



KHADEMI, ALI MOHAMMAD

KHADEMI, Ali Mohammad (ʿAli Moḥammad Kādemi, b. Jahrom, Fars, 30 November 1913; d. Tehran, 7 November 1978), pilot, officer, and first general manager of Iran Air (FIGURE 1). Khademi was a career officer in the Air Force, who was promoted in 1966 to lieutenant general (*sepahbod*). He served from 1962 until 1978 as the general manager of Iran Air, the newly founded national flag-carrier, which under his stewardship became a very successful domestic and international airline. In 1970-71 he served as president of the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

Family and education. His father Lotf-Allāh Kādemi belonged to a prominent Muslim family. In the early 1900s he joined the Bahai faith, and the subsequent persecution forced him to leave everything behind and to move in 1927 his family to Isfahan. ʿAli Moḥammad attended high school in Isfahan and graduated in 1932 at the top of his class. He passed the demanding entrance examination of the Military Academy (*Dāneškada-ye afsari*) in Tehran, and graduated with honors in aviation studies in 1936. The following year he graduated with distinction from the Air Force Flying School (*Āmuzešgāh-e kalabānān-eniru-ye havāʾi*).

Air Force. Khademi joined the Air Force (*Niru-ye havāʾi-e Irān*) in 1938, and continued with his pilot training. He was the first Iranian to receive a commercial pilot license from the British Civil Aviation Authority in 1948, and in 1957 he completed a training course at the U.S. Air Force University in Montgomery, Alabama. In 1958 he was promoted to Chief of Staff (*raʾis-e setād*), and became lieutenant general in 1966. Khademi contributed to the



modernization and expansion of the Air Force by fostering cooperation with the U.S. Air Force, the most technologically advanced air force in the world (Atrvaš, p. 263).

Iran Air. In 1962, when Iran Air was founded, Khademi was selected as its general manager. Shortly after the appointment, he completed the Air Transport Senior Management course at the American University in Washington, D.C. During his 16-year tenure at Iran Air, the company was transformed from a fledgling domestic airline to a thriving national flag-carrier. Iran Air had started in 1962 with a fleet of 13 old propeller airplanes and less than 700 employees, and in 1978 the company owned a modern fleet of 37 Boeing jets and had close to 12,800 employees. Its routes included the major destinations in the Middle East, Europe, the U.S.A., and the Far East, and this expansion was the result of bilateral negotiations that were initiated and led by Khademi (Atrvaš, p. 13). Under Khademi's stewardship, the net equity of the company increased eight-fold, though the company did not receive any government subsidies. Iran Air became one of the country's most profitable government-owned enterprises and the highest foreign-currency earner after the National Oil Company. The company attained one of the best safety records of any airline in the world, and maintained one of the first Middle East technical service stations in Iran, which was certified by the U.S. Federal Aviation Agency (Adams, p. 25). In addition to his responsibilities as general manager, Khademi served as the chairman of Iran Air's Board of Directors from 1977 until 1978.

Khademi's management style was often praised by peers and colleagues, since he emphasized a team approach to develop the company's managerial skills (Alā'i, p. 203; Milani, p. 454; [FIGURE 2](#)). He relied on the most advanced industry-wide technologies and practices, and consequently he played an active role in promoting modern management education in Iran. From 1968 until 1974 Khademi served as the chairman of the Board of the Iran Management Association (*Anjoman-e modiriyat-e Irān*), and became the driving force behind its expansion. The association founded seven new chapters in the capitals of Iran's major provinces, and government and private sector executives collaborated in order to organize management trainings. The first management congress was held in Iran, and Khademi became a prominent contributor to the Iranian Center of Management Studies (*Markaz-e moṭāla'āt-e modiriyat-e Irān*) in Tehran, a management school affiliated with Harvard University. Between 1976 and 1977, Khademi was an early supporter



and mentor of the European Economic Forum, the predecessor of the World Economic Forum (‘Alā’i, p. 203). Khademi was instrumental in founding the first College of Planning and Computer Science (*Madrasa-ye a’lā-ye barnāma rizi o kārbord-e kāmputer*) in Tehran in 1973, and served as a member of its board until 1978. He also sat on the board of Damavand College, and was an advisor to the International Rotary Club.

Khademi was a member of IATA’s Executive Committee, and was the organization’s first Asian president from 1970 until 1971. He belonged to the Governing Board of Civil Aviation of Iran (*Havā-peymā’i-e kešvari-e Irān*). In 1977 Khademi’s outstanding achievements in the fields of civil aviation and management were recognized with an honorary doctorate from Northrop University, which cited his leading role in the advancement of the airline industry in Iran as well as his important and effective services to the field of international air transport (Shell; [FIGURE 3](#)).

In 1944 Khademi married Bahia Mo’ayyad, the daughter of Dr. Ḥabib Mo’ayyad, the first physician from Kermānšāh who had been educated in Western medicine. They had one son and two daughters. Due to the political instability during the months leading up to the Revolution of 1979, Khademi resigned from his position as Iran Air’s general manager on 9 September 1978. On 7 November 1978, two days after the declaration of martial law, Khademi was assassinated at his home before the eyes of his wife. Later investigations suggested that the assailants could have been SAVAK employees, but no motive was discovered and no one was ever charged. (Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Dādsetāni, file no. 401/68/3060; Dādgāh-e Kayfari, Šo’ba 180, file no. 193/64). The case remains unresolved.

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internet. The program is currently catalogued by the Library of Congress.

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