

Arab support for Iraq on the rise

by Thierry Lalevée

Iraq's Aug. 28 decision to resume air attacks on Iranian oil and military installations hit the diplomatic world, too, like a bombshell. Its most immediate happy effect was to disrupt secret negotiations between Iran and several Western countries for a new arms-for-hostages deal.

The attacks were resumed less than 48 hours after Iran's deputy foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Larijani, had returned from a visit to the United Nations in New York, and following a series of consultations with Italian Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti and West German Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher. Seemingly focused on the U.N. disarmament conference and negotiations with Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar over the Gulf situation, the Larijani visit was actually part of the latest round of secret, direct negotiations between the U.S. State Department and Iran, negotiations which have continued unabated throughout the summer. In mid-August, for example, an Iranian delegation led by Ruhollah Khomeini's son, Ahmed, visited Geneva for such talks.

As a result, Iran was expected to help secure the release of a few Western hostages, with a priority given to the two West German citizens held in Lebanon. A \$10 million ransom arranged by Genscher has already been paid. On Aug. 31, *Bild Zeitung* announced that both were expected to be released within a week. The same report quoted "Israeli sources" asserting that CIA agent Charles Glass had never been kidnapped, but had gone "underground to pursue active negotiations with the Hezbollahi"—the Iranian-controlled Shi'ite terrorists in Lebanon.

Washington intelligence sources report that these negotiations are under the leadership of Abraham Sofaer, the chief legal counsel at the State Department, and a man very well connected in Israel. His name has repeatedly come up in the Irangate hearings, and it was he who was responsible for stopping any broader investigation of the Israeli intelligence network associated with Jonathan Jay Pollard.

Washington insiders report that it was at Sofaer's insist-

ence that both Richard Murphy and Michael Armacost of the State Department made a spectacle of themselves Aug. 30 by denouncing Iraq's actions as "deplorable." State Department officials who thought that a new political deal with Iran was in the making, were reported to be "white with anger" at Iraq's "sabotage." There is little the State Department can do about it, however, unless Iran were to make significant compromises. That is quite improbable.

New strategy and new goals

What prompted Iraq to renew its air attacks now, was not merely to terminate the State Department's "crisis management" games, nor even simply to pressure Iran into accepting the cease-fire called for in July's U.N. Security Council resolution 598. As U.S. force concentrations in the Gulf steadily mounted over the month of August, there followed a fundamental shift in the Gulf war situation.

Following the July 31 Iranian "pilgrims" rioting in Mecca, Iran retaliated by ransacking the Saudi embassy in Tehran, leaving a Saudi diplomat bleeding to death in the streets. Then came a bombing in Saudi Arabia's eastern oil province. The Saudis have let it be known they will take no from the mad mullahs, and under the Saudi lead, a new Arab strategy has been in the making.

The issue is no longer simply to ensure freedom of navigation in the Gulf, or merely to impose a cease-fire which would, at best, perpetuate the status quo in respective military positions. The issue now is how to impose an end to the Gulf war once and for all, if necessary by ensuring an Iranian defeat—and it appears it may well be necessary. Here, the Arabs are mindful of the consequences of "peace" on an Iranian mullah regime that has based its survival on blood.

This standpoint runs counter to the elaborate U.S. State Department scenarios which want to make of the Gulf a mere "crisis management" issue, complementary to broader American-Soviet negotiations.

Hence, it was coherent and "legitimate," as the Jordanian foreign minister declared on Sept. 1, for Iraq to renew its attacks now. The temporary lull in the tanker war allowed Iran to export up to 2 millions barrels per day, cashing an extra \$25 million which has quickly been converted into military hardware from China, the Soviet Union, Israel, and several Western countries. Allowed by the Security Council to drag its feet, Iran was rebuilding its financial and military power.

This was unacceptable to both Iraq and Saudi Arabia, and to many other Arab countries which had called for tough sanctions against Iran at the Arab League foreign ministers' meeting on Aug. 24. In fact, unable to elaborate an Arab League strategy because of resistance from Algeria, Libya, Syria, and Oman, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Egypt, and a score of other countries, have set into motion a multilateral military strategy which calls for an Iranian military defeat.

The Saudis are already preparing for a direct war with

Iran. On Aug. 30, a Saudi diplomat announced that Riyadh would answer any attacks on Saudi tankers by "attacking an Iranian tanker." The same diplomat emphasized that "the monster [Khomeini] has to be kicked down."

Then, in an interview with the weekly *Al Musawaar* on Aug. 28, Egyptian Defense Minister Marshal Abu Ghazala recommended that the military forces of the Gulf Cooperation Council be pulled together. The interview was understood in the Gulf as a signal that Cairo would be ready to do more militarily if requested. Intelligence sources report that Cairo and Riyadh are discussing Egyptian intervention in case of Iranian aggression against Saudi Arabia.

Such a display of Arab unity has taken the Iranians by surprise and put them on the defensive. Although they increased their attacks against unescorted ships on Sept. 1, they are not expected to launch a major offensive before the end of the month.

The Soviets too are embarrassed, and are witnessing the collapse of their policy of "equilibrium" between the Arabs and Iran, and the potential loss of their asset, Khomeini. On Aug. 25, the publisher of Kuwait's *As Seyassa*, Ahmed Jarallah, warned Moscow that it could not "forget about striking a happy balance" between the Gulf Security Council and Iran. In other words, the Soviets cannot afford to side with Iran too openly.

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Communists bid for as violence spirals

by Valerie Rush

The national executive board of the Unified Workers Confederation (CUT), the largest trade union organization in Colombia, was closeted on Aug. 31 in a nine-hour battle over who would control the fate of the Colombian labor movement: the communists or the democrats. Against the backdrop of social and political decomposition triggered by right-left narco-terrorism, the CUT battle represents a striking microcosm of this besieged nation.

At the conclusion of the nine hours, CUT president and former Labor Minister Jorge Carrillo categorically informed the press that he would not permit the trade union organization to be used to destabilize the national institutions in this period of crisis. He was directly responding to the efforts of Communist Party leaders who have "burrowed" into the CUT, to use the labor movement as a battering ram against the armed forces, political parties, and government of Colombia.

Carrillo, who created the CUT last year in an effort to break the stranglehold of the drug mafia over the country's trade unions, is best known for his proposals to follow the Peruvian model of limiting debt repayment, while adopting a "great projects" approach to reviving the economy and creating jobs.

Carrillo's aggressive pro-development stance, together with his anti-communism and his anti-drug commitment, have made him a spokesman for Colombia's nationalist forces. They have also won him many enemies; Carrillo's name appears on a "hit list" just revealed to the press by the attorney general's office. On that list are military officers, journalists, professors, former government officials, even a priest. At least one person on that list, the head of the Human Rights Commission of Antioquia province, Dr. Hector Abad Gómez, was assassinated Aug. 25.

Labor movement threatened

Carrillo was insistent that the CUT "will not be used by any political party, because it has been 'reddened' to the point that it could lead to failure if the situation continues. . . . [The CUT] is an example that would have served the nation,