

Iran's meddling is a new danger for South Africa

EXTRREMISTS sometimes forge strange alliances. But one of the weirder ones I've heard of is currently out of Africa.

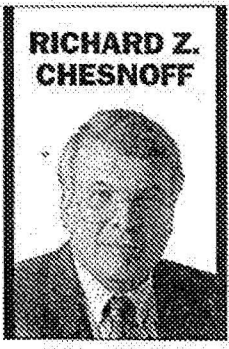
According to senior intelligence sources, there's been a recent surge in contacts between operatives of Iran's Islamic fundamentalist regime and members of the shadowy South African right-wing white underground that some security circles call the Third Force.

The sources say that four white activists recently returned to South Africa from a secret week-long visit to Iran. The Iranian authorities refrained from stamping their passports so as not to raise suspicions of South African airport police when the quartet arrived home by way of Europe.

The visit, which took the white extremists to Tehran, reportedly was organized by Iranian intelligence following two initial meetings in Mozambique in May between representatives of the South African group and Iran's intelligence bureau.

Potentially the most dangerous of all the revisionist white groups in South Africa, the Third Force draws heavily on remnants of South Africa's old apartheid regime: former army men, retired bureaucrats, security personnel and extremist farmers — all racists who just won't give up.

Their first goal is to force the majority black administration, led by Nelson Mandela's African National Congress, not only to include whites in all political decisions that the new South Africa makes, but to grant the white minority wide autonomy. The most radical members actually en-



RICHARD Z. CHESNOFF

Tehran forges a link with white extremists

visage a separate white state.

That's where Iran comes in. Trouble-making Tehran's long-term strategy for Africa includes expanding its fundamentalist influence through the continent's growing Islamic population — particularly in resource-rich South Africa.

According to intelligence sources, Iranian government strategists believe that if South Africa's extremist white minority continues pressing demands for white autonomy, it could open the door to radical Muslim demands for some form of Islamic autonomy in South Africa — a development that would give Iran, which already pours substantial money into the community, an even stronger foothold.

The white underground, which has a well-developed operational infrastructure and keeps both the identity and location of its members secret, is thought to have a large store of various types of weapons and forged documents. The sources say the South African government now fears a supply of new arms from Iran to the white extremists and an increase in Iranian financed or sponsored terror.

Adding to the potential for mayhem is growing evidence that the Third Force has already managed to infiltrate an alarming number of South Africa's security bodies, including the National Intelligence Agency.

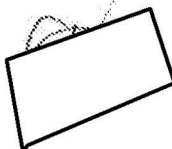
Of prime concern to Mandela's circle of ANC leaders is the growing fear that extremists will carry out armed violence before South Africa's parliamentary elections scheduled between May and July of next year.

Nonetheless, South African authorities have carefully refrained from publishing data on the full scope of the Third Force's activities for fear it may encourage other extremists — not to mention exposing the Pretoria government's ineptitude in quashing it. No one has breathed a word publicly of the new Iranian connection.

If I were them, I wouldn't keep quiet. I'd shout protests and warnings from the rooftops!

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Violence Spreads in Zulu Area as New Party Gathers Force

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By SUZANNE DALEY

JOHANNESBURG, July 12 — Political violence has broken out once more in the troubled KwaZulu/Natal Province. Only this time it is not the traditional players going at one another. A new battle seems to be emerging between South Africa's newest political party, headed in this area by a local strongman, and President Nelson Mandela's party, the African National Congress.

In the last week 23 people have died near Pietermaritzburg, including the Deputy Mayor of the Village of Richmond, who was gunned down along with eight other people while watching a soccer match at a pub.

Even the reinforced security before a visit by Mr. Mandela today did not slow the carnage. Despite police and army units' patrolling in armored vehicles, 10 people were killed, including three youths shot point-blank as they cowered in a hut and a young mother who was killed

with her 3-year-old daughter as they sat by their evening fire.

After visiting the local morgue, Mr. Mandela described the details of what he had seen to the crowds that gathered for the funeral of the Deputy Mayor and two other party supporters who were being buried today.

"I have gone to the mortuary and I have seen people with cracked skulls, others shot in the mouth while the others' stomachs had been ripped apart," Mr. Mandela said. "I have seen people's brains spilled all over. This is the brutality to which people are being subjected to."

Mr. Mandela promised to do all that he could to end the killings. But the Government is struggling to gain control of the situation.

The head of the police has threatened to transfer all the local officers if arrests are not made soon.

As he has in the past, Mr. Mandela attributed the problems in Richmond to a "third force," a presumably white-led right-wing group bent on fomenting black-on-black violence and destroying the young democracy by undermining his party. "The perpetrators are just tools moved by third-force elements," Mr. Mandela said, "and it is these elements that must be nipped in the bud if we want to defeat political violence."

Although the previous white-supremacist Government has admitted third-force activities, there has been no public evidence of such an effort since then. Some experts who follow KwaZulu/Natal politics say some remnants of such a force exist and stir up trouble when they can. But others say blaming a "third force" for problems like the soaring crime rate and the political violence is simply politically expedient.

The violence in Richmond this week, which claimed the lives of supporters of both the new party, the United Democratic Movement, and the African National Congress, is the



The New York Times

Scores of people have been killed in violence in and near Richmond.

latest chapter in the brutal political history of the province. For more than a decade the fighting was between the congress and the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party headed by the flamboyant Mangosuthu Buthelezi. More than 10,000 people died as the parties wrestled for the country's most populous province, egged on by the apartheid Government, which fed the Inkatha weapons to promote violence among blacks.

Though few analysts are willing to bet on what will happen as the 1999 national elections grow near, the conflict between the parties has eased in the last 18 months. When Mr. Mandela and his deputy, Thabo Mbeki, are both out of the country, they have several times turned to Mr. Buthelezi to be Acting President.

But in the area of Richmond, once an African National Congress stronghold, the Inkatha party is not a factor. The conflict is between the

congress and supporters of the local strongman, Sifiso Nkabinde, now a high-ranking member of the new United Democratic Movement, which has picked up the support of 5 percent of the voters, according to the latest polls.

Some of the violence in KwaZulu/Natal has been part of a strategy to eliminate political leaders in the hope of undermining the parties. Some of it is meant to intimidate people into staying loyal to a party. Some is pure revenge.

Mr. Nkabinde was once an A.N.C. stalwart, at least on the surface. But the party expelled him last year, saying he was an apartheid-era spy still bent on promoting violence. Mr. Nkabinde denied the charges, but soon allied himself with the fledgling United Democratic Movement.

At that time the violence began to heat up, and more than 12 people died, including four A.N.C. officials, one of whom was the local Mayor. Mr. Nkabinde appeared to have an unusual relationship with the local police. At one crime scene he did not want the bodies moved until the press had arrived, and the officers waited, following his orders.

But after a special inquiry team was created, Mr. Nkabinde was charged with several killings and jailed. Life quickly quieted down among the huts near Richmond.

In March, Mr. Nkabinde was acquitted and sent home. In a few days the trouble began again. More than 40 people have died since, most A.N.C. supporters, although at least six members of the United Democratic Movement have also died.

Mr. Nkabinde has denied that he is responsible for the fighting. "It was uttered that Mr. Nkabinde had sent people to kill," said a spokesman for him, Wonderboy Senzanuhle. "But we are flabbergasted by this. The U.D.M. is sympathetic to the families who have people who died."

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