

## Iran-arms importers captured in Iraq

Contributed by Administrator  
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By Sara A. Carter - Four terrorists linked to an Iranian smuggling operation &mdash; responsible for targeting coalition forces with powerful bombs &mdash; were captured yesterday in Iraq, according to Defense Department officials.

The announcement came as U.S. officials continue to investigate links between Iran and insurgents seeking to destabilize the region and who target U.S. forces on the ground.

"I would say that it's clear to us that there are networks that are smuggling weapons, both explosive-formed projectiles, IEDs, as well as mortar and other capabilities from Iran into Iraq," said Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, the day-to-day commander in Iraq.

"And in fact, we believe some training is also going on inside of Iran. We have seen in the last three months a significant improvement in the capability of mortarmen and rocketeers to provide accurate fires into the [coalition] Green Zone and other places. We think this is directly related to training that was conducted in Iran."

Terrorists are suspected of facilitating the transport of weapons and personnel from Iran into Iraq, specifically the deadly Explosively Formed Projectiles (EFPs). The warhead-style weapons can pierce armor and cause significant damage and casualties to coalition forces.

The suspects were captured after U.S. forces conducted a raid in Qasarin, a small village north of Baqouba, in the Diyala province near the border with Iran.

Opponents of the Iraq war criticize the administration for pointing the finger at Iran, suggesting there is not sufficient evidence of their involvement in Iraq.

Rep. John P. Murtha, Pennsylvania Democrat and chairman of the defense appropriations subcommittee, said he will introduce a measure next week that would begin pulling out troops within 60 days after its introduction.

But Peter Brookes, senior fellow at the conservative Heritage Foundation and a national security authority, warns that a withdrawal of troops from Iraq would put the region at risk as Iran continues to pursue its objective to obtain nuclear power.

"Iran could potentially hold the United States at risk with its nuclear and space programs," Mr. Brookes said. "Their foreign policy is to destroy the U.S. and Israel and that's what they are aiming to do."

Earlier this week, American and Iranian ambassadors to Iraq met in Baghdad and agreed to set up a security subcommittee to carry forward talks on restoring stability in the war-torn nation.

During the groundbreaking talks, U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker accused Iran of spurring the violence in Iraq by arming and training Shi'ite militias. He warned that no progress can be made unless Iranian behavior changes.

Iranian Ambassador Hassan Kazemi Qomi countered that Tehran is trying to help Iraq deal with the security situation, but Iraqis are "victimized by terror and the presence of foreign forces" in their country.

Iran holds considerable sway in Iraq, where the majority of the population is also Shi'ite Muslim and where many Shi'ite political parties are seen as having ties to Tehran.

The United States broke off diplomatic ties with the Islamic republic after the 1979 storming of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and holding of American hostages for 444 days.

Mr. Brookes cites Iran's current involvement and support for Taliban groups in Afghanistan as an example of Iran's flip-flop foreign policy when it comes to defeating the U.S.

"In the past the Iranians would have never given financial support to the Taliban," he said. "The evidence now suggests that Iran is offering them assistance in an effort to push U.S. forces out of the region."

Iran and Syria are doing the same in Iraq, he added.

In February, senior defense officials at a press briefing in Baghdad outlined what they thought to be Iran and Syria's involvement in region.

Officials said the deadly arsenal of weapons used against coalition forces by Iraqi Shi'ite groups was provided by an elite Iranian military force &mdash; known as the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps.

"Iran is a significant contributor to attacks on coalition forces, and also supports violence against the Iraqi Security Force and innocent Iraqis," military officials stated in a presentation to reporters.

Further evidence presented at the briefing noted Iran's participation in providing training and other forms of weaponry to extremist groups.

&bull;This story is based in part on wire service reports. WashingtonTimes

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Reference Website: Multi-National Force &ndash; Iraq (MNF-I)

<http://www.mnf-iraq.com/>  
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Baghdad raid nets 4 suspected arms smugglers

The Associated Press

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BAGHDAD &mdash; U.S. forces on Friday captured four militants allegedly linked to smuggling networks transporting weapons and fighters from Iran into Iraq, the military said.

The four suspects were detained during a raid in the village of Qasarin, 10 miles north of Baqubah, in the restive Diyala province that borders Iran.

The raid was targeting a &ldquo;highly sought operative believed to be a senior leader of a weapons smuggling network,&rdquo; the statement said, although it did not specify whether he was among those captured.

The detainees were suspected of helping to smuggle fighters and weapons from Iran into Iraq, including armor-piercing explosively formed penetrators. The powerful roadside bombs have killed hundreds of U.S. troops in recent months.

&ldquo;Coalition troops remain relentless in our pursuit of those terrorists who seek to bring EFPs and other lethal aid into Iraq,&rdquo; said Army Maj. Marc Young, a military spokesman. &ldquo;Iranian influence is hindering the prospects of peace and stability in Iraq.&rdquo;

The announcement came as U.S. officials continue to press allegations that Iran is fueling violence in Iraq. Tehran has denied the claims and said it also is seeking stability for its Shiite-dominated neighbor.

Army Lt. Gen. Ray Odierno, the day-to-day commander in Iraq, said the U.S. military has noted a &ldquo;significant improvement&rdquo; in the aim of attackers firing rockets and mortars into the heavily fortified Green Zone in the past three months that he attributed to the training of militants in Iran.

Without offering any proof, Odierno said networks continue to smuggle powerful roadside bombs and mortars across the border from Iran despite Tehran&rsquo;s assertions that it supports stability in Iraq.

His remarks came two days after the U.S. and Iranian ambassadors to Iraq met in Baghdad and agreed to establish a security committee to address the violence jointly.

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Coalition nets 4 &ldquo;terrorists&rdquo; smuggling EFPs from Iran to Iraq

Fri. 27 Jul 2007

Iran Focus

London, Jul. 27 - Coalition Forces captured four "suspected Special Groups terrorists affiliated with the Iranian lethal aide network" in a pre-dawn raid on Friday in the Iraqi village of Qasarin, Diyala Province, the U.S. military said.

"Coalition Forces conducted a raid to capture or kill a highly-sought operative believed to be a senior leader of a weapons smuggling network", said a statement by the Multi-National Force & Iraq (MNF-I).

"The captured terrorists are suspected of facilitating the transport of weapons and personnel from Iran into Iraq", it said.

"Iranian influence is hindering the prospects of peace and stability in Iraq", said Major Marc Young, an MNF-I spokesperson.

"The captured terrorists are also believed to have facilitated the flow of deadly Explosively Formed Projectiles (EFPs) into Iraq from Iran to be used against Coalition Forces", the MNF-I statement said.