Iran: Reconstruction and Overhaul of Helicopters

OE Watch Commentary: Iraq's 1980 invasion of Iran exploited a huge Iranian vulnerability. Under the shah, imperial Iran had invested billions of dollars in a top-shelf military replete with platforms purchased from the United States. After the 1979 Revolution and the new Iranian regime's seizure of the American hostages, the Iranian government was unable to get its purchases delivered or spare parts to operate existing aircraft. While the Islamic Republic ultimately survived the Iraqi onslaught, the lasting strategic lesson for the Iranian government was that it needed an indigenous capability to produce and upgrade existing platforms. Often, Iranian officials discuss their ability to upgrade jetfighters like the F-14s, which Iran still flies almost a half century after their purchase. In the excerpted article from the *Iranian Labour News Agency*, a semi-official outlet that began covering labor issues but now also covers general news and defense, Second Brigadier General (equivalent to an O-7) Yousef Ghorbani, commander of the Army Air Force, discusses Iran's success at overhauling and upgrading Iran's substantial helicopter fleet. For Iran, this is an important capability both because its helicopter fleet is its military's workhorse and because of the harsh environments in which its helicopters must operate. As the Iranian military increases its Makran Coast operations along the Gulf of Oman, it must rely on helicopters to compensate for the lack of roads and difficult terrain. Ghorbani also noted that night vision capabilities are becoming more standard for Iranian helicopters, which shapes the operational environment because it signifies an important domestic capability for a key regional adversary, as well as possibly its anti-American proxies, such as Lebanese Hezbollah and the Houthi militias in Yemen, with whom Iran often shares technology. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

Iranian Army Helicopters prepare to conduct COVID-19 Disinfection Flights, March 2020.
Source: Jam News, https://media.jamnews.com/medium1/1398/12/25/JamNewsImage21162007.PNG

"Last year, we succeeded in overhauling 40 helicopters"

Source: "Bazsazi va Overhawl-e Balgerdha ba Talash-e Motakhasasan-e Havaniruz" (Reconstruction and overhaul of helicopters with the efforts of aviation specialists)," *Iranian Labour News Agency* (a semi-official outlet that began covering labor issues but now also covers general news and defense), 5 February 2021. https://www.ilna.news/بازسازی-و-اورهال-بالگردها-با-تلاش-متخصصان-هوانیروز-3/1034075

Second Brigadier General and Pilot Yousef Ghorbani, commander of the Army Air Force, stated at the end of the overhaul of seven attack, reconnaissance and transport helicopters conducted at the First Air Base of Kermanshah, "Last year, we succeeded in overhauling 40 helicopters, which shows the knowledge and expertise of the native forces of this land." Brigadier General Ghorbani said, "From zero to 100 percent reconstruction and overhaul of helicopters is done with the efforts of aviation specialists and we have reached complete self-sufficiency in this field." He also spoke about the night vision system: "This system used to belong to several countries, but today it has reached the stage of indigenous development with the capable hands of knowledge-based companies and aviation employees, and we can operate flights now during the day and night."