

Giant U.S. Arms Purchase by Iran

Washington

Iran has contracted in recent months to buy more than \$2 billion worth of military equipment from the U.S. in what defense officials describe as the biggest single arms deal ever arranged by the Pentagon.

In confirming the deliberately "unpublicized arms deal," defense officials said Iran's purchases will include helicopter gunships, F-5E supersonic interceptors, F-4 fighter-bombers and C-130 cargo planes.

Senate sources who have been briefed on the arms deal said they understood that Iran also would purchase such advanced weapons as laser bombs, the guided bombs used with devastating precision against North Vietnamese targets in the final stages of the Vietnam war.

It was also understood by Senate sources that, at the shah's request, the U.S. will station 300 military person-

nel, an unusually large detachment, in Iran to train the Iranian forces in the use of the new weapons.

State department and Defense department officials said the large-scale transfer of arms over the next several years will help reinforce what they described as "a point of stability" in the Persian Gulf area.

"We are trying to help a stable and progressive regime that is playing a constructive role in the area," said one State Department official.

Both Defense and State Department officials emphasize that aside from such political-military considerations, the deal was entered into because it will be highly profitable to the U.S. in helping American arms manufacturers caught in a post-Vietnam slump in orders and in helping to redress the U.S. balance of payments deficit.

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