

Sacked general is reinstated by Khomeini

From Liz Thurgood
in Tehran

The case of Iran's dismissed general who refused to leave his post last night threatened to develop into yet another critical test in the Government's bid to wrest authority from the powerful Ayatollahs.

The personal bureau of Ayatollah Khomeini, Iran's de facto Head of State, yesterday confirmed that the controversial general Azzizollah Amir Rahimi had been told to remain at his post as head of the country's Military Police, thereby overruling an official notification of dismissal from General Taomi Riahi, the Minister of Defence.

The incident followed outspoken remarks at a press conference on Monday in which General Rahimi claimed to have uncovered a plot by senior officers aimed at ousting him and weakening the Ayatollah Khomeini's leadership. The general, who went to work as usual at his office yesterday morning, had earlier said that all 7,000 soldiers at the re-named Jamshidieh Garrison were behind him.

Underlining the sense of crisis was an attack yesterday on a young member of the elite Siah Jameghan (black-clad) guard which is currently acting as the general's body-guard. The guard, Ahmad Nouri, was shot twice in the stomach not far from the garrison and rushed to hospital where his condition was later reported to be satisfactory. His three assailants escaped by car.

General Rahimi said yesterday that he had received some 10 anonymous calls threatening his life. "I don't know who these people are, but they have threatened to come back and kill all of us, but we are well prepared."

The barracks and his home, where he intended to return last night, were being heavily guarded by members of the Fedayeen Khomeini, pledged to protect the life of the unofficial Head of State, and armed with Uzi hand machine carbines and automatic rifles.

between the Government and the religious leadership follows high-level talks in the religious centre of Qom ten days ago between the Prime Minister, Dr Mehdi Bazargan, Ayatollah Khomeini. Immediately after the meeting there was speculation among Iranians that the Prime Minister had agreed not to submit his resignation in return for more freedom in running the country.

As an unelected Provisional Government, Dr Bazargan's Cabinet is subject to the will of the secret Revolutionary Council in Qom, believed to be made up of leading clergymen.

Meanwhile, confusing reports from Iran's troubled Western border with Iraq speak of several thousand Kurds encircling a tribal area and holding a local chieftain as hostage. According to the State radio, "between six thousand and ten thousand armed members of the Kurdish Democratic Party have surrounded the Zarza region in West Ayarbaijan and are threatening a massacre."

Reports from the area during the past week have warned that "counter revolutionaries" led by General Palizban, the Shah's former chief of Army counter intelligence, were stirring up trouble.

Reuter adds: General Rahimi, who served several gaol sentences under the Shah's regime, is a tough disciplinarian who believes in re-establishing law and order in post-revolutionary Iran by assimilating the country's armed militias into the armed forces. Informed sources said that he was also at odds with other members of the military hierarchy over the question of employing foreign advisers to retrain and re-equip Iran's Islamic armed forces.

He was gaoled by the Shah for criticising the supply of used United States Army uniforms to the Iranian forces and for protesting against the Shah's acceptance of an honorary British generalship.

His nationalist standpoint has more recently led him to make outspoken comments in favour of preserving Iran's territorial integrity in the face of autonomist movements in the

The military crisis has passed unnoticed by most Iranians. Yesterday was a holiday, and there were no newspapers. The only word on the crisis was a one-sentence announcement by the official State radio on Monday that General Rahimi had been dismissed.

The latest clash of interests

provinces.

General Rahimi's special relationship with Ayatollah Khomeini is understood to be based on the general's close association with groups opposed to the Shah, that helped create the Revolution.

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