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Kurds

Iran Troops in Iraq; Backing Rebel Kurds

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BEIRUT, Jan. 20—Iraq has turned to the Soviet Union for heavy artillery to match the 155- and 175-mm. guns being used by Kurdish and Iranian forces inside northeastern Iraq, Arab sources said today.

Two Iranian artillery battalions possessing 155-mm. howitzers are operating inside Iraq with the Kurds and have brought in antiaircraft guns for their own defense, according to authoritative reports. Iranian soldiers are also firing 175-mm. guns at Iraqi forces from border positions.

The urgent Iraqi request for new Soviet artillery, advanced Mig fighter-bombers and (according to one report that could not be confirmed here) surface-to-surface missiles, appears to reflect growing military troubles for Baghdad, which has been forced to begin calling up 36- and 37-year-old reserve officers to replace Iraq's losses against the Kurds, these sources reported.

The sources, who are well acquainted with the 10-month-old civil war between the Kurdish forces of Gen. Mullah Mustafa Barzani and the Baathist government of Iraq, confirmed Beirut press reports yesterday that a large Iraqi-Soviet arms deal has been concluded.

A new Iraqi effort to get Iran's Shah Mohamed Reza Pahlavi to halt his military support for Barzani's Pesh Merga forces collapsed yesterday when talks between the Iraqi and Iranian foreign ministers in Istanbul ended without producing results. Later the two conferred separately with Turkish President Fahri Koroturk in Ankara.

The shah is reported by Arab sources to have told Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in Cairo a week ago that while he had no border problem with Iraq that could not be negotiated, he saw no hope of reaching any agreement with the Baathist government, which he termed a threat to the entire region.

The Iraqis, who had rolled the Kurds back toward the border with a major autumn offensive before the Iranians stepped in provide the Kurds with heavier weapons, have not been able to reach the

Iranian positions with their 152-mm. Soviet-made field guns, the heaviest artillery they now possess.

Baghdad is also seeking new bombers from the Soviets. The Iraqis have reportedly grounded their only squadron of Tu-16 bombers, which raided Kurdish positions regularly until Dec 14.

On that date, one of the slow-moving Tu-16s, flying at an altitude of 18,000 feet, was shot down. Iraq accused Iranian troops of using U.S.-made Hawk missiles to down the aircraft. Highly reliable sources said today that American-made missiles were not used in the incident. Kurdish forces used another type of surface-to-air missile to shoot down the Tu-16, they said.

These sources also identified antitank wire-guided missiles supplied to the Kurds by Iran as being of non-American manufacture, but they refused to specify for publication the type of missile involved.

The Kurds claim to have killed 8,000 Iraqi troops and wounded 15,000, in contrast to their own military losses of about a thousand dead.

The Iraqi reserve callup has reached its 19th category, according to reports from Baghdad, and newsreels paid for by the Iraqi Government being shown in Beirut movie theaters call on citizens of other Arab countries to volunteer for the Iraqi army.

Ten brigades of Iraqi reservists have been mobilized since the Kurds rejected an autonomy plan presented by the Baghdad government in March 1974 and began their latest rebellion. Barzani and his forces have periodically fought for self-rule for nearly half a century.

Iraq was estimated by London's Institute of Strategic Studies to have 112,000 men in its armed forces at the beginning of the Kurdish war.