

The Road To Tehran

On Monday, July 25, 1988, the National Liberation Army of Iran launched its largest military offensive, Operation Eternal Light. The NLA took control of Islamabad and Kerend and advanced to the outskirts of Kermanshah, the provincial capital. In this unprecedented thrust 170 kilometers inside Iran.

Most enemy bases, their armaments, extensive equipment and facilities were destroyed. Nearly 55,000 of Khomeini's repressive Guards, including a large number of the Guards Corps' members and commanders, were killed or wounded

in the greatest battle in the history of the Iranian Resistance. The assault and its remarkable achievements sounded the Khomeini regime's death toll.

To supplement and complete the series of military communiqués issued during and after the operation, the General Command of the National Liberation Army presents its final report on Operation Eternal Light. This condensed report is the product of a careful, point-by-point examination of the NLA



combatants' reports as well as independent appraisals of the operation by each brigade over the past month.

Order to Fire and Advance

At 3:30 pm, on Monday, July 25, the order to advance was issued. A total of 10 NLA divisions -35 combat and support brigades, including mechanized-infantry and armored brigades, artillery and engineering battalions as well as air defense units - launched the offensive.

NLA Chief of Staff Mahmoud Atai'i, with Mehdi Abrishamchi as his deputy, Mehdi Bara'i, Ebrahim Zakeri, Mehdi Eftekhari and Mahmoud Mahdavi commanded the NLA forces on five axes.



Capture of Gal-e-Davoud and Pataq

After crossing the border into the western province of Kermanshah, the NLA

forces first clashed with Khomeini's troops in Gal-e-Davoud Pass. Although equipped with tanks, field guns, mobile multiple rocket launchers (Katyusha), various mortars, and heavy machine guns, the enemy forces were routed or captured and most of their vehicles and weapons destroyed.

Clashes continued along the strategic, 30-km Pataq Pass. It was eventually taken, along with all its surrounding heights, and swept clean of enemy forces. A Gendarmerie post, a communications relay station, an oil pumping station and several ammunition dumps and depots were captured and destroyed.

Besides scattered clashes and skirmishes, five major confrontations took place from Gal-e-Davoud to Kerend between the NLA and columns of Khomeini's Guards, Baseej, Gendarmerie and Army forces. Khomeini's casualties topped 2,500, and the regime lost at least 100 military vehicles, including tanks, armored personnel carriers, jeepmounted 106mm and SPG-9 recoilless rifles, command jeeps, 155mm self-propelled howitzers, BM-21 rocket launchers and smaller multiple launchers.

Liberation of Kerend

The National Liberation Army liberated Kerend around 7 p.m., on Monday, July 25. It was enthusiastically welcomed by the local populace. As the NLA

advanced toward Kerend, many servicemen joined with all their weapons and equipment. The safety and security of all servicemen who remained neutral and refrained from any hostile acts against the NLA were guaranteed, and they were allowed to depart for any destination they desired.

Meanwhile, learning that a wave of soldiers and officers had retreated or joined the NLA, Guards Corps commanders clashed with regular military forces at Kerend's central square and opened fire on them. The NLA subsequently arrived and intervened, routing the Guards, including the GC 127th Meqdad brigade from Bakhtaran's 4th corps, who were forced to flee. The statements of Khomeini's Chief Justice, Moussavi-Ardebili, at the August 5 Friday prayer referred to such scenes: "When a brigade commander sees his units want to retreat... he lays down in front of the jeeps and tanks and says, 'You'll retreat over my dead body.'"

Deserting or retreating servicemen were not the only victims of atrocities by Khomeini's Guards. They included ordinary people travelling on the road. On the Kerend Islamabad road, for example, NLA combatants found a car bound for Islamabad whose passengers - a family with three children - had been massacred. Only the grandfather survived to recount the Guards' savage murder.

The following centers were captured, cleared of Khomeini's agents, and destroyed during the liberation of Kerend:

- * GC headquarters
- * Office of Information (Khomeini's SAVAK)
- * Basseej headquarters
- * Komiteh headquarters
- * GC propaganda office
- * A spying center known as the Educational Affairs building
- * GC engineering unit
- * War logistics headquarters
- * Propaganda committee
- * GC logistics center
- * An armored, fully automatic relay station with a communications tower on northern Kerend's heights. For several years, the center's main function was to jam Voice of Mojahed broadcasts.

Local residents helped the NLA combatants empty and then blow up the regime's arms and ammunition dumps and depots at various points in the town.

The warm welcome, full support, and active cooperation rendered the NLA by the local population in Kerend was indeed beyond expectation. People from nearby towns and villages, their elders and representatives, kept coming to the NLA HQ in Kerend to express their support. Many spent the night working side by side with the NLA combatants. Some voluntarily patrolled the town,

alerting the NLA to possible military threats. The Command HQ thus received essential information as expeditiously as possible.

Liberation of Kernerd Part 3

The residents also located the enemy's headquarters, secret centers, warehouses, and ammunition depots and gave the information to the NLA Command. At their suggestion, ambushes were set at various points to offset potential attacks. Young men joined the NLA and participated in military operations which took control of the town's key positions and routed agents stationed at the Imam garrison.

A shepherd travelled a great distance to inform the NLA of the concentration of enemy forces north of Kerend to attack the town. The information was substantiated by reports from other individuals and verified by patrols formed by local residents and dispatched to check the area. Several GC and Komiteh brigades were preparing to attack in the afternoon of Wednesday, July 27, 'capture the northern heights and invade the town. The NLA forces got the jump on the enemy, however, inflicting at least 650 casualties and repelling them from the heights in a two-stage assault.

Meanwhile, the City Council endeavored to provide the essentials of daily

life. Staples from the regime's warehouses were distributed among the people and flour distributed to the bakeries for bread.

When the Khomeini regime's attempts to recapture Kerend had been frustrated, it bombarded the town. For three consecutive days, fighter jets and helicopter gunships showered bombs and strafed Kerend. Enemy ground artillery opened a heavy rocket barrage. All the entrances to and exits from the town were under heavy fire, and residential homes were demolished. Despite the atrocities, the enemy could not retake the town. The NLA combatants and Kerend's residents put up a courageous defense and routed waves of Guards attacking from all directions.

Battles Between Kerend and Islamabad

Late Thursday night, July 28, the National Liberation Army evacuated Kerend. Hours later, the Guards reinforcement divisions dispatched to the area still did not dare to enter. On Friday afternoon, July 29, Tehran radio announced that its Guards were still "advancing on Kerend."

From Tuesday to Thursday, and all day Friday, the regime's high command, Khatam operational HQ in Kermanshah, could be heard on the wireless network issuing constant orders for the bombardment of Islamabad and Kerend. As the

NLA was evacuating Kerend, group after group of people joined the Army and moved across the border to NLA bases.

At around 8 p.m., Monday, July 25, as NLA forces advanced toward Islamabad, they encountered five long columns of Khomeini's Guards and Army. Several other Guards battalions had taken up positions at various points along the Kerend-Islamabad road. By then, the enemy had known of the NLA's assault and its magnitude for several hours. Having lost Kerend, the regime mobilized all its forces in the region to repel the NLA before it reached Islamabad.

In a communique on July 29, the Khomeini regime announced that in addition to the Guards Corps, the Army's 84th Khorramabad division, 81st Bakhtaran division, 58th Zolfaqar division, and 55th airborne brigade of Shiraz - all under the western operational headquarters' command - had deployed most of their forces to confront the NLA and halt its advance toward Islamabad.

Battles Between Kerend and Islamabad Part 2

All of Khomeini's forces were equipped with heavy weaponry, tanks, multiple rocket launchers, and 106mm recoilless rifles. Their rushed mobilization left them no option but human wave attacks. But their vast numbers had to be

spread over farmland affording no cover, and they were routed in two hours of fighting.

Some 5,000 of Khomeini's forces were killed or wounded and the rest fled. The enemy lost over 400 vehicles, including tanks, armored personnel carriers, jeep-mounted 106mm recoilless rifles and rocket launchers. The assortment of vehicles indicated that the regime had sent its forces by any means possible.

Meanwhile, NLA combatants attacked the Guards Corps support headquarters, Najaf 2, located on the Kerend Islamabad road. The garrison was destroyed and 200 of Khomeini's agents killed or wounded. Subsequently, Lorestan's engineering HQ was captured and demolished near Islamabad. A large number of vehicles, and much equipment and machinery were destroyed. Next, the NLA forces launched an assault against the Allaho-Akbar garrison at the western entrance to Islamabad.

The 3x2 kilometer Allaho-Akbar garrison is a key Guards Corps base in western Iran, and several GC and Army divisions and units. They include the GC 45th engineering division, the GC armored center in the west, and the bases of operations for several Air Force and Air Corps units.

The Allaho-Akbar garrison was overrun in the course of clashes during which a number of GC commanders - among them Seyyed Javad Amiri, a commander of

the Samenol A'emneh corps; Khaleqverdi, GC commander for troop deployment at Allaho-Akbar; and Mansour, logistics commander were killed. Many Guards and servicemen surrendered, some joined the NLA, and the rest were disarmed and allowed to leave.

Liberation of Islamabad

Inside the Allaho-Akbar garrison, the command, personnel, transportation and repair, and engineering sections were destroyed along with all their equipment and vehicles, which included hydraulic cranes, refrigerated containers, and bulldozers, as well as command vehicles and military personnel carriers.

Subsequently, the GC security post at Islamabad's entrance, the last obstacle before the city, was quickly captured and its Guards routed.

At 10 pm, Monday, July 25, the National Liberation Army entered Islamabad. A series of operations established its control of the entire town.

The NLA's forward units initially took up positions in the town's main square and then captured Chiakavaneh hill. Khomeini's Guards, all on full alert, opened fire from the Guards Corps and Komiteh headquarters, located on Sugar

Factory Avenue near the main square. But the NLA combatants quickly overran the enemy positions and routed Khomeini's forces.

Subsequent clashes resulted in the NLA's capture of the following centers, which were completely cleared of Khomeini's agents:

- * GC central HQ
- * Komiteh central HQ
- * Baseej [mobilization] center
- * Revolutionary court
- * GC "resistance" base
- * Gendarmerie base
- * Mayor's office
- * Municipal police station
- * Relief committee
- * GC security center
- * Air defense and security center
- * Three Guards Corps district bases
- * City prison
- * Guards Air Corps base at southeastern Islamabad
- * Malavi Junction at eastern Islamabad

Liberation of Isambad Part 2

Local residents cooperated in the fighting which liberated Islamabad. About 400 of the enemy's loyalist forces, who were held up in various centers and opened fire on the residents and the combatants, were killed. All of the enemy's equipment, arms and vehicles, including vehicles mounted with rocket launchers, 106mm recoilless rifles and a number of 155mm howitzers, as well as the Guards Air Corps' large radar dish, were destroyed. 100 enemy vehicles were also destroyed and the rest confiscated.

Prior to the attack, the enemy had been on alert for several hours. To prevent NLA contact with the local residents, the regime's radio and loudspeakers at the mosques blared repeated warnings that Iraqi forces were going to attack. Residents were ordered to evacuate the town. Some had actually done so. But when the people learned that the Mojahedin and the National Liberation Army had come, or saw them coming, they turned back.

Within Islamabad, after loudspeakers announced the NLA's arrival, there was a fervent outpouring of joy. Some cried, hugged, and kissed the combatants. The younger residents joined the NLA and were armed. Some prayed and encouraged the Army to march on to Tehran. Some clapped and danced. The column of

NLA vehicles were stopped at several points by residents asking how they

could help the combatants or for pictures of Massoud and Maryam Rajavi. Some of the people went looking for the criminal mullahs, especially the Friday prayer leader, but they had already fled. A commander of Islamabad's Guards Corps, Azadi, was killed.

Liberation of Isambad Part 2

The expression of popular support for the National Liberation Army was extraordinary. In the nine consecutive battles that took place in and around Islamabad from Monday, July 25, through Thursday, July 28, the NLA's victories against constant raids by Khomeini's forces were made possible only through the support of Islamabad's residents.

Hundreds of Islamabad's young men joined the NLA and fought alongside NLA combatants. Dozens sacrificed their lives fighting off enemy attacks. Their names will go down in Iranian history as courageous soldiers who fought for the liberation of their homeland.

The Khomeini regime reacted by shelling Islamabad. Every 30 minutes, long-range mortar and Katyusha rocket barrages were fired at the town. Helicopters and other aircraft flew low over the town, strafing innocent residents with .50 caliber machine guns. After the operation, the regime

took revenge on Islamabad, hanging group after group of innocent people, young and old. The photographs of a few of the barbaric executions were published by Khomeini's press.

Those who could not carry arms helped in other ways. They let the combatants use their homes or walked long distances to take food, water, and fruit for those fighting on the town's perimeter. Local residents cared for the wounded, secured and defended the town, gathered information, provided fuel, and located enemy ammunition depots. Many of Islamabad's women asked to be armed and guarded the town along with the NLA combatants. Those who could not do heavy work asked to donate blood for the wounded so that, in their own words, they "could share at least that much in the combatants' sacrifice" for the liberation of their country.

Battle for Islamabad

In addition to scattered but virtually continuous clashes, nine major confrontations between the NLA and Khomeini's forces took place from Tuesday morning until Thursday evening. The Guards forces,



arriving by air and land, attacked the town from various directions. All the attacks and counterattacks were characterized by their intensity and length. In many cases, the NLA forces fought the enemy in hand-to-hand combat. The confrontations lasted from 10 to 30 hours.

It should be noted that until Thursday evening, when the NLA decided to withdraw from Islamabad, it had prevailed over the enemy in all of these battles. Despite constant reinforcements which added fresh troops and increased their numbers, at



no time was the NLA driven back from any of its gains.

The first major confrontation raged from 6 a.m. on Tuesday until the early hours of Wednesday morning, south of Islamabad on the hills overlooking Sugar Factory road toward 11 a.m. Three NLA brigades put up a strong defense against Guards attacking from several directions. The Guards Corps' 5th Nasr, 43rd Imam Ali, and 17th Ali-ibn-Abitaleb divisions wanted to capture the heights overlooking the town and then break through. Their high command, the Khatam operational HQ, insisted that they begin their attack before their support artillery arrived. In the first stage, they could not advance despite a four-hour clash.

Battle for Islamabad Part 2

At 10 o'clock, the NLA forces launched a counterattack. Fierce fighting broke out throughout southern Islamabad and led to hand-to-hand combat. The enemy was defeated and suffered more than 3,800 casualties. The Guards informed their Kermanshah-based command by wireless that the situation was "not good at all." The regime had previously announced its recapture of Islamabad, but was forced to admit in official announcements that the NLA had again "infiltrated" the town. Meanwhile, the town's airport - being used by

the enemy to land reinforcements and all of its equipment and military centers were destroyed.

The second major confrontation began at noon on Tuesday and continued until midnight in the vicinity of the Allaho-Akbar garrison. The Guards made seven attempts to cut the Islamabad-Kerend road, but the NLA's heavy fire prevented their advance. Another, smaller clash began early in the night. NLA reinforcements arrived and the combatants dominated, forcing the enemy to retreat, leaving 200 dead on the field. At the same time, Allaho-Akbar's newly discovered cache of rockets was blown up.

The third major confrontation began with a fierce clash at 5 p.m. Tuesday, and continued as intensely until Wednesday noon. Five NLA brigades confronted the 57th Abolfazl, 8th Najaf, 27th Mohammad (whose forces are mostly stationed in the south), and the 25th Karbala GC divisions, as well as the 82nd Sahebol-Amr brigade, transferred by ground or by the Air Corps to the Malavi Junction, Islamabad-Kermanshah and Islamabad-Khorramabad roads east of Islamabad.

Battle for Islamabad Part 3

Clashes raged at five points around the junction. The enemy had landed

troops on all the surrounding heights. It intended to cut the communications and supply routes between Islamabad and the NLA forces advancing toward Kermanshah, to cut them off at both ends, and then destroy the NLA forces at Charzebar Pass.

The regime's basic tactic was human waves, resulting in heavy enemy casualties. It also attempted to concentrate heavy fire on the NLA columns. All the heights in the region became battle scenes. The Air Corps' Chinook and UH1 helicopters shuttled in fresh troops. Other reinforcements arrived by ground transport. Nevertheless, the NLA combatants fought courageously, and the enemy lost 100% of its forces on the northern heights and retreated from the southern heights after sustaining heavy casualties. The NLA took control of the road.

At certain points, for example on the northern heights, the fighting raged for hours, hand-to-hand. An NLA brigade charged from the road into the heart of Khomeini's forces and forced them into the wasteland behind the local gas station on the road. The link between Khomeini's forces on the northern and southern sides of the road was thus broken, and the northern forces could not get reinforcements or ammunition. On the southern side, Khomeini's forces were retreating toward the Islamabad-Khorramabad road when they suddenly confronted NLA forces behind the southern hills and were completely routed.

Battle for Islamabad Part 4

The regime's casualties on the northern and southern heights, around the gas station on the Islamabad-Kermanshah road, and while landing under the fire of the NLA's artillery battalions, surpassed 2,200.

At around 7 a.m., Wednesday, the commanders of the Guards Corps divisions complained by wireless of excessive casualties and demanded helicopters to transfer the wounded behind the lines. Guards Corps Commander Mohsen Reza'i, on the other end, agreed and ordered the commanders to report on their situation every 10 minutes. The 27th and 57th divisions asked for immediate reinforcements. A new reinforcement brigade joined the 57th Abolfazl division before noon.

The enemy lost a large amount of arms, including DSHK heavy machine guns, 106mm recoilless rifles, 23mm doublebarreled anti-aircraft guns, 60mm mortars, and RPG rocket launchers. The NLA combatants turned some of the seized weapons on the enemy. Khomeini's forces, transported overland, also lost at least 70 vehicles of various kinds.

At 1:45 pm, Kermanshah's high command was still questioning the commander of the 27th division, Kossari, to find out why his forces had withdrawn: Had

the NLA pushed him back, or had he merely run short of ammunition?!

Battle for Islamabad Part 5

The fourth major confrontation began at 6 a.m., Wednesday, and continued in several stages until Thursday afternoon. The regime's agents had been reinforced, and new forces - the 71st Ruhollah division, the 61st Moharram artillery brigade, and the 155th special brigade - had been dispatched to capture the southern heights and, from there, retake the town via Sugar Factory road.

The NLA brigades had repelled the enemy's last attack only hours ago, and were in control of Islamabad's southern section.

According to plan, all the town's entrances and exits as well as its strategic points, like the Sugar Factory near the southern entrance, were under tight control. Before launching its attack, Khomeini's Guards Corps sent some Jondollah intelligence agents, posing as deserters, into Islamabad to gather information for their assault. Some of these agents were arrested by the NLA combatants and revealed their mission.

By 6 a.m., the enemy had concentrated its forces in the orchards and farms south of the town. Khomeini's Guards launched their attack and clashes

continued until late that night. The NLA combatants immediately launched a counter-attack. With three infantry and one armored column, they pounded the enemy forces. The NLA then took the southern heights overlooking the road as planned, and cleared them of enemy agents. At this point, the enemy sent massive reinforcements to circumvent the heights. But an NLA column opened fire and routed all of them. The Guards hidden in the ridges were cut off by the lightning NLA attack.

Battle for Islamabad Part 6

On Thursday morning, the NLA combat columns defending the southern section of Islamabad again attacked the enemy's troop concentrations on Islamabad's southern heights. At 9 a.m., an enemy commander at the scene begged on the wireless for more helicopters to evacuate his wounded: "We have a lot of wounded. Some of them are dying." The Guards Corps sent another batch of fresh troops around noon. But the NLA combatants found out in advance, and took up positions at the eastern section of 11am road and at Islamabad's southern orchards. They repelled the new troops and chased them out of town.

The NLA forces counted over 2,700 enemy casualties and destroyed a large number of vehicles.

In the fifth major confrontation, which began at 11 o'clock on Wednesday

morning and continued through the night, the NLA cleared enemy forces from the ridges around Islamabad road (toward Hassanabad). They also launched a second attack and captured the Guards Air Corps base located in southeast Islamabad on the Islamabad-Khorramabad road. Two days before, the NLA forces had captured and then left the base. But as the NLA combat brigades were advancing toward Kermanshah, the regime resumed extensive use of the base to airlift reinforcements. When the NLA retook the base, at least 550 Guards were killed or wounded and the base's fortifications destroyed. The NLA blew up four ammunition depots, destroyed heavy weaponry including a Shillika anti-aircraft gun equipped with radar, and seized a large amount of arms.

Battle for Islamabad Part 7

In the sixth major confrontation, which continued on and off from 6 o'clock on Wednesday morning until Thursday afternoon, the regime's newly arrived forces, unable to enter the town from the south, advanced from southwestern Islamabad toward the hills behind Allaho-Akbar garrison. They hoped to cut the Kerend-Islamabad road by capturing the garrison. An NLA brigade countered Khomeini's forces. The regime's forces, including a massive force attached to the Boroujerdi garrison, had no heavy weaponry and could not withstand the heavy fire of an NLA tank battalion. The NLA recaptured the four hills located behind Allaho-Akbar garrison. Long-range clashes continued until 6 a.m., Thursday. All the western and northwestern areas of

Islamabad, including the silo at the northwestern end of the town, were under NLA control.

At 6 a.m., Thursday, enemy forces attacked again from three directions to capture the hills behind the Garfson. This attack was defeated, but the enemy reorganized its forces and captured a hill located at the southernmost point. A bloody battle ensued and the hill changed hands twice. The NLA forces ultimately captured the hill after a fierce battle and held it until they evacuated the town on Thursday evening. Khomeini's forces were unable to make any more advances. In this series of clashes, the enemy suffered more than 700 casualties.

Battle for Islamabad Part 8

The seventh major confrontation raged in eastern Islamabad from Wednesday afternoon until 5 o'clock, Thursday morning. The Khomeini regime had sent a multitude of fresh troops, who attacked on four axes, again attempting to cut the Islamabad-Kermanshah road. According to the GC wireless conversations, intercepted by the NLA, dozens of helicopters carried ammunition for the Guards.

From Kermanshah, GC Ground Forces Commander Shamkhani repeatedly demanded

that his forces begin their operation. He stressed, “I am the one who issues the orders.” At the battle scene, however, the divisions were still complaining of shortages of multiple rocket launchers until 4 p.m.

Five NLA brigades countered the new attack and inflicted 3,000 casualties on the enemy during a heroic, 15-hour battle. Khomeini’s forces did not capture even a single position, and their plan to cut the NLA’s supply route to Kermanshah, and surround and destroy the resistance combatants was frustrated. As Khomeini’s Guards fought their losing battle, their commanders constantly asked for more Katyusha rocket launchers and until 7:20 p.m. bellowed on the wireless that they “needed” more air support and helicopters.

Late that night, the commander of the 27th Mohammad division declared on the wireless that “the situation is very troublesome.” The commander of the 57th Abolfazl division also reported that a great many of his forces, along with a commander called Kamare’i, had been killed.

Battle for Islamabad Part 9

At 8:30 a.m., Thursday, the regime’s high command was still repeating its orders to the Air Corps: “Due to the large number of wounded, immediately dispatch helicopters to the positions of the 27th division.” The next

urgent order to the Air Force and Air Corps was to step up the bombardment of the regions “after Kernd” (toward Islam-abad). At 10:42 a.m., Colonel Ardestani, deputy commander of the operation, announced that he had received orders “for a bomb blitz” and told the pilots that they must work constantly to carry out the order.

By 2 p.m., the Air Corps had reported 100 flights, but was persistently directed to send more helicopter gun ships and more helicopters to carry the wounded.

The eighth major confrontation was an attack launched by an NLA brigade on columns of newly arrived enemy forces. The battle raged from Thursday morning until 1 p.m. along the road from Malavi Junction to the Hassanabad heights (toward Kermanshah). 1,200 of Khomeini’s forces were killed or wounded.

Battle for Islamabad Past 10

Khomeini’s Air Corps helicopters scurried to drop new forces, but they were immediately ambushed from various ridges.

At 9:20 a.m., Thursday, as the fighting was winding down, one of the enemy’s

frontline positions reported the deaths of Guards dispatched to the region from the northern provinces of Gil an and Mazandaran, as well as the death or injury of a large number of Guards and commanders from the Nab i-A kram brigade.

The ninth major confrontation consisted of six independent ambushes. Six NLA brigades carried out the ambushes as they withdrew from Kermanshah, Islamabad, and Kerend back to their bases on the border. The operations inflicted a total of 950 deaths on Khomeini's Guards and their commanders.

Battles from Islamabad to Charzebar Pass

At 11 p.m., on Monday, July 25, National Liberation Army forces moved from Islamabad toward Kerman shah. The enemy had placed an ambush at the exit from Islamabad, near the power station. They opened heavy fire. The NLA leading brigade pounded the enemy's ambush in return and the column moved ahead. On the road to Hassanabad Pass, Khomeini's forces were fleeing in cars or on foot. Some surrendered, and their security was guaranteed, and some fled up into the heights. Dozens of enemy vehicles left on the road slowed the NLA column.

At approximately 12 midnight, the NLA advance was halted at Hassanabad Pass. Guards Corps forces, including forces attached to the 33rd Al-Mehdi division,

had taken up positions atop the pass. The enemy was well aware that the NLA intended to advance beyond Islamabad as far as possible.

An hour of clashes at Hassanabad Pass and the road was cleared of Khomeini's agents. The Guards Corps informed its high command in Kermanshah that it had been hit hard and was unaware of the Al-Mehdi command's condition.

The August 21 Jomhuri Islami newspaper interviewed the commander of the GC Hazrat Rassoul battalion, Barati, on this confrontation. Noting that "after Islamabad, our battalion was the first to clash with the [Mojahedin]," Barati said, "They had taken the dominant positions on top of Hassanabad Pass and thus opened a barrage of fire on our forces... Since they had reconnoitered the area, they enjoyed a military advantage over us."

Battles from Islamabad to Charzebar Pass Part 2

The NLA vanguard brigade fought its way through Hassanits way through Hassanabad Pass at about 1 a.m. and arrived at the plain leading to Charzebar Pass. From the opposite direction a well-euippecd column from the 27th Mohammad division commanded by Baba'i was moving from the pass towards Hassanabad. Fighting again broke out. This time, the enemy was pounded by tanks and other heavy weaponry and retreated toward Charzebar Pass.

Under cover of night, the enemy laid various ambushes which were destroyed one after the other. Despite reinforcements, Khomeini's forces suffered heavy casualties and failed to halt the NLA's progress. They ultimately retreated to Charzebar Pass, which was under their own control. From atop the peaks leading into the pass, the enemy opened fire.

At 2 a.m., Tuesday, Kossari, commander of the 27th Mohammad division, was still in the south with the majority of his forces. Bahonar garrison, which lodged part of the division in Kermanshah's Mahidasht region, informed Kossari by wireless that the Mojahedin had arrived and he must get there with his forces as soon as possible. At first, Kossari refused to believe the news, saying it was impossible; if it were so, he would have been informed from Tehran, etc.

At this point, the forces of the National Liberation Army were 35 kilometers from Kermanshah. From Islamabad to Charzebar, Khomeini's forces suffered at least 400 casualties.

Battles at Charzebar

Approximately 9 kilometers of the road from Hassanabad to Charzebar pass through the bowl-shaped Hassanabad plain. Charzebar is a 4 km, narrow

mountain pass connecting Hassanabad plain to Kermanshah. Two pairs of parallel crests mark the entrance and exit to the pass, and resemble high natural walls. Half-way past the first crest, the pass widens into a small valley surrounded by high mountains.

The Khomeini regime had built two large bases in the small valley: The headquarters of the GC Ansarol-Hosseini division is located on the right (southern) side, the Behesh ti garrison on the left (northern). There are also two large garrisons behind the pass: The headquarters of the 31st Ashura division on the right and Raja'i garrison on the left.

Khomeini's forces retreated to the pass and opened artillery fire from atop the crests. By 6 a.m. Tuesday, the NLA forces, fighting courageously, had penetrated deep inside the pass ablaze with fire and inflicted more than 1,000 casualties in several stages, much to the enemy's alarm. Bahonar post reported the situation as "chaotic" to its high command.

The battle at Charzebar continued for 48 hours, until the early hours of Thursday morning.

Battles at Charzebar Part 2

The Khomeini regime acknowledged having sent troops from 172 cities.¹ The

commanders of Khomeini's Air Force and Air Corps stressed that their forces flew as many sorties in those few days as they had during two years of the war with Iraq along the 1,200-km border.²

The Khomeini regime adjourned its Parliament, closed its theological schools and all branches of its "House of Workers" (a network used to suppress blue-collar workers). Top-ranking officials and the entire command system of the Guards rushed to Kermanshah. High schools and universities were shut down. All bus terminals were closed to the public and their buses used to transport forces to the battle. Members of the Islamic societies and councils and Friday prayer leaders were dispatched to the site. Soccer tournaments were called off.

Komiteh Guards from Tehran and other cities as well as the Guards Corps' special division of bodyguards for the regime's officials were dispatched to Kermanshah province. Hezbollahis were sent from places like Esfaryan, Birjad and Sabzevar (in eastern Iran), Tonb and Abu-Moussa islands (in the Persian Gulf), and Chahbahar (in southern Baluchistan). The regime resorted to extensive diplomatic activities and employed all means available to postpone its inevitable collapse.

Battles at Charzebar Part 3

The NLA's first major attack was launched at 7:30 a.m., Tuesday. The enemy's wireless networks were swamped with persistent requests for more and more troops. The offensive, carried out by 16 NLA combat brigades, had several fronts and continued through the night, inflicting tremendous losses on Khomeini's forces.

Early in the day, Khomeini's Air Force and Air Corps began constantly strafing and bombing the pass to gain time and await the arrival of fresh troops.

The High Command of Khomeini's forces issued two consecutive communiqués reporting "130 combat missions" by its Air Corps and "30 independent missions" by its jet bombers on Tuesday. (Ressalat and communiqués of the High Command of the Armed Forces, July 27, 1988)

The first NLA column headed straight into the pass under the cover fire of tanks, DSHK heavy machine guns, double-barreled guns, and 106mm recoilless rifles. Other columns adopted mountain fighting tactics. They left their vehicles and heavy weaponry behind and climbed up the heights, opening various fronts around the pass.

One of the enemy commanders later described this offensive: "On [Tuesday] morning, the [Mojahedin] mobilized all their forces and launched a full-scale offensive. Three of their vehicles made it through our heavy

artillery fire and came toward our forces.” (Jomhuri Islami, August 17, 1988)

Battles at Charzebar Part 4

The NLA forces conquered the first crest on the left (north) by noon and forced the enemy to retreat. In the afternoon, the right (southern) crest as well as part of the second crest on the left were captured. The enemy could not maintain its positions at Beheshti garrison and began evacuating. At the same time, the wireless communications of Khomeini’s forces indicated that they were constantly being reinforced with fresh troops.

Herds of Guards arrived by various means. In groups numbering in the thousands, they came from behind the pass and the adjacent secondary roads in buses, vans, trucks, vehicles of the municipal police, and various other cars, and poured fire on NLA forces. Mortars, Katyusha rocket, and long range artillery rained incessant fire. But the cost of the enemy’s human wave tactic was heavy, and obliged it to keep asking for more and more troops. At two instances, the frontline command of Najaf garrison asked for 2,000 and 4,000 fresh troops.

By nightfall, the enemy had suffered at least 5,000 casualties. Bahonar post reported fierce fighting to its high command at the Khatam operational HQ in

Kermanshah. At 7 p.m., Khatam HQ informed them that “Isfahan and Masjid-Soleiman’s Air Corps are also being assigned to Kermanshah.”

Battles at Charzebar Part 5

Between 12 noon and 5 p.m., the NLA’s air defense units downed one Phantom jet and two helicopters, and hit an F-14 jet bomber.

The battle raged all day Tuesday and into the night. The enemy fought with everything it had, launching four heavy counterattacks. It was determined to retake the left and right crests. Later, the commander of a Tehran Komiteh force revealed that Khomeini had personally sent several special messages to the Guards and Komiteh members on the importance of preventing the Mojahedin from reaching Kermanshah. All enemy counterattacks proved futile Tuesday night and 3,200 more of its forces were killed or wounded.

The NLA’s second major attack was launched at 4 a.m. on Wednesday. The clashes were very fierce, and in many cases ended up in hand-to-hand fighting. By noon, extensive casualties had been inflicted on the GC 4th Be’ssat, 5th Ashura, 9th Javadol-A’emmeh, 15th Ramezan and Badr 1 - All of the regimes newspapers including Ressel at of July 30 1988. 2 - In an August 8 interview with Tehran radio the commander of Khomeinis Army Air Corps Brigadier General Mohammad Ansari said: “In the few days of the operation we flew as many

sorties as we normally did in two years.” Many Guards Corps divisions and brigades were routed, and the NLA forces, who had attacked from various directions, captured and assumed full control of Beheshti garrison and the headquarters of the 32nd Ansarol-Hosseini division. The ammunition, arms, and logistics equipment stored in these bases were readily used against the enemy.

From then on, Raja’i garrison and the headquarters of the 31st Ashura division were within firing range of the NLA. The massive force of Guards concentrated in that region was routed. Their wireless communications indicated that many fled. In addition to firing their tanks, guns, multiple rocket launchers, and mortars on NLA forces, the Guards were preparing a new offensive which was nipped in the bud. Khomeini’s forces suffered more than 8,000 casualties in the NLA’s second attack.

The regime’s forces had received deadly blows and were demanding more troops and ammunition. The Kermanshah command was heard on the wireless telling them to be patient because the Mojahedin had been wiped out and are swearing at Rajavi and Saddam for sending them to this sacrificial altar.”

The NLA’s third major attack was launched right after; the second at 11 a.m., Wednesday, and continued until evening. Meanwhile the regime kept adding to the number of its forces. The frontline command of the Najaf garrison, for example, informed Khatam operational HQ at 9:45 a.m. that they had received

10,000 forces during the night.

Nevertheless, the NLA's attack was successful, capturing the second crest on the right (southern) side of the pass. The enemy's plan to concentrate forces all around the battle zone and surround the NLA was neutralized.

Around noon, the frontline command of Najaf garrison's forces, who had faced the NLA, reported "a slight retreat" to Kermanshah and requested more fresh troops. At 5:30 p.m., it reported the arrival of 9,000 new troops. By Wednesday evening, the enemy's artillery had been significantly weakened by the NLA blows, but the enemy was still in control of the exit from the pass.

By midnight, the NLA combat brigades stationed at Charzebar's heights and crests had begun their withdrawal after 56 hours of relentless combat. Some brigades were still fighting, and until they began to withdraw, the enemy did not dare to advance to the front of the pass.

The series of clashes during the third major attack and consequent confrontations, which continued until midnight Wednesday in the Charzebar Pass and its heights, inflicted at least 4,000 casualties on the enemy.

Between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Wednesday, the NLA's air defense units downed two aircraft and one helicopter. The enemy's wireless later informed its high command that two pilots of the downed F-4 jets had been found and that both were on the verge of death.

The NLA also destroyed more than 100 vehicles, dozens of tanks, guns, armored personnel carriers, Katyusha rocket launchers, SU-23-4 anti-aircraft guns, and vehicles carrying 106mm recoilless rifles, and a considerable amount of engineering machinery.

It should be noted that many groups of residents of Kerend, Islamabad, and the surrounding villages who voluntarily joined the NLA fought alongside the NLA combatants at Charzebar.

NLA Losses

A total of 1,263 NLA combatants were martyred, are missing, or were captured and their fates not yet known. NLA combatants were wounded in the Eternal Light operation, eleven of whom eventually died. In the same period, 994 combatants who had suffered minor injuries fully recovered and returned to their duties in various units of the National Liberation Army. A number of others are also expected to fully recover and resume their duties in the coming days and weeks.

The NLA's material losses in the Eternal Light operation amounted to 612 vehicles of various makes, 72 tanks and armored personnel carriers, twenty-one 122mm guns, and fifty-one 106mm rifles, half of which were non-mobile. Many of these rifles, guns, and tanks were no longer functional due to excessive use in four days of heavy, incessant battle.

Enemy Propaganda

The Khomeini regime's official positions and propaganda during and after the Eternal Light operation were ridiculously contradictory and indicated profound fear and haste.

The regime initially tried to portray the Eternal Light operation as an "Iraqi attack." It is, however, common knowledge that neither party to the eight-year Iran-Iraq war had ever penetrated 170 kilometers inside the other's territory. Furthermore, the local populace witnessed the reality. Consequently, the Khomeini regime was forced to take one step back and refer to the operation in its official communiqués as an attack by "more than 20 joint brigades" of Mojahedin and Iraqi forces.

In the next step, the regime claimed only "Iraqi artillery support for the blind-hearted Monafeqin."¹ This soon became untenable, because it is not possible to provide any form of artillery support at a distance of 100 to 150 kilometers. The regime's officials and press retreated again: "It seems that Iraqi infantry forces initially came with [the Mojahedin] but later returned to their own positions."² Finally, Iraq's role in the "Iraqi attack" paled, and the regime's officials specified that the forces of the National Liberation Army and the Mojahedin "had been organized into 30 brigades."³ The mullahs' spokesmen openly declared that the regime was

“concerned” about the Mojahedin, who are much more dangerous and “worse than [Iraqi President] Saddam.”⁴

In the final version, Khomeini’s analysts stressed that the Mojahedin wanted to do what Iraq “could not achieve in several years of aggression against Iran, even more... [they wanted] to conquer Tehran.”⁵ One and a half years after the first National Liberation Army operation and several public flipflops in reaction to the major Eternal Light setback, the Khomeini regime was finally forced to admit what it had tried its utmost to ignore and never mention.

We are confronted with a similar metamorphosis regarding the martyrs of the National Liberation Army. The Khomeini regime initially claimed to have wiped out the Mojahedin and the National Liberation Army. Subsequently, it spoke of the destruction of 75% of their forces. In the next step, the Deputy for Operations and Intelligence to the High Command of the Armed Forces reduced the figure, claiming that of a total of 7,000 NLA forces, they had eliminated “4,800 in 48 hours,” i.e. 70%.⁶ Next, Khomeini’s Chief Justice, Moussavi-Ardebili, said they had destroyed 20% of the NLA forces. Finally, on August 8, the commander of the 4th Bessat corps announced a total of 1,734 Mojahedin dead.⁷ Consequently, the regime’s

1. Communique’ of the High Command of the Armed Forces, July 29.

2. Interview with the provincial governor of Kermanshah.
3. Shamkhani, Deputy for Operations and Intelligence to the High Command of the Armed Forces, August 1.
4. Hojjati-Kermani, July 30.
5. Kayhan, August 3.
6. Shamkhani, August 1.
7. Shabani, Commander of the GC 4th Bessat corps in Kermanshah, August 8. (What is this section doing here?)

Minister warned in a lengthy discussion at the Supreme National Security Council that the danger remains and the incident is “not over”: “We do not consider the Monafeqin problem as over, because many of their agents... managed to escape.” Later, Mullah Ansari, head of Khomeini’s politico-cultural office, pointed out, “For ten years, [the Mojahedin] pierced our hearts... Tomorrow, they will invade our homes and destroy them on top of us. ..” (Tehran radio, August 7)

As for popular support for the National Liberation Army and the Mojahedin, the same trend was repeated. The Khomeini regime initially claimed that the “people” and the “tribesmen” arose and fought against the NLA. In the next step, the names of 12 Guards Corps and Army divisions dispatched from various parts of Iran to counter the NLA were announced. Ultimately, the conscription and forcible dispatch of another 130,000 agents were disclosed. Gradually, claims about “the people” fighting the Mojahedin vanished and

the Khomeini regime resorted to extensive arrests, executions, and public hangings in open retaliation against the populace. The commanders of the Guards Corps recounted their ordeal at Kerend and Islamabad, admitting that “the Mojahedin were in the people’s houses and therefore, the brothers... were forced to evacuate the city.” (Kayhan Hava’i, August 10)

The enemy also resorted to atrocities against the residents of Kerend. Many were flogged or expelled from the town. The regime confiscated their property and sent a number before firing squads. Two young men, Farhad Hamedani and Jahangir Yadegari, were among those executed on the charge of collaborating with the National Liberation Army.

In truth, the regime, more than anyone else, was aware of the popular support for the NLA combatants in all the towns and villages through which they advanced. Otherwise, the mullahs would not have taken such violent revenge on the residents of Islamabad, Kerend, and Kermanshah’s villages, who had buried the bodies of the Mojahedin martyrs with honor. They would not have resorted to repression and threats against secret funeral services for the NLA martyrs. We shall never forget that from the regime’s point of view one of the “crimes of the people of Kermanshah was singing a folk song in memory of a courageous Mojahed woman called Maryam. The people sung of her heroic fight against Khomeini’s Guards. This unforgettable heroine was an NLA combatant whose corpse had been hanged from her feet in Kermanshah. The local people said she had told them only that her name was Maryam before being executed.