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Iranian Forces Reported on Outskirts of Kurd Capital

From Times Wire Services

TEHRAN, Iran—Government forces were reported Thursday to be within 5 miles of the Kurdish rebel capital of Mahabad and an army spokesman said it could be taken "any time."

Officials of the banned Kurdish Democratic Party, which is leading the rebellion, denied the army had advanced from a position 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 told a wire service reporter by telephone, "Troops are between 6 and 8 kilometers (3.6 and 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 antiaircraft

batteries taken from the Kurdish-held Mahabad barracks.

In Tehran, meanwhile, a member of a Kurdish goodwill delegation charged the Iranian government with "fabricating stories" about talks aimed at averting more battles between army troops and Kurdish rebels.

Baba Taheri, part of the five-member delegation that came to the capital from Mahabad, claimed authorities had rounded up scores of Kurds in Tehran. He also accused an Islamic court judge of atrocities.

Taheri said "no agreement whatsoever" had been reached by leaders of the autonomy-seeking Kurds and the regime of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, despite a claim to the contrary on the state radio Wednesday.

"How can there be progress when the government distorts the details of our negotiations and fabricates stories

on the state radio?" Taheri said in a telephone interview.

In the interview, Taheri also criticized the Ayatollah Sadegh Khalkhali, the head of Iran's courts, who has put Kurdish insurgents on trial in the recaptured city of Saqqez, scene of a bloody clash last week.

"The Kurdish people as well as a large number of people around the world do not understand how Sheikh Khalkhali can claim to be handing out Islamic justice when he tries and condemns . . . innocent Kurds in a matter of a few hours," Taheri said.

Government figures indicate 83 persons have been shot to death by firing squads in and near Kurdistan in recent days. Kurdish sources claim the total exceeds 100.

Two more Kurds were executed by an Islamic court despite four retaliatory executions of government guards by Kurds earlier in the week. The warring Kurds have threatened to shoot two prisoners for each Kurd executed by the government.

The Iranian armed forces commander, Maj. Gen. Hussein Shaker, said on state radio Thursday 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.