[Print](#) | [Download](#)View: [List](#) | [Full](#)< [prev](#) Document 10 of 14 [next](#) > Tag for Print & Download

CLEAR

Copyright 2004 Los Angeles Times
All Rights Reserved
Los Angeles TimesApril 4, 2004 Sunday
Home Edition**SECTION:** OPINION; Editorial Pages Desk; Part M; Pg. 1**LENGTH:** 979 words**HEADLINE:** Iraqi Democrats Feeling Sidelined**BYLINE:** Michael Rubin, Michael Rubin is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and was a governance team advisor for the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq.**DATELINE:** WASHINGTON**BODY:**

Last summer, as Iraqis sweltered outside, the Coalition Provisional Authority met in the marbled corridors and air-conditioned offices of one of Saddam Hussein's former palaces to hash out how to fund political parties. The State Department was adamant, insisting that the CPA should maintain "an even playing field" and should not favor one party over another. Parties affiliated with the Iraqi Governing Council's militant Islamists and liberal secularists should receive the same treatment. There should be no special consideration given to groups seeking to unite Iraqis rather than dividing them by ethnicity or sectarian affiliations.

This may sound like the way to ensure fair elections. But while the CPA has maintained its neutrality, our adversaries have shown no such compunction.

Until recently, I worked for the CPA, living in a nondescript house outside Baghdad's Green Zone. I traveled the country with Iraqi friends, paying spot checks on borders, political parties, shrines and markets. Because I was not in a convoy or traveling with heavily armed guards, Iraqis could easily approach me. Professionals, politicians and religious figures telephoned at all hours for meetings, knowing they would not have to wait at the fortified gates of the palace complex. I quickly learned that most political business in Iraq happens not at Governing Council sessions, but in private homes between 9 p.m. and 3 a.m.

One February evening, a governor from a southern province asked to see me. We met after dark at a friend's house. After pleasantries and tea, he got down to business. "The Iranians are flooding the city and countryside with money," he said. "Last month, they sent a truckload of silk carpets across the border for the tribal sheikhs. Whomever they can't buy, they threaten." The following week, I headed south to investigate. A number of Iraqis said the Iranians had channeled money through the offices of the Dawa Party, an Islamist political party, led by Governing Council member Ibrahim Jafari. On separate occasions in Baghdad and the southern city of Nasiriya, I watched ordinary Iraqis line up for handouts of money and supplies at Dawa offices. The largess seems to be having an effect: Polls indicate that Jafari is Iraq's most popular politician, enjoying a favorable rating by more than 50% of the electorate.

The CPA's evenhandedness may be well-intentioned, but to a society weaned on conspiracy theories, the United States' failure to support liberals and democrats signals support for the Islamists. Equal

opportunity may exist in Washington, but not in Baghdad. Why, Iraqis ask, would the CPA ignore the influx of Iranian arms and money into southern Iraq if it had not struck some secret deal with Tehran or did not desire the resulting increase in militancy? Why would the Iranian border be largely unguarded a year after liberation?

Iraqi liberals are especially sensitive to signs of support for Shiite politician Abdelaziz Hakim, leader of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, whose visit official Washington welcomed in January. Students affiliated with the Badr Corps, Hakim's militia, roam Basra University, forcing women to wear the veil. Signs proclaiming the supremacy of Hakim are affixed to doors across the university, and professors say they are afraid to remove them. In Nasiriya and Karbala, Iraqis lament they can no longer speak openly, lest they become the subject of retaliation by Iranian-funded gangs.

While Sens. John F. Kerry of Massachusetts and Carl Levin of Michigan demand yet another government audit of the Iraqi National Congress (previous audits have found no wrongdoing), radical clerics find their pockets full, their Iranian sponsors more interested in mission than political cannibalism. Last month, I visited a gathering of urban professionals in Najaf. They repeatedly asked why the CPA stood by while followers of firebrand Shiite cleric Muqtader Sadr invaded homes, smashed satellite dishes and meted out punishment in ad hoc Islamic courts. We may dismiss Sadr as a grass-roots populist, but his rise was not arbitrary. Rather, his network is based upon ample funding he receives through Iran-based cleric Ayatollah Kazem al Haeri, a close associate of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

In signing the bill authorizing \$87.5 billion for reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan in November, President Bush called the massive campaign to rebuild both nations "the greatest commitment of its kind since the Marshall Plan." There is daily progress. Shops have opened. Roads are repaved. But, the CPA remains hampered by a strategic communications strategy geared more toward Washington than Iraq. American newspapers may report our \$5.6 billion investment in Iraq's electrical infrastructure, but what Iraqis see are signs such as a billboard of Hakim, the radical politician, affixed to a newly-refurbished Ministry of Electricity office in Baghdad.

On March 26, a team of United Nations election specialists arrived in Baghdad to prepare the country for elections following the scheduled June 30 transfer of sovereignty. Iraqis may welcome elections, but it would be an abdication of American leadership if we do not support our allies, especially as Iraq's neighbors fund proxy groups and radicals with goals inimical to democracy.

We should not be more willing to help our adversaries than our friends. Democracy is about not only elections, but also about tolerance, compromise and liberty. Twenty-five years ago, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, leader of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, declared "the first day of God's government." In a rushed referendum supervised by armed vigilantes, Iranians voted for theocracy. For a quarter century, they have struggled to undo their mistake. It would be a betrayal of Bush's vision as well as 24 million Iraqis if we replicate it in Iraq.

LOAD-DATE: April 4, 2004

View: [List](#) | [Full](#)

< [prev](#) Document 10 of 14 [next](#) >

[Edit Search](#) | [New Search](#)
[Print](#) | [Download](#)

[About LexisNexis](#) | [Terms and Conditions](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)
Copyright 2004 LexisNexis, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Search Within Results: [Edit Search](#) | [New Search](#)
[Print](#) | [Download](#)View: [List](#) | [Full](#)< [prev](#) Document 2 of 2 Tag for Print & DownloadCopyright 2004 IPS-Inter Press Service/Global Information Network
IPS-Inter Press Service

April 9, 2004, Monday

LENGTH: 1435 words**HEADLINE:** IRAQ: NEO-CONS SEE IRAN BEHIND SHIITE UPRISING**BYLINE:** By Jim Lobe**DATELINE:** WASHINGTON, Apr. 9**BODY:**

Neo-conservatives close to the administration of President George W Bush are pushing for retribution against Iran for, they say, sponsoring this week's Shiite uprising in Iraq led by radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr.

Despite the growing number of reports that depict the fighting as a spontaneous and indigenous revolt against the U.S.-led occupation, the influential neo-cons are calling on Bush to warn Tehran to cease its alleged backing for al-Sadr and other Shia militias or face retaliation, ranging from an attack on Iranian nuclear facilities to covert action designed to overthrow the government.

But independent experts say that while Iran has no doubt provided various forms of assistance to Shia factions in Iraq since the ouster of former President Saddam Hussein one year ago, its relations with Sadr have long been rocky, and that it has opposed radical actions that could destabilise the situation.

"Those elements closest to Iran among the Shiite clerics (in Iraq) have been the most moderate through all of this," according to Shaul Bakhash, an Iran expert at George Mason University here.

Many regional specialists agree that Iran has a strategic interest in avoiding any train of events that risks plunging Iraq into chaos or civil war and partition.

Neo-conservatives centred in Vice President Dick Cheney's office and among the civilian leadership in the Pentagon have strongly opposed any detente with Iran, and have frequently blamed it for problems the United States has encountered in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

Neo-conservatives outside the administration, such as former Defence Policy Board chairman Richard Perle and his colleagues at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), Michael Ledeen and Reuel Marc Gerecht, called even before the Iraq war for Washington to support indigenous efforts to oust the "mullahcracy" in Tehran, which is seen as an arch-enemy of both the United States and Israel.

Some neo-conservatives have seized on Sadr's uprising as a new opportunity both to raise tensions against Iran and to divert attention from Washington's bungling of relations with the Shia community in Iraq.

Top U.S. officials both here and in Iraq have not yet named Iran as the hidden hand behind Sadr, although a senior reporter at the right-wing 'Washington Times', Rowan Scarborough, quoted unnamed "military sources" Wednesday as telling him that Sadr "is being aided directly by Iran's Revolutionary Guard... and by Hezbollah, an Iranian-created terrorist group based in Lebanon".

Unnamed "Pentagon officials" gave a similar account to the 'New York Times', although Times reporter James Risen stressed that CIA officials disagreed with that analysis, adding, some intelligence officials

believe that the Pentagon has been eager to link Hezbollah to the violence in Iraq to link the Iranian regime more closely to anti-American terrorism".

The Iran hand was first raised in connection with Sadr's revolt by Michael Rubin, who just returned as a "governance team advisor" for the U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in Iraq to his previous position as a resident fellow at AEI.

In a column published in the 'Los Angeles Times' on Sunday, he complained that Washington and the CPA had failed to provide liberal and democratic Iraqi leaders with anything like the kind of support that Iran was supplying to radical Shia leaders and their "gangs".

Rubin said that on a visit to the Shia-dominated south he found that Iranians were pouring money and arms to key Islamist parties, including the Da'wa, the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), and Sadr himself, whose rise over the past year, according to Rubin, is explained by the "ample funding he receives through Iran-based cleric Ayatollah Kazem al Haeri, a close associate of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei".

Another senior CPA adviser, Larry Diamond, a neo-conservative who specialises in democratisation at the California-based Hoover Institution, told IPS this week that Sadr's Mahdi Army, and other Shia militias, are being armed and financed by Iran with the aim of imposing "another Iranian-style theocracy".

"Iran is embarked on a concerned, clever, lavishly-resourced campaign to defeat any effort for any genuine pluralist democracy in Iraq," said Diamond. "The longer we wait to confront the thug, the more troops he'll have in his army, the more arms he'll have and financial support -- virtually all coming from Iran -- the more he will intimidate and kill sincere democratic actors in the country, and the more impossible our task at building democracy will become".

"I think we should tell the Iranian regime that if they don't cease and desist, we will play the same game, that we will destabilise them," he added.

On Tuesday, the 'Wall Street Journal's editorial page took up the same theme, arguing that Sadr has talked "openly of creating an Iranian-style Islamic Republic in Iraq (and) has visited Tehran since the fall of Saddam. ... his Mahdi militia is almost certainly financed and trained by Iranians," the editorial continued, adding, "Revolutionary Guards may be instigating some of the current unrest".

"As for Tehran, we would hope the Sadr uprising puts to rest the illusion that the mullahs (in Tehran) can be appeased. As Bernard Lewis teaches, Middle Eastern leaders interpret American restraint as weakness. Iran's mullahs fear a Muslim democracy in Iraq because it is a direct threat to their own rule."

"If warnings to Tehran from Washington don't impress them, perhaps some cruise missiles aimed at the Bushehr nuclear site will concentrate their minds," the Journal suggested.

On Wednesday, 'New York Times' columnist William Safire asserted the existence of an axis involving Sadr, Iran, Hezbollah and Syria. "We should break the Iranian-Hezbollah-Sadr connection in ways that our special forces know how to do", he wrote.

But this line of reasoning appears particularly curious to Bakhsh, who notes that the Sadr family, including Moqtada himself, is precisely the kind of Iraqi Shiite who would be deeply suspicious of Tehran.

"Sadr's father was a strong Iraqi nationalist, like Moqtada himself", he told IPS. "He often used to question why there were in Iraq ayatollahs who spoke Arabic with a Persian accent."

Like other experts, Bakhsh believes that Iran has indeed been heavily involved with the Iraqi Shia community, but sees the leadership providing far more support to SCIRI and its Badr brigades than to Sadr, who, from Tehran's point of view, is seen as untrustworthy.

Bakhsh also questions the neo-conservative assumption that Iran wants to destabilise Iraq now. "Obviously the Iranians are not unhappy to see the Americans discomfited in Iraq, but I don't think it's the policy of the Iranian government to destabilise Iraq right along its own border," he said.

Middle East historian Juan Cole of the University of Michigan also questions the notion of a link between

Iran and Sadr in the current uprising. While Sadr's views on theocratic government are consistent with those of Iranian hardliners, according to Cole, his outspoken Iraqi nationalism poses a major challenge to Khomeini's claim to authority over all Shiite religious communities, including those outside Iran.

Contrary to the Journal's assumptions, adds Cole, Sadr did not receive much encouragement from the Iranian leaders he met in Tehran. "The message he got ...was that he should stop being so divisive and should cooperate more with the other Shiite leaders".

Geoffrey Kemp, an Iran specialist at the Nixon Centre and Middle East adviser on former president Ronald Reagan's National Security Council staff, says he has little doubt the Iranians have influence with several different Shiite groups, and that there might even be "rogue elements" inside Iraq who back Sadr.

But he agrees that Tehran's strongest ties are with SCIRI and the Badr Brigades, who were trained by the Revolutionary Guard inside Iran during Hussein's rule. "The situation is far too complex to make simplistic statements about what Iran is or is not doing," Kemp told IPS. "But to suggest that this is an Iranian-inspired insurrection is a stretch".

"The neo-conservatives are all so heavily invested in the success of Iraq that instead of blaming the Pentagon for some extraordinary blunders, they want to blame everyone else -- the State Department, the Iranians, the Syrians for the mess that was partly of their own making."

LOAD-DATE: April 12, 2004

View: [List](#) | [Full](#)

< [prev](#) Document 2 of 2

[Edit Search](#) | [New Search](#)
[Print](#) | [Download](#)

[About LexisNexis](#) | [Terms and Conditions](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)
Copyright 2004 LexisNexis, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Search Within Results: [Edit Search](#) | [New Search](#)
[Print](#) | [Download](#)View: [List](#) | [Full](#)< [prev](#) Document 6 of 14 [next](#) > Tag for Print & DownloadCopyright 2004 Federal Information and News Dispatch, Inc.
Voice of America News

April 19, 2004

SECTION: RADIO SCRIPTS - BACKGROUND REPORT 5-55191.**LENGTH: 625 words****HEADLINE: IRAN / IRAQ****BYLINE: GARY THOMAS****TEXT: WASHINGTON**

INTRO: An attempt by Iran to mediate an end to the fight in neighboring Iraq between the forces of a radical Muslim cleric and U-S troops was not successful. But, as correspondent Gary Thomas reports, the effort underscores Iran's bid to wield some clout in postwar Iraq.

To Iran, the United States is still, officially speaking, the Great Satan. And from the U-S perspective, Iran is one of the two remaining members of what President Bush famously termed an axis of evil. But Iran sent a delegation to Iraq to try mediate an end to the standoff between radical Shi'ite Muslim cleric Moqtada al-Sadr and the U-S occupation authority - and the United States made no move to stop the effort.

An Iranian diplomat was gunned down in Baghdad during the visit and the mediation subsequently broke down. Nevertheless, say analysts, the Iranian effort in Iraq was symptomatic of a broader political struggle in Iran for influence, power, and international legitimacy.

Just how much clout Iran has in Iraq - and just who in Iran wields it - is murky.

Juan Cole, a professor of Middle East and South Asian history at the University of Michigan, says the Iranian mission to Iraq is part of an effort by President Mohammad Ali Khatami and his fellow reformists to regain some influence they had lost to the hardliners. President Khatami has pointedly distanced himself from Mr. al-Sadr.

[COLE ACT]

That faction has been under enormous pressure inside Iran. Of course, it was sidelined in the recent elections by the hardliners. And so reaching out and playing this kind of positive role in the region may be one way for the reformists to break back out of their isolation.

[END ACT]

But Michael Rubin, who was until last month a political advisor to the Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad, says the Iranian role in Iraq was anything but positive. He says Iran is meddling and trying to set up its own cells in Iraq.

[RUBIN ACT]

I think having Iranian involvement in Iraq is like having the arsonist volunteering to put out the fire.

[END ACT]

Moqtada al-Sadr - the cleric turned insurgent - is believed to have strong backing from the hardline elements in Iran. His mentor, say analysts, is Ayatollah Kazem al-Hussein al-Hairi, a senior Shi'ite cleric in the Iranian holy city of Qom - although how much influence he actually exerts on Mr. al-Sadr is not clear. And while supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has welcomed the forced departure of Saddam Hussein - who led a bloody decade-long war against Iran - he has sharply condemned the U-S-led occupation of Iraq.

Mr. Rubin says Iran is actively helping Mr. al-Sadr's forces.

[2ND RUBIN ACT]

The Iranians have been funding some of the radicals with arms, with Revolutionary Guards. The Iranian charge d'affaires in Baghdad is actually not a diplomat. He is a member of the Qods force, which is the unit of the Revolutionary Guards dedicated to the export of the Islamic revolution. The last thing Iraqis want is for us to involve non-Iraqis in this matter.

[END ACT]

But Professor Cole says Iran's role in Iraq is not as pervasive as Mr. Rubin and like-minded analysts portray.

[2ND COLE ACT]

There are persistent reports that Iran has, and the hardliners in Iran have, provided material support to Moqtada and his faction. I personally think those reports are overblown. I think this is largely an indigenous Iraqi movement, but it may have gotten some money. Lots of Iraqi groups have gotten money from Iran, including some of the more secular politicians.

[END ACT]

Analysts say Iran is not likely to allow its once-powerful neighbor to be reconstituted without trying to have some influence over the matter. (SIGNED)

NEB/GPT/RH/RAE

LOAD-DATE: April 19, 2004

View: [List](#) | [Full](#)

< [prev](#) Document 6 of 14 [next](#) >

[Edit Search](#) | [New Search](#)
[Print](#) | [Download](#)

[About LexisNexis](#) | [Terms and Conditions](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)
Copyright 2004 LexisNexis, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Search Within Results:

Search

[Edit Search](#) | [New Search](#)
[Print](#) | [Download](#)

View: [List](#) | [Full](#)

< [prev](#) Document 2 of 14 [next](#) >

Tag for Print & Download

[CLEAR](#)

Copyright 2004 The News and Observer
The News & Observer. (Raleigh, North Carolina)

June 6, 2004 Sunday
Final Edition

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. A26

LENGTH: 576 words

HEADLINE: Listening post;
Ideas and issues under discussion in the Triangle

BODY:

Tired of losing? Stay the course

COMMENTARY

From Carolina Journal, a publication of the John Locke Foundation, a commentary by editor Richard Wagner.

"If you ever have a player who's afraid he's going to lose, take him out." A legendary baseball manager in my hometown uttered that advice to a protege about 40 years ago. The statement, seemingly simple, actually embodies a much deeper philosophy of commitment, success and leadership in everyday life.

That advice can be applied also to the nation's morale and the war on terrorism being waged, for now, in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The losers in our society say we can't win in the Mideast. They say President Bush duped Americans into thinking Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. They say we have entered a "quagmire" in Iraq, like we did in Vietnam. They said the same thing before U.S. troops liberated Afghanistan.

The losers are the same people who refuse to recognize the simple fact that terrorism is nothing new. Islamic terrorists have been at war with the United States for about 30 years. Observers of recent history remember that the long string of terrorism began with the hijacking of airlines, the taking of hostages and the slaughter of innocent victims in the 1970s.

Then it progressed, among other events, into the bombing of U.S. military barracks, U.S. embassies, the USS Cole and the World Trade Center.

Then came Sept. 11. Until then, the terrorists were at war with us, but we weren't at war with them.

Americans woke up when al-Qaeda terrorists flew airliners into the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon. Only a few years later, the losers lulled themselves into a false sense of security, closed their eyes and went back to sleep. They're still asleep today.

Now, according to some national surveys, the losers are infecting others with their disease. More Americans are beginning to doubt themselves and to lose their will to fight.

Some leaders, however, are slapping the nation with some cold facts. One of them, retired Lt. Gen. Thomas McInerney, a military analyst for Fox News Channel, spoke at a recent luncheon sponsored by the John Locke Foundation. Some of his revelations were:

- Syria got \$300 million from Saddam Hussein to hide Iraq's weapons of mass destruction;
- ~~The recent outbreak of hostilities is the "last gasp by the radical Islamists~~ to ensure that we do not get a successful turnover in Iraq and Iraq becoming a growing democracy";
- **Iran** is sponsoring and **funding** Muqtada al-Sadr in the recent fighting in Iraq;
- Terrorist organizations, such as Hezbollah and Hamas, are an **arm of Iran** and Syria;
- Afghanistan, Iraq, **Iran**, Syria, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and North Korea form a "web of terror" that supports terrorism. "If these web of terror nations did not support terrorism, terrorism withers," he said. Libya and Afghanistan are no longer on the list.
- **Sadr**, too, remembers Vietnam. One of his objectives is to sow discord in the United States so we will lose our resolve.

I believe McInerney and the president.

For some Americans, losing is a way of life. To them, America, likewise, is always a loser. They made Vietnam a self-fulfilling prophecy. Now they want to do the same in Iraq.

If the losers are allowed to endure, sure enough, we will allow freedom to be held hostage again. Our nation eventually not only could surrender, it could succumb. The enemy this time has entered our back yard and prepares to torch our home.

LOAD-DATE: June 6, 2004

View: [List](#) | [Full](#)

< [prev](#) Document 2 of 14 [next](#) >

[Edit Search](#) | [New Search](#)
[Print](#) | [Download](#)

[About LexisNexis](#) | [Terms and Conditions](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)
Copyright 2004 LexisNexis, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Search Within Results: [Edit Search](#) | [New Search](#)
[Print](#) | [Download](#)View: [List](#) | [Full](#)Document 1 of 5 [next](#) > Tag for Print & DownloadCopyright 2004 U.P.I.
United Press International

June 8, 2004 Tuesday

LENGTH: 908 words**HEADLINE:** Analysis: Despite Iraqi gains, Sadr remains**BYLINE:** By GADI DECHTER**DATELINE:** WASHINGTON, June 8 (UPI)**BODY:**

Despite a recent spate of positive political news Iraq-watchers of diverse stripes agree that renegade cleric Moqtada Sadr remains the critical thorn in the country's side, and not likely to be extirpated any time soon.

Incoming Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi formally outlawed on Monday the defiant Shiite cleric's Mahdi Army, a private militia of 2,000-3,000 fighters that has repeatedly clashed with U.S. forces in recent months, and barred Sadr and his lieutenants from holding public office for three years.

The order is an exception to a new Iraqi policy of including private militias and their leaders in a postwar political process in exchange for their disbanding and pledging to work with the new government, which is scheduled to take over sovereignty from coalition forces on June 30. Nine other Iraqi political parties and movements pledged on Monday to comply with the order.

Juan Cole, a University of Michigan history professor and frequent commentator on the Middle East said that banning Sadr from mainstream Iraqi politics would only endanger the fragile truce between the Mahdi Army and U.S. forces in the holy Shiite cities of Najaf and Kufa, a cease-fire that has held since Friday.

"I think there is every prospect of drawing (Sadr) into the political process," Cole told United Press International Tuesday. "(Sadr's) forces can be potentially drawn off into the regular army and it is better to do that than confront him."

Among the obstacles to Sadr's inclusion in mainstream Iraqi politics is an outstanding warrant for his arrest issued in April by an Iraqi judge, on charges that Sadr allegedly murdered a rival cleric last year.

A State Department spokesman said Monday it believes Iraqi authorities should prosecute Sadr.

"It is our view that Moqtada Sadr is a subject of Iraqi law and that law should be applied to him, as well as to any other Iraqi citizen who has been accused of violating the law," Adam Ereli told a briefing in Washington.

But the Iraqi government could take advantage of the transitional nature of Iraqi politics to amend Sadr's current fugitive status, said Cole.

"The charges against (Sadr) were arbitrary anyway, since no grand jury has met and had him charged. They could be allowed to lapse or given over to the clerics to handle internally," he said.

Turning the outlaw cleric into a legitimate political player would not necessarily neutralize him as a security threat, and may in fact increase his power, according to Amatzia Baram, a senior fellow at the

United States Institute of Peace, a federally funded think tank.

"Can (Sadr) be bought off? He can be bought off, yes. But only as a stepping-stone to total power. Namely, he'll do the same thing that Saddam Hussein has done, that Hitler has done. He'll cooperate up to a point and then he'll try to take over and replace the system," said Baram, who is also a professor of Middle Eastern history at the University of Haifa in Israel.

"Unless Sadr is captured or killed he will remain a thorn in the side of the new Iraqi government," agreed Nimrod Raphaeli, a senior analyst at the Middle Eastern Media Research Institute, an organization that monitors and analyzes Middle East media reports.

Whatever strategy the new Iraqi government ultimately pursues, experts agree that disbanding the Mahdi Army, whether by force or persuasion, is a practical challenge of almost overwhelming difficulty.

Unlike Kurdish militias and the Badr Corps -- the armed force of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, or SCIRI, which is one of the groups that has reportedly agreed to disband -- Sadr's militia is undisciplined and may not respond even to their leader's commands to lay down weapons.

"The Mahdi Army is not a militia in the same way that the Badr Corps is, and cannot be disbanded. It's just a congeries of Shiite ghetto youth gangs, mainly from East Baghdad," said Cole. "They are like the Crips and the Bloods in Los Angeles. As long as there are ghettos and as long as the poverty-stricken young men in them are armed, they will be something of a problem."

Moqtada Sadr, 30, is the fourth son of Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Muhammad Baqir Sadr, a Shiite leader who was killed, along with two of his children, by agents of Saddam Hussein in 1999. The Sadr family traces its origins to the prophet Muhammad and is one of the most venerated in Shiite Iraq.

His fiery sermons are characterized by intense anti-American hostility and a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam similar to that promulgated by the Iranian government, from whom he is believed to receive funding.

"His vision for Iraq is probably a government similar to that of Iran," said Raphaeli.

After Sadr's weekly paper, Al-Hawza, was closed by the Coalition Provisional Authority on March 28, his forces took over holy Shiite shrines in the cities of Najaf and Karbala and declared open rebellion against the U.S.-led occupation. Fighters in the Mahdi Army occupied buildings and mosques in as many as six Iraqi cities in April, holding out longest in Najaf and Kufa.

Those cities have been relatively quiet for about a week, following a cease-fire between American and Sadr forces mediated by mainstream Shiite authorities. U.S. forces appear to have given up on their threats to "capture or kill" Sadr and have reportedly decided to let the new Iraqi prime minister decide how to handle the rebellious cleric.

LOAD-DATE: June 9, 2004

View: [List](#) | [Full](#)

Document 1 of 5 [next](#) >

[Edit Search](#) | [New Search](#)
[Print](#) | [Download](#)

Search Within Results:

Search

[Edit Search](#) | [New Search](#)
[Print](#) | [Download](#)

View: [List](#) | [Full](#)

Document 1 of 2 [next](#) >

Tag for Print & Download

[CLEAR](#)



Copyright 2004 U.S. News & World Report
U.S. News & World Report

November 22, 2004

SECTION: SPECIAL REPORT; COVER PACKAGE; THE IRAN CONNECTION; Vol. 137 , No. 18; Pg. 34

LENGTH: 6480 words

HEADLINE: Special Report: The Iran Connection

BYLINE: By Edward T. Pound; Jennifer Jack

BODY:

In the summer of last year, Iranian intelligence agents in Tehran began planning something quite spectacular for September 11, the two-year anniversary of al Qaeda's attack on the United States, according to a classified American intelligence report. Iranian agents disbursed \$ 20,000 to a team of assassins, the report said, to kill Paul Bremer, then the top U.S. civilian administrator in Iraq. The information was specific: The team, said a well-placed source quoted in the intelligence document, would use a Toyota Corona taxi and a second car, driven by suicide bombers, to take out Bremer and destroy two hotels in downtown Baghdad. The source even named one of the planners, Himin Bani Shari, a high-ranking member of the Ansar al-Islam terrorist group and a known associate of Iranian intelligence agents.

The alleged plan was never carried out. But American officials regarded Iran's reported role, and its ability to make trouble in Iraq, as deadly serious. Iran, said a separate report, issued in November 2003 by American military analysts, "will use and support proxy groups" such as Ansar al-Islam "to conduct attacks in Iraq in an attempt to further destabilize the country." An assessment by the U.S. Army's V Corps, which then directed all Army activity in Iraq, agreed: "Iranian intelligence continues to prod and facilitate the infiltration of Iraq with their subversive elements while providing them support once they are in country."

With the Pentagon's stepped-up efforts to break the back of the insurgency before Iraq's scheduled elections in late January, Iran's efforts to destabilize Iraq have received little public attention. But a review of thousands of pages of intelligence reports by U.S. News reveals the critical role Iran has played in aiding some elements of the anti-American insurgency after Baghdad fell--and raises important questions about whether Iran will continue to try to destabilize Iraq after elections are held. The classified intelligence reports, covering the period July 2003 through early 2004, were prepared by the CIA; the Defense Intelligence Agency; the Iraq Survey Group, the 1,400-person outfit President Bush sent to Iraq to find weapons of mass destruction; the Coalition Provisional Authority; and various military commands and units in the field, including the V Corps and the Pentagon's Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force. The reports are based on information gathered from Iraqis, Iranian dissidents, and other sources inside Iraq. U.S. News also reviewed British intelligence assessments of the postwar phase in Iraq.

\$ 500 a soldier. Many of the reports are uncorroborated and are considered "raw" intelligence of the type seldom seen by those outside the national security community. But the picture that emerges from the sheer volume of the reports, and as a result of the multiplicity of sources from which they were generated, leaves little doubt about the depth of Iran's involvement in supporting elements of the insurgency and in positioning itself to move quickly in Iraq if it believes a change in circumstances there dictates such action. "Iran," wrote an analyst with the Air Force Office of Special Investigations on Dec. 5, 2003, "poses the greatest long-term threat to U.S. efforts in Iraq." An analyst at the V Corps summarized matters this way: "Iranian intelligence agents are conducting operations in every major city

with a significant Shia population. The counterintelligence threat from Iran is assessed to be high, as locally employed people, former military officers, politicians, and young men are recruited, hired, and trained by Iranian intelligence to collect [intelligence] on coalition forces."

Even as Bremer's Coalition Provisional Authority and the U.S.-led military were pressing last year to consolidate their grip on Iraq, the intelligence reports indicate, the seeds of the insurgency were growing, in some cases with funding and direction from Iranian government factions. "Iranian intelligence will not conduct attacks on CF [coalition forces] that can be directly linked to Iran," wrote a senior Army analyst, "but will provide lethal aid to subversive elements within Iraq . . . in the form of weapons, safe houses, or money." In an interview, David Kay, the former chief weapons inspector for the Iraq Survey Group, said he believes that factions within the Iranian government have been plotting with and funding some insurgency groups. "I think we are in an intelligence war with Iran," Kay said. "There are Iranian intelligence agents all over the country [Iraq]." Another former American official, Michael Rubin, who worked for the Pentagon and the Coalition Provisional Authority, agrees. "Iran feels it should be the predominant power in the region," Rubin said. "With the U.S. out of there, they [will] have no real competition."

The intelligence reports reviewed by U.S. News appear to support those assessments. Examples:

Iran set up a massive intelligence network in Iraq, flooding the country with agents in the months after the U.S.-led coalition toppled Saddam Hussein's regime. Sources told American intelligence analysts that Iranian agents were tasked with finding information on U.S. military plans and identifying Iraqis who would be willing to conduct attacks on U.S. forces that would not be linked to Iran.

Iranian intelligence agents were said to have planned attacks against the U.S.-led forces and supported terrorist groups with weapons. Iranian agents smuggled weapons and ammunition across the border into Iraq and distributed them "to individuals who wanted to attack coalition forces," according to one report, citing "a source with good access." Separately, an Iraq Survey Group report said that Iranian agents "placed a bounty" of \$ 500 for each American soldier killed by insurgents and more for destruction of tanks and heavy weaponry.

Iran trained terrorists and provided them with safe havens and passage across the border into Iraq, several of the reports say. The Iranian-supported Ansar al-Islam began carrying out bombings and other attacks against coalition forces and Iraqi citizens in the summer of 2003. One report, describing an interview with a source, said: "There were approximately 320 Ansar al-Islam terrorists being trained in Iran . . . for various attack scenarios including suicide bombings, assassinations, and general subversion against U.S. forces in Iraq." The reports linked Ansar al-Islam to al Qaeda and to Abu Musab Zarqawi, the most wanted terrorist in Iraq. "Among the more capable terrorist groups operating in Iraq," an analyst wrote in another report, "are al Qaeda, the al Zarqawi network, as well as Ansar al-Islam."

Iran has been a principal supporter of Moqtada al-Sadr, a radical Shiite cleric whose black-clad Mahdi Army fighters have clashed often with U.S.-led forces. Months before the worst of the insurgency in southern Iraq began last April, U.S. intelligence officials tracked reported movements of Iranian money and arms to forces loyal to Sadr. According to a V Corps report written in September 2003, "There has been an increase of Iranian intelligence officers entering" Baghdad, Najaf, Karbala, Basra, and Amarah. Sadr's fighters later engaged in fierce battles with coalition forces in each of those cities.

"Double game." Iran's permanent mission to the United Nations in New York did not respond to repeated requests for comment from U.S. News. In a sermon given last April, Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, a leading political figure in Iran, said that Americans were "a very effective target" but that Iran "does not wish to get involved in acts of adventurism." Separately, in New York last September, Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi denied that his country had funded or armed Sadr's Mahdi Army.

U.S. government officials, questioned about the intelligence reports reviewed by U.S. News, say the evidence of Iran's destabilization efforts in Iraq is persuasive. "We certainly do have a lot of evidence of Iranian mischief making," a senior Pentagon official said in an interview, "and attempts [at] building subversive influence. I would never underestimate the Iranian problem. . . . Iran is a menace in a basic sense."

Looking at the overall problem in Iraq, however, the official identifies Sunni Muslim extremists as the "hard core" of the insurgency. They include former supporters of Saddam and some foreign fighters--most prominently Zarqawi, whose network has claimed responsibility for some of Iraq's bloodiest

bombings and the beheading of American Nicholas Berg and other western captives. Some terrorists, the official noted pointedly, are also using Syria as an outpost and safe haven.

More than a year ago, the Defense Intelligence Agency reached similar conclusions in a secret analysis headlined "Iraq: Who Are We Fighting?" The analysis cited foreign jihadists as "potentially" the most "threatening." An analyst with the Iraq Survey Group concluded that "[a]s time passes and more and more terrorists and foreign fighters come into Iraq, the situation will become more dangerous because you will get a more experienced enemy, with more training, resources, and experience."

Iran has obvious interests in Iraq. In the 1980s, Iran and Iraq fought a brutal eight-year war that claimed more than a million casualties. Despite the hostilities, the Shiite communities of both countries have deep ties. Shiites compose the majority of the population in both Iran and Iraq, accounting for 60 percent of the latter's 25.4 million people. Iraq is home to some of Shiite Islam's most important holy sites, and thousands of Iranians have taken advantage of newly opened borders to visit them. During Saddam's three decades of repression, Iran provided support and refuge for many of Iraq's Shiite religious leaders. Patrick Clawson, a leading expert on Iraq and Iran at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, says it is not surprising that Iran is heavily involved in Iraq. "It only makes sense that the government of Iran would want to have a network of contacts with the insurgents, develop friends, develop intelligence sources, provide them information about American assets and capabilities," he said in an interview. ". . . It is in their national interest." At the same time, Clawson says, Iran is playing "a double game"--stirring up trouble in Iraq while publicly professing support for Iraqi elections.

Understanding Iran's precise motives in Iraq is no simple matter. Ahmed Hashim, a professor of strategic studies at the U.S. Naval War College, says that the Islamic regime in Tehran does not always speak with one voice. "I think Iran has its hand in a lot of what's going on [in Iraq], but we shouldn't assume the government is unified," he says. "When you look at the Iranian system of government, if you say Iran, it could actually be the Ministry of Intelligence and Security, the [charitable] foundations, or various agencies of the government. They act almost independently." Another Iran expert, Kenneth Pollack, who served in the Clinton White House as director of Persian Gulf affairs on the National Security Council staff, believes Iran does not want chaos in Iraq. "The Iranian leaders are terrified of chaos in Iraq," he says, "and the spillover" aspect. Iran, Pollack adds, wants a stable, "independent" government headed by Shiites.

Whatever its objectives in Iraq, Iran has a well-documented history of supporting terrorist groups. For years, the State Department has identified Iran as the world's pre-eminent state sponsor of terrorism. American officials say the regime has provided funding, safe havens, training, and weapons to several terrorist groups, including Lebanon-based Hezbollah. The commission investigating the 9/11 attacks said in its final report that al Qaeda has long-standing ties to Iran and Hezbollah. Iran favors spectacular attacks, officials say, citing its alleged role in the 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, that claimed the lives of 19 U.S. servicemen. Six of the Hezbollah terrorists indicted in the attack "directly implicated" senior Iranian government officials "in the planning and execution of this attack," former FBI Director Louis Freeh wrote last year.

A wolf's claws. Freeh named two Iranian government agencies, the Ministry of Intelligence and Security, or MOIS, and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, an elite fighting unit and enforcer for the clerical regime. As the insurgency developed in Iraq, both played central roles in planning and funding some of the attacks on coalition forces, according to the intelligence reports reviewed by U.S. News. Early on, MOIS and the revolutionary guard corps were tasked with the job of creating instability in Iraq, the reports say. In some cases, Iran's agents allegedly worked with former Saddam loyalists, an odd marriage but one that shared a common goal: to drive U.S. forces out of Iraq. The reports detail how Iranian agents sought to recruit former regime loyalists and how one former Iraqi Intelligence Service officer, who had close ties to Saddam's late son, Uday, reportedly set up a front company for Iranian intelligence operations in Baghdad.

Only weeks after Saddam was ousted, in April 2003, Iran publicly signaled support for violence against the coalition. In a sermon on May 2, Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, secretary general of Iran's powerful Council of Guardians, called on Iraqis to stage suicide attacks to drive U.S.-led forces from Iraq. The Iraqi people, he said, "have no other choice but to rise up and stage martyrdom operations. . . . The Iraqi people were released from the claws of one wolf and have been caught by another wolf." Two months later, U.S. News has learned, coalition forces uncovered a document describing a fatwa, or religious edict, that had reportedly been issued in Iran for its Shiite supporters in Iraq. The fatwa urged "holy fighters" in Iraq to get close to the enemy--the U.S.-led troops. These fighters, the fatwa said,

should "maintain good relations with the coalition forces" but at the same time create "a secret group that would conduct attacks against American troops." U.S. analysts could not confirm that the ruling was issued by Iranian clerics, but they believe it was credible. Wrote one analyst: "It seems that they [the Iranians] want them [Iraqi Shiite supporters] to be close to the coalition forces and outwardly respect them so that they can gather intelligence that will assist them in their mission."

Before long, Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security stepped up its intelligence operations in Iraq, many of the intelligence reports suggest. Agents set up "significant" intelligence cells in key Iraqi cities, several reports said, including Baghdad, Najaf, Karbala, Kut, Basra, and Kirkuk. MOIS agents also set up a "listening post" in a city in southeastern Iraq to monitor the activities of U.S. forces. In southern Iraq, 10 Iranian agents reportedly began operating out of two rooms at a Shiite mosque. Iran, according to the reports, also sought to place spies within Bremer's Coalition Provisional Authority, then running Iraq's affairs, and they followed and photographed coalition forces. Four Iranians, believed to be MOIS agents, were detained in late July 2003 for photographing a hydropower plant near the central city of Samarra. Power plants became a frequent target of insurgents. In one case, U.S. intelligence officials learned that a MOIS agent, a man named Muhammad Farhaadi, videotaped coalition operations in Karbala, a city south of Baghdad, then took the tape back to Iran.

During the summer and fall of 2003, U.S. analysts' reports describe how MOIS and its operatives sought to develop information from Shites in the south and from Sunnis in the north on the activities of U.S.-led forces. In the fall of 2003, an analyst for the Air Force Office of Special Investigations wrote: "Iranian intelligence has infiltrated all areas of Iraq, posing both a tactical and strategic threat to U.S. interests."

Bribes and border crossings. MOIS also sought to cultivate former Iraqi intelligence officers who might help develop intelligence on the plans and activities of the Coalition Provisional Authority and U.S.-led forces, several reports said. "Former IIS [Iraqi Intelligence Service] officers are highly sought-after targets by U.S. intelligence," said an October 2003 report issued by the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, "not only for their current and former knowledge of Iraqi activities but also because many IIS officers will likely have a wealth of intelligence information on Iran. Iran knows this and will strive to recruit former IIS officers before the U.S. is able to do so. The environment is ripe for double-agent operations, and loyalties can never be certain."

The intelligence reports detail precisely what Iran was after. Its "collection priorities" included finding out what weapons U.S. troops were carrying and what kind of body armor they were wearing. Iranian agents also sought information on the location of U.S. Army and intelligence bases; on the routes traveled by U.S. convoys; on the operations of the Special Forces' elite Delta Force; and on the plans of the U.S. military and intelligence inside Iraq. A military report said a source had reported that the Iranians were pressing to find out whether the Israeli intelligence agency, Mossad, was active in Iraq. According to the report, MOIS directed its agents "to collect information on the Israeli intelligence presence in northern Iraq." Iran's "primary objective in Iraq," wrote another analyst, citing a good source, "is to create instability so coalition forces will focus on controlling the unstable situation rather than concentrating on reconstruction efforts."

MOIS agents carried cash, reports said, to bribe Iraqi border police in order to obtain safe passage into Iraq. In reality, however, all the Iranians had to do was walk across the border at any number of crossing points, where they could blend in amid Iranians coming to Iraq to visit relatives, do business, and worship at Shiite shrines, according to the intelligence reports and several senior Army officers interviewed by U.S. News. "The borders were wide open," says one senior officer. "It suggests that terrorists could come over pretty easily. My God, there were busloads of Iranians crossing the border without interference." Another U.S. Army officer was so concerned that Iranian spies and Islamic jihadists were crossing into Iraq that he visited a border site in a mountainous region northeast of Baghdad last January. "I saw over 1,200 people come over [to Iraq] in an hour, and there were no [coalition] troops there," the officer recalls. "I did not see them armed, but then a lot of them came across in carts and some in vehicles and donkeys, and you wouldn't know. If only 1 percent of them were combatants," he adds, "you can see the problem."

Iranian agents had plenty of help waiting inside Iraq. Numerous intelligence reports say that members of a Shiite militia group in Iraq known as the Badr Corps aided Iran in moving agents, weapons, and other materiel into southern Iraq--sometimes under the cover of humanitarian organizations. The Badr Corps has served as the armed wing of one of the most popular Shiite political parties in southern Iraq, the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, or SCIRI. The leaders of both SCIRI and the Badr Corps, which now calls itself the Badr Organization, have maintained close ties to Iran for about two decades.

Iraqis associated with SCIRI and Badr opposed Saddam's regime and fled to Iran in the early 1980s, where their organizations were established. They began returning to Iraq in droves after U.S.-led troops invaded Iraq in March 2003, prompting Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to warn the Badr Corps not to interfere in Iraq. Badr leaders say they have no hostile intentions toward U.S. forces, but their loyalties remain much in doubt. Just last month, Iraq's national intelligence chief, Mohammed al Shahwani, accused the Badr Organization of killing 10 of his agents on orders from Iranian leaders. Badr, which denied the charges, was said to have disarmed this past summer, as part of an agreement with the new Iraqi government that would allow its members to serve in the new Iraqi Civil Defense Force.

Yet Badr's historical ties to Iran, as described in U.S. and British intelligence reports, offer little in the way of reassurance. While saying that SCIRI and Badr have "made some attempts to emphasize independence from Iran," a British Defence Intelligence Staff report on "Armed Groups in Iraq," dated Nov. 21, 2003, says that the Badr Organization retains "strong links" to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The IRGC, the report says, "has funded, trained, and armed" the militia group, whose membership it estimated at between 18,000 and 20,000. The report says that some Badr members were unhappy with their leader, Abul Aziz al-Hakim, who commands both SCIRI and Badr, and had returned to Iran. At the time, the report says, Badr was "well equipped" with "small arms, mortars and RPG s [rocket-propelled grenades]," T-55 series tanks and a "variety of artillery and antiair pieces." Other intelligence reports say that an Iranian government agency--probably the IRGC--had provided Badr with global positioning systems to better target U.S.-led forces.

Some of the most important information on Iran has been provided by an Iranian exile group, the Mujaheddin-e-Khalq. The MEK fled Iran after the 1979 revolution and later relocated with Saddam's support to Iraq, where it continued to advocate the overthrow of the Iranian clerical regime. U.S. forces now are guarding its 3,800 members at Camp Ashraf, the MEK's sprawling compound northeast of Baghdad. Designated a terrorist organization by the State Department, the MEK nevertheless has provided American officials with significant intelligence on Iran's nuclear weapons programs. The MEK, wrote one Army analyst, is "quite proficient at intelligence collection." Other analysts said that the MEK also had provided valuable on-the-ground intelligence to Army Special Forces after the invasion of Iraq. "The SF guys claim the [MEK] are a valuable intel asset," wrote an Army sergeant who had met frequently with the MEK, "and are generally reliable." At the same time, an Army team wrote that it was important to be mindful that, given that its stated goal is to topple the government in Tehran, the MEK's reports "were designed to inform as well as influence American policy toward . . . the Iranian regime."

A red truck. Relying on its own agents inside Iran and other sources, the MEK has given Army personnel detailed reports on what it says have been Iran's efforts to destabilize Iraq. In its reports, some of which were reviewed by U.S. News, the MEK reported on the intelligence-collection methods of Iran's MOIS, arms shipments from Iran to Iraq, and the involvement in these operations of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps's so-called Qods Force, or "Jerusalem Force."

In December last year, MEK intelligence officers provided the Army with a detailed report and maps on what it called "a widespread network for transferring and distributing arms from Iran to Iraq" through the Ilam region in western Iran. The MEK said its sworn enemy, the Badr Organization, was involved in the network. According to the MEK's operatives, both Badr and the Iranian command staff were based in Iran at the border town of Mehran. "In order to control and manage the intelligence and terrorist activities in Iraq," a MEK intelligence officer wrote, "the Qods Force has recently moved part of its command staff from Tehran to the border city of Mehran." His report also identified the areas in western, northwestern, and southern Iran where Qods Force commanders operated, along with the identities of more than a dozen commanders.

The MEK's reports contain detailed information on arms shipments. On Dec. 4, 2003, the MEK reported, Iranian agents moved 1,000 rocket-propelled grenades and seven boxes of TNT from western Iran to Iraqi resistance groups. A week later, Iran's Qods Force moved "a number of Mirage submachine guns" into Iraq in a "truck loaded with cement bags under which the arms were hidden," according to another report. Later that month, the MEK said, an Iraqi working for Iran drove a red fruit truck--a "cover for a consignment of arms," including RPG s, mortars, and Kalashnikov rifles--across the border into Iraq.

The dissident Iranian group also provided American intelligence officers with information on how Hezbollah was aiding Iran in gathering intelligence in Iraq. Hezbollah, a bitter enemy of Israel with close ties to Iran and Syria, collected information on American and British troops, photographed them, then sent the information to Qods Force commanders in Iran, according to MEK intelligence reports.

Intelligence officers for the MEK also said they had learned that Hezbollah had some 800 operatives in Iraq as of last January, including assassination teams. "The teams assassinate their opponents," a MEK intelligence officer reported, "and carry out sabotage operations." The MEK claimed that Hezbollah had assassinated an Iraqi man who had provided information to coalition forces.

Other sources provided similar information, including Mossad, the Israeli intelligence agency. Mossad warned U.S. intelligence officials in October 2003 that Hezbollah planned to set up a resistance movement that would cause mass casualties, according to a report prepared by the Defense Intelligence Agency's Joint Intelligence Task Force--Combating Terrorism. Iran, the report said, was calling the shots. "Should such mass casualty attacks be considered," the task force wrote, "they [Hezbollah] must first receive approval from Iran." The Iranians "do not want the U.S. and the coalition to focus attention on Iranian support for terrorist networks or other anti-coalition activities they're involved with," said a report by an analyst for a U.S. Central Command support team in Iraq. "Iran is also trying to ensure it has a great deal of influence in Iraq, and one way of doing that is to supply weapons to anti-coalition groups."

Iranian agencies put the intelligence they gathered to practical use, planning, funding, and training attackers, according to many of the intelligence reports reviewed by U.S. News. In November of last year, the Iraq Survey Group received information that Iran had formed small groups of fighters to conduct attacks in cities across Iraq. "Iran had reportedly placed a bounty on U.S. forces of U.S. \$ 2,000 for each helicopter shot down, \$ 1,000 for each tank destroyed, and \$ 500 for each U.S. military personnel killed," the Iraq Survey Group reported. Iranian agents were also suspected in the assassination of at least two prominent Iraqis. In the fall of 2003, there were two reported plots against Bremer, the Coalition Provisional Authority administrator. The Iraq Survey Group, citing a source who "has provided reliable information in the past," said a senior Iranian cleric in Tehran set up a special 100-member army, known as al Saqar, which means eagle in Arabic, to assassinate Bremer and carry out other terrorist attacks. The Eagle Army, the Iraq Survey Group was told, had trained for 30 days at an Iranian terrorist camp. This alleged plot and others reportedly planned against Bremer came to nothing. There were many reported plots against Bremer during his one-year tenure in Baghdad, and throughout his time there he was provided with blanket security. He declined to be interviewed for this story.

Mastermind. Jihadists saw Iraq as an opportunity. In a report quoting a source who was not otherwise characterized, a U.S. Special Operations task force wrote that "the Lebanese Hizballah leadership believes that the struggle in Iraq is the new battleground in the fight against the U.S." In fact, other analysts wrote, Hezbollah and Ansar al-Islam were among the most active groups in Iraq, although al-Qaeda operatives also were believed to be operating there soon after the invasion.

Ansar al-Islam is a small group of Arabs and Iraqi Kurds that is believed to have figured in some of the most violent attacks in Iraq. American and British intelligence, the reports show, concluded that Ansar al-Islam was working closely with Iran, and also al-Qaeda, in its terrorist attacks against coalition forces. Military intelligence reports suggested that the group was believed to be linked to two horrific bombings in Baghdad last year--the attack on the Jordanian Embassy on August 7, in which 17 people were killed, and the August 19 bombing that devastated the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad. That attack killed 22 people, including U.N. envoy Sergio Vieira de Mello. Intelligence reporting indicated that the mastermind of the U.N. attack was Zarqawi, the terrorist who has continued to bedevil coalition forces, and that al-Qaeda operatives also played a role. A "reliable source with good access" said that Zarqawi had coordinated his plans for attacks in Iraq with Ansar al-Islam's top leader, Abu Abdullah al-Shafii. The reports did not link Iran directly to either the U.N. attack or the Jordanian bombing. But one British defense report noted pointedly: "Some elements [of Ansar al-Islam] remain in Iran. Intelligence indicates that elements" of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps "are providing safe haven and basic training to Iran-based AI [Ansar al-Islam] cadres."

Funneling money. A separate report from the British Secret Intelligence Service, quoting a source who "has proved fairly reliable," said that Iranian government agencies were also secretly helping Ansar al-Islam members cross into Iraq from Iran, as part of a plan to mount sniper attacks against coalition forces. There were also multiple American intelligence reports identifying Iran as a chief supporter of Ansar al-Islam. U.S. intelligence received information that an Iranian was aiding Ansar al-Islam "on how to build and set up" improvised explosive devices, known as IEDs. An analyst for the U.S. Central Command offered this assessment: "AI [Ansar al-Islam] is actively attempting to improve IED effectiveness and sophistication."

As might be expected, given the volume of the intelligence reports reviewed by U.S. News, some of the

information was contradictory. In some cases, Hezbollah, for instance, was said to be planning direct attacks against coalition forces. In others, it was said to be working only behind the scenes in fomenting violence in Iraq.

Perhaps Iran's most significant involvement in Iraq has been its support for Moqtada al-Sadr, the radical, anti-U.S. cleric. His Mahdi Army militia engaged in a series of vicious battles with coalition forces in the holy southern Shiite cities of Najaf and Karbala, and in the teeming Baghdad slum known as Sadr City, between April and October this year. Like most of its operations in Iraq, the intelligence reports indicate that the Iranian regime has tried to mask its support of Sadr. He visited Tehran in June 2003 for a ceremony marking the death of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the spiritual leader of the 1979 revolution, but it is not known whether he received any commitment from Iran at that time. U.S. intelligence reports say that Iran used Hezbollah to train and provide funds to Sadr's Mahdi Army and may also have used front companies to funnel money to him. For a time, the reports suggest, Sadr appeared to be getting funds from a senior Shiite religious leader living in Iran, the Grand Ayatollah Kazem al-Haeri, who advocates an Islamic state in Iraq. But by mid-October 2003, according to a special operations task force, Haeri withdrew his "financial support" from Sadr. The ayatollah later publicly cut his ties with Sadr.

There was no such break with Hezbollah. The first sign that the terrorist group planned to support Sadr is reflected in a July 29, 2003, U.S. intelligence report. Citing Israeli military intelligence, the report says Hezbollah "military activists" were attempting to establish contacts with Sadr and his Mahdi Army. The next month they did. By late August, according to a report prepared by a U.S. military analyst, Hezbollah had established "a team of 30 to 40 operatives" in Najaf "in support of Moqtada Sadr's Shia paramilitary group." The report, based on a source "with direct access to the reported information," said that Hezbollah was recruiting and training members of Sadr's militia. A later report, citing "multiple sources," said that Hezbollah was "buying rocket-propelled grenades . . . antitank missiles" and other weapons for Sadr's militia.

Intelligence analysts also tied Sadr to Hassan Nasrallah, the secretary general of Hezbollah. "Reporting also confirms the relationship between . . . Sadr and Hassan Nasrallah," an Army report said. The report cited unconfirmed information indicating that a top adviser to Nasrallah, who is based in Lebanon, had delivered funds to Sadr in Najaf.

Other reporting indicated that the Mahdi Army may have received support from former Saddam supporters and other anticoalition groups. Intelligence analysts were aware, as early as the fall of 2003, that Sadr could become a serious problem. At that time, there had been no confirmed attacks on coalition forces, only Sadr's tough rhetoric, in which he denounced the United States and called the Iraqi Governing Council illegal. But, as a British defense intelligence report said, "stockpiling of heavier weapons, along with public anti-CF [Coalition Force] rhetoric, could indicate a willingness to take more direct action against CF."

"The honeymoon is over." Direct action was precisely what Sadr took, after Bremer ordered his Baghdad newspaper shut down, in March this year, accusing it of "inciting violence" against U.S.-led forces. Days later, after American soldiers arrested a Sadr aide, fierce fighting erupted between U.S. troops and Sadr's forces. In August, Sadr's Mahdi Army surrendered the Imam Ali Shrine in Najaf, and last month he reached a cease-fire with the United States and Iraq's interim government. Sadr's fighters began turning in their weapons, as part of an agreement to disband, and Sadr signaled his intention to get involved in the political process. He remains influential with many Shiites, and American officials know that, if the Iraqi venture is to succeed, they must do everything they can to keep the majority Shiites happy. "Beware if we lose the goodwill of the Shi'ites. The honeymoon is over," an Army captain wrote in October 2003, months before the battles with Sadr's forces began. "Arresting Sadr, the son of a martyr, will only fuel Shiite extremists' animosity, and strengthen their recruiting efforts."

Managing the Sadr situation, some government and intelligence officials say, is a microcosm of the far more difficult challenges America faces in responding to Iran's activities in Iraq. Iran clearly has the potential to stir up far more trouble than it has, particularly in the largely Shiite southern half of Iraq. But so far, as it continues its elaborate dance with the West over its ambitious nuclear program, the Islamic regime has yet to turn the heat up full blast in Iraq, evidently secure in the knowledge that it can do so when and if it sees the need to. "I would not put it past them to carry out spectacular attacks," says David Kay, the former chief U.S. weapons inspector in Iraq, "to demonstrate the cost of a hostile policy. That is the policy issue--can we learn to live with Iranian nuclear capacity?"

The Ties to Tehran

Agents from Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps infiltrated several Iraqi cities (yellow) to collect information on U.S.-led forces and work with insurgent groups after the ouster of Saddam Hussein. Other Iranian agents crossed the long, porous, border with Iraq, intelligence reports said, to support the Mahdi Army and the Badr Organization.

[MAP LABELS]

IRAQ

IRAN

Tehran

Iraq-Iran border crossings

Hajj Umran

Baneh

Halabjah

As Sulaymaniyah

Khanaqin

Mehran and Baramadad

Chamsari

Hoveyzeh

Darsiyah

Shalamchah

Khorramshahr

Abadan

Active Iranian intelligence cells

Mosul

Kirkuk

Baghdad

Karbala

Kut

Najaf

Amarah

Basra

[LABELS-GLOBE INSET]

IRAQ

IRAN

Area of detail

Sources: U.S. intelligence and State Department reports; United Nations
Rob Cady--USN&WR

AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE

BADR ORGANIZATION. This group served as the armed wing of a Shiite political party in Iraq known as the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution. Members of the Badr group opposed Saddam Hussein's rule, and fled to Iran in the early 1980s. A British intelligence report says that Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps "funded, trained, and armed the group, as well as assigning IRGC personnel in a support

capacity." Members returned to Iraq after the coalition invasion in March 2003.

HEZBOLLAH (THE PARTY OF GOD) was created in 1982 after Israel invaded Lebanon. Hezbollah is a Lebanon-based Shiite Muslim group inspired by the Iranian revolution and the teachings of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The organization is funded by Iraq. Syria also supports this group.

ANSAR AL-ISLAM is a Sunni Muslim group of Iraqi Kurds and Arabs established in December 2001. It is closely allied with al Qaeda and the terrorist network of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Intelligence reports indicate that elements of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps have provided safe haven and training for Ansar al-Islam members. Reports also say that Ansar al-Islam and al Qaeda have crossed into Iraq from Iran and Syria. Additionally, they suggest an Ansar al-Islam tie with former members of Saddam Hussein's Fedayeen paramilitary force.

MAHDI ARMY. This is the armed militia group of the radical Shiite cleric, Moqtada al-Sadr. Intelligence reports say that Iran used Hezbollah to train and provide funds to Sadr's militia and may have also used front companies to fund Sadr's attacks against coalition forces.

Sources: U.S. Intelligence and State Department reports, United Nations

GRAPHIC: Picture, CARNAGE. After the bombing of the U.N. headquarters in Baghdad. Two groups with ties to Iran are suspected in the August 2003 attack. (GEERT VAN KESTEREN--AGENTUR FOCUS / CONTACT); Picture, HOLY MAN. Iran's Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati told Iraqis they have no other choice but to rise up against U.S. forces there and drive them out. (VAHID SALEMI--AP); Picture, BELIEVERS. Members of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard Corps. In Iraq, reports say, the guard helped plan and finance attacks on U.S.-led forces. (DAMIR SAGOLJ--REUTERS / CORBIS); Pictures: ALL HANDS. At prayers in a Shiite shrine in Karbala (left). A customs office on the Iraq-Iran border displays terrorist "wanted" posters. (ABBAS--MAGNUM; HUSSEIN MALLA--AP); Pictures: TEHRAN TIES. Followers of Moqtada al-Sadr (left); Abdul Aziz al-Hakim (right, with glasses), the head of the Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution in Iraq (PAOLO WOODS--ANZENBERGER; MURAD SEZER--AP); Picture, TARGET? Intelligence reports linked two alleged plots to kill Paul Bremer, the top U.S. official in Baghdad, to Iranian-backed groups. (GEERT VAN KESTEREN--AGENTUR FOCUS / CONTACT); Picture, On the attack. A member of Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army preparing to fire a rocket-propelled grenade at an American tank in Baghdad (KAEL ALFORD--PANOS); Picture, Ansar al-Islam fighters in Iraq (CHANG W. LEE--THE NEW YORK TIMES); Map, The Ties to Tehran (U.S. intelligence and State Department reports, United Nations; Rob Cady--USN&WR)

LOAD-DATE: November 15, 2004

View: [List](#) | [Full](#)

Document 1 of 2 [next](#) >

[Edit Search](#) | [New Search](#)
[Print](#) | [Download](#)

Search Within Results:

Search

[Edit Search](#) | [New Search](#)
[Print](#) | [Download](#)View: [List](#) | [Full](#)< [prev Document 17 of 28](#) [next](#) > Tag for Print & DownloadCopyright 2003 Agence France Presse
Agence France Presse -- English

July 7, 2003 Monday

SECTION: International News**LENGTH:** 742 words**HEADLINE:** Iran brings Israel within missile range, digs in on tougher UN nuclear probe**BYLINE:** SIAVOSH GHAZI**DATELINE:** TEHRAN, July 7**BODY:**

Iran has conducted a final test of its Shahab-3 ballistic missile, the Iranian foreign ministry confirmed Monday, in a move that brings arch-enemy Israel well within range of the Islamic republic's armed forces.

The announcement sparked immediate alarm in Israel, and also came as Iran's clerical leaders dug in on their refusal to allow tougher UN inspections of their civil nuclear programme, seen by the United States as a cover for nuclear weapons development.

"The test took place several weeks ago. The range of the missile is what we declared before," foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told reporters, adding the test was the final one before the missile was handed over for operation by the country's army.

Officials here have previously said the missile -- based on North Korea's No-Dong and Pakistan's Ghauri-II -- has a range of 1,300 kilometers (810 miles). It can reportedly carry a warhead weighing up to 1,000 kilogrammes.

In Farsi, Shahab means "meteor" or "shooting star".

Asefi was reacting to a report in the Israeli Haaretz newspaper last week which said Iran had conducted the test just over a week ago and was now capable of hitting the Jewish state, American forces in the Gulf or the Indian subcontinent.

"This is nothing new," Asefi said. "Apparently the Israelis are a bit late with their information."

In Israel, government spokesman Avi Pazner told AFP that the Jewish state was "very concerned" at the development.

"We are very concerned, especially since we know that Iran is seeking to acquire the nuclear weapon," he said.

Iran has fiercely denied accusations it has a nuclear weapons programme, and asserts its missile development is purely for its own defence.

But confirmation of the test came as Iran was set to face more scrutiny over its nuclear programme, with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) director Mohamed ElBaradei set to visit Wednesday to press demands for tougher inspections.

But Asefi again rebuffed mounting international demands to immediately and unconditionally allow

tougher UN inspections of its nuclear facilities, asserting instead that drawn-out negotiations may be necessary.

"There is no have-to involved. We hope that in negotiations with Mr. ElBaradei, the two sides can cover subjects that allow us to build mutual trust," he said, adding that "if not, negotiations must continue".

The IAEA has been urging Iran immediately sign, ratify and implement an additional protocol to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) that would allow its teams to conduct surprise inspections of suspect sites.

So far the Vienna-based UN body is only allowed to pay pre-arranged visits to declared sites, but Iran has been urged to open up its nuclear programme amid widespread fears it is also seeking to acquire a nuclear arsenal.

ElBaradei has been backed up by G8 leaders and the European Union. Individual states, Japan, France, Britain, Australia, Russia and the United States, have also echoed the demand. Foreign diplomats here have asserted they are not prepared to see lengthy negotiations on the issue.

But Asefi said that for Iran, the additional protocol problem is "not a black and white issue".

"For every problem there is a solution, and for this problem we must negotiate and we are fully ready to listen," he told reporters.

In June, ElBaradei said the Islamic republic had not fully respected the NPT by failing to inform the IAEA of some of its nuclear activities, including the import of uranium in 1991.

Iranian officials have dismissed the criticisms as technicalities, and have consistently asserted they are ready to allow a tougher inspections regime, but only on the condition that other NPT signatories first assist its nuclear power programme -- one of their treaty obligations.

Asefi also dismissed threats from some EU quarters that negotiations over a trade and cooperation agreement -- which the EU hopes will yield progress on political, human rights and military concerns in Iran -- could be torpedoed by Iran's intransigence on inspections.

"The commercial cooperation accord would be profitable for both sides, so this cannot be used as leverage and the Islamic republic will not accept such pressure," he said.

"Sanctions against the Islamic republic have been ineffective. The Europeans should be careful about what they say and avoid using threats."

sgh-sas/ps

Iran-missile-nuclear-IAEA

LOAD-DATE: July 8, 2003

View: [List](#) | [Full](#)

< [prev](#) [Document 17 of 28](#) [next](#) >

[Edit Search](#) | [New Search](#)
[Print](#) | [Download](#)

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 07-29-2010 BY 60324 uc baw/sab/lsg

Search Within Results:

Search

Edit Search | New Search
Print | Download

View: List | Full

< prev Document 10 of 28 next >

Tag for Print & Download **CLEAR**



Copyright 2003 Defense & Foreign Affairs/International Strategic Studies Association
Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily

July 25, 2003 Friday

SECTION: Vol. XXI, No. 111

LENGTH: 2761 words

HEADLINE: Iranian Clerical Leaders Continue to Defy Opposition, Causing Hardening of Position by its Allies

BODY:

Analysis. By Jason Fuchs, GIS staff. Iran's clerical leadership has begun to harden its position against internal and perceived US-supported opposition following its successful suppression of the July 9, 2003, protests against the Administration. At the same time, the clerical leadership has embarked on a campaign -- which repeats a process successfully undertaken on several occasions in the past -- designed to show that it was cooperating with the US and other states in the "war on terror" when, in fact, it continues to harbor major anti-Western terrorists.<1>

Reports on July 22, 2003, to the effect that it had detained senior al-Qaida leaders were almost identical to remarks made over earlier months to the US, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. No evidence has been provided that the Iranian claims were true, and nor have any such senior al-Qaida terrorists been handed over to Saudi Arabia and Egypt, as promised, despite the fact that Saudi Arabia had -- as part of a supposed reciprocal deal -- handed over Iranian terrorists to the Iranian authorities. Suggestions that the Iranian clerics had detained, and would hand over, al-Qaida deputy leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, were ridiculed by informed Tehran sources, following the hints by Iranian clerical sources to Western media that such an prisoner was being held.

Sources in Iran indicated that the psychological operations initiative had worked in the past to suppress US support for the Iranian opposition, and they noted that senior Iranian Administration officials believed that it would work again:

Meanwhile, the successful Iranian suppression of the mounting waves of internal opposition, supported by the US, also gave encouragement to Iran's allies and other anti-Western states.<2>

In the wake of the st1:date Year="2003" Day="9" Month="7" July 9, 2003 , demonstrations marking the fourth anniversary of the 1999 student demonstrations in Tehran, the Iranian leadership, satisfied with the outcome of its suppression of the protests, appeared resurgently defiant of US-Western demands for transparency regarding the indigenous Iranian nuclear program and, by late July 2003, Tehran 's allies, both regional and otherwise, appeared to have taken note. The jamming of US-based satellite feeds into Iran that began on st1:date Year="2003" Day="5" Month="7" July 5, 2003 , reportedly from sites in Cuba , emphasized this. Cuba's blocking of the transmissions, which continued through July 24, 2003, served as a reminder to the US Bush Administration that states like Cuba, Syria, and Libya -- referred to as the "junior varsity axis of evil" by a Bush Administration official in April 2003 -- continued to look to Tehran as a barometer for their own dealings with the US.

There was now also growing US concern over the status of the Iranian nuclear weapons program, following reports, reportedly confirmed by both US and Israeli intelligence services, that Pakistani nuclear weapons technology had now been acquired and had accelerated the pace of Iranian indigenous nuclear development.

Significantly, while the North Korean (DPRK) Administration of Mar. Kim Jong-il outstripped Iran in real military terms, it too had looked to Tehran in the aftermath of the US-led Coalition-Iraq War of March-

April 2003. Reports of a second DPRK nuclear facility in mid-July 2003 along with the North Korean declaration that it had produced enough fissile material to build an additional six nuclear weapons had, by late July 2003, refocused international attention on the DPRK nuclear program, with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) citing the the Kim Jong-il Administration as the greatest threat to world peace. The DPRK 's continuing diplomatic offensive against the US appeared to have been at least partially resultant of the continuing hard-line Iranian stance, insofar as long-standing and continuing diplomatic and military understanding between Pyongyang and Tehran . Indications by st1:date Year="2003" Day="24" Month="7" July 24, 2003 , were that Pyongyang would continue to heighten tensions on the Korean peninsula, parallel to the increasing US pressure on Tehran and Damascus .

An exchange of fire between North and South Korean troops along the demilitarized zone (DMZ) on July 17, 2003, appeared to reaffirm this intent.

GIS/ Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily had extensively reported on the North Korean military nuclear capability and related delivery systems. In a January 9, 2003 , report entitled Iraq, Iran, North Korea and WMD: Threat Activated , i style="mso-bidi-font-style: normal"Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily noted:

"Even by early 1994, it was known that the DPRK had 10 nuclear warheads of 50kt yield deployed on ballistic missiles, plus two additional 50kt devices suitable for vehicle or aircraft delivery. i style="mso-bidi-font-style: normal"Defense & Foreign Affairs sources believe that the number of warheads available to the DPRK would now be substantially higher, given the fact that it has had an additional eight years to work on the program."

As Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily reported in late June 2003, the Iranian leadership had evaluated the new realities of the post-Saddam Middle East and, increasingly threatened both by the neighboring US military presence in both Afghanistan and Iraq and demonstrations within Iran, decided to initiate an anti-Western offensive for the very survival of Iran as an Islamic Republic. A i style="mso-bidi-font-style: normal"Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily report on June 30, 2003, in particular noted the assemblage of a so-called "Anti-July 9 Crackdown Committee" to suppress the planned July 9, 2003, anti-Government demonstrations. The fruits of these efforts were made evident by the Government's largely successful containment of the st1:date Year="2003" Day="9" Month="7" July 9, 2003 , protests, which, though sizable in number [upwards of 10,000 according to reports] failed to act as any sort of catalyst to spur further widespread support and/or action within the Iranian populace or military. While the protests of st1:date Year="2003" Day="9" Month="7" July 9, 2003 , may have played a key role in the anti-Government movement, it was decidedly not the decisive turning point that some within the Iranian opposition had hoped for.

The result of this perceived success was that the ayatollahs appeared more willing than ever to oppose US and Western demands. For the Iranian leadership, the effective suppression of the protests had served as a much-needed victory against the US and the West. Whether the West actually saw events in these terms was immaterial; in the run-up to st1:date Year="2003" Day="9" Month="7" July 9, 2003 , particularly during the protests of June 2003, state-run Iranian media made clear in stark terms that the anti-Government demonstrators did not represent the Iranian people and were instead agents of the US or other Western "disruptors". On st1:date Year="2003" Day="18" Month="7" July 18, 2003 , the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) reported that i style="mso-bidi-font-style: normal"ayatollah Ahmad Jannati had told worshippers attending Friday prayers at Tehran University that st1:date Year="2003" Day="9" Month="7" July 9, 2003 , was "a day of disgrace for the US and its agents, as their efforts did not succeed" and characterized the July 9 protests as "minor" and "insignificant".

This style of rhetoric served more than one purpose for the Iranian Government. While these comments served to minimize the support base of the protestors they also gave the ayatollahs an opportunity to finally win a battle against the West. Iran had proved incapable of denying Western victories in Afghanistan or Iraq and appeared, by late July 2003, to have grown increasingly frustrated with the Islamic world's inability to respond to the US-led Coalition invasion of Iraq with significant attacks on the Western home front. Thus, while efforts to rectify these situations were well underway by June-July 2003, the "defeat" of the st1:date Year="2003" Day="9" Month="7" July 9, 2003 , protests served as a welcome interim victory, and doubtless a morale booster amongst the Iranian leadership.

Iran 's aggressive strategic stance toward the US , Israel , and the West was emphasized on st1:date Year="2003" Day="20" Month="7" July 20, 2003 , when the Iranian Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khamene'i, officially inaugurated the Shahab-3 ballistic missile. The Shahab-3 reportedly has a range of between 1,300 and 1,500 kilometers and is capable of carrying a 1,000-760 kilogram

warhead. The Iranian Government and Western media had reported since early July 2003 that the missile had been successfully tested in June 2003. The July 20, 2003 , ceremony marked the missile's entrance into operational service, according to Ayatollah Khamene'i, who remarked: "Today our people and our armed forces are ready to defend their goals anywhere."

However, the authoritative Middle Eastern web-based information service, Debka.com, which clearly has strong sources within the Israeli intelligence community, stated in a July 23, 2003 , dispatch that the missile had, in fact, failed its most recent test. According to the Debka.com report, Iranian officials were, as of late July 2003, in North Korea attempting to expedite shipment plans for new engines in hopes of fixing the Sh a hab-3 's remaining defects. It remained unclear whether the July 23, 2003 , report of North Korean-Iranian missile shipments was linked to the arrival of a large Iranian cargo ship to a North Korean port at Haeju Harbor in the Yellow Sea during early July 2003. On July 9, 2003 , an unnamed South Korean official had speculated to the South Korean JoongAng Daily that the Iranian cargo ship had taken on small patrol boats. [The Iranian Navy maintains at least three Zafar -class (North Korean built Chasho -class) FAC(G) patrol boats purchased from North Korea in the early 1990s. Western intelligence agencies believed that an additional six patrol boats had been shipped to Iran in December 2002 in a package sale including two gunboats and five semi-submersibles capable of carrying two torpedoes each.]

Thus, with uncertainty as to the current strategic viability of the Sh a hab-3 missile, what appeared most evident by late July 2003 was the importance which the Iranian Government continued to place on propaganda and the projection of force. The message of the missile test -- failed or otherwise -- had been aimed directly at the US , Israel , and the West. And, though, the test gained only the passing attention of most US and European media, Israeli news outlets paid close watch, with the daily Yedioth Ahronoth blaring across its front page during mid-July 2003: "The Iranian threat -- the missile that can hit every house in Israel ".

The importance of the missile test, insofar as achieving a strong Iranian front to the West, could not be overstated. Iran had long depended on the threat of widening any US-led war in the Middle East to include Israel as a major deterrent to US action against the Tehran-Damascus-Baghdad axis. US Pres. Bush had proved willing to risk that eventuality to achieve US strategic goals in removing the Iraqi Administration of former Pres. Saddam Hussein. With this US decision, the Iranians had hoped for Saddam to make good on this long-promised threat, not only to punish Israel , but also to deter further US action against Iran or its staunch ally Syria . The Iraqi inability to widen the war to Israel made the clerics recognize, more than ever, the necessity for a demonstration of the Iranian capability to strike Israel . The some 10,000 medium-to-short range rockets in Southern Lebanon , controlled jointly by Tehran , Damascus , and, to a degree, HizbAllah, were well within the Iranian sphere of influence, yet, Tehran 's willingness to rely on its neighbors to attack Israel if necessary appeared to have waned in the wake of the Iraqi failure. US efforts in June 2003 to sway the HizbAllah from the Iranian sphere of influence, though fruitless by late July 2003, may also have raised the attention of the Iranian leadership. Thus, Tehran sought to warn the US against taking action toward "regime change" in Iran by reminding Washington that it retained the ability to widen any conflict with the US to include Israel by means within its own borders. Although perhaps unnecessary, this should have registered in Damascus as a reminder that Syria remains strategically dependent on Iran , and not the other way around.

Notably, Cuba 's blocking of US-based satellite feeds into Iran , which continued as of July 24, 2003, signaled that Havana continued to pay close attention to Tehran 's policies vis-a-vis the US as an indicator for its own relations with Washington . Initially, following the September 11, 2001 , attacks, Havana had shown a more conciliatory attitude toward the US, most notably by remaining relatively acquiescent to the US use of Guantanamo Bay as a detention camp for al-Qaida detainees. The Russian closure of the Lourdes Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) facility following the September 11, 2001, attacks on the US, though begun in August 2001, also seemed to indicate a more amiable Cuban posture. Yet, Iran 's unflinching stance in the face of the US pressure to end support for terror groups, abandon its indigenous nuclear weapons program, and begin a process of political and economic liberalization appeared to have affected Havana 's strategic approach. By late July 2003, it seemed clear that Cuba would continue a policy of overt hostility towards the US . This was evidenced by the Cuban decision to help Iran block US satellite feeds into Iran , particularly at a time as sensitive as the July 9, 2003, protests, for which the US had voiced support. A denial issued by the Cuban Foreign Ministry on July 19, 2003, made no attempt to mask this hostile tone,

declaring: "This is a new campaign of anti-Cuban lies ... adding to a long list of hostile and aggressive actions that the imperial administration of George W. Bush has taken against our country."

So, as July 2003 came to a close, Iran 's aggressive stance came, unintentionally, with intense political pressure on the US Bush Administration . The Democrats, the US opposition party, continued to pursue Pres. Bush on the question of the Iraq War's legitimacy, the continuing (although low) US death toll in US-occupied Iraq, and the US economy. Damascus , Pyongyang , Havana , and Tripoli , thus, seemed to have one eye on the emboldened Iranians and another on Pres. Bush's slipping poll numbers. Tehran and its allies appeared ever more confident that in spite of the US-declared "war on terror" their respective governments might yet outlive the US Bush Administration.

Footnote:

1. The US Central Intelligence Agency "confirmed" to US media company ABC that al-Qaida senior military figure Saif al-Adel was being held by Iranian authorities. However, GIS sources in Tehran indicated that the "detention" was, if it could be described as that, was almost certainly symbolic. Egyptian authorities have for some months been demanding the extradition of Saif al-Adel, an Egyptian national, for trial. However, reports surfaced on July 24, 2003, that because he was "of Libyan origin", Libya had requested his extradition to Tripoli for trial. Given the close Iranian-Libyan relationship -- particularly given the fact that Libya essentially has taken responsibility for the Iranian-managed bombing of Pan Am PA103 flight over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988 -- it seems almost certain that this move was a canard designed to demonstrate "Iranian compliance" in the "war on terror", while still ensuring that Saif al-Adel was able to be safeguarded.

2. International pressure on Iran's clerics is, however, far from over. The Canadian Ambassador to Tehran was recalled on July 23, 2003, over Canadian protests that Iranian-born Canadian photojournalist Zahra Kazemi was tortured, possibly raped, and then killed by Iranian officials.

See also:

Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily, July 10, 2003: Iranian Protests Take Place Despite Massive Suppression; Worldwide Expatriate Protests Against Clerics .

LOAD-DATE: July 24, 2003

View: List | Full

< [prev](#) Document 10 of 28 [next](#) >

[Edit Search](#) | [New Search](#)
[Print](#) | [Download](#)

[About LexisNexis](#) | [Terms and Conditions](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)
Copyright 2004 LexisNexis, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

DEBKAFfile - We start where the media stop

DATE 07-29-2010 BY 60324 uc baw/sab/lsg

Iran-Based Al Qaeda Threat Much Closer than Shehab-3

DEBKAFfile Special Analysis

July 22, 2003, 9:30 AM (GMT+02:00)

Israel has more cause for concern from the presence of senior al Qaeda operatives in Iran than from the prospect of Iran shooting a Shehab-3 medium-range missile any time soon, despite the handover ceremony Iran's bellicose spiritual leader Ali Khamenei staged with Iran's Revolutionary Guards on July 20. According to DEBKAFfile's military experts, the missile is not yet operational; neither is it precise enough or capable of delivering an unconventional warhead. The Shehab-3 will need another two years at least to be ready for service. Only then, will Israel's anti-missile Arrow missile system be required to live up to the Israeli defense minister Shaul Mofaz's encomium, that the Arrow is Israel's answer to the Iranian missile.



Mussab Zarqawi - Al Qaeda's ticking bomb in Iran

Meanwhile, the Shehab-3 is meanwhile grounded by two daunting obstacles:

A. The final version of the missile's engine is far from complete; tests are still running on various North Korean versions including the Nodong-1 upgraded with Russian technology and Iranian improvements. DEBKAFfile's intelligence sources report that Iranian missile engineers and operators went to North Korea at the end of June to speed delivery of the new engine parts ordered and paid for last year, after the first version engine proved faulty. Some of the missiles test-fired crashed shortly after launch.

While pressing for delivery of the engine parts, Tehran is cocking an anxious ear to the war of words flying between Washington and Pyongyang. Iran's leaders fear that sooner or later the disputants will come to an understanding over North Korea's nuclear weapons program rather than letting it slide into outright confrontation. For Iran's program, this spells curtains in more than one way.

1. The moment North Korea's nuclear program accepts a regime of controls and limitations, the full blast of international heat, especially from Washington, will veer round to compel the Iranians to fall in line and give up the development of a nuclear bomb.

2. North Korea will be bound under such an agreement by non-proliferation clauses banning the export of nuclear and missile technologies alike. Once the Pyongyang door is slammed, Iran can forget about North Korean assistance in bringing its ballistic missile engines up to scratch. Tehran is therefore racing to get what it can out of North Korea before Pyongyang resolves its dispute with the Washington.

B. The Iranian program faces another major hurdle. Their twin object is to produce enough enriched uranium for the manufacture of nuclear bombs and warheads by the latter half of 2005, also completing the development of dependable engines for their ballistic missiles in the same time frame. If all goes according to plan, Tehran will by that date have a nuclear weapon plus several missiles for delivering it. However, it is hard to imagine the United States and/or Israel allowing the Islamic Republic to reach that point unopposed.

These difficulties place the Shehab-3 menace in the middle distance and bring the Iran-based al Qaeda threat to the Middle East including Israel into much sharper focus.

The thinking in Jerusalem is that since the Islamic theocrats did not scruple to give al Qaeda logistical backing from their towns for the May 12 string of suicide attacks against Riyadh, they will be as willing to help the same terrorists mount strikes against Israel. Tuesday, July 22, Tehran again denied granting the network's leading lights sanctuary, contradicting President George W. Bush's accusation the day before that Syria and Iran harbored and assisted terrorists. He also warned them they would be held accountable.

No one knows for sure if Iran's al Qaeda "guests" are enjoying a comfortable form of detention or are preparing the next wave of terrorist attacks with local connivance. (See also earlier DEBKAFfile story on this page.) The theory going round some circles in Washington is that Iran's logistical aid in the Riyadh attacks was meant to hint to the US government at the extent of damage the Iranians are capable of causing US interests in Iraq and other parts of the Middle East if the heat is not reduced on the nuclear issue.

Israel is keeping a very close eye on the Jordanian-born terror master Mussab Zarqawi, who just before the Iraq War was assigned; according to Israeli security sources, with executing a 9/11-scale attack in Israel. Six months ago, Zarqawi was sighted several times in Damascus, Beirut and places in Western Europe. He always went back to Iran after what are believed to have been recruiting missions for the attack from among the al Qaeda group sheltering in southern Lebanon and operatives who infiltrated Israel and the West Bank.

Zarqawi could not have moved around south Lebanon without the knowledge and assent of Syrian army intelligence and the Iran-backed Hizballah.

There is nothing to say that Zarqawi back in Iran ever gave up preparing for his Israel assignment. If such an operation is indeed afoot, then the Iran-based al Qaeda would be a greater and more tangible threat to Israel than any semi-functioning Iranian missile.

US-Israel Postscript

DEBKAFfile's Washington sources disclose that President Bush's accusations against Syria and Iran on Monday were also meant for the ears of Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon, who has been invited for talks in the White House on July 29. On Friday, July 25, the Palestinian prime minister Mahmoud Abbas will be received by the US president in Washington for the first time. He is coming with a shopping list, at the top of which is a demand that Israel free a large number of terrorists from its prisons, including terrorists "with blood on their hands" and Hamas and Jihad Islami members.

Sharon, limited by government decisions from setting the latter categories loose, sought to create a diversion by developing an independent peace channel to Damascus. By attacking Syria as a sponsor of terrorists, Bush effectively blocked Sharon's ploy. The implication is that if the Israeli leader is not too squeamish to do business with hard-line regimes like that of Bashar Assad which harbor al Qaeda and Hamas and Jihad Islami command centers, it can certainly bring itself to make concessions to the non-terrorist Abbas and his interior minister Dahlan.

There are indications that the Bush administration is cross with Sharon for his Syrian initiative and, to make things worse, using a UN official, Middle East envoy Terje Roed-Larsen as his go-between. Bush has no great love for UN officials and even less for surprises, especially when they come from Sharon who until now worked in perfect harmony with the White House.

From the US capital, the Israeli prime minister is seen to be shutting out of his counsels his defense and foreign ministers, Shaul Mofaz and Silvan Shalom - both of whom he has found indiscreetly forthcoming to the media on government policy, and barricading himself behind a hard shell in readiness for his White House talks. Quite aside from the real concerns posed by al Qaeda in Iran, Syria and Lebanon, Bush advisers are intent on cracking the Israeli leader's shell so as to bring him round to advancing the concessions on the list brought by Palestinian leaders.

Copyright 2000-2004 DEBKAFfile. All Rights Reserved.

Search Within Results: [Edit Search](#) | [New Search](#)
[Print](#) | [Download](#)View: [List](#) | [Full](#)< [prev](#) Document 10 of 33 [next](#) > Tag for Print & DownloadCopyright 2004 Gale Group, Inc.
ASAP
Copyright 2004 Middle East Forum
Middle East Quarterly

March 22, 2004

SECTION: No. 2, Vol. 11; Pg. 45; ISSN: 1073-9467**IAC-ACC-NO:** 118416733**LENGTH:** 5232 words**HEADLINE:** How to tame Tehran.**BYLINE:** Berman, Ilan**BODY:**

Over the past year, Iran has become a major cause of concern in Washington. The Islamic Republic has been discovered to possess a robust nuclear program, of a scope well beyond previous estimates. It has also made substantial breakthroughs in its ballistic missile capabilities. Less noticed, but equally significant, has been Tehran's growing activism in the Persian Gulf, the Caucasus, and Iraq.

There is a vision and a method to Iran's policies. In the words of Mohsen Reza'i, secretary of Iran's Expediency Council, Iran believes it is destined to become the "center of international power politics" in the post-Saddam Hussein Middle East. (1) Iran's new, more confrontational strategic doctrine even has a name: "deterrent defense." According to foreign minister Kamal Kharrazi, this national security concept is designed to confront "a broad spectrum of threats to Iran's national security, among them foreign aggression, war, border incidents, espionage, sabotage, regional crises derived from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), state terrorism, and discrimination in manufacturing and storing WMD." (2)

Under the rubric of "deterrent defense," Iran is exploiting U.S. preoccupation with Iraq to build capabilities that will establish its hegemony in its immediate neighborhood and enhance its role across the Middle East. Iran's moves, if unchecked, will create a grave and growing challenge to U.S. aims in the region. At stake are nothing less than the geopolitical balance in the Middle East and the long-term achievement of U.S. goals, from stability in Iraq to regional peace.

How has Iran's policy changed? And what can the United States do to thwart Iran's new drive?

STRATEGIC AMBITIONS

For years, policymakers in Washington had suspected Tehran's rulers of pursuing an offensive nuclear capability. They had viewed with alarm the growing strategic ties between Iran and Russia and had publicly expressed concerns that the centerpiece of that cooperation, the \$ 800 million light-water reactor project at Bushehr, could lead to significant Iranian nuclear advances.

Then, in the summer of 2002, an Iranian opposition group disclosed the existence of an extensive uranium enrichment complex at Natanz in central Iran. This revelation and a series of subsequent discoveries by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)--ranging from advanced clandestine nuclear development to the presence of trace weapons-grade uranium--revealed the true extent of Iran's nuclear endeavor.

This effort turns out to have been far broader and more mature than originally believed. Iran is now

thought to have some fourteen other facilities, including heavy- and light-water reactors in Isfahan and Arak, and suspect sites in Fasa, Karaj, and Nekka. Together, these constitute all the makings of an ambitious national effort to develop nuclear weapons. (3) Iranian officials, meanwhile, have hinted at the existence of still other, as yet undisclosed, facilities essential to the country's nuclear program. (4)

Iran appears to have agreed to suspend its uranium enrichment activities under an October 2003 deal with France, Germany, and Great Britain. Similarly, international pressure succeeded in prompting Iran to sign the Additional Protocol to the 1968 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), permitting snap inspections and invasive monitoring of segments of Iran's nuclear sector by the International Atomic Energy Agency. However, two of Iran's main atomic suppliers, Russia and China, wield veto power on the United Nations Security Council, making it improbable that Iranian nuclear violations would result in meaningful censure. And in fact, ongoing IAEA deliberations have so far failed to yield decisive international action, despite mounting evidence of Iran's atomic breaches.

There is also a lingering uncertainty over Tehran's nuclear time line. While informed American observers contend that Iran is still some two years (and possibly longer) away from an offensive nuclear capability, (5) others believe that an Iranian bomb could materialize much sooner. In November 2003 testimony before the Israeli parliament's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, Mossad chief Meir Dagan warned that Iran could reach a "point of no return" in its nuclear development by mid-2004, following which time an Iranian offensive capability would become a virtual certainty. (6) President Bush has himself warned that the United States "will not tolerate" a nuclear-armed Iran. (7) But if estimates are off, even by a few months, Iran could present the world with a nuclear fait accompli.

At the same time, major breakthroughs in Iran's strategic arsenal have made it an emerging missile power. In June 2003, the Islamic Republic conducted what it termed the final test of its 1,300-kilometer range **Shahab-3** ballistic missile. The launch was a success, confirming Iran's ability to target U.S. allies Israel and Turkey, as well as U.S. troops in the Persian Gulf. Since then, with great fanfare, the Islamic Republic has inducted the advanced rocket into its Revolutionary Guards (the Pasdaran). (8)

This potential for proliferation is hardly the only worry. If recent signals are any indication, the **Shahab-3** has already evolved well beyond its officially declared capabilities. In September 2003, at a military parade commemorating the anniversary of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, the **Shahab-3** was officially described as possessing a range of 1,700 kilometers. (9) Additionally, opposition groups have charged that Tehran's overt missile development actually masks a much broader clandestine endeavor--one that includes development of the 4,000-kilometer range **Shahab-5** and even a follow-on **Shahab-6** intercontinental ballistic missile. (10)

Such efforts have only been strengthened by Iranian perceptions of U.S. policy. The Bush administration's rapid dispatch of Saddam Hussein's regime, and its contrasting hesitancy in dealing with a newly nuclear North Korea, has had a profound impact on Iran's calculus. North Korea's nuclear maneuvers, and its ability to successfully stymie U.S. strategy, have led Iranian officials to express their admiration for Pyongyang's resistance to U.S. "pressure, hegemony and superiority." (11) There has indeed been some internal debate in Iran about the risks of stepping over the nuclear threshold. Yet even leading Iranian reformers appear to have gravitated to the notion that nuclear weapons are necessary to shift the regional "equilibrium." (12)

CHARM OFFENSIVE

These strategic advances, however, are only part of the picture. In tandem with Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile breakthroughs, a significant transformation has also begun in Iranian foreign policy.

For Tehran, the overthrow of Hussein's regime has only fueled mounting fears of a dangerous strategic encirclement. The U.S. destruction of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan had already ensconced the pro-Western--albeit fragile--government of Hamid Karzai in Kabul. For Iran, the extremist Sunni Taliban posed an ideological threat, but a U.S. foothold on Iran's eastern border is regarded as even more threatening. Regime change in Baghdad, therefore, confronted officials in Tehran with the two-fold danger that Iran could be pinioned between two U.S. client-states, and that Iraq's fall might be a prelude to a similar U.S. drive to transform their country.

In response, Iran formulated its new strategic doctrine of "deterrent defense." In practice, this has entailed a major expansion of Iran's military capabilities. Heavy defense expenditures, and ongoing strategic partnerships with both Russia and China, have made possible a far-reaching national military