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Iran-Iraq War: Iran Starts Counteroffensive

- [Bani-Sadr Blamed for War Conduct](#)

Iranian President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr Jan. 5 announced that Iranian troops that day had launched a counteroffensive against Iraqi forces. Baghdad scoffed at Iranian claims of victory and the U.S. called Teheran's battlefield reports exaggerated. [See 1980 [Iran-Iraq War: Fighting Spreads to Kurdistan; Other Developments](#)]

The Iranian Supreme Defense Council said in a communique issued Jan. 5 that the drive had been started in Khuzistan province and 200 Iraqis had been killed in the Ahwaz area, and another 100 slain in the Gilan region, nearly 300 miles (480 kilometers) to the northwest. Teheran claimed the capture of 2,000 Iraqis on both fronts.

Iraq Jan. 6 confirmed the Iranian offensive, but said its forces had repelled the attackers with a loss of 381 Iranian lives. Iraq admitted losing 29 men killed in the two days of fighting.

Both sides Jan. 7 continued to announce conflicting claims. Iraq said its forces had wiped out an entire Iranian brigade in fighting near the Khuzistan city of Susangird, "killing hundreds." Another 200 Iranians were slain on the Gilan front, Iraq said. Baghdad placed its own losses for the day at 33 men.

Iran said 70 Iraqi soldiers were killed in the Gilan area and about 3,000 Iraqis had been captured since the start of the Iranian drive. Iran Jan. 7 paraded 495 Iraqi prisoners through the streets of Teheran to back up its victory claim.

Another 160 Iraqis were killed Jan. 9 in the Gilan area, according to Teheran.

Statements from Teheran Jan. 9 said 2,057 Iraqis had been killed since the start of the Iranian offensive. Iraq claimed Iran had lost 1,878 men in the five days of fighting.

Iraqi Deputy Premier Taha Yasin Ramadan Jan. 8 ridiculed Teheran's reports of battlefield successes, saying they were intended to give the Iranian people false hope. Baghdad radio also minimized the Iranian push, saying it was confined to a small area of "a front extending hundreds of square miles."

Iraq had proclaimed Jan. 4, one day before Iran's announced offensive, that it had won the war. "We have realized almost all our objectives and the myth of Iranian hegemony has ended forever," a defense official said.

Bani-Sadr Blamed for War Conduct

President Bani-Sadr's Jan. 5 announcement of Iran's counteroffensive followed recent criticism by the Iranian clergy of his handling of the war. As commander in chief of the armed forces, Bani-Sadr had been accused by clerics of the Islamic Republican Party of having failed to put the Iranian military on the attack.

The dispute between Bani-Sadr and the clerics also centered on the fact that clergy-supported paramilitary forces had claimed most of the credit for reported Iranian battle victories. But Bani-Sadr had given credit only to the regular armed forces in his public remarks.

The clergy's complaints against Bani-Sadr were further expressed Jan. 5 at a rally in Teheran to mark the death of the Prophet Mohammed, a national holiday. A resolution was read taking issue with "the policy of wasting time and being slow." The statement continued: "In the knowledge that this policy is in the interest of the United States and helps its conspiracies, once more we ask the authorities to begin the real attack and to expel the Baathist mercenaries [Iraqi troops] from Islamic land."

The sharp rivalry between Bani-Sadr and the Islamic fundamentalists had first come into the open with a statement Jan. 2 by Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri, presumed successor to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, demanding to know why the army had not been permitted to attack.

A previous criticism by Montazeri of the president's Supreme Defense Council's alleged mishandling of the war with Iraq prompted Khomeini Jan. 1 to appeal for an end to rivalry among the armed forces.

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