**Formation of Operation Morvarid**

**Operation Planning Process**

Introduction: As the war started and considering the attempt of Iraq for increasing oil exportation, the activity of Al-Bakr and Al-Amaya oil platforms increased accordingly and became of the attaché targets for Iran. The designers and experts of Air force and Navy of Iran were aware of the capacities of Iraqi warfare and facilities of Iraqi Navy and thereby the anticipated the probability of a battle taking place in the Persian Gulf. Therefore, combat force 421 was ready for destruction of Al-Bakr and Al-Amaya oil platforms.

**How was the attack method of the enemy formed alongside these platforms?**

Usually by the sunset the missile launcher Osa frigate used to berth along Al-Bakr and Al-Amaya oil platforms and as the dark of the night came, they left the harbor and moved toward Imam port. In the next step, they identified and discovered Iranian commercial vessels and launched radar-guided Styx[[1]](#footnote-1) missiles and then rapidly went toward Umm Qasr . This process, sometimes, repeated until the dawn and even during the following nights.

Continuance of this circumstances caused problems for the traffic of Iranian vessels. Implementation of a strike and of course joint operation, therefore, could to some extent enf the dominance of Iraqi army over Al-Bakr and Al-Amaya oil platforms and also could stop the electronic eavesdropping of Iraq (installed on these platforms). Thereby on October 30th 1980 and on November 5th 1980, within two separate operation, which later became known as Askan and Shahid Safari[[2]](#footnote-2) , helicopters of I.R.I Navy and supported by the Air force attacked both platforms simultaneously[[3]](#footnote-3). Destruction of the facilities and installations of these platforms required master stroke of the marine rangers and in case of success and destruction of these terminals , Iraq would have practically lost the exportation of Oil from the Persian Gulf.[[4]](#footnote-4)

1. **Operation Ashkan**

Areal patrol was conducted by I.R.I Navy helicopters on a daily basis over the north west region of the Persian Gulf for the purpose of acquiring information on the status of the enemy’s units and traffic of various vessels in that region and observed and monitored any change in the region and traffic of vessel units and or probable presence of surface units of the enemy in the sea. According to the reports of the patrols which were transmitted to the front marine base, the enemy did not station many defense equipments on these platforms, however, it was certain that air defense equipments were installed on them and enemy troops were stationed in the place for watch out and for defending the positions.

Considering the fact that the mentioned platforms were large and were constructed with steel and concrete, therefore firing a fusillade at them from long distance could only lead to small damages which could be repaired by the enemy within a short time. Areal bombarding and missile strike of the surface units would of course lead to a huge extent of destruction, yet again, the repairing and rebuilding the facilities was possible. The third option which was associated with taking many risks (which was aligned with the mission of the front marine base) was deactivating the existing installations on the platforms for long term. Therefore, it was necessary to deploy special operation troops on the platforms and install explosives on sensitive points of the terminals and to totally destroy the oil loading installations.

The combat force 421 initially prepared the battle instruction No. 7 abbreviated as Ashkan for the following executive targets:

1. Major demolition or destruction of oil exportation facilities on these platforms which were considered of the most important infrastructural facilities in the economy of Iraq.
2. Assessing the military power of the enemy in defending the platforms and if possible, acquiring information of the military equipments stationed there.
3. Frightening the enemy troops and forcing them to leave the platforms.
4. Warning the tanker vessels which intended to traffic to the platform (reminding the Navy’s notification stating the declaration of war and warning them for entering the region).

Selected marine units had a mission to engage both Al-Bakr and Al-Amaya terminals at 06:15 AM dated November 1st 1980 with gunnery and to make these two platforms unusable by damaging them (especially destroying the building sector of the platforms and to impose damages as much as possible). In this regard, Joshan missile launcher frigate which was in charge of commanding the operation scene, along with Peykan missile launcher frigate and Gardouneh missile launcher frigate, left the military platform of Boushehr toward the marine ambush point (under aerial cover). [[5]](#footnote-5) On the same day and at 16:00 hrs a S-H-3-D helicopter departed Air-Sea first station in Boushehr and then landed on the deck of Ardeshir oil platform.

The method of executing the operation was as following:

* The frigates turn off all their radar and electronic systems and move toward their statining point with normal speed, so that the enemy is not alerted about the presence of three battle frigates of Iran in the region.
* After Joushan frigate stationed alongside Norouz oil platform it temporarily turned on its radar and inspected the region. After making sure that there is no enemy in the region (and probably their unawareness of this operation) , then, all three frigates moved toward Al-Bakr and Al-Amaya terminals at 3:00 AM dated November 1st 1980 in total radio silence and utilizing minimum radar. Unfortunately, the climate status was inappropriate and the sea was raging and therefore it was difficult to execute the operation.
* An airplane of the enemy, intending to attack the frigates dived on them at 6:00, however, Peykan immediately shot a 76 mm cannon and targeted it which as the result, the airplane crashed in water. The frigates, then, slowly continued to move toward their target. Considering the fact that inappropriate climate conditions caused a decrease in shot ranges of the cannons, therefore starting the operation was postponed until improved climatic conditions.
* As the sea became smooth by 7:00, the instruction for firing toward the enemy’s platforms was ordered. The frigates heavily and harmoniously fired at Al-Bakr and then Al-Amaya platforms with 76 mm cannons. S-H-3-D helicopter which had flown from Ardeshir platform toward the operation zone, kept flying in the sky of the zone and corrected the shooting errors of the frigates and also monitored the status of the oil platforms and the troops available on them. Fusillading the oil terminals kept on until 7:50 at wich the end of operation was announced.

The successful implementation of this operation on only damaged the facilities at the terminals and destroyed some parts of them, but also caused fear and horror in the hearts of the Iraqi defenders on the platforms in a way they rapidly left their positions.

1. Operation Shahid Safari

The combat force 421 cooperating with the special operation group of the marine rangers plotted another plan for total destruction of the oil loading facilities at Al-Bakr terminal[[6]](#footnote-6). The date of executing the operation was determined to be on November 4th 1980, because the enemy would not have expected another operation in the region in a short time since it was only three days passed the Operation Ashkan and thereby the possibility for success of friendly troops and surprising the enemy could be increased.

For the purpose of executing the mission, Lavan 2, a 3000-ton troop carrier battleship along with 27 marine rangers, explosives and weapons and equipments left Bushehr port in the afternoon of the determined date toward Al-Bakr oil platform. Two missile launcher frigates were also in charge of protecting and supporting the mentioned warship. Peykan frigate stationed alongside the oil platform and then inspected the region with radar and after making sure that the region is safe, prepared the grounds for continuance of the mission of Lavan-2 (at Al-Bakr Terminal).

On that day, the climatic condition of the sea was inappropriate, thereby when Lavan -2 arrived at Al-Bakr platform, the commander of the battleship put a lot of efforts for deploying the troops and equipments on one of the pillars of the platform,. The power of the engine of this warship, however, was not enough to resist against the raging waves, still the commander kept trying. As the tide flow began, the derrick collided with the beneath of the platform and its radar was damaged. The command of combat force 421 reviewed the case and figured that the mentioned warship is not able to berth alongside the pillar to deploy the rangers therefore the command aborted the mission and instructed to come back to Bushehr. A little afterwards, Peykan frigate declared readiness for continuing the mission of Lavan-2, then the battle base affirmed and thus, Lavan was instructed to move toward Norouz platform.

After transferring the marine rangers, equipments and ammunitions from Lavan-2 battleship to Peykan frigate, the aforesaid frigate turned its radar off and departed for Al-Bakr platform and arrive at the place at 23:00. Then, performing special maneuvers and utilizing four engines of the frigate, it was able to berth and get close to the pillar of the platform and the rangers deployed the equipments and ammunitions using the ladder on the pillar of the platform. The frigate, then, left to perform the same implementation at Al-Amaya platform and after reaching to the location, deployed the forces, equipments and ammunitions for this platform as it was done for Al-Bakr platform. At the same time the operator of the Electronic Support Measure informed the commander of the frigate about the receipt of waves transmitted from three unknown frigates from the side of Khawr Abd Allah. Upon the instruction of the commander, the specifications of the frequencies were analyzed and it became clear that the frigates belong to enemy. Therefore, Peykan which was behind Al-Amaya platform, left it rapidly and attacked the Iraqi frigates. The fire control system was locked on the first enemy frigate and contumely fired 76 mm cannons and destroyed it which was a P-6 torpedo launcher frigate. The Iraqi frigates that were unaware of the presence of Paykan, were surprised and the two other which were Osa model, escaped toward Khawr Abd Allah. Paykan frigate, after disengagement from the first Iraqi frigate, went after the two other ones. As the distance of Iraqi frigates distanced from Peykan, and going out of the shooting range of the cannons of the Iranian frigate, the commander of Peykan decided to use missiles against the Iraqi frigates. Another frigate of the enemy was destroyed with precise targeting and its radar echo was disappeared from the radar screen at Peykan. The third frigate, however, took the opportunity and escaped in the Khawr Abd Allah.

Peykan frigate, then returned to Bushehr and after refueling and loading ammunitions and food, returned to the operation zone again toward the platforms. The marine rangers, during their stationing on Al-Bakr and Al-Amaya platforms had installed explosives on various and sensitive points of the terminals facilities. According to the operation plan, minimum troops should have remained on each terminal in order to activate the fuses. Therefore, only two of the marine rangers stayed on each terminal and the remainder of them were transferred on Peykan frigate and left the zone. On the morning of November 7th 1980, the marine rangers activated the fuses of the explosives and rapidly distanced from the platforms and were transferred to the helicopters of the I.R.I Navy. The installed explosives were then exploded one after the other and a huge financial damage was imposed on the platforms and their facilities. Thereby, the possibility of oil exportation for Iraq from those platforms was eliminated.

After successful implementation of this operation, the joint staff of the I.R.I army instructed the following message to the Navy and Southern and Central aerial bases of the country in order to prevent revenge measures of the enemy:

“For the purpose of defending the regions of Mahshahr, Bushehr Port and Khark Island all radar stations and defending positions stationed at the above mentioned regions should consciously monitor the region. The Sixth, Seventh and Eighth attack bases should provide the protection of the region with coordination of the command post of the combat force 421.” [[7]](#footnote-7)

Therefore, the commander of combat force 421 decided to occupy Al-Bakr platform (with the purpose of preventing the traffic of vessels to the enemy’s ports) and to execute the next phase of the operation.

Implementation of this operation cause a total limitation for movement of the enemy’s navy from Al Faw port to Basra Port and provided an appropriate level of freedom for discharge of cargo and commercial vessels of Iran at Imam Khomeini Port and Mahshahr Port. In the meantime, telecom security factor was increased for the traffic of the Navy vessels and flights of the Air force could increase, as the electronic and communicating eavesdropping of the enemy from Al-Bakr and Al-Amaya platforms were stopped and aerial control over north-west of the Persian Gulf by I.R. Air Force became possible.

Furthermore, due to the importance of Khark Island for loading large oil tankers and the necessity of their aerial protection and also in order to prevent revenge measures by the enemy’s aircrafts, the command post of combat force 421 requested the commander of the sixth attack base (according to Annex No. 5): “For the purpose of more and more security of the vessels as at the harbor of Khark Island it is necessary to conduct armed and continues surveillance over this island.”



Figure 28- A part of Booshehr Port

Whereas The I.R. Air Force had accompanied I.R. Navy as the backup force in executing joint missions during the war, therefore, it instructed the First, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth and Ninth bases to execute the mission as per the request of combat force 421 (as the operational base and coordinator with the Navy).

Upon the receipt of this instruction, The seventh and eighth attack bases flied F-14 Aircrafts in combat patrol missions and also alert aircrafts[[8]](#footnote-8) ( F-4) were used ( from the sixth and ninth attack bases) in order to cover air defense of the region and to strengthen the security of the tanker vessels . The sixth and ninth bases always kept two F-4 aircrafts ready to fly in their daily flight schedule and equipped them with Maverick missiles so in case of emergency, they could be ready to take a part in the joint air-sea operations.

F-14 aircrafts, in addition to the above said mission, were in charge of escorting commercial vessels (which were guided by the Navy from Bandar Abbas port to Bandar-e Imam port). These caravans utilized the existing railroads in the mentioned port and the attempt was to discharge them faster and transport the shipments to their designated destinations. Escorting the vessels kept going ion by IR Air Force and with several airborne refueling even long after the ceasefire (The complete description of this operation will be provided in the book of The Wasr of Tanker Vessels)/

Combat force 421 decided to use Al-Bakr and Al-Amaya Terminals for watching in order to put an end to the activity of the Iraqi navy in the north of the Persian Gulf and also to maintain the marine lordship of the Islamic Iran, therefore this force planed a surprise operation to bring the Iraqi navy to the northern part of the Persian Gulf and then to destroy them.

Hence, Drafsh instruction was prepared and the IR Air Force was placed in charge of backup fire and air defense. The study of this instruction was commenced in the command and operation post of the Booshehr marine base with cooperation and consultation of the operative officers of the air base and necessary correspondences were made between IR Navy and IR Air Force, which thereby, the plan of attacking platforms, targets of the operation and its battle organization and its date of execution (November 24th 1980) were set. The content of the following document indicates that the presence of the fighters from IR Air Force and the support provided by this force on the operation region kept going on, even after its completion.

**From: Operation Deputy of IR Air Force (Operation Director)**

**To: Commander of the Sixth Attack Base**

**Subject: Close Back up**

**SECRET**

**Re 59/9/15-V H P/501-01/6-137**

**Following No. 59/9/23 – HV 201-06/4-113**

1. **The Command of IR Navy informed that regarding Al-Bakr and Al-Amaya, the commander of combat force 421have coordinated and operationally briefed the commander of the sixth base.**
2. **A copy of the letter from IR Navy is hereby attached for information.**

**The Operation Deputy of the IR Air Force**

**Colonel Gheydian**

**59-9-23-3 HV/201-06/4-1149**



Figure 29- The Letter sent to the Commander of the Sixth Base

On November 9th 1980 and prior to the execution of the operation, the third bureau of the joint Staff of the IR Army held a meeting with the presence of Deputy Commander of the Air force and requests destruction of Basra pier installations. Considering the surface area of Basra facilities (500 by 270 sq m) , the air force evaluated that for 450 bomber shot ,each weighing 500 pounds, which result in a guaranteed about 50% damage , 80 F-4 aircrafts are required , which considering the existing defense in the region and assuming 10% casualties, almost 8 F-4 aircrafts will go down. Therefore, executing such a mission is not feasible. [[9]](#footnote-9) Thereby, it was then decided to execute the plan of joint operation Morvarid in order to cut the marine connecting routes of Iraq to the Persian Gulf.

In the next step of the operation, destruction of Umm Qasr port and then occupation of Al Faw port were assumed in order to prevent any movement of the marine force of Iraq. For realization of this, on November 20th 1980, the Combat force 421 requested the Air Force to conduct an identification flight over the mentioned region and to image Umm Qasr port, Al Faw port and Kuwait shores. [[10]](#footnote-10)

The identification flight by RF 4 indicated that many Iraqi vessels are located in a close distance from Umm Qasr waterway and Khawr Abd Allah. The commander of the combat force then requested the Air force to destroy them. On November 23rd 1980, the sexith attack base of Booshehr used two F4-A aircrafts and attacked those vessels, as a result which two missile launcher Osa frigates were completely destroyed. On November 4th 1980, this mission was repeated, however, no result was achieved.



Figure 30- One SH3D Helicopter is landing on the board of one of the IR Navy frigates

**Commencement of the Operation**

The mission of conveying observer groups and the destruction team to Al Bakr pier was assigned to two anti-surface AB-212[[11]](#footnote-11) helicopter and one Anti-submarine HS-3D[[12]](#footnote-12) helicopter with the capability of search and rescue. These helicopters, along with Peykan frigate and logistic warships and mine sweepers were in alert mode, however, commencement of the operation was postponed for three days due to inappropriate climate conditions, during which, the Iraqis had the opportunity to traffic on the piers.

On November 24th 1980, Capt Mostafa MadaniNejad , the commander of the joint operation of the combat force 421, in a message, instructed the seventh warship and air-sea of Booshehr that:

1. Considering the climatic conditions, please instruct to ignore the execution of operation on this date.
2. The day (D) is dated 25/11/1980 and the hour (H) is 05:00.
3. Any supplementary instructions will be instructed subsequently.



Figure 31- The request of the commander of the combat force to the sixth base and change of the mission time

Furtheremore, the commander of the combat force 421, following the message at 14:35 on the day before, advised the sixth attack base of Bushehr: Considering the climatic condition, the combat instruction 9 will be executed with a delay of 1 day. Please instruct to correct the dates as stated in the following letter:

Date 24/11/1980 to be corrected with 25/11/1980

Date 28/11/1980 to be corrected with 29/11/1980.

The commander of joint operation, then reflected the following request to the sixth air base:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| From The Command of Combat force 421  To: The sixth attack base | Date: 23/11/1980  Ref. No: T 421/021435  Secret (Limited) |

In execution of the battle instruction No. 9, since 24/11/1980 until the end of 28/11/1980 , instruct for implementation of the following measures:

1. From 24/11/1980 to 28/11/1980 no attack operation shall take place to Al-Bakr and Al-Amaya
2. A F-4 aircraft equipped with Maverick missiles shall be ready to fly under emergency within high time range between 8:00 to 16:00 hours.
3. Maintain readiness to provide support for friendly troops in the sea against enemy’s air targets.
4. At 7:30 sharp, the first supervisor officer shall be delegated to the seventh warship on a daily basis in order to be delegated to sea with missile launcher frigate.
5. Any coordination and or complementary instructions will be made by the representative of the combat force 421 in that base.
6. All correspondence in this regard shall be specified with Morvarid code.

Commander of the Combat Force 421

The First Capt of HQ Mostafa Madani Nejad



Figure 32- Letter of the Combat Commander 421 to the Commander of the Sixth Base

On 25/11/1980 the command of the second marine region from the sixth attack base invites for attending the briefing meeting , for which on the following day, the commander of the attack battalion 61 along with the authorities of air defense of the base , headed for the second marine region ( Booshehr).[[13]](#footnote-13) In the briefing meeting, first the commander of the combat group ( as the commander of the joint operation) described the necessary points and then operation and plan officers of the second marine region analyzed all solutions, All arrangements and coordination were made with the commanders: Navy, tactical attack battalion 61 and the air defense group. In the end, the following were requested from the commander of the sixth attack battalion:

1. A pilot officer to be delegated as the first air supervisor to Peykan frigate for coordination and request for back up.[[14]](#footnote-14)
2. F-14 interceptor attack aircrafts create a safe zone on the space of the operation region under the cover of Booshehr radar and to neutralize enemy’s air disturbances.
3. The aircrafts responsible for direct air support, at the time of shooting sea targets, shall make sure that the identified vessels are actually enemy.

After the meeting was concluded and upon the return of the delegated team from the air base, a briefing meeting was held with the presence of the commander, operation deputy of the base, air defense operation deputy, commander of the maintenance battalion and all pilots participating in the operation. They were operationally briefed and then the pilots were informed about the standing point of the fueling aircrafts and the F-14 interceptor attack aircrafts. Then, the base commander instructed the necessary commands for cooperation with the commander of the combat force 421 and desired execution of the mission as per following:

1. Obligations of Booshehr radar site: radar coverage of the operation region space using F-14 interceptor attack aircrafts for detecting enemy aircrafts.
2. Obligations of the maintenance battalion: Equipping a number of aircrafts with air to air and air to surface, Maverick missiles and preparing the aircrafts with necessary safety and precision.
3. On 28/11/1980, all the pilots were present in the alert room of the base and according to the plan, and with full safety, they shall fly (Annex No. 15, photo of the participating pilots along with their service and flight records).
4. The requests shall be met with two aircrafts, one equipped with air to surface armors and one with air to air armors.
5. The necessary coordination shall be made with the seventh and eighth attack bases for flying over the static region according to the schedule at the height of 24000 feet and under radar coverage of Booshehr.
6. Coordination with the seventh base of Shiraz for flying fueling tanker aircrafts in the static region according to the schediule at the height of 24000 feet and under radar coverage of Booshehr.
7. The first lieutenant pilot Seyed Ebrahim Sharifi is selected as the first supervisor air officer and will be delegated from the base to Peykan frigate.

At 8:00 on 26/11/1980, the commander of the joint operation, First Capt Mostafa Manani Nejad introduced the plans at hand under the code names of Behrouz[[15]](#footnote-15) and Morvarid and confirmed readiness for executing the plan at 09:05 , instructed the sixth air base: Considering the climatic condition, the plan will be executed on 27/11/1980.

1. Surface to Surface missiles with a range of 40 Km manufactured by USSR that six of them could be stationed on the Ouza class of frigates. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Martyr Safari was the first marine ranger that was martyred at the border of Shalamcheh after a long resistance against enemy forces and killing many of them. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. References used and related to the operations of I.R. I Navy are mentioned at the end of Chapter Seven. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. In this operation Al-Bakr platform was damaged less in comparison with Al-Amaya platform and continued its activity [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. These three frigates left the platform on November 1st 1980 at 16:45, 17:00 and 17:25, respectively, toward the location of mission. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Battle instruction No. 8 was prepared for this operation and was called Shahid Safari. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Document No. 59090909230, The Document Center of I.R.I. Army [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Aircrafts ready to fly within the shortest time possible (5,10,15 minutes) stationed on land and are equipped with air to air weapons which will fly as per the request of radar sites to track intrusive aircrafts of the enemy and to destroy them upon command. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. IR Air force document 3 HV/021-06/4-41023 dated 06/11/1980 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Document No 590909059, IR Navy center for documents of the holy war [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. A type of anti-surface helicopter with the capability of carrying air to surface missile, which in secondary missions, it is used for transportation of equipment’s and forces. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Dual purpose helicopter with submarine detection and destruction equipments and is also used for search and rescue operations. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Document 3-HV/201-06/4-929 dated 24/11/1980, IR Air Force [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. First lieutenant Pilot Seyed Ebrahim Sharifi as the first air supervisor was delegated to Peykan frigate as an agent on behalf of the sixth attack base [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Behrouz Plan included air patrol flight by SH-3D helicopters of the IR Navy. This daily patrol was implemented to gather information around Al Bakr and Al Amaya piers and to report their observations to the command post of combat force 421 on the activity of the enemy in the region. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)