

New Envoys Named

Ambassadors to Iraq, Ukraine, Hungary, Georgia, Ivory Coast, Bosnia, Serbia, Indonesia, Poland, Pakistan and a few other countries have been appointed. The nominees were proposed by Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki and approved by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Qorban Seifi is the new ambassador to Kazakhstan. Earlier he was Iran's number two man in Moscow.

Deputy head of Foreign Ministry's Directorate of Information



and Media Akbar Qassemi will take over the mission in Ukraine. Prior to this appointment, Qassemi was head of Iran's Interest Section in Egypt and chief of the ministry's directorate for Arab Middle East and North Africa Affairs, Mehr News Agency reported.

Former consul general in Hong Kong, Abdollah Nekoonam will replace Qassemi as deputy chief of the information and media office.

Bani Hasehmi and Muhammad Mousa Hashemi Golpaygani are new ambassadors to Hungary and Turkmenistan, respectively.

Special assistant to the minister for strategic planning, Mostafa Moslehzadeh is the new ambassador in Jordan.

Majid Samadzadeh Saber has been introduced as envoy to Georgia. Previously, he was number two in the embassy in Ukraine.

Ali Lakizadeh and Youssefi have been appointed as new ambassadors to Poland and Bosnia, respectively. Youssefi was formerly ambassador to the Philippines, Thailand and Bangladesh.

Mahmoud Heidari is the new consul general in Istanbul. Before that he was deputy director general of parliamentary affairs in the Foreign Ministry.

Abolqassem Delfi, former ambassador to Belgium and the EU headquarters, was appointed as envoy to Serbia.

Upon the end of his successful mission to Iraq, Hassan Kazemi-Qomi will be replaced by Hassan Danaeifar later this year.

Mashallah Shokri, the incumbent ambassador to Islamabad, will be replaced by Ahmad Sobhani, who is currently director general for Latin American affairs at the ministry.

West Bitter Over Anti-Terror Success

A senior military officer said some western powers seem furious at Iran's recent success in fighting terrorism and capturing terrorists and their agents.

He also said Iran's access to technical know-how in industrial fields has blunted the sanctions imposed by arrogant powers, in particular the US, Presstv quoted the deputy chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Massoud Jazayeri as saying in Tehran on Sunday.

"Western governments which support terrorism, mistakenly believe that they can always influence world public opinion through their media," Jazayeri stated.

"Now it has been proved that criminals, the main sponsors of terrorism, warmongers... have never been able to conceal their true colors forever."

Referring to the confessions of Jundallah ringleader Abdol-



malek Rigi by Iran's intelligence officers last month, Jazayeri said some foreign officials were directly involved in terrorist acts against the Islamic Republic.

"Disclosure of information about the involvement of certain foreign officials in terrorist acts against Iran has opened a new phase in the growing international mistrust toward western governments," he stressed.

Rigi was captured on February 23 aboard a passenger jet flying from the UAE to Kyrgyzstan. He was taken in after the plane was grounded in the southern port city of Bandar Abbas.

Hours after Rigi's arrest, Iran's Intelligence Minister Heydar Moslehi said the notorious fugitive was at a US base 24 hours prior to being captured. The Americans had issued an Afghan passport for him. In his confessions Rigi gave details about his ties with some intelligence agencies such as the CIA and said that he also had close relations with the security services in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

PJAK Boss Must Be Extradited



Ali Larjani

Majlis Speaker Ali Larjani said Monday diplomatic efforts are underway for extradition of the leader of Free Life in Kurdistan Party (PJAK), Abdolrahman Haji Ahmadi.

"The PJAK leader must be extradited to face trial in Iran," he told Majlis correspondents, Mehr News Agency reported.

German police arrested the fugitive PJAK boss last week. The banned group is responsible for several terrorist attacks inside Iran, mainly in the western and northwestern regions.

Ahmadi was arrested at his home in Germany on Friday.

PJAK is an offshoot of the internationally-banned terrorist group, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) that conducts deadly attacks in Kurdish-populated regions in western Iran.

"For long we have told German officials that since Haji Ahmadi has committed many crimes in Iran and lives in Germany, he should be extradited to Iran. Every time they said they would study the request.

Now we are following up the matter and in-

sist that he be handed over to our custody," the senior lawmaker concluded.

> Protest Near Belgian Mission

Protesters on Monday gathered outside the Belgian Embassy to demand the extradition of PJAK members detained by police in Brussels last week.

The protesters carried pictures of their loved ones killed in terrorist attacks by PJAK, Presstv reported.

On Friday, Belgian authorities detained several Kurdish dissidents in Brussels as part of a counter-terrorism operation.

Iran has often reported clashes between government forces and PJAK members along its western border with Iraq. The banned group is reportedly supported by the United States.

In an article in The New Yorker some years ago, investigative journalist Seymour Hersh, revealed that the US military and Israel are assisting PJAK by providing the group with equipment, training and vital intelligence in a bid to destabilize the Islamic Republic.

Canada Supporting Israeli War Crimes

Iran has deplored Canada's move to vote against a UN-backed resolution extending a deadline for a full and credible probe into Israeli war crimes during its aggression in Gaza last year.

"During the tenure of [Prime Minister Stephen] Harper, Canada followed a policy to ignore ground realities and has been demonstrating contradictory behavior," Presstv quoted Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast as saying on Sunday.

"Canada's vote against the resolution, which supports the rights of citizens, immigrants and religious minorities,

caused Israel of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The 575-page report documented accounts of deliberate killing of Palestinian civilians by the Israeli army which targeted places known to hold civilians and opened fire on unarmed non-combatants fleeing the scene.

> Unwavering Backing

Mehmanparast condemned Canada's consistent and unwavering support for Israeli lawlessness and said "Ottawa shows full support for inhuman crimes of the Zionist regime."



Israel killed more than 1,400 Palestinians during its three weeks of onslaught against the Gaza Strip last year.

is yet another apparent example of such behavior," Mehmanparast added.

On Friday, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a non-binding resolution to this effect, backed by the Palestinian Authority's delegation and several Arab and African countries. The vote was 98-31.

The move allows another five months for fresh investigations into war crimes committed during the three-week Israeli onslaught that killed more than 1,400 Palestinians, mostly civilians, and left thousands of others wounded.

A UN fact-finding committee led by renowned South African prosecutor Richard Goldstone had previously ac-

"In light of such remarks which contradict Canada's claims as an advocate of human rights, the Canadian government has shown that it is not qualified to comment on such issues," he stressed.

Taking the Goldstone report into consideration, the General Assembly overwhelmingly passed a resolution demanding credible, independent investigations of war crime charges registered until February 5.

The distinguished South African jurist has suggested that the case be sent to the International Criminal Court at The Hague if plausible probes are not conducted within six months.

Ahmadinejad's Afghan Visit on Schedule

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad would head a high-ranking delegation to Kabul on Wednesday, an Iranian diplomat said in the Afghan capital, rejecting earlier reports that the visit had been delayed.

The unnamed Iranian source told Presstv on Monday that Tehran had announced that the visit would take place during the week, without specifying which day.

He rejected reports that the visit's itinerary had been influenced by US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates' visit to Kabul.

Sources in the Afghan presidential office said early Monday that Ahmadinejad had postponed his visit, which, they said, had been originally scheduled for Monday (March 8).

"President Ahmadinejad won't be coming to Kabul," an informed source at Karzai's office told Presstv on Monday on condition of anonymity.

US Defense Secretary Robert Gates, the source added, had arrived in Afghanistan on Monday morning on an unannounced visit.

The one-day visit would be Ahmadinejad's first official visit to Afghanistan since both he and President Hamid Karzai were reelected last year. The two presidents will discuss the situation in the war-torn country and ways to expand Tehran-Kabul ties.

Iran blames the ongoing Afghan violence and the upsurge in Taliban attacks on US and NATO occupation of the impoverished Muslim country.

The US-led war in Afghanistan has killed more than 1,440 civilians in the past two months -- a figure equal to the US-led coalition's overall death toll since the invasion in 2001.

Meanwhile, according to figures released by the Washington Post, around 5,372 American servicemen have been killed since 2001 in the US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission reported on the fatalities in January, saying 40 percent of the deaths had been caused by foreign forces. Meanwhile, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan has warned that, compared to 2008, this year's death toll shows a 10.8 percent increase.

Several Tremors Reported

Four successive tremors jolted different parts of the southern Fars province on Monday, while another quake shook a bordering province in the east.

A report by the Geophysics Institute of Tehran University said the tremors in Fars were measured at 3.2, 2.6, 1.6 and 3.6 on the Richter scale.

The Seismological arm of the institute registered the mild quakes in the southern province at 07:11, 07:46, 10:54 and 11:42 hours local time (0341, 0416, 0724 and 0812 GMT) respectively.

The tremors were epicentered in an area 51.4, 53.8, 51.3 and 51.4 degrees in longitude and 29.7, 28.4, 29.9 and 29.7 degrees in latitude, respectively, Fars News Agency reported.

Also Monday an earthquake measuring 3.3 on the Richter scale jolted the town of Sar Bisheh in South Khorassan province. It was registered at 07:54 hours local time (0424 GMT).

No reports on possible casualties or damage to property have been received.

Iran sits astride several major faults in the earth's crust, and is prone to frequent tremors, many of which have been devastating.

The worst in recent times hit Bam in southeastern Kerman province in December 2003, killing 31,000 people -- about a quarter of its population -- and destroying the city's ancient mud-built citadel.

The deadliest quake in the country was in June 1990 and measured 7.7 on the Richter scale. About 37,000 people were killed and more than 100,000 injured in the northwestern provinces of Gilan and Zanjan. It devastated 27 towns and about 1,870 villages.

