

Land of the Persian Gulf Command

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My first knowledge about a foreign country came when I was 4 years old. I received a birthday present in the mail from my uncle (and aunt)—my Godparents.

The present was a beautiful bracelet containing 9 small, painted, square bone insets showing women garbed in exotic dresses, men riding horses through the countryside and crossing bridges, gazelles cavorting among trees, and unusual buildings capped with domes and towers. The bracelet was mailed to me in a wood box some 12 inches long and 2 inches wide and had traveled all the way from Iran.

Upon receipt of the bracelet, my parents promptly got out a world map to show me where this faraway country was. I have been fascinated by all things Iranian ever since.

My uncle was stationed for over a year in hot, dusty Andimeshk, Iran, during World War II as company commander of the 871st Ordnance Heavy Automotive Maintenance Co of the US Persian Gulf Command. His company was involved in repairing and moving trucks and vehicles to the Soviet Union for use in that country's battle with German troops in Eastern Europe.

The United States Persian Gulf Command made sure that the motor transport and rail routes in this western part of Iran were kept open and in good shape for this important war effort.

And, of course, the soldiers of the Command were heavily involved in the transportation aspect of the Tehran Conference. This critical meeting took place in Iran's capital city at the end of November 1943 with Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin attempting to iron out many of the issues involving bringing WWII to an end. My uncle according to the company's journal was in Tehran for over a week before the conference. Could my bracelet have been purchased there?

Maps, books and accounts of the Persian Gulf Command effort were among my Uncle's possessions when he passed away. And I've read them all with great interest and traced the stories on the accompanying maps.

Now with all the focus on Iran and a potential nuclear deal with the west, I've been trying to determine how the areas mentioned in my uncle's Iranian material might relate to the Iranian nuclear effort. And once again, I'm perusing maps.

Isfahan, a beautiful Iranian city that was once the country's capital in the 16th century, is where a uranium conversion facility is now located. It is some 100 miles east from Andimeshk. Could Isfahan be where my bracelet came from? The mosques rendered on the bracelet have similar domes.

Arak where a heavy-water reactor plant is to be built is north of Andimeshk and was known as Sultanabad when the Persian Gulf Command was there. Located on a main north south rail route, it was an area where high quality rugs were produced. And at that time, any rug production was primarily accomplished by young girls—some as young as 5 or 6—close to my age at the time. Amazing!

And fifty miles north from that area, closer to Teheran, is Qum where uranium enrichment plants are already online. Qum at the time of the Persian Gulf Command was one of the most sacred cities in Iran with many kings and princes buried there. The Shrine of Fatemeh was the glory of Qum attracting pilgrims for centuries. And more than likely my uncle also visited this city.

But fortunately, the city of Hamadan which is north and west of Arak does not show on any current maps as hosting nuclear facilities. During the Persian Gulf Command, Hamadan located in the mountains was used a recuperation camp for soldiers to get away from Iran's oppressive summer heat in the lower elevations and to help them recuperate from illnesses that had befallen them. The tomb of Esther and Mordecai of ancient Iran are located here along with many other centuries-old ruins.

I like to think this city is where my bracelet was created.



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