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Near East and South Asia Review



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Supplement
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Articles

Iran and the Afghan Resistance: Fostering Revolution in the Hazarehjat [Redacted]

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Iraq: Managing the Effects of Al Faw [Redacted]

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Iraq has suffered a serious setback at Al Faw, but the reverse is unlikely to destabilize the regime. Iraq's leaders exercise tight control over the populace and will see to it that the defeat does not generate unrest that might threaten the government. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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Some articles are preliminary views of a subject or speculative, but the contents normally will be coordinated as appropriate with other offices within CIA. Occasionally an article will represent the views of a single analyst; these items will be designated as noncoordinated views. Comments may be directed to the authors. [Redacted]

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Near East and South Asia Review



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Articles

Iran and the Afghan Resistance: Fostering Revolution in the Hazarehjat

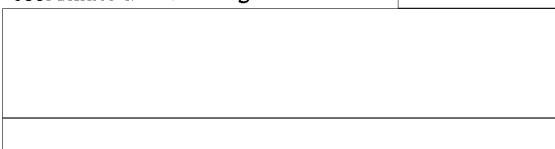


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Iran is increasing its influence in the Hazarehjat region of central Afghanistan, where Tehran-backed Shia resistance groups are in ascendance. Iran's attempts to establish a Khomeini-style government in the Hazarehjat have increased fighting among local Shia resistance groups, as well as between Shia insurgents and Sunni groups that transit the region. If the gains of pro-Iranian groups in the Hazarehjat can be sustained, Shia groups could concentrate on fighting Soviet and Afghan regime forces.

Tehran Increasingly Active

Recent evidence suggests that Iran has been consolidating its control in the Hazarehjat region, where Afghanistan's Shia community lives. [redacted] as part of a more aggressive Iranian policy on Afghanistan launched last year, Iran organized all Tehran-based Afghan resistance groups under the Sazman-i-Nasr group (Nasr), which it controls, and proposed a joint Pakistani-Iranian committee on Afghanistan to coordinate and exchange information.



Iran has also been more active in proselytizing in central Afghanistan, and pro-Khomeini cassettes and posters are widespread.

As evidence of Moscow's concern over Iranian subversive efforts in the Hazarehjat, Kabul protested Iranian behavior twice since the disappointing visit in February of Soviet First Deputy Foreign Minister Korniyenko to Tehran. A week after Korniyenko's departure, Kabul issued a formal protest to Iran for sending a delegation of Iranian clerics into

Hazarehjat Society

The Hazarehjat is one of the most backward and isolated regions of Afghanistan. Because of their Mongoloid features, separate dialect, and minority (Shia) religion, the Hazaras have traditionally been regarded by other Afghans as the lowest social class. [redacted] the social structure of this poor rural area is based on a tenant-farming peasantry cultivating land for large landowners.

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Members of all classes of Hazara society who have lived in Kabul tend to become Marxists or Islamic revolutionaries, [redacted] Many, especially the Islamists, have returned to the region and provided the leadership for the most radical of the fundamentalist insurgent organizations: Sazman-i-Nasr and Sepah-e Pasdaran. With little affection for the traditional social institutions of the Hazarehjat, the Islamists are attempting to foster Iranian-style revolution—in our view, with some success.

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Afghanistan to promote Islamic revolution—a demarche we believe Moscow inspired in light of gloating Iranian press reports of the clerics' "secret mission" during Korniyenko's visit. The Afghan Foreign Ministry, in an unusually strong protest last month, complained again about Iran's subversive behavior, including interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs, border violations, and adverse propaganda.

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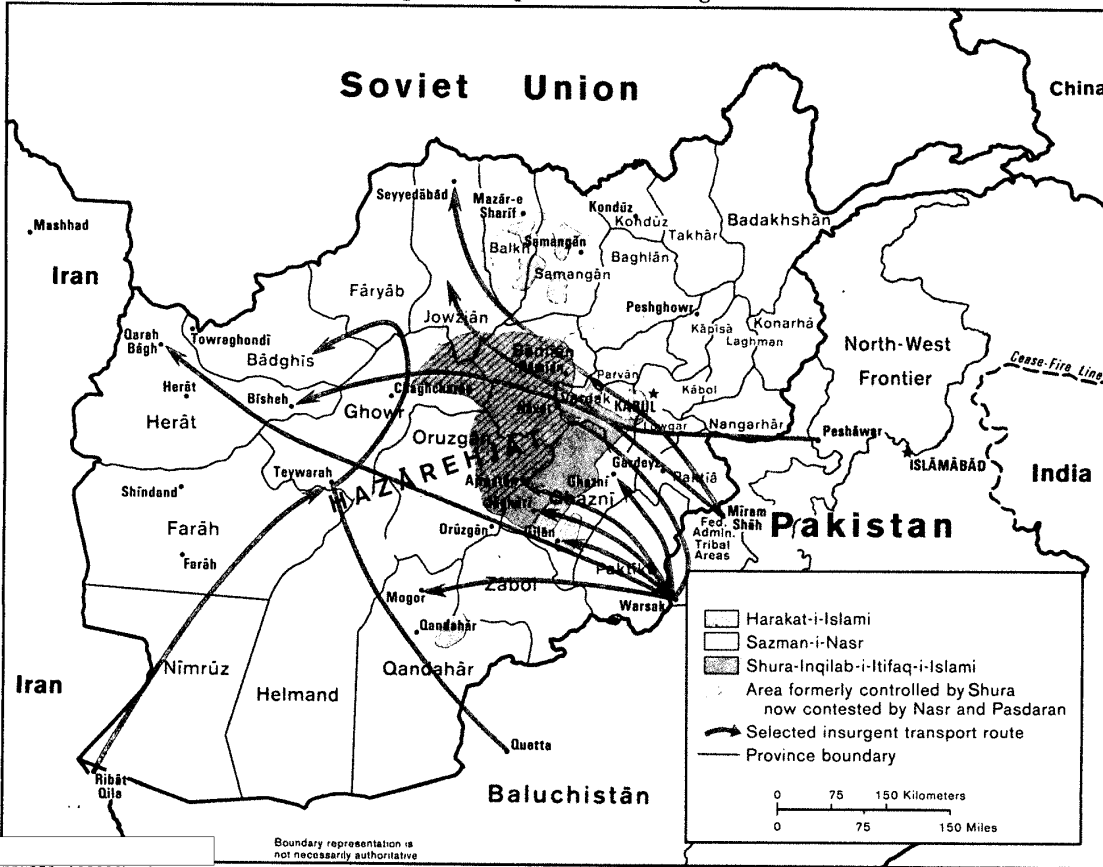
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Selected Insurgent Groups and Insurgent Transport Routes in Afghanistan



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Afghanistan. Moscow, for its part, recently publicly charged Iran with operating 20 training camps for "counterrevolutionaries."

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[Redacted]

How Important Is the Hazarehjat?

The Hazarehjat has strategic value to the resistance. Some insurgent groups active in western and northern Afghanistan—such as Jamiat-i-Islami groups in Herat, Balkh, and Kapisa Provinces—use supply routes that pass through the area. The Hazarehjat's terrain, moreover, provides the insurgents with a natural redoubt from which to strike Soviet and

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[Redacted] Afghan mullahs trained in Iran enjoy support at the highest levels of the Tehran government, including Ayatollah Khomeini and his designated successor Ayatollah Montazeri, who favors an activist policy on

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Excerpts from Kabul's Foreign Ministry Statement

The Iranian Charge d'Affaires in Kabul was summoned to the Afghan Foreign Ministry on 3 March and handed an unusually strong protest. Kabul complained that:

- *During the current year (21 March 1985–20 March 1986) Afghan territory "has been violated 63 times by the ground and air forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as a result of which 20 people have been killed, 245 people wounded, and 19 people abducted to Iran . . . "*
- *"Despite repeated requests, the propaganda, publicity, and organizational operations against the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan have not been reduced, but the hours of hostile broadcasting of the Iranian radio and television against [us] have been increased and . . . are full of hostile articles and concocted subjects against [us] . . . "*
- *"The authorities and leaders of [Iran] have expanded their interference in organizing, provoking, and instigating the resident Afghans and counterrevolutionary elements in Iran to such an extent that religious leaders, instructed by the high authorities, enter the territory of [Afghanistan] to carry out unfriendly secret actions that the Iranian media extensively publicize. Such actions are taken at the instruction of such personalities as Ayatollah Montazeri . . . "*
- *"Some Iranian media . . . admit that the Islamic Republic of Iran gives broad material, financial,*

political, and military assistance to the Afghan counterrevolutionaries and exposes those persons at the Presidency, the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Interior, and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard who are in charge of and oversee these actions. It is due to the involvement of these authorities that the Afghan counterrevolutionary bands have been organized in Tehran, Qom, Mashhad, Yazd, Isfahan, and other parts of Iran and are sent to Afghanistan for murder, plunder, and subversion . . . "

- *"It has become necessary once again, in the light of evidence and documents at hand, to state [Afghanistan's] strongest protests to the Iranian state [and to ask it to] reconsider its position and method of approach . . . and not allow, by supporting reactionary and US-linked bands, to take up positions within the ranks of US imperialism and its collaborators . . . "*
- *"The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan states that, if the authorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran do not cease, resolutely and effectively, the course of their interference and aggressions in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, conditions will be imposed on us such that we shall defend our national sovereignty and security at any cost. In that case undoubtedly the responsibility for their inevitable and dangerous consequences will rest with the Islamic Republic of Iran."*

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Afghan convoys and installations on the highway encircling the region. The Soviets would be at a disadvantage during such assaults because the region's mountainous terrain makes land transit difficult and hampers effective helicopter support operations. [redacted]

To date, the resistance in central Afghanistan has not played a significant role in the war effort. Attacks against Soviet and Afghan Government forces have been minimal. Much of the resistance's potential in the Hazarehjat has not been fulfilled because of fighting among the numerous Iranian-backed groups. There also has been fighting between Shia groups and the mainstream Sunni insurgents based in Pakistan that seek to transit the region. [redacted]

Major Resistance Groups

Four major Shia groups compete for power in the Hazarehjat:

- Shura-Inqilabi-i-Itifaq-i-Islami (Shura) is a traditionalist Hazara coalition of some 30 groups that united during local uprisings in 1979 against the Communist government. Once dominant in central Afghanistan, its influence has declined because of internal weaknesses that caused the departure of many of its original member groups and the growth of more revolutionary Iranian-supported groups in the Hazarehjat.
- Harakat-i-Islami (Harakat) operates on the periphery of the Hazarehjat region. It is the most active in fighting the Soviets in the Qandahar region. Shaykh Asif Mohseni, the head of Harakat, is based in Qom but gets no arms from Iran. He is highly suspicious of revolutionary Islamic doctrine, and Harakat's relations with Iran have often been strained because it has rebuffed Tehran's "guidance," [redacted] The group's members are mainly Tajik, Pushtun, and Turkmen, with some Hazaras.
- Sazman-i-Nasr (Nasr), an Iranian-backed group, seeks the establishment of a Khomeini-style society in the Hazarehjat. Formed in 1972 by Shia students in Kabul, it moved to Iran in 1979 and became

active in the Hazarehjat in 1980. We believe most Hazaras who are attracted to Nasr view it as more nationalist than pro-Iranian.

- Sepah-e Pasdaran (Pasdaran), the most revolutionary of the Hazara resistance groups, is a direct instrument of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, [redacted] Its recruits are young Hazaras, uprooted from their villages, often without family ties, and dissatisfied with the traditional social structure in the Hazarehjat. [redacted]

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Relations With Other Resistance Groups

The Pakistan-based insurgent alliance has a history of troublesome relations with Shia groups in the Hazarehjat, partly because of Iranian meddling.

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[redacted] Iran instructed Nasr to confiscate weapons and supplies from the Hizbi Islami-Khalis faction and the Islamic Union for the Liberation of Afghanistan in 1983-84. [redacted]

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Even Hizbi Islami faction leader Gulbuddin—whose staunchly fundamentalist and anti-Western values most closely mirror Iran's—is unhappy with Iran. He objects to the low level of Iranian support for the Pakistan-based resistance groups. Moreover, his faction closed its offices in Iran last summer over alleged Iranian mistreatment of Afghan refugees in Mashhad. [redacted]

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Individual Nasr commanders make ad hoc transit arrangements with local Sunni commanders because the Shias are not adequately supplied by Iran. The arrangements often include the collection of "tolls" from comparatively better supplied Sunni groups. Nasr, for example, began cooperating with Jamiat groups in Balkh Province under a 1984 agreement with their now deceased commander Zabiullah Khan, [redacted] The agreement provided for safe passage for Jamiat convoys to Balkh and Jowzjan Provinces, in exchange for a percentage of ammunition, medicine, and money

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for Shia commanders along the convoy route. The system appeared to be working well in late 1985, according to press reports. [redacted]

Revolutionary Groups Take the Lead

[redacted] revolutionary groups backed by Iran—Nasr and Pasdaran—have displaced those in the Hazarehjat that are more traditionalist—a development we believe will give Iran an important foothold in the country. [redacted]

Nasr and Pasdaran drove out rival Shura and Harakat groups from most of the region last year. The [redacted] pro-Iranian groups were well disciplined and were concentrating their attacks on Afghan Government offices and military outposts. [redacted]

The contest among the resistance groups for the Hazarehjat is not over. [redacted] the Harakat still holds positions on the outskirts of the region, such as southern Balkh Province. Jamiat leaders, moreover, increasingly concerned about growing Iranian influence in eastern Hazarehjat because of the potential threat to their supply routes, were considering collaborating with Shura forces last fall to regain control of the region, [redacted]

Implications

For the Mainstream Resistance. We do not expect the movement of resistance forces and supplies through the Hazarehjat—which has always depended on local and somewhat fragile arrangements—to become significantly more difficult. Because Iranian materiel support is minimal, we believe Shia insurgents have come to rely on Sunni groups that transit the area for supplies and weapons. Only a major breakthrough in the Iran-Iraq war, which would allow a significant increase in Iranian materiel support for Shia groups in Afghanistan, would alter this assessment. [redacted]

For the War. The growing capabilities of Iranian-trained forces operating in the Hazarehjat are likely to increase military pressure on the Soviets, but Shia

groups will probably not make a substantial difference to the course of the war until Nasr and Pasdaran can consolidate their position. Shia groups could then concentrate on fighting Soviet and regime forces—a development we believe would be a major step toward opening a front west of Kabul. Soviet-Afghan forces now have only two outposts in the region—at Chaghcharan and Bamian—but a significant increase of antiregime activity would force them to increase more garrisons. [redacted]

For a Peace Settlement. Growing Iranian control and intervention in Afghanistan would further complicate progress toward a settlement, in our view. Fear of rising pro-Iranian fundamentalism in Afghanistan was one of the reasons for the Soviet invasion and remains an important Soviet motivation. [redacted]

[redacted] although Kabul and Moscow appear to have softened their demand that an Iranian-Afghan mutual noninterference agreement be part of a settlement, Kabul still insists that Iran assent to any peace agreement. [redacted]

Iran, which has consistently called for Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan followed by the creation of an Islamic state in Kabul, has not backed down from its demands. Although we do not believe Tehran could torpedo a peace agreement—the level of military activity in the Hazarehjat is only a nuisance to the Soviets—a substantial increase in Iranian-sponsored attacks would make Moscow more reluctant to make concessions. [redacted]

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Iraq: Managing the Effects of Al Faw [Redacted]

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Iraq has suffered a serious setback at Al Faw, but the reverse is unlikely to destabilize the regime. Iraq's leaders exercise tight control over the populace and will see to it that the defeat does not generate unrest that might threaten the government. The regime, however, cannot prevent news about the setback from circulating widely, and this will have a dampening effect on morale. Public knowledge will also cause some Iraqis to question the effectiveness of President Saddam Husayn. Faced with these adverse developments, the regime will probably escalate attacks on Iranian economic targets. [Redacted]

Iranian positions. The television also conducts "man-in-the-street" interviews in which Iraqis express faith in the armed forces, the diplomats report. [Redacted]

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It is unlikely that Iraqis will openly challenge the government's propaganda, but the regime cannot completely suppress news of the defeat. As the word leaks out, popular morale, which already is low, [Redacted] will sag further. [Redacted]

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The government is powerless to prevent the families of soldiers slain at Al Faw from talking about their losses. As the bereaved families share their grief, the word will spread that the fighting at Al Faw has taken a greater than usual toll. [Redacted]

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Background

Iraq is an authoritarian state that is ruled by a single party, the Ba'th. The mainstays of the regime are the party cadres and the secret police, the latter reputed to be among the most brutally efficient in the Middle East. Oppressive control by the Ba'th Party extends into every sector of Iraqi society. In the armed forces, political "commissars" check on the loyalty of commanders and men. On college campuses, youthful Ba'thists have taken control of the student organizations. Ba'thists also control Iraq's labor unions, professional societies, peasant cooperatives, and women's groups. The Ba'th Party even controls the Iraqi equivalent of the Boy Scouts, the so-called Pioneers. [Redacted]

Military personnel on home leave from the front also will spread accounts of the setback. The survivors' firsthand descriptions of the battle will expose Iraq's tactical errors during the first days of the fighting. The soldiers also can testify to the difficulty in recapturing Al Faw. All this will reflect adversely on Iraq's President Saddam Husayn, who plays a direct role in military planning. [Redacted]

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Upping the Ante

Saddam probably will not adopt more aggressive tactics on the battlefield to recoup his prestige. According to US diplomats, a sharp—and sustained—rise in casualties would probably trigger large-scale desertions. The diplomats say that draft dodging and desertion already are major problems in Iraq. [Redacted]

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Government control of public life has produced extraordinary conformity, according to US diplomats. Iraqis rarely express opinions on politics, and, when they do, they generally repeat the officially approved line [Redacted]

Instead, the regime is likely to launch an aggressive air campaign against Iran's economy. Last fall, Iraq began bombing Khark Island and other important

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Currently, according to the diplomats, Iraqi propagandists are carrying on an "unprecedented" campaign to convince the public that the war is going well. Government-controlled television is showing extensive footage of Al Faw, often focusing on seemingly continuous Iraqi artillery firing against

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economic targets but never tried to wipe them out. Rather it sought to use the threat of destruction to press Iran to negotiate a settlement. [Redacted]

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The Iraqis apparently believed that a peace party existed in Tehran that would end the fighting rather than risk major damage to its industrial plant. The Iraqis obviously were mistaken. Having been shown that its calculations were wrong, the regime almost certainly will carry out its original threat and step up its air raids. [Redacted]

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Outlook

If Iraq, as we anticipate, begins bombing civilian targets in Iran, the Iranians probably will retaliate by firing missiles against Iraqi cities. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Iranian Scud attacks on Baghdad in 1984 convinced the Iraqi regime to call off its bombing of Iranian civilian targets. This time, however, we do not believe the Scuds will prove so effective. We believe that the Iraqi regime has been sobered by the defeat at Al Faw and views it as possibly opening the way for ultimate Iranian victory. To reduce the chances for such a development, we believe the Iraqis will escalate the air war. [Redacted]

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