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Iran, Moscow seen ready to help PLO

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WASHINGTON TIMES STAFF

Iran is prepared to send 40,000 troops into Lebanon, at short notice, to drive the Israelis out, and Moscow has signaled that it may be prepared to provide the airlift, Sen. Barry Goldwater R-Ariz., told The Washington Times yesterday.

Goldwater said he opposed the sending of American troops to Lebanon, and urged direct U.S. talks with the Palestinians.

Citing intelligence sources, the chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence said: "I know, and it's known, that he (Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini) has 40,000 troops that can be flown into Lebanon tomorrow, to fight Israel. Iraq would also help in Lebanon.

"We have reason to believe that the Russians have either mounted or are ready to mount an airborne attack — not bombing, but troop-carrying — to help Lebanon."

The objective, Goldwater said, would be to relieve pressure on the Palestine Liberation Organization in Lebanon.

Asked if Moscow had expressly warned,

or signaled, Washington of its intentions, Goldwater said: "I would call it a signal; but I think that was carried, somewhat, in (Soviet Chairman Leonid) Brezhnev's promise to (President) Reagan that, if we sent the Marines in (to Beirut), watch out!"

The former presidential candidate added: "The Middle East right now, unless (Israeli premier Menachem) Begin changes his spots, is a potential source of world war. They haven't got any other Arab countries aroused right now; but when Iran gets into this thing, if it does, then I think you are going to see extreme activity."

Goldwater said the blame for the Lebanese crisis clearly lay with Begin.

"What he can't understand," the senator said, "is that America promised to help Israel if Israel was attacked. We didn't promise to help Israel if she was going to attack other countries. As far as I'm concerned, I don't want to sell another thing to Israel as long as Begin is in the driver's seat."

American arms supplies to Israel, Goldwater said, did not give Israel "a right to go killing women and children and babies for no reason at all. That doesn't sit well with any American that I know."

Asked what pressures Washington should use on Israel, he said: "I would just stop sending any supplies and any equipment, and let them know it — 'We're through!' And any supplies en route, pull 'em back! I know it would raise holy hell among the Jewish people of America. Hell, I'm half-Jewish myself, but there's a limit. My country's America, not Israel: that's my attitude."