

**May 22, 1987**

**Report of the Hungarian Ambassador in Iran on  
recent developments of the Iraq-Iran war in 1987**

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**Summary:**

This report issued by the Hungarian Embassy in Iran describes Iran's increasing advantage against Iraq in Iran-Iraq War, amidst some domestic opposition to the war, and a continuing controversy over the use of chemical weapons.

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**Contents:**

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Embassy of the Hungarian People's Republic Tehran  
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Top Secret!  
Tehran, 22 May 1987

Subject: Recent developments of the Iraq-Iran war  
Comrade dr. Péter Várkonyi  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Budapest

Recent developments of the war suggest that Iran's superiority and military pressure on Iraq have grown. The weapons of the Iranian troops have improved and extended, due to the military equipment delivered during the American rapprochement-trial linked to McFarlane.

Due to the Iranian troops' gaining ground, Basra, Iraq's second largest town seems to be in the front line, whose defense holds significant Iraqi forces with heavy casualties. Currently the offensive coded "Kerbala 10" is going on the northern part of the front, in the area of Suleimania. Here the Iranian troops have occupied not large but strategically important positions. By all means, the Iranian casualties, not disclosed, are bigger than Iraqi casualties, but the Iranian military leaders can replace them easier, even if the current ratio of compulsory mobilization reaches 10% at the government institutions and mass organizations.

Iran acts with increasing confidence and aggressiveness in the Persian Gulf as well. The limits of its naval "defense area" have been extended to 500 km. The naval traffic across the Straits of Hormuz is frequently checked by its navy. Iran stresses its doctrine of the Straits on "security being either everyone's or no one's" with its missiles allegedly constructed with Chinese cooperation, deployed in the area of the Straits and disturbing the naval traffic of the Arab countries along the Gulf /air strikes against trading vessels/. In other words, if Iraqi planes are attacking the Iranian oil transportation lines, then Iran claims the right to launch a strike on the shipping of the countries in the Gulf supporting Iraq.

Iran continues to supply and send new units to the front line. Today the units called pazdar, that is the Islamic Revolutionary Guard, play the main role. /Volunteers, that are independent from the army, committed to ideals of the Islamic Revolution, supplied with highly developed technical equipment /. In May, the reorganization of the army and the promotion of many field officers to generals were announced.

In Tehran diplomatic circles there exists an opinion, claiming that with the full mobilization of its resources, although at the price of high casualties, Iran would be capable of occupying Basra, or even the whole territory of Iraq troubled with internal problems. However, in the question of the decisive attack, it plays an important role that other Arab countries, even Libya and supposedly Syria as well, would object such a maneuver, namely the occupation of an Arab country, apart from the international repercussions following such a move and from the reactions of the great powers with interests in the area. Consequently Iran is waiting for such a situation to come, when in the climate of discontent, due to protracted war, the

internal forces opposing Saddam – following the increased pressure by Iran – would overthrow the Iraqi president and its regime. Thereby creating the potential for forming a government friendly towards Iran. Consequently, the Iranian army would only give the events a push and with its strike, it would speed up the dissolution of the Iraqi army, Saddam’s main support.

In Iranian judgments, the development of such a situation is simply a matter of time and it seems to be imminent. In the meantime, Iran tries to wear out Iraq’s military power and the tolerance of the Iraqi people tired of war by ever renewing tactical but heavy attacks. In this war an increasing support is provided to Iran by the sabotage and guerilla actions of the Iraqi groups in opposition, primarily the Kurds.

In the issue of war, similar to every other issue in Iran’s foreign and domestic policy, difference of opinion among the theoreticians and members of the executive branch of the Iranian Islamic revolution and a conflict within groups of the leadership is evident. There exists a view that the revolution’s best cadres should not be sacrificed in the Iraqi war and that the countries reserves should not be exhausted as these are and will be necessary to build up the country and to extend the revolution in the Islamic world in perspective.

In my view the polarization of the Iranian society in the issue of war has deepened. The increasing open activity of the “opposition” – the group of Bazargan – seems to be a controversial phenomenon of the social reality in Iran resulting in several – of course, small scale -- recent anti-war marches in Tehran. These demonstrations – unlike the previous ones – were not broken up by the authorities, but were protected by the Islamic Guards and the internal security forces. The authorities seem not only to tolerate but to use these moderate demonstrations to test reception of slogans, such as Saddam Hussein should be pardoned. Within the top leadership a new endeavor seems to reveal itself increasingly, namely when Iran’s military superiority is becoming evident, in spite of the still existing internal problems, a negotiated settlement based on the best conditions should be arranged with Iraq. /This was the reason why such views could be articulated that Koran makes forgiveness possible./ The persons and groups advocating such views think that only the imam can give such a forgiveness and his words are accepted by the masses. If the imam dies without giving the forgiveness, then the war has to be carried on, according to the last will of the highest ranking religious leader. This group is aware that war was an important element for cohesion and fostered the internal consolidation following the revolution. However, the problems caused by the war going on for 7 years are now producing counter effects, weakening the power of the leadership to influence the masses. The mass base of the regime is not influenced by the war yet, but the increasing discontent and disappointment is inevitable. /This was visible during the air bombing -- of towns in January-February./ Nevertheless, certain conflicts of interest cannot be disclosed either concerning economic and cadre issues on the basis of which groups makes how much money or how its influence will develop in case of peace or a continuing war.

Out of the other, and in my opinion the decisive part of the leadership, imam Homeini, chief judge Ardebili, President Hamenei are supporters of the war with the realization of the well known conditions: until the “punishment” of the Saddam Hussein and the Baathist regime.

This situation was closed –in my view –by chief judge Ardebili’s speech of 15 May on a Friday prayer in Tehran stating that the main goal cannot be a matter of negotiation according to the interest of individuals or groups.

The military situation is still unpredictable. Latest information /in accordance with the information from Baghdad/ suggest that Iran is preparing another grand scale offensive. The level of troop concentration is high, dozens of new battalions sent to the front line. It is uncertain, how Iraq can react to the new Iranian offensive following the increasing pressure of the internal problems – according to local information these have been an unsuccessful conspiracy against Saddam Hussein and the Kurdish rebellion. The most recent Iraqi air strikes against Isfahan and Tabriz project the potential of the renewal of the Iraqi air strikes against towns as the most efficient means of retaliation so far.

The struggle continues over the issue of chemical weapons both on the front lines and in the international organizations. In this respect there is no new development, although the Iranian party wanted to portray the UN Security Council's resolution as an obvious, exclusive condemnation of Iraq.

Currently the Iranian position, being firm in the issue of war is intended to be based on that the two superpowers object to the continuation of the war and want to put a pressure on Iran. Consequently, the continuation of the war would mean an expression of the opposition to the superpowers and by this, the Islamic revolution would grow to be a decisive factor in world politics, along with the two leading powers. The Iranian leaders have condemned Murphy's talks in the Middle East in the same spirit. Petrovski, Soviet deputy foreign minister's talks in the Middle East and the Soviet Union's initiatives for an earliest ending of the war have also been condemned. The Iranian party wants to give the impression that the Soviet Union, with the renewal of the agreement of friendship and with its initiatives has fallen in the trap of American policy and got on the same platform with them. This Iranian behavior has resulted in a significant and sudden cooling down and increasing tensions in the Soviet-Iranian relationship. The strong protest on behalf of the Soviet Embassy in Tehran against the attack against the Soviet tanker is part of the same problem. The Iranian party is known to objecting the Soviet lease of tankers to Kuwait and to the appearance of Soviet warships in the Gulf.

The essence of the Iranian behavior can be summarized as it tries to undermine the Gulf- states' anti-war attitude and looks for the right occasion to launch the necessary – political, economic, or even military- strike on them. With reference to the Soviet Union, a view, officially not publicized yet, exists about that Iran could get into pincers with significant Soviet troops stationing on the northern borders, and Soviet warships appearing in the Gulf.

I will report on the further development of the war as necessary.

(dr. Zsigmond Kázmér) Ambassador