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IRAN TANKS DESTROYED

Kurdish Rebels Reported in Control of Mahabad

From Times Wire Services

TEHRAN, Iran—Kurdish rebels were in control of most of Mahabad in northwest Iran Saturday night after heavy fighting in which they destroyed government tanks and captured the radio station, local residents said.

Iranian government forces brought up helicopter gunships that fired on rebel positions, the residents said. The casualty toll was not known.

Guerrilla sources said the rebels had captured the local army barracks but this could not be immediately confirmed.

The official Pars news agency reported that Kurdish insurgents armed with rocket-propelled grenades blasted several government tanks in the city. Three were reported ablaze in the main avenue where the barracks are situated.

One resident who fled to the safety of the local governor's residence reported by telephone that security forces had been pushed back to their headquarters.

Kurdish sources said the fighting flared after government forces cut roads into Mahabad and blockaded the town in an attempt to check the rebels, who have been staging nightly attacks on government positions.

Shooting was still going on throughout Mahabad after nightfall.

Mahabad was the stronghold of autonomy-seeking Kurdish rebels until the army, backed by columns of tanks, pushed them into the mountains of western Iran last summer.

Guerrilla sources said army troops and revolutionary guard commandos were involved in Saturday's clashes. They said the rebels had captured one tank and some heavy weapons, including 50-mm. machine guns.

The first indication that the

government was losing control of the former rebel capital came last week when the Kurdistan provincial governor general, Jamshid Haggi, said that security forces were no longer in complete control of the town.

Residents said most government buildings could already be considered in the hands of the rebels because most government employes were sympathetic to the rebel cause. They said the guerrillas held the radio and television station although its equipment had already been destroyed.

Minister of State Dariush Forouhar returned to Tehran on Saturday after a series of talks with Kurdish leaders on ending the eight-month conflict.

Results of the talks were not disclosed by the government, which said it welcomed Kurdish suggestions to "end the pitiful clashes." It did not say what the suggestions were.

On Friday, Kurdish rebels ambushed a column of national police, battling them for two hours near Naqadeh, in northwest Iran, the state radio said Saturday.

The radio also said the army Saturday continued its "cleaning up" campaign in Kurdistan and arrested eight members of the outlawed Kurdish Democratic Party with "large amounts of arms and ammunition."

In Tehran on Saturday, the Assn. of Political Prisoners Opposed to Imperialism and International Reaction said in a report that 1,500 men and women were being held in Iranian jails as political prisoners.

In addition, it charged that 130 people "arrested on political accusations and for anti-imperialist and antireactionary struggle" have been executed.

A member of the association told

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reporters, "The condition of the political prisoners is not different from what it was under the cruel regime" of the deposed Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi.

The report on the executions was in reference to the Kurds, ethnic Arabs and others executed after trial by Islamic courts on charge of treason during the recent fighting in Kurdistan and Khuzistan provinces.