

# UN Investigates Charge That Military Data Was Passed On to Tehran

By Warren Getler

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LONDON — UN officials are investigating allegations by the president of a company specializing in analysis of satellite data who says he gave valuable military intelligence to Iran this month under the impression that he was giving it to the United Nations.

Peter Fend, the founder of Ocean Earth Construction and Development Corp., acknowledged that he was "naive." But he said in interviews that he approached the United Nations in New York out of a spirit of idealism and because his company was looking for "constructive" business.

Mr. Fend said his company, which is based in New York, believed that its satellite data could be used by the United Nations in monitoring a cease-fire in the Gulf War.

Instead, he said, a senior UN official from Pakistan, Iqbal Riza, organized a meeting at UN headquarters with two officials of the Iranian Foreign Ministry. They were identified as Mojtaba Mir-mehdi, deputy minister for legal affairs, and Mohammed Mahallati, director general for international affairs.

Mr. Fend acknowledged that he knew he would be meeting with Iranian officials, but said he assumed the meeting would be held under the auspices of the United Nations and monitored by its officials.

Instead, Mr. Fend said, the only UN representative present was a videotape technician.

A UN spokesman, Joe Sills, said the organization had begun an investigation of Mr. Fend's allegations.

"The matter regarding the relationship between the UN and Ocean Earth is being looked into by senior officials," he said.

Mr. Riza, a director of the Office of the Undersecretaries-General for Special Political Affairs, confirmed that he had put Ocean Earth in touch with the Iranians.

"I did arrange for the meeting in the UN," he said in a telephone interview. "The UN is a public place."

Mr. Riza said the link between

Ocean Earth and Iran, as far as he was concerned, was merely commercial. "It is between them and the Iranians," he said.

Mr. Sills said Ocean Earth contacted the United Nations a couple of years ago about the possibility of using satellite photography for monitoring a cease-fire.

"We looked at it, but did not feel it would be of use," he said. "This year, Ocean Earth came back to us with some updated material, and they also requested that they be placed in touch with the Iranians."

"We did so and arranged for them to show a tape on Friday, Oct. 9, at the UN using UN screening facilities," he said.

"Officials from the Iranian UN mission had asked us to set up the screening," Mr. Sills said. "If any member of the UN asks us to do this, we normally would comply, it would be routine. There was never supposed to be a member of the Undersecretaries-General office in attendance. What happens between Iran and this company is totally their concern."

Mr. Fend said that the Iranian officials asked Ocean Earth to deliver a 30-minute videotape of images from the Shatt-al-Arab waterway, which lies on the front with Iraq. He said the Iranians agreed they wanted the images for military purposes.

"We told the Iranians that we were not here to do business with Iran, we're here to do business with the UN," Mr. Fend said. "Nothing is going to be delivered to anybody except through the UN, and that means Iraq and all other UN members would have access to the material."

Nevertheless, Mr. Fend asserts that valuable information was passed to the Iranians, including details of recent Iraqi fortifications.

He said "it could be very useful" for missile targeting and other military purposes. The meeting "ended up being an intelligence transfer to Iran — courtesy of the UN."

Images shown during the meeting, Mr. Fend said, included video recordings of photographic displays obtained from the U.S. civilian satellite, Landsat, and from Spot Image SA, the French civilian satellite agency.

He said that the Ocean Earth analysis of the data from the Gulf War zone reveals, among other things, construction of an Iraqi canal that bypasses Fish Lake, a strategic barrier along the southern Iraq-Iran border, where most of the ground fighting is concentrated.

Ocean Earth has retrieved land images, including those of war zones and environmental hot spots, such as Chernobyl in the Soviet Union, from civilian satellites since the early 1980s. It has sold the data and analyses to news media and research institutes, including the British Broadcasting Corp. and CBS Television. Governments have not been among its customers, Mr. Fend said.

Mr. Fend also accused Mr. Riza of passing on to the Iranians an earlier videotape of satellite images from the war zone that his company had made for demonstration purposes. He is demanding that the United Nations pay \$30,000 for the tape.