

Rafsanjani sees plot to blame Iran

Associated Press

NICOSIA, Cyprus — Iran's parliament speaker said yesterday that the Iraqi attack on the USS Stark resulted from a plot by the United States, Saudi Arabia and Iraq in which the Iranians were to be blamed.

Hashemi Rafsanjani said the plot failed because of the alertness of Iranian forces, which he called a "divine blessing" and "miracle" similar to the disastrous attempt by a U.S. Army commando force in 1980 to rescue 52 U.S. hostages from Iran.

Rafsanjani told an open session of the Majlis, or Parliament, that Iranian intelligence showed "the hands of the United States, Saudi Arabia and Iraq were involved" in the Sunday night attack that killed 37 sailors and wounded 21. The United States said the attack was a mistake by the Iraqis and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq has apologized to President Reagan.

"If there was a serious international court, we could present evidence that the action by reactionary [countries] and Iraq was against us, but as a result of the awareness of our defense forces, the plot turned against themselves," Rafsanjani said in remarks carried by official Tehran radio.

"Because we have no faith in such a court ... we will not allow ourselves to disclose such sources of intelligence equipment, which monitor events in the Persian Gulf.

"We had warned the superpowers that the waves of the Persian Gulf waters are not less than the storms of Tabas," he said.

Eight U.S. soldiers died in the 1980 rescue operation when a helicopter crashed into an EC-130 transport in the Tabas desert of southern Iran during a sandstorm.

Rafsanjani said the same "divine hands which brought misery to America in Tabas have now degraded and humiliated the two superpowers."

Referring to an Iraqi Foreign Ministry explanation that the attack could have resulted from "confusion" by the pilot, he said:

"Can it be naively accepted that this mistake was due to the confusion of Iraqi pilots? Can it not be due to relations between the two superpowers, like the race for presence in the Persian Gulf?"

The attack on the Stark came a day after a Soviet oil tanker, leased by Kuwait in an effort to avert Iranian attacks, struck a mine near Kuwait. Iran claimed it was an Iraqi mine.

"Is this a mere coincidence that in a period of a few hours, a Soviet ship with plenty of publicity and under the escort of the Soviet navy enters the waters of the region and hits a mine and then an American frigate is rocketed?" Rafsanjani said.

He added that the superpowers should stop their adventures in the gulf.