

## The Role of the Air Force in Suppressing the Kurdish Movement in Northern Iraq (1961-1963)

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### SUMMARY

The Iraqi air force is regarded on of the most important forces in the military establishment in the contemporary history of Iraq. Its role was clearly prevalent since it kept-up with suppressing and solving internal conflicts. This includes, the Kurdish movement in northern Iraq, which has always cast its shadows upon the aspects of politics and military. Thus, Air Forces have accompanied those military statuses, which accompanied this movement, and employed services it believes in. All of which in order to end such insurgency, and maintain the national security of Iraq.

(Keywords) Kurdish movement, Iraqi Air Force Military Operations, foreign interventions.

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### INTRODUCTION

The importance of the objective study of the research relies in "The Role of The Air Force in Putting Down the Kurdish Movement in Northern Iraq (1961-1963)", which documented a really important aspect of the Iraqi Air Force Military Operations exclusively, regarding this movement since it began its armed disobedience of the state, and since the Kurds' demand for their rights of (Autonomy). Although, and in spite of all the successive political regimes, especially during the first republican era, and since the establishment of the modern Iraqi state, they were all seeking resolutions and promoting intellectual concepts regarding to solve the Kurdish Issue. At the same time, the state did not refrain from resorting to the armed forces, including the Iraqi Air Forces, in order to stop the Kurdish militant's movement, and cut-off foreign support and supply to these militants. However, the real reason may be that both lack the presence of deep and well-grounded beliefs, which in turn widened this disagreement, especially after the Kurds relied on regional and international countries to fund them.

Amidst the emergence of such events inside Iraq, which resulted in depleting money and lots of lost lives on both sides, with the absence of solutions that meet the Kurds' requirements, which in turn accelerated and increased the pace of military operations.

This study is mainly divided into military topics, in accordance with the political and military scenes and updates inside Iraq. Especially the foreign interventions which had the greatest impact on the continuation of such military operations, and the exhaustion of the military institution in general, and the Iraqi Air Forces in particular.

This study relied upon the British documents between 1961-1963, as well as on various Arabic, Arabized, and even foreign sources, which in turn gave great importance to the objectivity of the study.

#### **The Kurdish Movement after The 14<sup>th</sup> of July Revolution, 1958:**

The Kurds of Iraq welcomed The 14<sup>th</sup> of July Revolution, 1958, and showed friendly relations and cooperation <sup>1</sup> at the first, especially after granting amnesty and permission for Mullah Mustafa Barzani <sup>2</sup> and his followers to return back to Iraq after he was

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<sup>2</sup> Mustafa Barzani also known as Mala Mustafa, was a Kurdish leader, and one of the most prominent political figures in modern Kurdish politics. In 1946, he was chosen as the leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party to lead the Kurdish revolution against Iraqi regimes.

exiled to the Soviet Union during the monarchy<sup>3</sup>. Except, that did not last long until it resulted in a war between the Kurds and the Iraqi government<sup>4</sup>. As a result, the Kurdish armed movement was declared on September 11th, 1961, inside the Kurdish regions in the northern Iraq<sup>5</sup>. The Kurds called it the September Revolution, citing the failure of the Iraqi government to fulfill its obligations regarding the Kurdish cause. Thus, the government considered this movement as an armed Kurdish rebellion<sup>6</sup>.

Mullah Mustafa Barzani's leadership has settled in Maluma village, which has an extremely wild mountainous nature and very harsh weather conditions. On this basis, the military conflicts began<sup>7</sup>. It is well known that the Kurds are concentrated in the northern regions of Iraq, characterized with wild and difficult to reach terrains. Also, since the adjacent borders do not separate them from the Kurds located in Iran, Turkey, and Syria, which makes it so easy to enter the Kurds' regions<sup>8</sup>. At that time, the Kurds' population settling in the northern regions was estimated approximately 1.5 to 1 million<sup>9</sup>.

The armed conflict first began in "Sulaymaniyah" city, in a way that appeared at first as no more than isolated incidents resulting from the (Intra-Kurdish) disagreements and conflicts, aided by the Iraqi government. In reality, however, Barzani was on the pursue to reinforce his positioning of the locations he gained through his claims of nationalism, his demand for the rights of the Kurdish people, and lifting the Agrarian Reform Act. He also continued to build its financial and manpower base via merging the Kurdish tribes under his leadership, which would qualify him to prepare for the fight against the armed forces of the Iraqi army. In October 1960, he managed to take control of an 8,000 km area, located in the mountainous region bordering Iran, and made it his main headquarters. In December, he was able to control all government outposts alongside the border strip with Iran, to ensure the safe arrival of essential

supplies to the Kurdish militants as required. The number of militants under Barzani's brigade, by the end of 1960, has reached nearly 7,000 fighters, through which Barzani was able to occupy and control important strategic areas at a later stage<sup>10</sup>.

Mullah Mustafa Barzani and his followers declared a general strike in northern Iraq, which resulted in a huge disruption to all forms of life in those areas<sup>11</sup>. The Iraqi government decided to resort to military operations to break this strike via ground and air military forces. Orders were issued to the commander of the Iraqi air force, Brigadier General Jalal Al-Awqati, to bomb Kurdish armed groups<sup>12</sup>, and in September 1961, the Military Movements Directorate set a date to start military operations in northern Iraq<sup>13</sup>. The Iraqi government authorized the military leadership in northern Iraq to open fire towards any sabotage attempt above the law committed via the Kurdish militants<sup>14</sup>.

#### **Military Operations of the Iraqi Air Forces in northern Iraq:**

Duhok district was the first to be attacked by government forces, as military artillery took part in addition to the aerial bombardment of Kurdish villages<sup>15</sup>. It must be noted here that there were some dissident officers from Zakho city, which supported the Kurdish armed movement in attacking the governments centers and giving the weapons and equipment inside them<sup>16</sup>, which facilitated the process of taking over the city. Their plans were to open long fronts of fight, including the wild areas that stretch from the (Iraqi - Turkish) borders beyond Zakho city, to the Iranian borders beyond Khanaqin city. All this to fragment the army forces. In addition to burning down villages to block the pilot's vision, which would cause him to collide with the high mountains, weakening the pilots' ability to hit the target. In addition to what will happen in terms of tension in the relationships on the borders with

<sup>3</sup> Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, Iraq Since 1958 From Revolution to Dictatorship, I.B.Tauris Publishers ( LONDON • NEW YORK, 1987),p. 79.

<sup>4</sup> Qahtan Ahmed Salman, the previous source.

<sup>5</sup> Khalil Abraham Hussein, Encyclopedia of 14<sup>th</sup> of July.

<sup>6</sup> Georges Fathallah Al-Muhami.

<sup>7</sup> Nouri Abdelhamid Al-Any and Alaa Jasem Harby.

<sup>8</sup> Monzer Al-Mowsely: Arabs and Kurds.

<sup>9</sup> Noaman Maher Kanaan: A Spotlight on Northern Iraq.

<sup>10</sup> Saad Naji Jawad: Studies in the Kurds Nationality.

<sup>11</sup> Ahmed Fawzi: Qassim and the Kurds.

<sup>12</sup> Al-Thawrah Journal, Iraq.

<sup>13</sup> Mahmoud Rizq Ahmed: The Kurdish Movement in Iraq.

<sup>14</sup> Fayzeh Muhammed Mallouk: Human Arts Journal, University of Zakho.

<sup>15</sup> Khalil Jundi Al-Azidi: Creeds and Methodologies.

<sup>16</sup> Fayzeh Muhammed Mallouk: Human Arts Journal, University of Zakho.

Turkey and Iran, which would be in the favor of the Kurds<sup>17</sup>.

The Iraqi Air Force carried out its orders, which had negative results. One of which was the dispute between Abdul Karim Qasim and the Commander of the Air Forces (al-Awqati), who, at the beginning, refused to use the Iraqi Air forces to hit the Kurdish communities, but was obligated to implement the instructions and military orders issued to him by the Army Commander<sup>18</sup>.

The objectives were assigned to the Iraqi Air Force to strike militant groups from air with Iraqi aircrafts, and the incendiary missiles and automatic machine guns that were used by these aircrafts burned-down and destroyed several villages such as Duhok, Zakho, Akre, Amedi located in the district of Duhok. In addition to Rawanduz and Koysinjak in the district of Erbil<sup>19</sup>. As for the Derbent Bazian region, the Iraqi ground forces launched a sweeping attack to open the road between the cities of Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah<sup>20</sup>, in addition to the air forces cover which supported those advancing land units and troops, which made it easier for them to reopen the road without any problems<sup>21</sup>.

The Kurdish militants then decided to move to (Sefin Dagh) mountain, which is 1800 meters in height, located in Shaqlawa district in Erbil. Which is difficult for the Army to reach, and on the other hand, these high mountains have caves where the Kurds shelter from army troops and air strikes. In Duhok, the Kurdish militants took over to Zakho, except, it was not under their control for long, and they retreated as a result of the constant air strikes. That led the government forces to take over this city again, and made the Kurdish armed groups go away. Just like what happened in Sulaymaniyah city, they retreated back to the mountains<sup>22</sup>.

It must be noted, that these rapid changes have raised the tension between Abdul Karim Qassem and Mullah Mustafa Barzani, after the former accused him of plotting against the state with the support of

foreign forces. Because these foreign forces are giving the Kurds a straightforward idea of the centers of power in northern Iraq. Which include: logistics, military and financial capabilities, and how closely is Mullah Mustafa Barzani is linked to external foreign forces who support the Kurds<sup>23</sup>.

### **Contributions of the Iraqi Air Forces in neutralizing and mitigating Foreign Interventions:**

Interference in Iraqi affairs prevailed in two aspects: regional (Turkey, Iran); and International (the Soviet Union, Britain, the United States). The issue of smuggling weapons to the Kurds of Iraq across the (Turkish - Iranian) borders had a prominent impact regarding the tension in the region as a whole, as follows:

#### **1- Turkey:**

The (Iraqi-Turkish) relations became tense after the Iraqi government have discovered an armed Kurdish-Turkish faction settling in the mountains bordering both countries, (the southeastern region of Turkey), which posed a threat on Iraq and even on Turkey<sup>24</sup>. However, that did not stop at that point, because another hidden factor appeared to be the cause of this tension between these two countries, as a number of Iraqi Air Forces have bombed some armed Kurdish groups on the (Iraqi - Turkish) borders<sup>25</sup>. So, the Turkish government rushed to close its borders to prevent the displacement of Kurds inside Its land, and has also reinforced its borders<sup>26</sup>. And due to it rugged terrains and the presence of Kurdish population on both sides, it was difficult seizing it, especially during the night, and when there is rain and snow, which makes it pretty difficult to move and observe. It is possible that the inhabitants of those areas would respond to some of the rebels, and weapon dealers have also been active smuggling armors and weapons, because of the huge profits they make doing so on both sides of the borders. This necessitated the intervention of the Iraqi Air Force in cases of pursuing some of these armed Kurdish factions, by bombing them inside the Turkish territory, and the opposite with regard to Turkey, which complicated the problems of the borders<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Nouri Abdelhamid Al-Any and Alaa Jasem Harby.

<sup>18</sup> Rana Abdulrahim and Saleh Abbas Nasser: Al-Awqati's position of the Iraqi Political Events.

<sup>19</sup> Fayzeh Muhammed Mallouk: Human Arts Journal, University of Zakho.

<sup>20</sup> Dana Adams, previously mentioned.

<sup>21</sup> Masoud Barzani: Barzani and the Kurdish Libertarian Movement.

<sup>22</sup> Saad Naji Jawad: Studies in the Kurds Nationality.

<sup>23</sup> Fayzeh Muhammed Mallouk: Human Arts Journal, University of Zakho.

<sup>24</sup> Fadel Hussein: Al Mosul Dilemma.

<sup>25</sup> Edmond Gharib: The Kurdish Movement.

<sup>26</sup> Fayzeh Muhammed Mallouk: Human Arts Journal, University of Zakho.

<sup>27</sup> Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Also, Turkey was afraid of the expansion of these armed groups inside Turkey<sup>28</sup>, which made them reinforce the borders and patrols, and increase Air observing operations by Reconnaissance Aircrafts which enter the Iraqi airspace<sup>29</sup>. With the presence of intense conflict between the Iraqi forces and the Kurdish militants on the borders, the Iraqi Air Forces would usually strike Kurdish militants inside the Turkish borders at certain times<sup>30</sup>. In some cases, Iraqi aircrafts would enter the Turkish territory and bomb some Turkish villages by mistake (southeastern Turkey), thinking that they were Iraqi villages in which Kurdish militants are gathered. This resulted in a loss of trust between the two governments, and the inability to find a proper way of cooperation between them<sup>31</sup>. On July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1962, an Iraqi aircraft bombed a Turkish post on the borders, but there were no casualties<sup>32</sup>.

Operations against the Kurds continued, and Iraqi aircrafts bombed villages where Kurdish militants were gathering. The most severe of which happened on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1962, when Iraqi air forces bombed Kurdish militants on the (Iraqi - Turkish) borders, killing a Turkish soldier and wounding another during a raid on a Turkish police station, which provoked a rage from the public opinion and the Turkish government. As a result, the Iraqi side issued an apology statement on behalf of the incident, and Turkey also informed Iraq that Turkish aircrafts will conduct exploratory patrols on the borders to confront the Iraqi aircraft, and carry out a similar procedure that of the Iraqi, unless the bombing of Iraqi aircraft stops immediately<sup>33</sup>. In this regard, the Iraqi Ambassador Talib Mushtaq said: "Instead of paying attention to this dangerous matter and issuing strict orders to the Iraqi pilots to avoid entering Turkish airspace, during its operations on the borders, the government simply ignored that"<sup>34</sup>. The Iraqi government did not pay any attention to these threats and did not issue its orders to the Iraqi air force

<sup>28</sup> Sameer Abdelkarim Al-Takriti: Iraqi-Turkish Relations.

<sup>29</sup> Talib Mushtaq: Memoirs of an Iraqi Ambassador in Turkey.

<sup>30</sup> Iraqi Embassy in Ankara.

<sup>31</sup> Sameer Abdelkarim Al-Takriti: Iraqi-Turkish Relations.

<sup>32</sup> Fayzeh Muhammed Mallouk: Human Arts Journal, University of Zakho.

<sup>33</sup> Qahtan Ahmed Suleiman: Previously mentioned.

<sup>34</sup> Sameer Abdelkarim Al-Takriti: Iraqi-Turkish Relations.

squadrons to avoid violating the sanctity of Turkish airspace during their operation on the borders, and thus the fourth and fifth squadrons were employed to sweep the Iraqi-Turkish borders of all Kurdish militants<sup>35</sup>.

The Turkish government response was manifested in crossing the Iraqi borders 70 km in distance, directing their shots towards one of the Iraqi aircraft over Shaqlawa, which led to the downfall of the aircraft and death of the pilot<sup>36</sup>. The latter claimed that the Iraqi aircrafts fired automatic machine guns towards the soldiers while waving the Turkish flag, and proceeded to cross the Turkish borders for a distance of 25 km, and descended to about 600 feet of altitude. Similar incidents were recurring, but were ignored based on allegations that the Iraqi pilots were unaware they were crossing the Turkish borders. On its behalf, Turkey announced that it would confront any aircraft that crosses its borders<sup>37</sup>.

The first casualties recorded by the Iraqi air force in that incident was the crash of a Fury aircraft, which was commanded by the pilot, Abdul Latif Khamas, who was assigned with the objective to hit the village of Adkun and Zakho. That led the Kurdish militants to direct their fire towards the pilot and aircraft, which belongs to the fourth squadron of the Iraqi Air Force, and that resulted in crashing the aircraft<sup>38</sup>.

As a result, the bad relationship between the two sides increased, and the Iraqi ambassador, Talib Mushtaq, lodged a strong protest to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding shooting down the Iraqi aircraft, accusing the Turkish authorities of such intended attack. The Iraqi government also issued a statement indicating that Turkish aircrafts had been crossing the Iraqi borders since the 14<sup>th</sup> of July Revolution, 1958, and stating also that the supply areas and centers within the Turkish borders were taken over by Kurdish militants<sup>39</sup>. In addition, anti-Turkish demonstrations took place in Baghdad and media campaigns and conferences were held across the countries. These tense relations between

<sup>35</sup> History of the Armed Forces: previously mentioned.

<sup>36</sup> Talib Mushtaq: Memoirs of an Iraqi Ambassador in Turkey.

<sup>37</sup> Fayzeh Muhammed Mallouk: Human Arts Journal, University of Zakho.

<sup>38</sup> History of the Armed Forces: previously mentioned.

<sup>39</sup> Talib Mushtaq: Memoirs of an Iraqi Ambassador in Turkey.



both countries have continued until February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1963<sup>40</sup>.

## 2- Iran:

As for the tension of the (Iraqi - Iranian) relations, this goes back to several reasons, including: Iran is accused of funding and providing military supplies to Kurdish militants, and not securing the mountainous borders between the two countries, which made it a safe haven for the Kurds. This matter increased the Iraqi government's concern, because this would enhance the longevity of the Kurdish power in northern Iraq. As a result, the Iraqi government decided to issue orders to the Iraqi air forces to breach the (Iraqi-Iranian) borders and bomb four mountainous villages on the Iranian side of the border. This led to the death of 4 people, which is similar to what happened previously with Turkey. However, the Iraqi government denied these accusations, and explaining that what happened was arresting Iranian guards who were accompanying a group of Iraqi-Kurds, and providing reinforcements<sup>41</sup>. Iran has worked to provide assistance to the Kurdish rebels by supplying them with weapons, opening the borders, opening channels of communication with the leaders of the Kurdish militia, supplying medical support to the wounded rebels, and providing them with food, supplies, and equipment. A close associate of Mullah Mustafa Barzani stated that most of the weapons were coming from the Iranian government<sup>42</sup>, and that supplied the Kurdish militia with money and weapons. Thus, the Iranian government took advantage of that internal conflict and aimed at gaining the trust of the Kurds to implement the Iranian policies and taking advantage of the Kurds as a winning card to negotiate with the Iraqi government on the Amendment of 1937 Agreement<sup>43</sup>.

According to the aforementioned, the distinction in addressing the Kurdish issue in Iraq is evident on the behalf of the Iranians. As Iran's acts were in contrast to what laws, international agreements, and the rights of the neighboring country dictate. As we witnessed Iran cooperation with small groups of Kurdish militants, and reinforced them with military

equipment and logistics, which encouraged continuous growth and expansion of the militia in northern Iraq. This caused internal and external harms to Iraq on the regional level. In addition to expanding such cooperation in order to undermine the Iraqi military establishment in general, and the air force in particular, which received heavy damage during the military operations in northern Iraq. As well as motivating delineation and deterioration of Iraq's relations with the neighboring countries; All of this was not coming from Iran as whole. Because, If we look closely at the path of our political orientations, we find no ambiguity in the existence of Western plans that have been prepared in advance, and left the tool for their plans' deployment in the hands of Iran.

As for international interventions, it played an important role in supporting the Kurdish movement, despite the good relations that connect Iraq to these countries, including:

## 3- The Soviet Union:

The Soviet vision was that the Kurds should remain within the frameworks of the Iraqi state, and to preserve the Soviet influence in the region, including Iraq. The Soviet support for the Kurds in conjunction with the Iraqi government, has varied<sup>44</sup>, as Moscow prepared a plan done by by the Russian Intelligence Agency (KGB), to send weapons and military equipment to northern Iraq, and this operation was called (The Secret Mission in the Middle East). The plan was to transfer shipments of lightweight and medium weight weapons through the Soviet Union's Federal Agency for Fishery, and the appointed crew of the ship was of a high level of competency and experience, which consisted of the captain of the ship Maximov, Captain Arsov, Captain Krasnov, Captain Alexander Kicillof, and others - they were assigned to secretly deliver the cargo from the port of southern Russia (Siberia), to the regional waters of the Soviet Union, via the Dardanelles, the Bosphorus, and Cyprus, and eventually, to Latakia port in Syria. The cargo, then, which consisted of (600) crates, was unloaded in 3 vehicles heading towards the Iraqi borders. When the vehicles reached Qa'im city<sup>45</sup>, reports from the Iraqi Military Intelligence stated that there were weapon shipments heading towards northern Iraq through Qa'im city, and its quantity is

<sup>40</sup> Talib Mushtaq: Memoirs of an Iraqi Ambassador in Turkey.

<sup>41</sup> Fayzeh Muhammed Mallouk: Human Arts Journal, University of Zakho.

<sup>42</sup> Qahtan Ahmed Suleiman: Previously mentioned.

<sup>43</sup> Fallah Khalaf Muhammad: Algeria Agreement 1975.

<sup>44</sup> Fayzeh Muhammed Mallouk: Human Arts Journal, University of Zakho.

<sup>45</sup> Nuheidan Muhammad Al-Barmi: Soviet's Position of the Kurdish cause.

40 tons. The orders were issued to the Iraqi pilots at Habbaniyah Air Base, launching two firefighters to track the shipment down and destroy it. This led to destroying two trucks, while the third survived the air strike and was handed over to the Kurdish fighters<sup>46</sup>. Reports also confirmed that approximately (1,250,000) Rubles, provided by the Soviet Union to Kurdish militants since the launch of the military operations between the Kurds and the Iraqi government. These were delivered in coordination with the Soviet Embassy in Iraq<sup>47</sup>. Regarding the briefing of the Soviet mission in northern Iraq, Captain Alexander Kicillof, who was in charge of securing the delivery of weapons to northern Iraq, pointed out that Iraqi government already knew the details, sufficient information, and timing of this mission. These information were exposed in two ways, the first: British Intelligence, and the second is through one of the members of the Kurdish militia who was in contact with Iraqi Government<sup>48</sup>.

#### 4- Britain:

As for the British, reports were received from the Iraqi Security Agencies indicating that the British ambassador (Humphrey Trevelyan) had secretly visited the Kurdish region in northern Iraq, met with Mullah Mustafa Barzani, and funded him with \$500,000. On the other hand, the British ambassador denied such accusations<sup>49</sup>. In the same context, the British Air Attaché in Baghdad in 1961, sent a report presenting accurately the state of the organization, and the potential of the Iraqi air force in northern Iraq, saying: "**The military and offensive ground operations in Kurdistan were carried out efficiently and responsibly, in which the Iraqi pilots demonstrated their abilities and superiority. Also, there is an urgent need to identify the reasons for such superiority in the framework of successful military operations in hitting the targets and achieving its objectives**"<sup>50</sup>. It seems that the Iraqi air force had an effective role in the war in

<sup>46</sup> Nuheidan Muhammad Al-Barmi: Soviet's Position of the Kurdish cause.

<sup>47</sup> Michal B.lorl; A History of Kurdish Military. The Peshmorga. From The Ottoman empire to present Iraq ; The Florida state University ; College of social sciences ; 2005.p.37.

<sup>48</sup> Nuheidan Muhammad Al-Barmi: Soviet's Position of the Kurdish cause.

<sup>49</sup> Ahmed Fawzi: Qassim and the Kurds.

<sup>50</sup> F.O., 371 / 164269, From, Roger Allen, British Embassy, Baghdad, No.1222 / 6 / 620, December 10 1962.p.6

northern Iraq, as Britain did not expect such rapid performance and professionalism in hitting the targets amidst the withdrawal of British forces from Habbaniyah Air Base.

Britain's hostile position to the attempted military intervention of the Soviet Union in support of the Kurdish militia may be evident as it falls within the interests of (Britain), and that is evident in Iran's declaration to not intervene in Iraqi's affairs, which, in turn, would undermine the Kurdish militia support, leading to the loss of one of its supporters. In addition to the British fears of Soviet Union's expand of intervention inside the region. That will pose a threat to the Societs in the foreseeable future regarding the seize of oil resources in Iraq<sup>51</sup>.

#### 5- United States of America:

As for the US government, it sought, through the employment of the Western media, to accuse the Soviet Union of military intervention in Iraq via the means of supporting the Kurds. Thus, Iraq became an arena for regional and international conflicts, and this was confirmed by (Henry Kissinger)<sup>52</sup> saying: "**Our ideology was clear, to weaken any country in touch with the Soviet Union, and since the Soviets established military relations with Iraq, it became necessary for us to promote the idea of opposing the Soviets' support for the Kurds**"<sup>53</sup>. The latter also conducted secret negotiations with Iran to compel and support the Kurdish militia, and Iran welcomed this initiative<sup>54</sup>. In addition to that, the Kurdish armed militia had contacts with (Israel), which delivered those supportive aids via Iran<sup>55</sup>.

#### Contributions of the Iraqi Air Force in Putting Down the Kurdish Militia

The Iraqi Air Force Command resumed its orders regarding the missions of detection and reconnaissance in the region, and through which it submitted reports to the military units notifying with the locations of the Kurdish militants, so the Iraqi air

<sup>51</sup> Fayzeh Muhammed Mallouk: Human Arts Journal, University of Zakho.

<sup>52</sup> Henry Alfred Kissinger KCMG is an American politician, diplomat, and geopolitical consultant who served as United States Secretary of State and National Security Advisor under the presidential administrations of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford.

<sup>53</sup> Jawdat Al Takriti: Soviets and Political Developments in Iraq.

<sup>54</sup> Qahtan Ahmed Suleiman: Previously mentioned.

<sup>55</sup> Samuel Segif: The Iranian Trilogy.

force issued military orders to hit the Kurdish militants in the village of Barzan, and some neighboring villages such as Rayzan, and a summer resort in Bania in Mount Shirin<sup>56</sup>. 4 firefighters carried out the mission, and continued its air raid on the area for 7 consecutive days. However, the village was empty of any militants, as everyone was expecting such attack, so they went up to the mountains and caves surrounding Barzan for shelter<sup>57</sup>.

The Iraqi army forces holding the land prepared to send a large force of pro-Government Kurdish Clans such as (Al-Jash)<sup>58</sup>. In order to occupy the village of Barzan, and carry out a large-scale attack on two focal points:

- A- Akre axis - Sri Akre – Barzan axis.
- B- Rawanduz- Mergasur - Barzan axis.

A violent armed clash took place between both parties on two axes, which led to the escape of armed groups towards the mountains and the government forces taking over this area<sup>59</sup>.

Military operations did not stop, and armed conflicts fluctuated here and there. On December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1961, military orders were issued by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense to head towards the Northern regions, to break the cordon imposed by the Kurdish armed groups in the village of Sifni, and imposed civil disobedience in the surrounding areas of (Sarsinq - Sifni). but the Kurdish armed groups enjoyed their civil presence, because of the knowledge they have of the area and its topography. This enabled them to ascend the pyramid of Mount Peres Valley, which is a vantage point on the outskirts of Duhok. On December 12<sup>th</sup>, the army advanced on land to get to the center of the valley, and the Kurdish groups opened fire towards the Army forces<sup>60</sup>. However, what made matters worse is that the government forces at the time did not take the necessary military measures to protect the soldiers and equipment when passing through that area, and the ugliest massacre occurred against the Iraqi army<sup>61</sup>. Masoud Barzani referred in his Memoirs to this incident saying: **“The government did not recognize that the full angle of the mountain was in the hands of the rebels. It was**

**not a battle in the well-known military sense, but a true massacre. The government’s Forces have bitten the trab, and only a few were able to escape”**. Lieutenant Colonel Saeed Hamo, the Commander of the 11<sup>th</sup> Brigade in the Iraqi Army, said, **“That battle bombarded the Army forces”**<sup>62</sup>.

This incident had a great impact on the Iraqi army personnel, especially since these areas are characterized with wild terrains, and difficult for transportation and supplies to reach. As well as the Kurds were already acquainted with every bit of these areas, especially since the role of the air force was weak due to the high mountains and their narrow slopes which would block the pilot’s sight for proper observing mid-air, in addition to his inability to fly by low altitudes, because he could be easily hit by enemy fires. It is no secret to anyone that the guerrilla warfare Barzani’s followers pursued against military barracks in such areas caused great losses among the military forces. After that incident, the Iraqi government relied mainly air-power in striking the dens of insurgents in the mountains, and pursued their gatherings wherever they existed. Indeed, the Iraqi Air Force aircrafts were assigned to carry out the tasks assigned to them in the Northern and bordering regions, specifically the Turkish and Iranian borders that were taken over by armed groups as their hideouts, and to supply them with weapons and equipment<sup>63</sup>. Although supplies were restrictedly cut off on the Turkish and Iranian borders, weapon smugglers across the Iraqi borders have not been fully managed, and the reason for this is the nature of the land and its wild terrain, as well as the covert international support for the Kurdish militia.

After the armed conflict that led to massive losses in numbers and gears for both parties, the central government sought to address the situation politically by negotiating with Mullah Mustafa Barzani, but the government failed to do so<sup>64</sup>. However, the Iraqi government did not stop its efforts to solve the Kurdish problems, as The Iraqi government sent Brigadier General Hassan Aboud, Commander of the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade, to meet with Mullah Mustafa, and the latter agreed, and on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 1961, the government marked a place for the negotiations near Sarsinq<sup>65</sup>. Colonel Hassan Aboud traveled to Sarsinq with a radio device to be able to communicate with Qasim and the Commander of the division. He met

<sup>56</sup> Samar Muhammad: Iraqi Kurds.

<sup>57</sup> Masoud Barzani: previously mentioned.

<sup>58</sup> Masoud Barzani: previously mentioned.

<sup>59</sup> Nouri Abdelhamid Al-Any and Alaa Jasem Harby.

<sup>60</sup> Samar Muhammad: Iraqi Kurds.

<sup>61</sup> Nouri Abdelhamid Al-Any and Alaa Jasem Harby.

<sup>62</sup> Masoud Barzani: previously mentioned.

<sup>63</sup> Sami Chorus: Kurdistan and The Kurdish People.

<sup>64</sup> Samar Muhammad: Iraqi Kurds.

<sup>65</sup> Masoud Barzani: previously mentioned.

Mulla Mustafa and informed him of Qassim's requirements. Al Barzani said, "**I am a young servant of Abdul Karim Qassim**". The Colonel replied, "**The leader does not want you but to settle either in Barzan, or to reside in any other area of your choice**". Amidst that, 4 military aircrafts were cruising-over in the sky of Sarsinq, and circled around the area where they are meeting. Then the Mullah asked, "**If the leader has sent you to meet with me, and inform me of his conditions, why did he send these aircrafts?**", Colonel Hassan Abboud denied that these aircrafts had been sent by Abdul Karim to kill him, and that he does not know anything about these aircrafts. Mulla Mustafa response was positive, and that he would fulfil Qassim's requests<sup>66</sup>.

It seems that the mission of the aircrafts was no more than a precautionary measure, in order to delude Barzani with the power of the government, which prompted Mullah Mustafa Barzani to pretend that he is willing to respond to the government's demands, and stop his armed disobedience. However, in reality, after the meeting has ended, Barzani resumed his armed disobedience. The reason for his approval at the beginning is because of the presence of these aircrafts over the meeting location, which raised fear in him in case he rejected the government's proposals. As for the other reason, it may be due to the fact that the problem has expanded outside the Iraq, to the (Regional and International Powers) which seek to secure their interests. They also participated significantly in the tragedies that occurred in the northern region, in particular, and the depletion of the Iraqi resources in general.

The military operations continued, from February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1962 till March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1962. At that time, aircrafts continued the bombing of the Kurdish armed locations and gatherings without interruption<sup>67</sup>. Likewise, on April 1962, and after the end of the winter season, the Kurdish militants continued their activities, prompting the government forces to continue their military operations there. Christian villages that contained Kurdish armed groups were also subjected to aerial bombardments<sup>68</sup>.

On May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1962, the Kurdish armed groups managed to take over areas in Northern Iraq. They attacked a government military convoy, and captured

<sup>66</sup> Khalil Abraham Hussein, Encyclopedia of 14<sup>th</sup> of July.

<sup>67</sup> Nouri Abdelhamid Al-Any and Alaa Jasem Harby.

<sup>68</sup> Samar Muhammad: Iraqi Kurds.

its soldiers<sup>69</sup>. In addition to seizing 6 ZIL Military trucks, two Jeeps, and a number of lightweight weapons<sup>70</sup>.

The Iraqi government took the initiative to recover the areas controlled by the Kurdish militants by occupying vantage points. However, they were sieged by the Kurdish militants, so they opted for the help of the Iraqi air forces, and in fact, the planes were sent to bomb the armed groups, and the matter was not only aerial bombardment, but also supplementing army units with crates and equipment by parachutes<sup>71</sup>. After that, Kurdish militants headed towards Balak and Dukan Dam, and the clashes focused on the Turkish and Iranian borders, especially after some militants from the Kurds of Iran and Turkey joined the armed movement that organized a tight defense line that extends from the Eastern end of Mount Zuzik to the Western end of Mount Hendren. On August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1962, military orders were issued to bomb the armed groups advancing towards the Iraqi-Iranian-Turkish borders and killed them as a result of these powerful air strikes<sup>72</sup>. The government returned to negotiating with the Kurdish militants, but it failed again due to the International and Regional intervention, and thus, the Kurdish movement had become a pressure card on the Iraqi government, so the latter abstained from any negotiations, and decided to end the movement with military force as soon as possible<sup>73</sup>.

Between the fall of 1961 and the spring of 1962, the government drew up military plans, and assembled enormous capabilities and forces of full division size, focusing initially towards Zakho, and launched a series of powerful attacks supported by air strikes by means of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Squadrons and Tanks<sup>74</sup>. The strikes of the army and the pro-government Kurds, supported by the Iraqi Air Forces on the Kurdish armed groups, have continued for two additional months and ended-up with losses on both parties<sup>75</sup>.

The attacks by the Iraqi Air Force, via the means of British and Soviet aircrafts, included villages and hilltop locations occupied by Mullah Mustafa Barzani. British reports on the success of the air force's missions in these attacks ranged from

<sup>69</sup> Nouri Abdelhamid Al-Any and Alaa Jasem Harby.

<sup>70</sup> Samar Muhammad: Iraqi Kurds.

<sup>71</sup> Samar Muhammad: Iraqi Kurds.

<sup>72</sup> Masoud Barzani: previously mentioned.

<sup>73</sup> Nouri Abdelhamid Al-Any and Alaa Jasem Harby.

<sup>74</sup> Masoud Barzani: previously mentioned.

<sup>75</sup> Samar Muhammad: Iraqi Kurds.



complete destruction of villages to minor damage. The British report indicated that the number of air strikes launched by the Iraqi Air Force on Northern Iraq reached 90 airstrikes, with a maximum rate of 4 to 8 airstrikes each raid. The Iraqi air force's losses in the Northern War between (1961-1963) is to 6 different types of aircrafts, including one Fury Aircraft, due to malfunction in the hydraulic tank, 2 Horn Aircrafts, due to rotation malfunction, and 3 Venom aircrafts which Crashed in Mosul. After a period of temporary composure regarding air combat operations<sup>76</sup>, military operations began in Ain Zala and the Strait of Baziant. During the aerial reconnaissance at the end of 1962, one of the aircrafts belonging to the 5<sup>th</sup> Squadron went missing at the time, and its pilot, First Lieutenant Zuhair Abdul Wahid, went missing, which required the Iraqi army to exert all efforts to find him.<sup>77</sup>

Although, whatever the matter is about the results of these military operations in northern Iraq, they have enhanced the expertise of the Iraqi pilots, and on the other hand, the central government's commitment to increase the number of aircrafts in the Iraqi Army, specifically helicopters. We could expect that because of the tension in relations between Al-Awqati and Abdul-Karim Qassim, upon most recent discussions regarding the Kurdish issue, which erupted in 1961<sup>78</sup>, as the former preferred to resort to political solutions rather than military force in order to avoid direct combat. As al-Awqati refused to bomb the opposition Kurds in northern Iraq, by telling Abdul Karim Qassim: "**We have not brought aircrafts to hit our own people**"<sup>79</sup>, as he indicated, "**The leader will destroy himself and the people with him**"<sup>80</sup>. That is why the Air Force did not participate in the battles of the North in its early beginnings until after Al-Awqati had traveled outside Iraq<sup>81</sup>. Indeed, the Kurdish September movement paved the way for the depletion of the government's financial, military, and political resources, which provoked popular resentment. Because the government was unable to fulfill its promises to improve the lives of the Iraqi

people, and it also provoked internal and external public opinions, which aided the Regional and International countries to intervene in the Iraqi affairs.

### CONCLUSION

This movement occupied Qassim from his other opponents (the nationalists and Nasserists), who were planning to topple him down and isolate him from power. In addition to the participation of two-thirds of the Iraqi army in these military operations. His military opponents were able to easily take possession of the army units surrounding Baghdad, as this armed movement resembled a weak factor for all governments that came after Qassim, just as it was a factor in weakening his regime. At the same time, reality has proven the role and importance of the military institution in general, and the air force in particular, in holding and protecting vast areas of Iraqi lands, villages, towns, and cities. As well as protecting vital targets in those areas such as: electricity stations, water dams, oil pipelines, transportation routes, factories, facilities and other vital resources. Those of which were often targeted by the militants, which required a change in the methodology of openness, distributing, deployment, and combat utilization of the Iraqi army and air force units throughout Iraq, in order to cut off the external supplies of those movements, and achieve internal security of the country.

<sup>76</sup> F.O., 371/164269, From, Roger Allen, British Embassy, Baghdad, No. 1222 /6 / 620, December 10 1962.p.6.

<sup>77</sup> History of the Armed Forces: previously mentioned.

<sup>78</sup> Nouri Abdelhamid Al-Any and Alaa Jasem Harby.

<sup>79</sup> Thabet Habib Al-Any: Previously mentioned.

<sup>80</sup> Hamed Al-Hamadani: Al-Awqati, Commander of the Iraqi Air Forces.

<sup>81</sup> Thabet Habib Al-Any: Previously mentioned.