

US Concern over Iranian Interference in Iraq - US captures 'high-priority' Iran officer in Iraq

Contributed by Iranmania
Sunday, 19 August 2007
Last Updated Sunday, 19 August 2007

LONDON, August 18 (IranMania) - The US military has reported the capture of a senior officer of Iran's elite Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps stationed in Baghdad, The World Tribune reported.

US forces, which are taking aim at key Iranian officers based in Iraq, conducted a raid that nabbed the officer of the IRGC's Quds Force and killed three of his aides.

"Coalition troops continue to target terrorists who bring weapons and explosives, especially explosively formed penetrators, and other aid into Iraq," US military spokesman Lt. Col. Christopher Garver said. "Coalition forces will continue their focused operations against unhelpful Iranian influence interfering in Iraq."

Officials said IRGC has become a major US target, particularly in the Baghdad area.

"The captured high-priority individual was responsible for smuggling explosively formed penetrators, Katyusha rockets and other weapons from Iran into Iraq," an official said. "The target was also responsible for distributing those weapons to special groups and extremist militants operating throughout Baghdad. The weapons smuggler had direct ties to senior militant leaders and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps Quds Force."

A military statement said nine gunmen were killed in a series of raids in Iraq. The statement said the detained IRGC officer facilitated the flow of weapons from Iran to Iraq and their distribution to Shi'ite and other militias.

Officials said five others were arrested during the raid. They said Iranian officers were transferring weapons and finances to a range of militias in an effort to force a US military withdrawal from Iraq.

US military spokesman Brig. Gen. Kevin Bergner said insurgents have received Iranian 240 mm rockets for attacks against the US-led coalition. Bergner said US forces recovered some of the 240 mm rockets in the Ninveh province on Aug. 14.

"The 240 mm rocket is a large-caliber projectile that has been provided to militia extremists groups in the past along with a range of other weapons from Iranian sources," Bergner said.

The Bush administration plans to designate IRGC a terrorist group. The Quds Force was said to be responsible for liaison with and assistance to a range of Middle East insurgency groups, including Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hizbullah.

The army also reported the killing of six Al Qaida insurgents and the detention of another 26 fighters in operations east of Balad. US and Iraqi combat units also found a cache of weapons and bombs in an Al Qaida stronghold.

"Terrorists cannot conceal themselves in small villages, disrupting the lives of Iraqi citizens," Garver said. "There was no safe havens for terrorists here, as operations will continue to seek them wherever they hide."

Saturday, August 18, 2007 - IranMania.com

Captured Video Shows Iraqi Insurgents Firing Sophisticated Iranian-Made Rockets at U.S. Positions
Thursday, August 09, 2007

Dramatic video produced by Iraqi insurgents and captured in a raid earlier this week by U.S. troops clearly shows a battery of sophisticated Iranian-made rocket launchers firing on American positions east of Baghdad, Pentagon officials said Wednesday.

The video, captured during a raid on Monday by the 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment in northeast Nahrawan, shows insurgents setting up and carrying out an attack on Sunday, as well as an attack on July 11 that killed one soldier and wounded 15 others, officials said. The raid last month appeared to involve 34 launchers firing 107 mm Iranian-made rockets.

The video provides clear visual evidence of the extent to which Iraqi insurgents are equipped to launch deadly rockets on

coalition forces, the Pentagon said.

The release of the video comes as officials charge Iran with supplying high-tech bombs used in 99 roadside bomb attacks in Iraq last month.

The powerful weapons, known as explosively formed penetrators or EFPs, accounted for a third of combat deaths suffered by coalition forces, the New York Times reported Wednesday.

The bombs fire white hot slugs that can cut through the heavy armor on Humvees. Intelligence officials said EFPs are being used almost exclusively by Shiite militias. The U.S. has repeatedly claimed that it has evidence Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard is smuggling the weapons into the country — a claim Tehran has repeatedly denied.

• Read the original report on NYTimes.com.

Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, the No. 2 commander in Iraq, told the Times he believes Shiite extremists have stepped up attacks in anticipation of Gen. Petraeus' upcoming progress report to Congress on the war.

“I think they want to influence the decision potentially coming up in September,” he said.

Of the 69 coalition soldiers who were lost in action last month, 23 died as a result of attacks with EFPs, Odierno said.

U.S. says Iran-supplied bomb is killing more troops in Iraq

By Michael R. Gordon

Tuesday, August 7, 2007

BAGHDAD: Attacks on American-led forces using a lethal type of roadside bomb said to be supplied by Iran reached a new high in July, according to the American military.

The devices, known as explosively formed penetrators, were used to carry out 99 attacks last month and accounted for a third of the combat deaths suffered by the American-led forces, Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno, the No. 2 commander in Iraq, said in an interview.

Such bombs, which fire a semi-molten copper slug that can penetrate the armor on a Humvee and are among the deadliest weapons used against American forces, are used almost exclusively by Shiite militants. American intelligence officials have presented evidence that the weapons come from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, although Iran has repeatedly denied providing lethal assistance to Iraqi groups.

In recent weeks, the American military has focused on mounting operations in sanctuaries used by Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, a Sunni group that is predominately made up of Iraqis but has foreign leadership. But, as the information provided by Odierno shows, Shiite militias remain a major long-term worry.

In focusing on Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, the American goal is to reduce the number of car bombings and spectacular suicide attacks that have aggravated sectarian tensions, encouraged Shiite retaliation and undermined efforts at political reconciliation.

While the group is seen by the American military as the most serious near-term threat, there are other signs that Shiite militias remain active. According to Odierno, the day-to-day commander of American troops in Iraq, Shiite militants carried out 73 percent of the attacks that killed or wounded American troops in Baghdad in July.

Though explosively formed penetrators account for a small fraction of roadside bomb attacks in Iraq, they cause a disproportionately large number of casualties.

Of the 69 members of the American-led forces killed in action in July, the lowest toll in months, 23 died as a result of attacks with the devices, according to data supplied by Odierno's command. Of the 614 allied troops who were wounded that month, 89 were hit in penetrator attacks.

"July was an all-time high," said Odierno, referring to strikes with such devices.

Penetrator attacks have been a worry for years. In 2005, the United States sent a private diplomatic protest to Tehran complaining that Iran's Revolutionary Guards and the Iranian-backed Hezbollah had been training Iraqi Shiite insurgents in Iran and providing them with bomb-making equipment.

American intelligence says that its report of Iranian involvement is based on a technical analysis of exploded and

captured devices, interrogations of Shiite militants, the interdiction of trucks near Iran's border with Iraq and parallels between the use of the weapons in Iran and in southern Lebanon by Hezbollah.

Some critics of Bush administration policy, saying there is no proof that the top echelons of Iran's government are involved, accuse the White House of exaggerating the role of Iran and Syria to divert attention from its own mistakes.

According to American military data, penetrator attacks accounted for 18 percent of combat deaths of Americans and allied troops in Iraq in the last quarter of 2006. The number of such attacks declined in January, and some American officials thought at that time that this might be a response to their efforts to publicly highlight the allegations of an Iranian role.

But in recent months such attacks have steadily risen.

The July figure is roughly double the number for January. The total for July is also 50 percent higher than in April, when there were 65 penetrator attacks, according to American military officials.

Many of the penetrators faced by American forces are difficult to counter. Because they fire from the side of the road, the militants do not need to dig a hole to plant them, making them well suited for urban use. Because they are set off by a passive infrared sensor, they cannot be thwarted by electronic jamming.

Odierno said Iran was increasing its support to Shiite militants in Iraq to step up the military pressure on the United States at a time when the Congress is debating whether to withdraw American troops.

"I think it is because the Iranians are surging support to the special groups," he said, referring to the American name for Iranian-backed cells here. "Over the last three to four months, it has picked up in terms of equipment, training and dollars."

"I think they want to influence the decision potentially coming up in September," he added.

Odierno said that Iranians had also provided Shiite groups with 107-millimeter rockets and the launchers for firing them, as well as 122-millimeter mortars.

American forces, he said, recently thwarted an attack at a military base used by forces from the Third Infantry Division. Fifty launchers equipped with rockets were discovered within range of the facility and struck by allied aircraft. Serial numbers taken from the rocket launchers, he said, indicated that they were made in Iran.

Iranian and American diplomats held talks in Baghdad on Monday on security in Iraq. Ryan Crocker, the American envoy in Iraq who led the discussions for the United States, said there had been "an escalation, not a de-escalation" of Iran's support for militias in Iraq since an earlier May meeting.

The Iranians, Crocker added, maintained their position that they had "absolutely nothing to do with" the attacks.