

# Iranian forces reported 5 miles from Kurd capital

Tehran, Iran (Reuter)—Iranian government forces were reported yesterday to be within 5 miles of the Kurdish rebel capital of Mahabad and an Army spokesman said: "We can take it at any time."

Officials of the banned Kurdish Democratic party (KDP), which is leading the rebellion, denied the Army had advanced from positions 20 miles outside the town and said guerrilla forces were on the alert to resist a government attack.

An Army spokesman at the Urumieh barracks north of the Kurdish stronghold said by telephone: "Troops are between 6 and 8 kilometers [3.6 to 4.8 miles] from Mahabad. We can take it at any time without any serious confrontation or resistance on the part of the Kurdish rebels."

The spokesman acknowledged that the Kurds had tanks and anti-aircraft batteries taken from the Kurdish-held Mahabad barracks.

He added: "We are awaiting orders from Tehran to enter Mahabad."

The armed forces commander, Maj. Gen. Hossein Shaker, said on state radio yesterday that Mahabad had to be occupied by the Army for the sake of peace and security in the region.

He said the government was prepared ultimately to move the Mahabad garrison outside the town.

"We will not arrest ordinary members of the KDP, but the leaders named by Imam [Ayatollah Ruhollah] Khomeini will be arrested and handed over to the responsible authorities," he added.

Both sides said the Kurdish town was running short of food and gasoline and the KDP accused the government of setting

armed rebels had taken over gasoline stations in Mahabad and guerrillas at exit roads were preventing civilians from leaving.

The KDP said yesterday it was rejecting a call from the unofficial head of state, Ayatollah Khomeini, to surrender. A senior official said: "We have decided to defend ourselves and we will fight."

Sources close to a five-man Kurdish peace mission that has been trying to reach a settlement in talks with government leaders here said one of its members, Rahim Seif Ghazi, had left Tehran for the southern town of Ahwaz for talks with the local governor-general, Rear Adm. Ahmad Madani.

The report could not be independently confirmed and the sources did not give a reason for the meeting.

Admiral Madani is governor-general of Khuzestan province and commander of Iran's Navy. He commanded forces that stifled Arab unrest in the oil-rich province earlier this year.

Fighting in the Kurdish region in recent days has been limited to night skirmishes. The Urumieh Army spokesman said guerrillas attacked a military food truck early yesterday near the border town of Piranshahr, killing one soldier.

Kurdish sources said people were evacuating Piranshahr and heading for the Iraqi border for fear of an imminent government attack.

Kurdish sources said Air Force Phantom jets dropped two bombs near Baneh, but this could not be confirmed. It was th