

# USADI Dispatch

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## USADI Commentary

### Hostage-taking: An Ominous Instrument to Advance Tehran's Foreign Policy

**"If the oppressed people of Lebanon do not take hostages, then what else can they do?"**

*Iran's former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Ettela'at daily, November 7, 1986*

As military personnel, civilians, journalists, contractors and tourists of various nationalities are randomly abducted, their video-taped images flash across our TV screens. Make no mistake: this is not Lebanon of the 1980s. It is the Iraq of 2004 and Iran's ruling theocracy is involved in this inhumane practice up to its eyeballs.

In the 1980s, Tehran perfected the art of using hostage-taking as a profitable instrument of advancing its foreign policy. It has used terrorism as part of its overall policy of exporting fundamentalism and expanding its influence in the Middle East and beyond.

It is no different in Iraq today.

Although not new to the world, terrorism has acquired qualitatively different dimensions since Iran's Islamic fundamentalist government came to power in 1979. The images of the victims and the targets are for the most part associated with Tehran. The grim faces of hostages pleading with their governments, hijacked planes sitting on the tarmacs, collapsed buildings and charred bodies, even of children, are too frequent to ignore.

The occupation of the United States Embassy in Tehran in 1979 signaled an ominous beginning and gave the world a glimpse of what was yet to come.

The 1980s witnessed the tragic saga of the U.S. and other Western hostages held captive by Tehran's proxies in Lebanon, where the mullahs bargained with West, not only to reap economic windfalls, but to harvest political concessions.

In late 1980s and early 1990s, the clerics realized that they could gain more from releasing rather than keeping the hostages. True to their colors, Iran appeasers rushed to cheer Tehran's "reformation" and penchant to use its "good offices." The cheerleading provided cover for normalizing relations with an otherwise loathsome regime.

Tehran has also used terrorism as an effective means to communicate with the Western world. When Iran-Swiss relations soured over the arrest of a top Iranian terrorist in Switzerland in 1992, a Swiss businessman disappeared in Tehran, only to turn up as hostage a few days later.

Even today, Tehran uses the same technique. Last September, when the Scotland Yard detained Iran's ex-ambassador to Argentina Hadi Soleimanpour for his role in the 1994 Jewish Center car bombing, Iranian agents carried out drive-by shootings against the British Embassy in Tehran. Few weeks later, a court in Britain released Soleimanpour on the basis of legal technicalities.

Today in Iraq, from all indications Tehran's proxies are behind much of the abduction of foreign nationals. The objective is to coerce other members of the Coalition to cut and run, leaving the United States isolated in the country. The ever-unscrupulous mullahs then offer to act as an arbiter in the chaos and anarchy that they themselves have fomented in the first place.

The Lebanon experience of the 1980s should serve as a stark reminder that any leniency towards Tehran and its creeping meddling in Iraq, would only serve to consolidate Iranian influence in that country. We should meet Tehran's challenge head-on. Relying on the "good offices" or "good will" of American's most dangerous nemesis would be an exercise in futility.

### Tehran Protests Memorial For Kurds Killed In 92

TEHRAN - The Iranian Foreign Ministry summoned the German ambassador Wednesday to protest the unveiling of a memorial plaque that blames Iran for the assassination of four Kurdish dissidents in a Berlin restaurant in 1992.

Ali Ahani, a deputy foreign minister, told Ambassador Paul von Maltzahn that Iran had no involvement in the shootings at the Mykonos restaurant and strongly objected to the plaque, the official Islamic Republic News Agency reported.

The plaque, unveiled Tuesday at the site of the former restaurant, blames "those in power in Iran at the time" for the assassinations of Sept. 17, 1992.

A German court found in 1997 that the Iranian authorities had ordered the killing of the four Iranian Kurds. The German government withdrew its ambassador to Tehran and expelled four Iranian diplomats.

The Wilmersdorf-Charlottenburg district council erected the plaque and originally wanted it to put the blame explicitly on Iran's secret service, but the wording was toned down - reportedly under pressure from the Berlin mayor's office.

On Wednesday, von Maltzahn restated the German position that the matter concerned local officials who were beyond the authority of the federal government, said a German Foreign Ministry spokesman.

**[Reuters, April 22:** Tehran city council will erect plaques denouncing Germany as a supplier of chemical weapons to Iraq, the council said on Thursday, in retaliation for a plaque in Berlin accusing Iran of killing four Kurds 12 years ago.

[City council official Mehdi Chamran said the two plaques, one of which will be placed in the same street as the German embassy in Tehran, will commemorate the thousands of Iranians killed by chemical gas attacks in the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war. The Berlin plaque attributed the attack to Tehran, a verdict shared by a German court in 1997.]

**Associated Press, April 20, 2004**

The US Alliance for Democratic Iran (USADI), is an independent, non-profit organization, which aims to advance a US policy on Iran that will benefit America's interests, through supporting Iranian people's aspirations for a democratic, secular, and peaceful government, free of tyranny, fundamentalism, weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism. The USADI is not affiliated with any government agencies, political groups or parties.

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**Wall Street Journal**  
**Apr 16, 2004**  
**The Iranian Hand**

Much is being made about the irony of an Iranian envoy arriving in Iraq to help negotiate a solution to the U.S. standoff with radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. How could we allow a charter member of President Bush's "Axis of Evil" to negotiate a "peace" with the thuggish Sadr and his band of fanatical militants?

Indeed, the irony is as thick as Sadr's own beard. But the fact that Iran holds sway over him and other Shiite militants in Iraq should surprise no one. Despite repeated denials by the State Department, it is an open secret throughout the Middle East that Sadr has been receiving support -- if not precise orders -- from the mullahs in Iran for some time now.

One wonders what Foggy Bottom's analysts make of Sadr's recent visit to Iran, when he met with Hashemi Rafsanjani (the number two power in the regime), Murtadha Radha'i (head of intelligence for the Revolutionary Guards) and Brigadier General Qassim Suleimani (the al-Quds Army commander in charge of Iraqi affairs). And what might they say about the fact that much of Sadr's funding comes straight from Ayatollah al-Haeri, one of the closest allies of the Iranian supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei?...

Iraq cannot be peaceful and secure so long as Tehran sends its terrorist cadres across the border. Naturally, our troops will engage -- and kill -- any infiltrators they encounter. But we can be sure that there will be others to take their place. The only way to end Tehran's continual sponsorship of terror is to bring about the demise of the present Iranian regime. And as it happens, we have an excellent opportunity to achieve this objective, without the direct use of military power against Iran. There is a critical mass of pro-democracy citizens there, who would like nothing more than to rid themselves of their oppressors. They need help, but they neither need nor desire to be liberated by force of arms.

Above all, they want to hear our leaders state clearly and repeatedly -- as Ronald Reagan did with the "Evil Empire" -- that regime change in Iran is the goal of American policy.... This sort of political campaign aimed at toppling the Iranian regime -- allied to firm punitive action within Iraq against terrorists of all stripes -- will make our task in Iraq manifestly less dangerous. Ultimately, security in Iraq will come in large measure from freedom and reform in Iran (as well as in Syria and Saudi Arabia). This is a truth that we should not hide from, nor be fearful to take on.

*Excerpts from an article by Michael Ledeen, resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute*

**New York Post**  
**April 16, 2004**  
**The Iran Factor**

An Iranian delegation is now in Baghdad, supposedly to help talk down the firebrand Iraqi cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and his radical "al-Mahdi Army." The strange thing is, Iran is the chief culprit among the outside players behind much of Iraq's current instability.

U.S. officials have long expressed concerns about the Islamic Republic's corrosive activities in Iraq, ranging from drug trafficking to the funding of radical clerics. But recent revelations have exposed an Iranian strategic offensive of unprecedented magnitude - one aimed at preventing the establishment of a secular, pro-Western government in its eastern neighbor.

In a recent interview with the influential Arab-language daily Al-Sharq al-Awsat, a former Iranian official revealed that Tehran has successfully infiltrated hundreds of operatives from its clerical army, the Pasdaran, into Iraq via Kurdish areas not yet firmly under the control of the Iraqi Governing Council.

Since then, the official said, Iranian agents - including members of the Pasdaran's feared paramilitary "Qods Corps" - have established a major presence throughout the country, where they have begun active recruitment, propaganda and insurgency operations... Iraq's political vacuum has also drawn other undesirable characters. Iraqis say both Hezbollah (the Iranian-backed, Lebanon-based Shi'ite militia) and Hamas (the Palestinian terrorist group) have begun to put down roots in post-Saddam Iraq through the establishment of recruitment bases and offices in urban centers like Nasariah, Basra and Safwan...

The reasons for this foreign meddling are not hard to fathom. Iran, already grappling with a restive, disenfranchised domestic population, is eager to avoid having a "bad" example - a secular, pro-Western regime - emerge next door...

With the deadline for a U.S. transfer of sovereignty to the emerging Iraqi government drawing closer, and with election-year mudslinging well underway in Washington, quelling Iraq's instability is rapidly emerging as an overriding priority for the Bush administration.

But so too should be the realization that the recipe for long-term stability in Iraq rests in taking up the thorny issue of external influence - and in unequivocally demonstrating to regional rogues that their troublemaking carries real consequences.

*Excerpts from an article by Ilan Berman, vice president for policy at the American Foreign Policy Council in Washington.*