
Defense Report

AUSA



Iran Rearms—Another Middle East Monster

There is growing concern in the United States and throughout the Middle East and Southwest Asia over a massive arms buildup in Iran. The full extent to which the mullahs have been able to rebuild their military force since the beating it took in the eight-year war with Iraq is not known, but there is ample evidence that they are making a massive effort to become the major power in the region.

Official Iranian government spokesmen have admitted to a \$10 billion, five-year program of rearmament, but other sources—the U.S. CIA included—say that's just the tip of the iceberg. One Iranian opposition group, the People's Mojahedin, claims that the regime is engaged in a military buildup that started in 1989 and will consume about \$50 billion by 1994.

What concerns Iran's neighbors more than the dollar amounts being spent on arms are the types and numbers of weapons and systems being purchased—far exceeding Iran's legitimate self-defense needs. The arsenal that was depleted in the eight-year Iran-Iraq War is being restored by purchases of Chinese F-7 fighters, Soviet-made MiG-29 fighters and Su-24 fighter-bombers and North Korean Scud B and C surface-to-surface missiles. Arab leaders are even more concerned over Teheran's reported plans to buy three Soviet Kilo-class submarines which would allow Iran to control the straits of Hormuz through which passes the bulk of the Western world's oil supply.

Ironically, the countries that would have the most to lose in an Iranian power play—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates—cannot reach agreement on cooperative security measures. Until such time as those members of the Gulf Cooperation Council can get their act together, they will be individually and collectively subject to the hegemonous machinations of Iran or Iraq or whoever else might desire to take control of the world's largest source of oil.

To protect its own substantial security interests in that part of the world, the United States of America needs to strengthen its security ties in the region—something it can't do by putting its ships in mothballs, grounding its pilots and dismantling its Army.