

IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps)

Name: IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps)

Type of Organization:

- Military
- terrorist
- transnational
- violent

Ideologies and Affiliations:

- Islamist
- Khomeinist
- Shiite
- state actor

Place of Origin:

Iran

Year of Origin:

1979

Founder(s):

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini

Places of Operation:

Afghanistan, Europe, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, South America, Syria

Overview

Executive Summary:

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is tasked with preserving the Islamic Republic of Iran and the ideals of the 1979 revolution. The IRGC combines traditional military roles with a relentless focus on supposed domestic enemies. The IRGC is Iran's primary instrument for exporting the ideology of the Islamic Revolution worldwide. It is rigidly loyal to Iran's clerical elite. The IRGC is Iran's main link to its terrorist proxies, which the regime uses to boost Iran's global influence.

Within the IRGC are the Basij militia and the Quds Force (IRGC-QF). The Basij, literally "mobilization," is a paramilitary organization charged with channeling popular support for the Iranian regime. The Basij is famous for its recruitment of volunteers, many of them teenage children, for human wave attacks during the Iran-Iraq war. Today, the Basij has two missions: to provide defensive military training to protect the regime against foreign invasion, and to suppress domestic anti-regime activity through street violence and intimidation. After the contested 2009 Iranian presidential elections, for example, the Basij brutally quashed protests and attacked student dormitories.

The IRGC's Quds Force specializes in foreign missions, providing training, funding and weapons to extremist groups, including Iraqi insurgents, Hezbollah, and Hamas. The Quds Force allegedly participated in the 1994 suicide bombing of an Argentine Jewish community center, killing more than 80 and wounding about 300. In the years since, the Quds Force has armed anti-government militants in Bahrain, and assisted in a 2011 assassination attempt on Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the United States. The Quds Force also plays a key role in support of Syrian regime forces in that country's civil war.

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Domestically, the IRGC exerts political and economic control throughout Iran. In April 2021, Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif complained in an interview the IRGC had more influence in foreign affairs and the country's nuclear dossier than him. Zarif alleged he had "zero" influence over Iran's foreign policy and had "never been able to tell a military commander to do something in order to aid diplomacy."¹ Through a network of linked front companies, the IRGC has also created a dominant stake in Iran's economic sector while exerting control over strategic industries to ensure loyalty to the supreme leader.

Doctrine:

The IRGC is an Iranian government agency tasked with defending the regime against internal and external threats. Espousing a radical ideology and a paranoid worldview, the IRGC uses secret police methods against its opponents within Iran, and terrorist tactics against its enemies abroad.

Iranian law defines the IRGC as "an institution commanded by the Supreme Leader whose purpose is to protect the Islamic Revolution of Iran and its accomplishments, while striving continuously . . . to spread the sovereignty of God's law."²

In the first months after the 1979 Iranian revolution, before its existence was enshrined in law, the IRGC operated as a network of militant activists loyal to revolutionary leader Ruhollah Khomeini. In this role, the IRGC helped to stamp out dissident currents within the revolutionary movement.³ The IRGC views its task as preserving the "Islamic republican" form of government created by Khomeini, and faithfully implementing the instructions of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, who succeeded Khomeini after the latter's death in 1989. Ahead of Iran's June 2013 presidential elections, IRGC commanders reportedly made clear through public statements that they would only confirm a president who is loyal to Khamenei.⁴

The IRGC today enjoys the power of a government agency, while still maintaining the zeal and fanaticism of an ideologically motivated terrorist group. The IRGC's mission combines traditional military roles with a relentless focus on pursuing supposed domestic enemies. According to the Ministry of Defense, the IRGC's role is to "protect [Iran's] independence, territorial integrity, and national and revolutionary ideals, under the shadow of the orders given by the Commander in Chief, the Grand Ayatollah Imam Khamenei."⁵ Political beliefs considered inconsistent with "revolutionary ideals" are treated as military threats. Then-IRGC commander Jafari stated in 2014: "today's war is not fought on land or sea, it is fought at the level of belief, and the enemy is investing efforts to gain influence inside the Islamic Republican system."⁶

The IRGC's doctrine combines rigid loyalty to Iran's clerical elite with deep paranoia about the outside world. In IRGC publications, Iran is portrayed as threatened by American and "Zionist" plots, which are said to be capable of exerting great influence within Iran. Allegations of foreign meddling in Iran provide the justification for terrorism abroad, fueling the high-profile international conflicts that provide the basis for ever harsher crackdowns on internal dissent. The IRGC considers "resistance" to Israel and support for so-called resistance groups among its primary regional goals. IRGC propaganda refers to Israel as a conspiracy against the region backed by the United States and the United Kingdom.⁷ Through its support for Hezbollah, Hamas, and other terror groups, the IRGC leads what it calls a regional axis of resistance to "speed up the downfall" of Israel and "the liberation of al-Quds," the Arabic name for Jerusalem.⁸ The IRGC provides military and strategic aid to its regional proxies. In 2016, for example, the IRGC provided Hezbollah with kits to convert short-range rockets into longer-range missiles, capable of hitting strategic targets inside Israel.⁹

Over time, domestic repression has come to overshadow traditional military missions, as the IRGC's influence has spread into every aspect of Iranian life.¹⁰ In 2007, following the formal incorporation of the Basij militia into the IRGC, IRGC Commander Mohammad Ali Jafari said, "The new strategic guidelines of the IRGC have been changed by the directives of the Leader of the Revolution [i.e., Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei]. The main mission of the IRGC from now on is to deal with the threats from the internal enemies. [The number-two priority of the corps] is to help the military in case of foreign threats."¹¹

The IRGC considers its loyalty to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei a religious imperative. At times, the organization's devotion to Khamenei slips into hero-worship. In 2014, for example, deputy IRGC commander Mohammad Hejazi credited Khamenei with overruling the objections of scientific experts to direct research towards increased accuracy in ballistic missiles, "resulting in proud accomplishments in this field."¹²

Organizational Structure:

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps

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By law, the power to appoint and remove the commander of the IRGC is given to the supreme leader.¹³ The supreme leader also appoints clerical representatives to the various units of the IRGC whose guidance and instructions are binding on commanders.¹⁴ Iranian law makes “belief and practical obedience to the principle of clerical rule” a condition of membership in the IRGC, further establishing absolute loyalty to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei as the IRGC’s guiding principle.¹⁵

Efforts to normalize the IRGC’s extraordinary role in Iran over the years have resulted in a complex organization chart. Administratively, the IRGC falls under the Joint Armed Forces General Staff, part of the Ministry of Defense. But these layers of oversight do not give Iran’s nominally elected civilian authorities real control over the IRGC, as the entire military remains subordinate to the Supreme National Security Council, which in turn answers to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.¹⁶

Scholars who study the IRGC have concluded that “individuals appear to matter more than institutions when considering national security decision-making.”¹⁷ Consequently, scholars have identified personal networks, often based on ties of family, friendship, or joint service in the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War as the key factors in IRGC leadership.¹⁸ The opacity of the IRGC’s real command structure helps make Iran an erratic and therefore especially dangerous player in regional affairs.

Basij

The Basij militia, whose name means “mobilization,” is a paramilitary organization tasked with channeling popular support for the Islamic Republican regime. The Basij was created on April 30, 1980, to assist the IRGC in maintaining order.¹⁹ The Basij is most famous for its recruitment of volunteers, many of them teenage children, for human wave attacks on Iraqi forces during the Iran-Iraq War in which thousands died. Following the Iran-Iraq War, the Basij assumed a police role in Iran to maintain loyalty to the regime and suppress protests.²⁰ Today, the Basij has two missions: giving military training to regime supporters to prepare them to resist foreign invasion, and helping suppress domestic opposition to the regime through street violence and intimidation. According to the 1980 Iranian law that created the Basij, the militia’s purpose is “to train and organize all volunteers for encountering any threat and invasion against the accomplishments of the Islamic revolution from inside and outside.”²¹

The Basij presents itself as a popular volunteer association, although it is very much an organ of the state. The group’s “regular members,” said to number more than ten million, are unpaid volunteers motivated by ideological zeal or the hopes of advancement. Its “active members” receive salaries and work full time to organize the volunteer members. According to U.S. government estimates, the Basij comprise 100,000 active members, while hundreds of thousands of volunteers could be mobilized in war.²² The group has been nominally subordinate to the IRGC since the early 1980s, and organizational changes in recent years have increased the IRGC’s direct control over the Basij, apparently to better manage the two groups’ repression of internal dissent.²³ The Basij were formally incorporated into the IRGC in July 2008 and report directly to the IRGC commander-in-chief.²⁴

Khatam al-Anbia

Created in 1989, Iran’s Khatam al-Anbia (KAA) is an IRGC-controlled engineering firm that acts as the organization’s construction arm.²⁵ KAA maintains more than 800 subsidiaries, collectively employing more than 40,000 people.²⁶ Approximately 70 percent of the firm’s business is believed to be military-related.²⁷ KAA has played a role in building Iran’s nuclear infrastructure, including the country’s nuclear facilities at Qom and Fordow.²⁸

The company has won more than 17,000 no-bid contracts from the government.²⁹ For example, in December 2012, KAA was reportedly set to begin construction of the “world’s tallest dam” in Iran after the government canceled a \$2 billion contract with a Chinese firm and turned the project over to the IRGC.³⁰ According to United Against Nuclear Iran, “Through Khatam al-Anbia, the IRGC has succeeded in assuming a dominant role in Iran’s oil and gas industry.”³¹ Khatam al-Anbia has become one of Iran’s largest contractors in industrial and development projects. In February 2022, the Iranian parliament’s Budget Reconciliation Committee announced a deal with Khatam al-Anbia to complete unfinished prayer houses in exchange for more than \$477 million in crude oil.³²

Quds Force

The Quds Force (IRGC-QF) is a special branch of the IRGC tasked with achieving sensitive missions beyond Iran’s borders. The IRGC-QF has played an active role in providing training and weapons to extremist groups including Iraqi insurgents, Lebanese Hezbollah, and others. The group’s commander is Brigadier General **Ismail Ghaani**, who was appointed to the role after the January 3, 2020, assassination of the group’s longtime leader, Major General Qasem Soleimani.³³ In addition to overseeing the group’s violent attacks, Soleimani served as an emissary of Supreme

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Leader Ali Khamenei, reportedly using a combination of violence and bribes to wield enormous influence over the politics of neighboring Iraq. He was also said to coordinate much of Iran's support for the Ba'ath regime in the Syrian civil war.³⁴

General Hossein Hamedani, deputy commander of an IRGC volunteer unit, told an Iranian news agency in 2008 that the IRGC is providing weapons to "liberation armies" in the Middle East, including groups in Lebanon and Iraq.³⁵ Such liaisons are the responsibility of the IRGC-QF.

Since Ghaani took control of the Quds Force, however, there have been numerous reports that he has been unable to exert the same influence over Iran's terrorist proxies. According to media sources, Ghaani allegedly does not have the same expertise as his predecessor and does not have a rapport with Khamenei or his office—a critical element of his role as commander of the Quds Force.³⁶ These allegations were exacerbated following a November 7, 2021, drone attack on the Baghdad home of Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi. Suspicions fell on Iran-backed militias, particularly Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) and Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH). The militias and Iran denied involvement in the attack, which lightly wounded Kadhimi and wounded seven members of his security detail. Ghaani visited Baghdad on November 8 and denied Tehran had any connection to the attack.³⁷ Following the attack, reports emerged of fractures between Iran and its proxies. AAH and KH have reportedly openly defied orders from Ghaani. AAH commander Qais al-Khazali and KH commander Abu Hussein al-Hamidawi allegedly told the Iranians that Tehran's support for Kadhimi receiving a second term in Iraq's October 2021 elections broke the allies' bond. Some security analysts in Iraq alleged Ghaani had lost control over the Iraqi militias.³⁸ On February 3, 2022, U.S. General Frank McKenzie, head of U.S. Central Command, declared Ghaani "does not exercise the same degree of control over Iranian-aligned militia groups" as Soleimani did.³⁹ As a result, other branches of the IRGC have reportedly taken a larger role in coordinating with Iran's proxies.⁴⁰

Training and Recruitment:

General

The IRGC is the third-wealthiest organization in Iran after the National Iranian Oil Company and the Imam Reza Endowment.⁴¹ Due to its vast wealth, the IRGC is able to use a very simple recruitment tactic: money. The IRGC attracts young men by paying them up to \$265 a month.⁴² In 1982, the IRGC created its first high school in Tehran to train and indoctrinate young men into the organization. The IRGC opened similar schools throughout the country. Graduates went on to join the IRGC and Basij. The program ended and the schools closed in 1999, but the IRGC announced plans in early 2015 to reopen affiliated high schools.⁴³

The Basij and Quds Force operate under the IRGC and are responsible for the bulk of the umbrella organization's recruitment. Both groups have developed an organized method of enrollment and training. Both the Basij and the Quds Force strategically place recruiters near holy sites, mosques, schools, and community centers to attract volunteers.⁴⁴ The IRGC also trains foreign fighters from groups like Hezbollah and Hamas.⁴⁵

Basij

Training

The Basij is a paramilitary organization operating under the IRGC that relies heavily on volunteers as well as paid members. The Basij constitution highlights the importance of training, stating that one of the force's most important responsibilities is to train volunteers to "defend the country and the Islamic Republic regime."⁴⁶ The Basij is increasingly being used to quell internal unrest in Iran and, consequently, has become highly organized.

The Basij has an extensive membership of regular, active, and special recruits. Each classification is based on the volunteer's level of training and, to a lesser degree, on his level of commitment.⁴⁷

The Basij relies heavily on Ideological-Political Trainers (IPTs) to indoctrinate and educate its fledgling members. IPTs are divided into three groups: organizational, non-organizational, and invited members. Organizational and non-organizational IPTs typically hold high school degrees, while invited trainers are usually well-connected and well-educated.⁴⁸ Trainees are also required to attend at least 18 hours of ideological and political courses on subjects like "Major Islamic Commandments."⁴⁹

The next level of training consists of courses that include "Jihad and Defense of the Quran," and "Fluency in Reading the Quran." Specialized training courses in areas such as advanced psychological warfare and anti-riot training last even longer but are not mandatory. Only after completing this final level of training can Basij members go to mosques, schools, and factories to organize.⁵⁰ Basic Basij members are also trained in

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practical matters such as weaponry, guard duty, civil defense, and first aid.⁵¹

IPTs are themselves educated by a network of political guides. IPTs are taught subjects like Islamic commandments, the Quran, the history of Islam, sociopolitical knowledge, and the fundamentals of belief.⁵²

Recruitment

Basij recruitment relies heavily on the cooperation of local and regional mosques. Members are recruited under “clerical [sic] supervision and trusted citizens.” Paid Basij positions are available by application at Basij central offices.⁵³

The Basij also target Iranian schools for recruitment.⁵⁴ The Iranian parliament passed a 1996 law authorizing the government to create children’s Basij units. The Basij expanded their recruitment activities in Iranian schools after the disputed 2009 presidential elections, when Basij militants helped to violently suppress protests.⁵⁵ In November 2009, the Basij established 6,000 “resistance centers” in the nation’s elementary schools to promote the ideals of the Iranian Revolution.⁵⁶ By 2010, the so-called Student Basij included 4.6 million members. These students were divided into units based on age: Omidan (“Hopes”) in elementary schools, Pouyandegan (“Seekers”) in middle schools, and Pushgaman (“Standard Bearers”) in high schools.⁵⁷

Quds Force

Training

The Quds Force is a special unit of the Revolutionary Guard that oversees weapons and training.⁵⁸ Basic training can last anywhere from three to nine months and takes place at three main facilities in Iran. The first is the Imam Ali Base near Tehran, which specializes in ground training for foreign fighters. The second is the Wali-e-Assar Base in Shiraz and the third is the “Jerusalem Operation” College in Qom, where trainees study spirituality and ideology. There are other smaller training facilities throughout the country that are used to train armed groups from foreign countries as well.⁵⁹ The Quds Force helps operate the Manzariyah training center in Iran near the holy city of Qom. The Manzariyah training center recruits from a pool of foreign students studying at a nearby religious seminary.⁶⁰

Recruitment

The Quds Force sets up recruitment offices near Islamic holy sites to attract a wide variety of devout people from many nationalities throughout the Muslim world, including Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Iraq. The most important recruitment office is in the “Dar al-Tawahid” hotel in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.⁶¹ The Quds force helps operate the Manzariyah training center in Iran near the holy city of Qom. The Manzariyah training center recruits from a pool of foreign students studying at a nearby religious seminary.⁶² The Quds Force also recruits in Iraq, where they reportedly paid Iraqi Shiites up to \$150 per month to go to Iran to train during the anti-U.S. insurgency.⁶³

Financing:

IRGC

The Trump administration claimed that it forced the Iranian regime to reduce its military spending by 30 percent since the administration began re-imposing financial sanctions in 2017. Iranian officials have dismissed the effectiveness of renewed sanctions.⁶⁴ Iran’s defense budget ranges from approximately \$10 billion to \$15 billion annually. Of that, the IRGC receives approximately two-thirds.⁶⁵ Shortly after the death of Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani in a U.S. airstrike in January 2020, the Iranian government increased its budget for the Quds Force by more than €200 million over the following two months.⁶⁶ The funding increase was part of a bill called “Counter-Measures Against U.S.,” which Iran’s parliament approved by a vote of 229-3.⁶⁷ Iran’s 2021 budget provided the IRGC with an allocation of 403 trillion rials, almost double the 212.79 trillion rials allocated toward Iran’s conventional military. On December 12, 2021, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi submitted a proposed 2022 budget to parliament that more than doubled the IRGC’s government allocation to 930 trillion rials (U.S. \$22 billion).⁶⁸

Iran has consistently increased its budget allocations to the IRGC in recent years. The IRGC received a reported 24 percent increase in Iran’s proposed 2017-18 fiscal budget, up from \$4.5 billion to \$7.4 billion. The IRGC’s allocation represented 53 percent of Iran’s defense budget. <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2017/03/31/irans-revolutionary-guard-gets-a-raise/>. Iran’s military budget has reportedly experienced a 70 percent increase in funding during President Hassan Rouhani’s tenure,⁶⁹ growing from \$3.3 billion in FY 2013-14 to more than \$5 billion after

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Rouhani assumed the presidency in 2013. Ahead of the FY 2016 budget, however, Rouhani reportedly sought to cut the IRGC's budget in favor of Iran's army.⁷⁰ The Iranian parliament rejected the cut and raised the IRGC's budgetary allocation.⁷¹ Rouhani reportedly cut the IRGC's budget by 17 percent in his proposed 2019-2020 budget submitted in December 2018.⁷² In 2020 alone, the IRGC budget reached \$6.96 billion, triple the total budget of Iran's army and approximately 20 times more than the budget for Iran's defense department. In December 2020, the proposed budget for 2021-2022 reportedly included a 65 percent increase for the IRGC.⁷³

Despite the increases, in June 2021 Iranian President Hasan Rouhani cut the IRGC's funding for missile production by about 50 percent and also cut funding to the Quds Force, leading IRGC commander Hossein Salami and Quds Force commander Ismail Ghaani to file a complaint with Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. Salami reportedly asked Khamenei to use his own cash budget to transfer the funds needed by the Quds Force to pay the salaries of its fighters and to intervene and force the government to stop its alleged hostile actions.⁷⁴ At the same time as the alleged budget cuts, reports emerged of Qatari financial support for the IRGC. In late June 2021, outgoing Israeli President Reuven Rivlin delivered intelligence to the White House of the Qatari support. In July 2021, the U.S. State Department opened an investigation into the allegations.⁷⁵

The IRGC is also Iran's most powerful economic actor, according to the U.S. Treasury Department, which labeled the National Iranian Oil Company "an agent or affiliate of the Revolutionary Guards."⁷⁶ According to a 2017 assessment by then-CIA Director Mike Pompeo, IRGC-linked companies control up to 20 percent of Iran's economy.⁷⁷ In July 2018, the city council of Tehran announced that the IRGC Cooperative Foundation, which manages the IRGC's investments, had embezzled more than \$1 billion from the city of Tehran.⁷⁸

Within the IRGC, the Quds Force exerts control over strategic industries, commercial services, and black-market enterprises.⁷⁹ According to a 2007 Los Angeles Times report, the IRGC has ties to over 100 companies, controlling over \$12 billion.⁸⁰ These funds are used to exert influence in Iran and Iranian proxies. According to Ray Takeyh of the Council on Foreign Relations, the IRGC is "heavily involved in everything from pharmaceuticals to telecommunications and pipelines – even the new Imam Khomeini Airport and a great deal of smuggling. Many of the front companies engaged in procuring nuclear technology are owned and run by the Revolutionary Guards. They're developing along the lines of the Chinese military, which is involved in many business enterprises. It's a huge business conglomeration."⁸¹

After the 2015 nuclear agreement—which opened Iran's economy to the international market, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's government attempted to restrict the IRGC's economic power in Iran, open Iran's economy internationally, and attract foreign investors by canceling government contracts with IRGC subsidiaries. An unidentified IRGC source told Reuters in November 2016 that any U.S. attempt to restrict the Iranian economy from global markets would result in the IRGC regaining its economic control of Iran.⁸² In March 2016, Khamenei called for the IRGC to play a larger role in creating a "resistance economy" in Iran, independent of the international community.⁸³

In August 2015, Reuters reported that the IRGC stood to benefit from the lifting of economic sanctions against Iran as part of the P5+1 nuclear deal. One beneficiary Reuters highlighted is IRGC conglomerate KAA, which reportedly controls at least 812 affiliated companies worth billions of dollars.⁸⁴ KAA subsidiary companies have been sanctioned by the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations as "proliferators of weapons of mass destruction," according to the U.S. government.⁸⁵ The IRGC reportedly controlled one-third of Iran's economy as of 2010.⁸⁶ As of November 2016, the group viewed the possibility of renewed sanctions against Iran and the threat posed by ISIS as pathways to limiting foreign investment in Iran and reestablishing IRGC control of the economy.⁸⁷

In addition to its roles in Iran's other economic sectors, the IRGC also profits from Iran's oil industry. On October 26, 2020, the U.S. government sanctioned the Iranian Ministry of Petroleum, the National Iranian Oil Company, and the National Iranian Tanker Company for their financial support to the Quds Force. U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin accused Iran of using "the petroleum sector to fund the destabilizing activities of the IRGC-QF."⁸⁸

In October 2017, the U.S. government designated the IRGC as a terrorist organization and levied financial sanctions against it for the IRGC's support of the Quds Force, as well as Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Taliban.⁸⁹ In March 2018, members of the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee began discussing additional sanctions on entities in which the IRGC has a 50-percent-or-less ownership stake in order to punish IRGC front companies.⁹⁰ The U.S. government designated the IRGC as a foreign terrorist organization in April 2019, opening the possibility of levying additional sanctions on IRGC-related businesses.⁹¹ According to U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven T. Mnuchin, "Iran employs a web of front companies to fund terrorist groups across the region, siphoning resources away from the Iranian people and prioritizing terrorist proxies over the basic needs of its people."⁹²

The United States has since sanction-designated multiple Iranian businesses and their leaders for ties to the IRGC. In October 2019, the U.S.-led Terrorist Financing Targeting Center (TFTC) jointly designated 25 targets accused of supporting the IRGC and Hezbollah. Included in the sanctions

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were 21 businesses accused of providing financial support to the IRGC's Basij militia. The TFTC includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States.⁹³ In March 2020, the U.S. government sanctioned 20 companies based in Iran and Iraq linked to the IRGC.⁹⁴ In May 2020, the Treasury Department sanctioned Iranian-Iraqi national Amir Dianat and his Taif Mining Services LLC company for involvement in the shipment of missiles on behalf of the IRGC-Quds Force and smuggling "lethal aid" from Iran to Yemen.⁹⁵

Iran also utilizes multiple front companies in and around the Middle East to facilitate the flow of money to the IRGC, which then provides financing to Iran's terror proxies. In 2018, for example, the U.S. government imposed sanctions on two individuals—Muhammad Qasim al-Bazzal and Ali Qasir—accused of heading international front companies that finance transactions between Hezbollah and the IRGC.⁹⁶ Bazzal is co-founder of the Syria-based Talaqi Group and a key financier for Hezbollah and the IRGC-Quds Force. Qasir is the managing director of the Talaqi Group. Since 2018, Bazzal has used the Talaqi Group and his other companies to facilitate illicit oil shipments for the Quds Force.⁹⁷

The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) accuses the IRGC of using the Central Bank of Syria to coordinate financial transfers with Hezbollah. According to OFAC, Iran has created an international network working with Russian companies to provide millions of barrels of oil to the Syrian government. Syria then facilitates the movement of hundreds of millions of U.S. dollars to the IRGC, which distributes the money to Hezbollah and Hamas. U.S.-designated Hezbollah official Muhammad Qasir heads the Hezbollah unit responsible for facilitating the transfer of weapons, technology, and other support from Syria to Lebanon. According to the U.S. State Department, Qasir is a "critical link" between Iran and Hezbollah.⁹⁸

On August 13, 2021, OFAC imposed sanctions on Omani national Mahmood Rashid Amur Al Habsi and a network of his businesses. According to OFAC, Al Habsi's Oman-based company, Nimr International L.L.C., facilitated the sale and shipment of Iranian oil in support of the Quds Force. OFAC also designated Oman-based Orbit Petrochemicals Trading LLC, which it accused Al Habsi of using to facilitate Iranian oil deals that obscured the Quds Force's involvement. OFAC also designated Liberian-registered Bravery Maritime Corporation and Romania-based Nimr International S.R.L. for being owned, controlled, or directed by Al Habsi.⁹⁹

The Iranian government has also sought to directly expand the IRGC's control over Iran's economy. In January 2022, Iran's energy ministry announced a 300-billion-rial contract with the IRGC's Imam Hasan Headquarters for water projects in rural areas.¹⁰⁰ Also, that month, the Iranian government reportedly awarded a \$3 billion rice farming project to the IRGC's Khatam al-Anbia engineering firm, which would make Iran independent of the rice import market.¹⁰¹ Khatam al-Anbia denied the report, but it remains one of Iran's largest contractors in industrial and development projects. In February 2022, the Iranian parliament's Budget Reconciliation Committee announced a deal with Khatam al-Anbia to complete unfinished prayer houses in exchange for more than \$477 million in crude oil.¹⁰²

Basij

The Basij received a budget of \$310.85 million in the 2015 fiscal year.¹⁰³ In the 2009-2010 budget, the Basij received \$430 million from the government, but also reportedly earned large sums of cash through its control of non-profit foundations created by the Basij and IRGC in the 1980s and 1990s. The Basij is also reportedly a major investor in the Tehran stock exchange.¹⁰⁴

Also Known As:

- Islamic Revolutionary Guards
- Pasdaran ("Guards")
- Revolutionary Guards
- Sepah ("Corps")
- Sepah-e Pasdaran-e Enghelab-e Eslami ("Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps")

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Key Leaders



Ali Khamenei

Iranian Supreme Leader



Mohammad Ali Jafari

Head of Islamic Revolutionary
Guards: Major General



Qasem Soleimani

Head of Al-Quds Force-Islamic
Revolutionary Guards: Major
General



Mohammad Reza Naqdi

Head of Basij Militia: Commander



**Gholamhossein
Gheybparvar**

Commander of the IRGC's Imam
Ali Central Security Headquarters



Abdollah Haji Sadeghi

Representative of the Guardian
Jurist to the IRGC



Hossein Salami

Commander-in-chief of the IRGC



Ismail Ghaani

Commander of the Quds Force

IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps)

History:

- **August 6, 2022:** In a meeting in Tehran with PIJ leader Ziad al-Nakhalah, Salami says the Palestinians are not alone and the IRGC is with them “until the end.”
The meeting comes on the second day of a three-day PIJ conflict with Israel that resulted in the deaths of two senior PIJ commanders and during which PIJ launched approximately 1,100 rockets toward Israel. Sources: Agence France-Presse, “Iran’s IRGC says Palestinians ‘not alone’ in fight against Israel,” *Al Arabiya*, August 6, 2022, <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2022/08/06/Iran-s-IRGC-says-Palestinians-not-alone-in-fight-against-Israel->; Fares Akram and Tia Goldenberg, “Cease-fire between Palestinians, Israel takes effect in Gaza,” *Associated Press*, August 8, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-israel-militant-groups-gaza-strip-0c1565488cc2dc03f80200edcdd49a56>.
- **August 2, 2022:** The U.S. Department of Justice formally requests Argentina seize a Venezuelan Boeing 747-300M cargo plane following the unsealing of a July 2022 seizure warrant in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.
According to the warrant, the U.S.-made plane is subject to forfeiture based on violations of U.S. export control laws related to the unauthorized transfer of the plane between the Quds Force-affiliated Mahan Air Venezuelan cargo airline and Empresa de Transporte Aéreo cargo del Sur, S.A. Source: “U.S. Justice Department Seeks Seizure of Boeing 747 Cargo Plane Grounded in Argentina,” U.S. Department of Justice, August 2, 2022, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/pr/boeing-747-cargo-plane-associated-irgc-affiliated-airline-seized-argentina-request-united>.
- **July 31, 2022:** Reports emerge of threats to “produce atomic warhead for missiles” on a Telegram channel belonging to the IRGC-linked Bisimchi Media (Radioman Media).
A video on the channel threatens Iran can “immediately return” to its Emad long-range missile project and build an atomic bomb “if the US or the Zionist regime make any stupid mistakes.” Source: Benjamin Weinthal, “Iran says it will ‘build nuclear warheads’ and turn NY into ‘hellish ruins,’” *Jerusalem Post*, July 31, 2022, <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/article-713512>.
- **July 24, 2022:** During an address to an IRGC conference in Tehran, Salami warns of Iranian retaliation for any sabotage of its military, nuclear, or other facilities.
Salami accuses “the whole world” of gathering at Iran’s borders to “pour evil into our country,” but threatens Iran would respond to their attacks in their own territory multiple times. Source: “IRGC Threatens To Retaliate Against Any Sabotage By ‘Enemies,’” *Iran International* July 25, 2022, <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202207250837>.
- **July 24, 2022:** Hajizadeh reveals the IRGC’s advances in the drone and satellite industries and announces plans to send a new homegrown satellite carrier into space in the current Iranian year.
The announcement followed the March 2022 launch of the Noor-II satellite. Source: “IRGC to Launch New Satellite Carrier,” *Tasnim News Agency*, July 25, 2022, <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2022/07/25/2747703/irgc-to-launch-new-satellite-carrier>.
- **July 13, 2022:** During an interview with Israel’s Channel 12, U.S. President Joe Biden pledges the IRGC will remain a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization, even if it dooms negotiations for a new nuclear deal with Iran.
The interview followed reports earlier in May that Biden had pledged to Israel’s prime minister the IRGC would remain a designated terrorist entity. On July 18, Iranian nuclear negotiator Mohammad Marandi reportedly says Iran has never demanded the United States de-list the IRGC as part of the nuclear negotiations. Sources: “US willing to kill Iran deal to keep IRGC on ‘terror’ list: Biden,” *Al Jazeera*, July 13, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/7/13/us-willing-to-kill-iran-deal-to-keep-irgc-on-terror-list-biden>; Naftali Bennett, Twitter post, May 24, 2022, 4:39 p.m., <https://twitter.com/naftalibennett/status/1529200384736374784?s=20&t=4BPhu6De7nKLRWTGBj1hMQ>; Alexander Ward and Nahal Toosi, “Biden made final decision to keep Iran’s IRGC on terrorist list,” *Politico*, May 24, 2022, <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/05/24/biden-final-decision-iran-revolutionary-guard-terrorist-00034789>; “Tehran Has ‘Never Demanded’ IRGC Terror Delisting, Iran Official Says,” *Iran International*, July 18, 2022, <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202207180088>.
- **June 23, 2022:** The IRGC replaces intelligence chief Hossein Taeb with General Mohammad Kazemi.
Taeb is appointed as an adviser to IRGC leader Salami. The change is announced the same day Turkish media report Turkish intelligence and police broke up an Iranian intelligence cell in Istanbul on June 17. No official reason is given for the change, but media reports speculate the move is in response to the recent deaths of multiple IRGC officers in Iran, which the IRGC has blamed on “Zionists.” Sources: “Iran replaces Revolutionary Guards’ intelligence chief amid recent deaths of officers,” *France 24*, June 23, 2022, <https://www.france24.com/en/asia-pacific/20220623-iran-replaces-revolutionary-guards-intelligence-chief-amid-recent-deaths-of-officers>; Maziar Motamedi, “Iran appoints new IRGC spy chief as Israel tensions rise,” *Al Jazeera*, June 23, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/6/23/iran-appoints-new-irgc-intelligence-chief-amid-israel-tensions>; “Turkish intelligence busts Iranian plans to kidnap, attack Israelis,” *Hurriyet Daily News* (Istanbul), June 23, 2022, <https://www.hurriyetsdailynews.com/turkish-intelligence-busts-iranian-plans-to-kidnap-attack-israelis-174800>.
- **June 13, 2022:** Israeli security officials tell Reuters Turkey has arrested several suspected IRGC members involved in plots against Israelis.
Israel warns its citizens against traveling to Istanbul and to avoid Turkey altogether unless they have a vital reason for going. Source: “Israel tells its citizens to avoid Istanbul, warns Iran not to harm them,” *Reuters*, June 13, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-urges-its-citizens-istanbul-leave-heightening-travel-warning-2022-06-13/>.
- **May 25, 2022:** The United States imposes economic sanctions on an international oil smuggling and money laundering network led by Quds Force official Behnam Shahriyari and former Quds Force official Rostam Ghasemi. The Treasury Department accuses the smuggling network of being a “critical element of Iran’s oil revenue generation,” as well as supporting Iran’s proxy militant groups in the region.
According to the Department of the Treasury, senior levels of the Russian Federation government and state-run economic enterprises support the network, which has facilitated the sale of hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of oil for the Quds Force and Hezbollah. The Treasury Department sanctions Iran-based Quds Force associates Mohammad Sadegh Karimian and Alireza Kashanimehr for aiding in the illicit sale of oil for the benefit of the Quds Force. Both have traveled from Iran to Turkey and worked with Shahriyari’s network to conceal the source of the proceeds from these sales. Additionally, Karimian, with the assistance of Afghan businessman Kamaluddin Gulam Nabizada, arranged the sale and transport of tens of thousands of tons of oil on behalf of Shahriyari and Ghasemi. The Treasury Department also sanctions IRGC official Azim Monzavi and IRGC associate Esam Etehadhi for assisting the smuggling network. Further, Treasury sanctions Turkey-based Quds Force associates Hakki Selcuk Sanli, Abdulhamid Celik, and Seyyid Cemal Gunduz for working with Shahriyari to conceal the source of proceeds from illicit Iranian oil and petrochemical sales. Treasury also sanctions companies in Lebanon, Hong Kong, China, and Iran for purchasing illicit Iranian oil through the Quds Force. Source: “Treasury Targets Oil Smuggling Network Generating Hundreds of Millions of Dollars for Qods Force and Hizballah,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, May 25, 2022, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0799>.
- **May 24, 2022:** Media reports emerge that U.S. President Joe Biden has finalized his decision to maintain the IRGC’s FTO designation.

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- Biden reportedly confirmed the decision in an April 24 phone call with Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, who writes a May 24 Twitter post welcoming Biden's decision. Sources: Naftali Bennett, Twitter post, May 24, 2022, 4:39 p.m., <https://twitter.com/naftalibennett/status/1529200384736374784?s=20&t=4BPhu6De7nKLrWTGBJh1hMQ>; Alexander Ward and Nahal Toosi, "Biden made final decision to keep Iran's IRGC on terrorist list," *Politico*, May 24, 2022, <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/05/24/biden-final-decision-iran-revolutionary-guard-terrorist-00034789>.
- **May 22, 2022:** Two gunmen on a motorbike kill Quds Force Colonel Hassan Sayyad Khodai while he is sitting in a car outside his home in Tehran. Israeli media accuse Khodai of likely directing an IRGC plot to kill Israeli businesspeople and diplomats in Africa, South America, and Turkey. Other media also suggest Khodai may have been behind plots targeting Israeli diplomats in India and Thailand in 2012. As Iranian authorities announce they are pursuing the assailants, Iran media claim Israeli intelligence agents were discovered inside Iran. The IRGC public relations service accuses the Israeli network of attempting "to steal and destroy personal and public property, kidnapping and obtaining fabricated confessions through a network of thugs." The IRGC does not reveal if the network is connected to Khodai's killing. Raisi blames Khodai's death on "the hands of global arrogance" and promises revenge, but he does not specifically accuse Israel of responsibility for the assassination. On May 30, Israel's foreign ministry warns its citizens against travel to Turkey because of Iranian threats of revenge for Khodai's death. Sources: David Gritten, "Iran vows revenge after Revolutionary Guards colonel is assassinated," BBC News, May 23, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-61546145>; Jonathan Liss, Associated Press, and Reuters, "Iran Revolutionary Guards Colonel Assassinated in Tehran, Report Says," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), May 22, 2022, <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/iran-iran-revolutionary-guards-member-assassinated-in-tehran-report-says-1.10814801>; "Iran Revolutionary Guard colonel is shot dead in Tehran," Associated Press, May 22, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/islamic-state-group-iran-middle-east-tehran-d1fd66f3ae263b4dba4129df6cb43a20>; "Iran will avenge slain Revolutionary Guards colonel, president says," Reuters, May 23, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-revolutionary-guard-says-determination-stronger-after-assassination-2022-05-23/>; "Slain IRGC officer reported behind 2012 attacks on envoys; Israel said raising alert," Times of Israel, May 24, 2022, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/suspects-in-killing-of-irgc-officer-said-at-large-despite-irans-claims-to-contrary/>; "Israel warns against travel to Turkey citing Iran assassination," Reuters, May 30, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-warns-against-travel-turkey-citing-iran-assassination-2022-05-30/>.
 - **April 26, 2022:** U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken tells the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee the IRGC continues to present "an ongoing threat against American officials both present and past." He does not comment on the specific nature of the threats because of the open forum. Blinken says he sees the United States revoking the IRGC's FTO designation only "if Iran takes steps necessary to justify the lifting of that designation." Source: Callie Patteson, "Antony Blinken confirms 'ongoing threat' to US officials from Iran's Revolutionary Guard," *New York Post*, April 26, 2022, <https://nypost.com/2022/04/26/antony-blinken-ongoing-threat-to-us-officials-from-irans-revolutionary-guard/>.
 - **March 7, 2022:** At least two IRGC members are allegedly plotting to assassinate former National Security Adviser John Bolton, according to a Washington Examiner report citing an anonymous Justice Department source. According to the report, the Justice Department possesses indictable evidence against the Iranians but Biden administration officials worry publicly indicting the men could hinder nuclear negotiations with Iran. Source: Tom Rogan, "Iran plotting assassination of John Bolton, others, even while Biden negotiates nuclear deal," *Washington Examiner*, March 7, 2022, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/restoring-america/courage-strength-optimism/iran-plotting-assassination-of-john-bolton-others-even-while-biden-negotiates-nuclear-deal>.
 - On March 7, an Israeli airstrike against a weapons depot in Damascus, Syria, kills two Quds Force members, identified as Colonel Ehsan Karbalayi-Poor and Colonel Morteza Saeed-Nezhad. Two civilians are also reportedly killed, and six militiamen are wounded. On March 8, an IRGC Public Relations Office statement warns "the Zionist regime will pay the price of this atrocity." On March 13, an Iranian barrage of 10 missiles strikes near the U.S. consulate in Erbil, Iraq. There are no U.S. casualties or damage to U.S. property. The IRGC claims it targeted a training center belonging to Israel's Mossad spy agency. Iranian media reports multiple Israeli casualties, which Israel does not confirm. Iranian media calls the strikes a response to "recent crimes of the fake Zionist regime" and exacted a "heavy toll on Zionists." Ghaani praises the missile attack as a show of force that also demonstrated the fragility of the Israeli regime. U.S. and Iraqi officials condemn the Iranian attack. Sources: "Iran vows to avenge two IRGC members killed in Israeli attack in Syria -Press TV," Reuters, March 8, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-vows-avenge-two-irgc-members-killed-israeli-attack-syria-press-tv-2022-03-08/>; "Iran says Israel will pay for Syria attack that killed 2 Revolutionary Guards," Reuters, March 9, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-condemns-israels-attack-damascus-isna-2022-03-09/>; "Heavy Toll on Zionists Very Likely in IRGC Missile Attack on Erbil," Source, Tasnim News Agency, March 14, 2022, <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2022/03/14/2682015/heavy-toll-on-zionists-very-likely-in-irgc-missile-attack-on-erbil-source>; Qasim Abdul-Zahra, "Iran claims missile barrage near US consulate in Iraq," Associated Press, March 14, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/iran-missile-attack-erbil-iraq-us-consulate-7a4ea6281fe6191a4e4b640c58c7fd49>; Louisa Loveluck and Alex Horton, "After nuclear talks break down, Iran claims ballistic missile attack in Iraq," *Washington Post*, last updated March 13, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/12/irbil-attack-iraq/>; "IRGC confirms it hit Mossad training centers inside Iraqi Kurdistan," *Tehran Times*, March 13, 2022, <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/470982/IRGC-confirms-it-hit-Mossad-training-centers-inside-Iraqi-Kurdistan/>; "IRGC Quds Force commander says Erbil attack was decisive," Mehr News Agency, March 15, 2022, <https://en.mehrnews.com/news/184909/IRGC-Quds-Force-commander-says-Erbil-attack-was-decisive>.
 - **February 23, 2022:** The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) levies financial sanctions on an international network funding the Houthis' war against the Yemeni government. According to the Treasury Department, the network is led by Houthi financier Sa' id al-Jamal and the Quds Force. Source: "Treasury Targets Key Houthi Finance Network in Coordination with Regional Gulf Partners," U.S. Department of the Treasury, February 23, 2022, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0603>.
 - **February 9, 2022:** The IRGC unveils the Khaybar Shekan, a new ballistic missile with a range of 900 miles. The IRGC claims the missile can penetrate missile shields. Source: "IRGC unveils precision strike ballistic missile with range of 1,450 km," Press TV, February 9, 2022, <https://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2022/02/09/676474/IRGC-unveils-precision-strike-ballistic-missile-with-range-of-1,450-km>.
 - **February 2, 2022:** The United Arab Emirates intercepts and destroys three drones headed toward its airspace. The little-known Iraqi group Awliya al-Waad al-Haq ("The True Promise Brigades") claims responsibility for launching "four drones targeting vital facilities in Abu Dhabi" in retaliation for the UAE's policies in Iraq and Yemen. Some analysts have linked the group to KH and suggest it may be directly controlled by the Quds Force. Sources: "UAE says it destroyed three drones with 'hostile' intent," Al Jazeera, last updated February 3, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/2/uae-destroys-three-drones-with-hostile-intent-ministry>; "Iraqi militia attack on UAE a 'message from Iran,'" Al Jazeera, February 4, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/4/iraqi-militia-attack-on-uae-a-message-from-iran-say-analysts>; "Crispin Smith, Hamdi Malik, and Michael Knights, "Profile: Alwiyat al-Waad al-Haq," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, April 1, 2021, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-alwiyat-al-waad-al-haq>.
 - On February 3, U.S. General Frank McKenzie, head of U.S. Central Command, tells the Middle East Institute Ghaani "does not exercise the same degree of control over Iranian-aligned militia groups" as Soleimani did. The declaration follows months of growing speculation Ghaani is losing control over Iran-backed militias in Iraq. On February 8, Ghaani travels to Iraq to meet with influential Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, whose political bloc won Iraq's October 2021 parliamentary elections. Ghaani calls on Sadr to form an inclusive government with Iraq's Shiite parties. After meeting with Ghaani, Sadr calls for a national unity government in Iraq. Sources: Mina Aldroubi, "Iraq's Al Sadr backs national majority

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government after meeting Iran's IRGC head," *National* (Abu Dhabi), February 9, 2022, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/iraq/2022/02/09/al-sadr-backs-inclusive-iraqi-government-after-meeting-irans-irgc-head/>; Joyce Karam, "Iran's Quds force commander struggling to control proxy militias, top US general says," *National* (Abu Dhabi), February 3, 2022, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/us-news/2022/02/03/irans-quds-force-commander-struggling-to-control-proxy-militias-top-us-general-says/>; Mustafa Saadoun, "Iranian commander lobbies Iraq's Muqtada al-Sadr for 'inclusive' approach to Shiite parties," *Al-Monitor*, February 15, 2022, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/02/iranian-commander-lobbies-iraqs-muqtada-al-sadr-inclusive-approach-shiite-parties>.

- On February 11, Radio Farda releases leaked audio of former IRGC commander Mohammad Ali Jafari and his deputy for construction and economic affairs, Sadegh Zolghadrnia, discussing corruption investigations within the IRGC and Tehran's municipality under then-Mayor Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf.

The undated audio likely occurred before Jafari was replaced in 2019. In the recording, Zolghadrnia says that Qalibaf had offered him a fake contract with the IRGC to cover up an 80 trillion-rial shortfall discovered during an audit of the IRGC's Cooperative Foundation. Zolghadrnia allegedly refused the offer. In the recording, Zolghadrnia suggests IRGC intelligence head Hossein Taeb had lobbied for Qalibaf's offer. Zolghadrnia also reveals Jamal Aberoumand, a deputy to Qalibaf who also served on the board of the Cooperative Foundation, had asked him to remove some passages from an audit regarding the missing funds. On February 12, the IRGC-affiliated Fars News Agency confirms the authenticity of the recording. On February 13, an IRGC spokesman acknowledges "mismanagement" and a "violation" had occurred in a company affiliated with the Cooperative Foundation. Following the revelation of the recording, scores of Iranians take to social media to complain about government corruption. Source: "Radio Farda Exposé On IRGC Corruption, Infighting Raises Ire Of Iranian Authorities," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, February 18, 2022, <https://www.rferl.org/a/farda-leaked-conversation-corruption-irgc/31710316.html>.
- During nuclear talks with world powers in Vienna, Iran allegedly demands the United States de-list the IRGC as a Foreign Terrorist Organization as a precondition for a new agreement.

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett reveals the demand on February 20 while addressing U.S. Jewish organizations in Jerusalem. The State Department does not comment on the report. On February 21, Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid calls for international pressure on the United States to reject the demand and maintain the IRGC's designation. On March 10, a bipartisan group of 21 members of Congress release a letter raising concerns about a potential nuclear deal with Iran and lifting the IRGC's FTO designation. Sources: Barak Ravid, "Iran demanding Revolutionary Guards be taken off terror list in nuclear talks: Israeli PM," *Axios*, February 20, 2022, <https://www.axios.com/irgc-terror-designation-nuclear-deal-c7de761b-36cb-412b-9440-8ef26f1ce2cc.html>; Lazar Berman, "Lapid calls on White House not to delist Iran's Guards as terror group," *Times of Israel*, February 21, 2022, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/lapid-calls-on-white-house-not-to-delist-irans-guards-as-terror-group/>; "RELEASE: BIPARTISAN GROUP OF 21 MEMBERS RAISE CONCERNS ABOUT POTENTIAL IRAN DEAL," website of U.S. Representative Josh Gottheimer, March 10, 2022, <https://gottheimer.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=3074>.
- **January 25, 2022:** British citizen Saber Fakhri pleads guilty in a U.S. federal court to conspiring with Bader Fakhri, of Canada, Altaf Faqih, of the United Arab Emirates, and Alireza Taghavi, of Iran, to export and attempt to export an Industrial Microwave System and counter-drone system from the United States to Iran, without first obtaining the requisite license from the Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC).

A second indictment charges Iranian national Jalal Rohollahnejad with smuggling, wire fraud, and related offenses arising from the same scheme. According to the indictments, Rohollahnejad and Taghavi are representatives of the IRGC-linked Rayan Roshd Asfzar. Source: "Indictment and Guilty Plea Entered in Iranian Export Case," U.S. Department of Justice, January 27, 2022, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/indictment-and-guilty-plea-entered-iranian-export-case>.
- **December 20, 2021:** The IRGC launch a five-day military exercise, dubbed "Payambar-e Azam 17" ("The Great Prophet"), in southern Iran and reveal new armed drones and a new tank capable of evading heat-seeking missiles.

IRGC senior officials describe the new drones as capable of targeting anywhere and destroying any target. Iranian media report threats from IRGC officials to launch "a crushing attack on all bases, centers, paths, and space used to carry out" aggression against Iran, particularly from Israel. Source: "IRGC Flies Suicide Drones in Drill," *Tasnim News Agency*, December 22, 2021, <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2021/12/22/2630870/irgc-flies-suicide-drones-in-drill>; "IRGC Ground Force employs new homegrown tank in military exercise," *PressTV*, December 22, 2021, <https://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2021/12/22/673169/IRGC-Ground-Force-employs-new-homegrown-tank-military-exercise>; "IRGC Drones Capable of Hitting Any Target: General," *Tasnim News Agency*, December 22, 2021, <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2021/12/22/2630660/irgc-drones-capable-of-hitting-any-target-general>; "Iran's Revolutionary Guards Hold Major Military Drill In Southern Iran," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, December 20, 2021, <https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-irgc-military-exercises/31617476.html>.
- **December 2, 2021:** As Iran engages in a seventh round of nuclear talks with world powers in Vienna, Salami declares Iran has become too powerful to succumb to foreign aggression and any military options opposing the Iranian nuclear program are off the table.

Salami makes the remarks while visiting Iran's Ilam province. Salami accuses Iran's enemies of knowing the military option has failed and instead seeking "economic war and sanctions." Source: "Iran's IRGC chief: Enemy worn down, weakened," *PressTV*, December 3, 2021, <https://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2021/12/03/671890/Enemy-military-option-archived-for-good-IRGC-chief>.
- The Basij launch a mobile video game called "Save the Freedom," which allows players to rescue American George Floyd from being killed by U.S. police.

Floyd was killed by Minnesota police on May 25, 2020, sparking nationwide protests in the United States. The game's development stemmed from September 2020's "Nationwide Event for the Production of Basij Digital Content" conference, during which Naqdi called for the development of "a game in which Iranians free this oppressed American from under the knees of American police." Source: "Iran's Revolutionary Guard launches George Floyd video game," *Middle East Eye*, November 25, 2021, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/george-floyd-iran-revolutionary-guard-video-game-launched>.
- Following a November 7 drone attack on the Baghdad home of Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, suspicions fall on Iran-sponsored Iraqi militias Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) and Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH), which deny responsibility.

Iran also denies its involvement or the involvement of its proxies. Reports emerge of fractures between Iran and its proxies. AAH and KH have reportedly openly defied orders from Ghaani. AAH leader Qais al-Khazali and KH commander Abu Hussein al-Hamidawi allegedly tell the Iranians that Tehran's support for Kadhimi receiving a second term in office has broken the allies' bond. Some security analysts in Iraq allege Ghaani has lost control over the Iraqi militias. Sources: Suadad al-Salhy, "Betrayed by Iran? Iraqi armed factions given 'slap' with Kadhimi drone attack," *Middle East Eye*, November 29, 2021, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/iraq-iran-kadhimi-drone-attack-armed-groups-betrayed>; Jared Malsin, Ghassan Adnan, and Benoit Faucon, "Iraq Struggles to Control Iran-Allied Militias Believed Responsible for Attack on Prime Minister," *Wall Street Journal*, November 9, 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/iraq-struggles-to-control-iran-allied-militias-believed-responsible-for-attack-on-prime-minister-11636475084>.
- **August 7, 2021 - August 9, 2021:** On August 7, Salami meets with Hezbollah deputy leader Naim Qassem in Tehran and reaffirms Iran's support for Hezbollah.

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Salami warns of Israel's "death" in a future war with Hezbollah. On August 9, Salami holds separate meetings in Tehran with Hamas leader Hassan Nasrallah and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) leader Ziad al-Nakhalah. Salami praises Hamas and PIJ's "triumph" against Israel during the 11-day conflict that May and says he is confident "that the decline and collapse of the Zionist regime is beyond a wish and is a reality that could happen in the near future." All three leaders were in Tehran for the inauguration of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi on August 5. Sources: "Next War to Mark Termination of Israel, IRGC Chief Warns," Tasnim News Agency, August 8, 2021, <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2021/08/08/2550894/next-war-to-mark-termination-of-israel-irgc-chief-warns>; "Collapse of Israel Imminent: IRGC Commander," Tasnim News Agency, August 9, 2021, <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2021/08/09/2551747/collapse-of-israel-imminent-irgc-commander>.

- **July 26, 2021:** Sky News publishes secret internal planning documents allegedly belonging to Unit 13, the IRGC's cyber unit. The documents show proposals to target a cargo ship's ballast water system. Other plans include hacking the automatic tank gage of certain gas stations, which could stop the flow of gas or cause an explosion. The source of the leaked documents is unclear. Sources: Deborah Haynes, "Iran's Secret Cyber Files," Sky News, July 26, 2021, <https://news.sky.com/story/irans-secret-cyber-files-on-how-cargo-ships-and-petrol-stations-could-be-attacked-12364871>; Yonah Jeremy Bob, "Secret Iran hacking plans against West revealed - report," *Jerusalem Post*, July 27, 2021, <https://www.jpost.com/international/secret-iran-hacking-plans-against-west-revealed-report-674992>.
- **July 24, 2021:** IRGC member Javad Foroughi wins a gold medal in air pistol marksmanship at the rescheduled 2020 Olympics in Tokyo, prompting condemnation from Iranian human rights activists. Sources: Olympics, Twitter post, July 24, 2021, 3:13 a.m., <https://twitter.com/Olympics/status/1418831573022031879>; Benjamin Weinthal, "Iranians blast Olympics for praising IRGC 'terrorist' who won gold medal," *Jerusalem Post*, July 25, 2021, <https://www.jpost.com/international/iranians-blast-olympics-for-praising-irgc-terrorist-who-won-gold-medal-674804>.
- **July 12, 2021:** In its quarterly report to the Iranian parliament on the state of the nuclear deal, Iran's foreign ministry reports the United States will revoke the Foreign Terrorist Organization designation on the IRGC, and lift sanctions against Khamenei, President-elect Ebrahim Raisi, and other Iranian officials as part of a new nuclear deal between Iran and world powers. According to the report, Iran would return to compliance with the deal after "after the verification of the lifting of sanctions." The U.S. State Department does not comment on the report. Source: Yaghoub Fazeli, "Iran says US will delist IRGC, lift sanctions on Khamenei, Raisi if nuke deal revived," *Al Arabiya*, July 13, 2022, <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2021/07/13/Iran-says-US-will-delist-IRGC-lift-sanctions-on-Khamenei-Raisi-if-nuke-deal-revived>.
- **July 12, 2021:** The U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia finds Syria, Iran, the IRGC, the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security, and three Iranian banks—Markazi, Mellī, and Saderat—liable for an October 1, 2015, Hamas terror attack that killed Israeli-American Eitam Henkin and his wife Naama in the West Bank. The orphaned Henkin children and the Henkins' estate filed the lawsuit in 2019 under the terrorism exception to the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act. The ruling is the first time a U.S. court has found Markazi, Mellī, or Saderat liable for a terror attack by a foreign terrorist organization against a U.S. national. Sources: Globe Newswire, "In Historic Ruling, Court Finds Iran, Syria and Iranian Banks Responsible for Murder of American Citizen in Israel," Yahoo News, July 13, 2021, <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/historic-ruling-court-finds-iran-182600941.html>; "US court: Iran, Syria liable for deaths of Israeli couple in 2015 terror attack," *Times of Israel*, July 15, 2021, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/us-court-rules-iran-syria-liable-for-deaths-of-israeli-couple-in-2015-attack/>.
- **June 29, 2021 - :** During a visit to the White House in late June, outgoing Israeli President Reuven Rivlin delivers intelligence Qatar is providing financial support to the IRGC. The information reportedly alarms U.S. officials. The alleged revelation coincides with the U.S. closure of bases in Qatar storing weapons—U.S. Army Camp As Sayliyah-Main, Camp As Sayliyah-South, and an ammunition supply point named Falcon. The remaining supplies are transferred to Jordan. In July, the U.S. State Department announces it is opening an investigation into the alleged Qatari support for the IRGC. Sources: Jacob Magid, "Old friends: Rivlin leaves Washington, confident Biden is in Israel's corner," *Times of Israel*, June 29, 2021, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/old-friends-rivlin-leaves-washington-confident-biden-is-in-israels-corner/>; Benjamin Weinthal and Jothan Spyer, "US investigates Qatar over claims that it finances Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps," *Washington Examiner*, July 23, 2021, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/us-investigates-qatar-claims-finances-iran-revolutionary-guard>; J.P. Lawrence, "US military shifts Army basing from Qatar to Jordan in move that could provide leverage against Iran," *Stars and Stripes*, July 1, 2021, <https://www.stripes.com/branches/army/2021-07-01/us-military-closes-qatar-camps-in-move-that-could-play-into-iran-policy-2009140.html>.
- **June 22, 2021:** The United States seizes 33 websites used by the Iranian Islamic Radio and Television Union (IRTVU) and three websites operated by Kata'ib Hezbollah in violation of U.S. sanctions. The United States sanctioned IRTVU in October 2020 for being owned or controlled by the Quds Force. The 33 domains are owned by a U.S. company. IRTVU did not obtain a license from OFAC prior to utilizing the domain names. According to the U.S. government, the seized sites were "disguised as news organizations or media outlets" and "targeted the United States with disinformation campaigns and malign influence operations." Source: "United States Seizes Websites Used by the Iranian Islamic Radio and Television Union and Kata'ib Hezbollah," U.S. Department of Justice, June 22, 2021, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/united-states-seizes-websites-used-iranian-islamic-radio-and-television-union-and-kata-ib>.
- **June 10, 2021:** The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctions members of a smuggling network, led by Iran-based Houthi financier Sa'id al-Jamal, helping to fund the Quds Force and the Houthis in Yemen. According to the U.S. government, the network generates tens of millions of dollars in revenue from the sale of commodities. The government accuses Jamal of heading a network of front companies and vessels that smuggle Iranian fuel, petroleum products, and other commodities to customers throughout the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. A significant portion of the revenue generated from these sales is directed through a complex international network of intermediaries and exchange houses to the Houthis in Yemen, as well as the Quds Force, Hezbollah, and other groups. Source: "Treasury Sanctions Network Financing Houthi Aggression and Instability in Yemen," U.S. Department of the Treasury, June 10, 2021, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0221>.
- Speaking to supporters in Bushehr, Iran, Ahmadinejad reveals former Emir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani paid \$57 million in ransom in August 2012 to release 57 IRGC fighters who had been captured by the Free Syrian Army after their bus was ambushed in Syria. Ahmadinejad says he asked Al Thani to pay the ransom and Iran would reimburse him in the future. The emir paid the ransom, and the prisoners were released. Ahmadinejad says the emir refused to accept reimbursement and said he made the payment on behalf of the friendship between the Qatari and Iranian peoples. Ahmadinejad's statement is the first admission those captured were IRGC members. Iran had previously insisted they were civilians. Source: "Ahmadinejad reveals Qatar paid ransom for IRGC fighters in 2012," *Arab Weekly*, May 3, 2021, <https://theArabweekly.com/ahmadinejad-reveals-qatar-paid-ransom-irgc-fighters-2012>.
- **April 25, 2021:** The London-based Iran International Persian-language satellite news channel airs an interview with Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif complaining the IRGC have more influence in foreign affairs and the country's nuclear dossier than him. Zarif alleges he has "zero" influence over Iran's foreign policy and has "never been able to tell a military commander to do something in order to aid diplomacy." An Iranian foreign ministry spokesman charges the news station aired only segments of the interview, but he does not dispute Zarif's allegations. Source: "In leaked recording, Iran's

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Zarif criticises Guards' influence in diplomacy," Reuters, April 26, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/leaked-recording-irans-zarif-criticises-guards-influence-diplomacy-2021-04-26/>.

- **April 18, 2021:** The IRGC announces Quds Force deputy leader Mohammad Hejazi has died of heart disease. According to the IRGC, Hejazi was actively fighting against ISIS and "Takfiri terrorists," implying he was involved in operations in Iraq and Syria. Sources: "Top Iranian General Hejazi Dies At 65," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, April 19, 2021, <https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-general-hejazi-dies-/31210721.html>; "High-ranking Iranian general dies of heart disease at 65," Associated Press, April 19, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/iran-middle-east-lebanon-syria-iraq-1e44c01fedd6b62b225666a2ade83dc>.
- **April 12, 2021:** The European Union announces sanctions on eight Iranian officials, including Salami and Basij head Gholamreza Soleimani. The sanctions are in response to the individuals' violent response to the November 2019 demonstrations in Iran. The European Union also levies sanctions against three Iranian prisons, including Evin Prison, which houses political prisoners. Sources: Official Journal of the European Union, "COUNCIL IMPLEMENTING DECISION (CFSP) 2021/585 of 12 April 2021," Eur-Lex, April 12, 2021, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.LI.2021.124.01.0007.01.ENG&toc=OJ%3AL%3A2021%3A124I%3ATOC>; "Iran: Council concludes annual review of the EU's Iran human rights sanctions regime," European Council, April 12, 2021, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/04/12/iran-council-reviews-eu-human-rights-sanctions-regime/>.
- **April 6, 2021:** The Iran Saviz, a U.S.-sanctioned IRGC-linked civilian cargo ship, is damaged by a mine attached to the vessel off Yemen's coast in the Red Sea. The ship is reportedly a floating base for the IRGC. The explosion causes minor damage and no casualties. Israel reportedly is responsible. Sources: "Mine Blast Damages Iranian Ship In Red Sea Linked To IRGC," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, April 7, 2021, <https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-irgc-ship-mine-explosion-saviz/31190863.html>; Jon Gambrell, "Iran ship said to be Red Sea troop base off Yemen attacked," Associated Press, April 7, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/dubai-iran-united-arab-emirates-persian-gulf-tensions-yemen-9c89b8a5571468f1f12be535e8825212>.
- **February 13, 2021:** The IRGC holds a military drill in southern Iran. Salami warns the "enemy should take a lesson from the firepower showcased by the Iranian forces" during the drill. Source: "IRGC chief warns enemies of Iran's defensive firepower," Mehr News Agency, February 12, 2021, <https://en.mehrnews.com/news/169839/IRGC-chief-warns-enemies-of-Iran-s-defensive-firepower>.
- **February 1, 2021:** Ethiopian intelligence arrests a 15-member cell in Addis Ababa that was allegedly planning to attack the United Arab Emirates embassy. The cell's alleged leader, Ahmed Ismail, is arrested in Sweden. American and Israeli officials accuse Iranian intelligence agents of activating the cell to gather intelligence for revenge operations for the January 2020 death of Soleimani and the November 2020 death of Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh. Sources: "Report: Ethiopia arrests 16 in an Iranian cell planning attack on UAE embassy," Times of Israel, February 5, 2021, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/report-ethiopia-arrests-16-in-an-iranian-cell-planning-attack-on-uae-embassy/>; Declan Walsh, Eric Schmitt, Simon Marks, and Ronen Bergman, "In a Dangerous Game of Cat and Mouse, Iran Eyes New Targets in Africa," *New York Times*, February 15, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/15/world/africa/iran-ethiopia-plot.html?searchResultPosition=1>.
- **February 1, 2021:** An IRGC operation in Pakistan frees two IRGC soldiers held captive by Jaish ul-Adl ("Army of Justice") since 2017. Jaish ul-Adl captured 12 IRGC soldiers near the Iranian-Pakistani border in October 2017. Five were released in November 2018. The Pakistani army rescued four in March 2019. Jaish ul-Adl claims it is protecting the rights of Baloch Sunnis in Iran. Iran considers Jaish ul-Adl a terrorist group. Source: "Iran conducts surgical operation inside Pakistan to free its Revolutionary Guards soldiers," Times Now Digital, February 4, 2021, <https://www.timesnownews.com/international/article/iran-conducts-surgical-operation-inside-pakistan-to-free-its-revolutionary-guards-soldiers/716116>.
- **April 22, 2020:** The IRGC launches its first military satellite, Noor, into orbit. The IRGC claims the satellite achieves an orbit of 264 miles above the earth's surface. U.S. officials warn that Iran can use the same technology to launch longer range missiles, which the Iranian government denies. After Iran announces the satellite launch, U.S. President Donald Trump orders the U.S. Navy to fire on IRGC boats if they continue to harass U.S. ships in the Gulf. Iran responds it will destroy "any American terrorist force" if Iranian security in the Gulf is threatened. Sources: Parisa Hafezi and Phil Stewart, "Iran says it puts first military satellite into orbit, triggers U.S. condemnation," Reuters, April 22, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-satellite-idUSKCN2240LO>; Greg Myre, "Trump Instructs U.S. Navy To Fire On Iranian Boats If Harassed," NPR, April 22, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/04/22/840955446/trump-instructs-u-s-navy-to-fire-on-iranian-boats-if-harassed>; "Iran hits back after Trump says US will shoot Iranian gunboats 'out of the water,'" NPR, April 23, 2020, <https://news.sky.com/story/iran-hits-back-after-trump-says-us-will-shoot-iranian-gunboats-out-of-the-water-11977339>.
- **January 3, 2020:** A U.S. airstrike near Baghdad International Airport kills Soleimani and Kata'ib Hezbollah leader Jamal Jaafar Ibrahim, a.k.a. Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes. The Pentagon confirms shortly after that U.S. President Donald Trump ordered the strike because Soleimani was "actively developing plans" to attack U.S. troops and officials. Deputy Quds Force commander Brigadier General Ismail Ghaani is appointed commander shortly after. On January 7, the Iranian government increases its budgetary allocation to the Quds Force by more than €200 million over the following two months. Sources: Frank Miles, "Baghdad rocket attack kills Iranian military leaders including Gen. Qasim Soleimani, reports say," Fox News, January 2, 2020, <https://www.foxnews.com/world/rockets-baghdad-airport-injuries-reported>; Missy Ryan and Dan Lamothe, "Pentagon launched airstrike that killed Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani, Defense Sec. Mark Esper says," *Washington Post*, January 2, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/defense-secretary-says-iran-and-its-proxies-may-be-planning-fresh-attacks-on-us-personnel-in-iraq/2020/01/02/53b63f00-2d89-11ea-bcb3-ac6482c4a92f_story.html; Ahmed Rasheed and Ahmed Aboulenein, "U.S. says it disrupted 'imminent attack' with killing of top Iran commander," Reuters, last updated January 3, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-security-blast/u-s-says-it-disrupted-imminent-attack-with-killing-of-top-iran-commander-idUSKBN1Z11K8>; Najmeh Bozorgmehr, "Iran considers options for retribution over Soleimani killing," *Financial Times*, January 7, 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/d74a76c6-308e-11ea-9703-eea0cae3f0de>.
- The website Qatari Leaks reveals members of the IRGC made a secret trip to Doha, Qatar, to meet with Amiri Diwan in the administrative office of the Qatari Emir, allegedly to discuss coordination in squashing an Iraqi revolution. Source: "Qatari Leaks report exposes IRGC visit to Doha," Egypt Today, November 9, 2019, <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/77603/Qatari-Leaks-report-exposes-IRGC-visit-to-Doha>.
- On June 20, the IRGC shoots down a U.S. drone allegedly over Iranian airspace, which the IRGC calls a "clear message" to the United States about the "red line" of Iranian borders. U.S. officials insist the drone was in international airspace. U.S. President Donald Trump threatens a military response against Iran, which he calls off in favor of increased sanctions. On June 24, Trump signs an executive order imposing sanctions on Khamenei, whom Trump calls "ultimately responsible for the hostile conduct of the regime." Sources: Joshua Berlinger, Mohammed Tawfeeq, Barbara Starr, Shirzad Bozorgmehr, and Frederik Pleitgen, "Iran shoots down US drone aircraft," CNN, June 20, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/06/20/middleeast/iran-drone-claim-hnk-intl/index.html>; "Iran: New US sanctions target Supreme Leader Khamenei," BBC News, June 24, 2019,

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<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-48748544>.

- The United States announces on April 8 that it will designate the IRGC as a foreign terrorist organization (FTO) effective April 15. It is the first time the United States has designated a foreign government as an FTO. The Iranian government threatens to take "reciprocal action" in response to "this inappropriate and idiotic action." Iran's National Security Council adds the U.S. Central Command to the country's terror list and designates the United States as a supporter of terrorism. On April 21, Khomeini promotes General Hossein Salami to the rank of major-general and appoints him commander-in-chief of the IRGC, replacing Jafari. Salami previously served as the IRGC's deputy commander. Jafari had served as the IRGC head since 2007. Jafari is assigned to the position of director of the Hazrat-e Baqiatollah Social and Cultural Base, where he is responsible for "expanding and explaining education of Islamic revolution...." The new role is largely seen as a demotion by international observers. Sources: "Iran will retaliate in kind if U.S. designates Guards as terrorists: MPs," Reuters, April 7, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-iran-guards/iran-will-retaliate-in-kind-if-u-s-designates-guards-as-terrorists-mps-idUSKCN1RJ07U>; "Designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps," U.S. Department of State, April 8, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2019/04/290963.htm>; "The Latest: Iran responds to US, labels CENTCOM terrorist," Associated Press, April 8, 2019, <https://www.apnews.com/f635668cc3d6478984ddcb39dd7c78c8>; Rick Gladstone, "Iran's Supreme Leader Replaces Head of Revolutionary Guards," *New York Times*, April 21, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/21/world/middleeast/iran-revolutionary-guards-leader.html>; "IRGC commander leaves sooner than expected," Al-Monitor, April 22, 2019, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/04/iran-ircg-new-commander-jafari-salami-khamenei-trump.html>.
- **February 13, 2019:** A suicide car bomber drives into an IRGC military bus in southeastern Sistan and Baluchistan province, killing at least 27 IRGC border security guards and wounding at least 20 others. It is reportedly one of the worst terror attacks on the IRGC inside Iran. Iranian state media blame al-Qaeda-linked Jaish al-Adl. Iran pledges to retaliate. Source: Mehdi Jedinia, "Iran Vows Revenge for Terror Attack on IRGC," Voice of America, February 13, 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/a/iran-vows-revenge-for-terror-attack-on-revolutionary-guards/4785769.html>.
- **May 1, 2018:** Morocco severs diplomatic and economic ties with Iran after accusing the regime of providing funding, weapons, and training to Polisario Front independence fighters in the Western Sahara. The Moroccan government says it has proof that Iran-backed Hezbollah has provided resources to the rebels. Iran denies the charges. Later in the month, former Israeli ambassador to the U.N. Dore Gold cites intelligence that the IRGC is arming the Polisario through the Iranian embassy in Algeria. Sources: "Iran denies supporting Polisario after Morocco severs ties," Associated Press, May 2, 2018, <https://www.apnews.com/8ac8b53a0c474e01b6edf8a745a3823d/Iran-denies-supporting-Polisario-after-Morocco-severs-ties>; Amira El Masati, "Morocco cuts ties with Iran over Sahara weapons dispute," Associated Press, May 1, 2018, <https://www.apnews.com/3aebb7da756940c99434b420a45aa84b/Morocco-cuts-ties-with-Iran-over-Sahara-weapons-dispute>; Tom Newton Dunn, "IRAN'S WAR ON WEST Iran opens up new front in global battle against Western allies by funding rebel group in North Africa," *Sun* (London), May 27, 2018, <https://wwwthesun.co.uk/news/6391291/iran-opens-up-new-front-in-global-battle-against-western-allies-by-funding-rebel-group-in-north-africa/>.
- **April 6, 2018:** The Baqir Brigade, a Syrian militia controlled by the IRGC, declares jihad against U.S. and allied forces in Syria. Based in the Aleppo region, the Baqir Brigade considers Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei as one of its leaders and has acknowledged receiving weapons and training from the IRGC. Soleimani has also been photographed meeting with the group's leaders. Source: Amir Toumaj and Romany Shaker, "IRGC-controlled Syrian militia declares jihad against US forces in Syria," *Long War Journal*, April 13, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/04/ircg-controlled-syrian-militia-declares-jihad-against-us-forces-in-syria.php>.
- On April 9, Israel allegedly launches an airstrike on the T-4 Syrian air force base in Homs, Syria, killing four Iranian military advisers. The base is reportedly used to coordinate Iranian-backed militias. Among the Iranian dead is Colonel Mehdi Dehghan, head of Iran's drone program. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, Israel coordinated the strike with the United States. The Iranian government vows retaliation against Israel, which makes preparations for the IRGC to launch an airstrike. The Israeli military distributes a map of Iranian bases in Syria to media. On April 29, an overnight attack on Syrian bases used by Iranian-backed militias kills more than a dozen, including several Iranians. Over 60 militia fighters are wounded. Israel is suspected. Sources: Ben Hubbard and David M. Halbfinger, "Iran-Israel Conflict Escalates in Shadow of Syrian Civil War," *New York Times*, April 9, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/09/world/middleeast/syria-russia-israel-air-base.html>; Judah Ari Gross, "Bracing for Iran missile or drone strikes, IDF reveals Iranian targets in Syria," *Times of Israel*, April 17, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-prepares-for-iranian-revenge-to-include-missile-attacks-drone-strikes/>; Dion Nissenbaum and Rory Jones, "Israel Conferred With U.S. on Strike in Syria to Target Iranian War Gear," *Wall Street Journal*, April 17, 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/israel-conferred-with-u-s-on-strike-in-syria-to-target-iranian-war-gear-1524001066>; Bassem Mroue and Sarah El Deeb, "Missile strikes in Syria kill over a dozen, mostly Iranians," Associated Press, April 30, 2018, <https://www.apnews.com/89c19b1d9c48ba6243be5e84ea293/Missile-strikes-in-Syria-kill-over-a-dozen-mostly-Iranians>.
- **February 10, 2018:** An Iranian-built drone launches from the Syrian T-4 air force base in Homs, Syria, and crosses into Israeli airspace. The Israeli military shoots down the drone and launches a counterattack against T-4. Israeli media call the drone an "unprecedented" escalation of the conflict between Israel and Iran. Further analysis by the Israeli military reveals that the drone had been carrying explosives. Sources: Judah Ari Gross, "Bracing for Iran missile or drone strikes, IDF reveals Iranian targets in Syria," *Times of Israel*, April 17, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-prepares-for-iranian-revenge-to-include-missile-attacks-drone-strikes/>; Alexander Fulbright, "Iranian drone shot down in northern Israel in February was armed with explosives," *Times of Israel*, April 13, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/iranian-drone-shot-down-in-northern-israel-in-february-was-armed-with-explosives/>.
- **December 2, 2017:** Israel reportedly launches an airstrike on an Iranian position in Syria, killing 12 IRGC members. The IRGC had reportedly been working to build a military base near Damascus. The Syrian and Iranian governments do not comment on the strike. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had previously warned the Syrian government that Israel would not tolerate an Iranian military presence in Syria. Sources: Shari Miller, "Israeli bomber jets 'kill 12 members of Iran's Revolutionary Guard' in Syrian airstrike," *Daily Mail*, December 3, 2017, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5140939/Israeli-jets-kill-12-Irans-Revolutionary-Guard.html>; "12 Iranians killed in 'Israeli strike' in Syria, Arab media reports say," *i24 News*, December 2, 2017, <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/middle-east/161747-171202-12-iranians-killed-in-israeli-strike-in-syria-arabic-media-reports>; Rory Jones, "Israel Warns Syria About Iranian Role," *Wall Street Journal*, December 4, 2017, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/israel-warns-syria-about-iranian-role-1512383401>.
- **October 13, 2017:** The United States labels the IRGC as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist and institutes financial sanctions against the group. Iran promises to "strongly respond to any action" against the IRGC. Sources: "Non-proliferation Designations; Iran Designations; Counter Terrorism Designation Update," U.S. Department of the Treasury, October 13, 2017, <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20171013.aspx>; "Treasury Designates the IRGC under Terrorism Authority and Targets IRGC and Military Supporters under Counter-Proliferation Authority," U.S. Department of the Treasury, October 13, 2017, <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/sm0177.aspx>; "Iran says will respond strongly to any action against its military forces: TV," Reuters, October 13, 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear-reaction/iran-says-will-respond-strongly-to-any-action-against-its-military-forces-tv-idUSKBN1C246>.
- **September 21, 2014:** Houthi rebels, aided by the IRGC Quds Force, take over Yemen's capital city of Sanaa. That December, an Iranian official confirms the IRGC Quds Force has "a few hundred" military personnel in Yemen training Houthi rebels. Sources: Yara Bayoumy and Mohammed Ghobari, "Iranian Support Seen Crucial for Yemen's Houthis," Reuters, December 15, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/15/us-yemen-houthis-iran>.

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insight-idUSKBN0JT17A20141215; Yara Bayoumy and Mohammed Ghobari, "Iranian Support Seen Crucial for Yemen's Houthis," Reuters, December 15, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/15/us-yemen-houthis-iran-insight-idUSKBN0JT17A20141215>.

- **August 26, 2014:** The Saudi-owned Asharq *Al-Awsat* newspaper, citing a coalition of Shiite parties, including politicians with close links to Tehran, reports that IRGC Quds Force Deputy Commander Hossein Hamedani would replace Quds Force Commander Qasem Soleimani because of the latter's inability to secure a third term for Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.
The website Nuclear Iran, which has ties to Saeed Jalili, former nuclear negotiator and former secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, denies the reports. Source: Arash Karami, "Iran Website Denies Qasem Soleimani Sidelined," *Al-Monitor*, August 28, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/08/iran-quds-suleimani-fired-guard-corps-jalili-nuclear.html>.
- IRGC Commander Mohammad Reza Naqdi reveals Iran has begun arming militants in the West Bank and supplying weaponry and training to Hamas during its conflict with Israel earlier that summer.
Source: "Basij Commander: Arming West Bank Started," Fars News Agency, August 27, 2014, <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13930605000983>.
- - : On June 11, Iran dispatches IRGC units to Iraq to combat ISIS.
In July, reports surface that Quds Force Commander Qasem Soleimani is personally overseeing the fight against ISIS in Iraq. Sources: Farnaz Fassihi, "Iran Deploys Revolutionary Guard Forces to Fight Militants in Iraq, Iranian Security Sources Say," *Wall Street Journal*, June 12, 2014, <http://online.wsj.com/articles/iran-deploys-forces-to-fight-al-qaeda-inspired-militants-in-iraq-iranian-security-sources-1402592470>; Qassim Abdul-Zahra and Hamza Hendawi, "Iranian commanders on front line of Iraq's fight," Associated Press, July 17, 2014, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/iranian-commanders-front-line-iraqs-fight>.
- **January 11, 2014:** General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, head of the IRGC's aerospace division, announces that Hezbollah's missile capabilities has greatly improved and the group is able to target any location in Israel.
Source: Ali Akbar Dareini, "Iran commander: Hezbollah's missile power improved," Associated Press, January 11, 2014, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/iran-commander-hezbollahs-missile-power-improved>.
- **August 19, 2013:** Iranian media report that the IRGC intends to teach students how to bring down aerial drones by hacking their computer systems.
Source: "Iran to teach drone-hunting to school students," Associated Press, August 19, 2013, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/iran-teach-drone-hunting-school-students>.
- **May 19, 2013 - June 5, 2013:** Syrian army forces, aided by Hezbollah, retake the rebel-controlled Syrian city of Qusair after two weeks of fighting that leaves more than 500 rebels dead and more than 1,000 people wounded.
IRGC Quds Force Commander Qasem Soleimani reportedly orchestrated the Syrian army offensive and Hezbollah's participation. Sources: "Syria Army Storms Rebel-Held Town," BBC News, May 19, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-22586378>; "Syrian Army Retakes Town of Qusair," BBC News, June 5, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-22778310>; Mariam Karouny, "Syrian Rebels Lose Strategic Town in Boost for Assad," Reuters, June 5, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/06/05/us-syria-crisis-idUSBRE9530VE20130605>; Dexter Filkins, "The Shadow Commander," *New Yorker*, September 23, 2013, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/09/30/the-shadow-commander>.
- An Argentine prosecutor releases a 500-page indictment in the AMIA bombing case, accusing Iran of building terrorist networks in Argentina and other Latin American countries for the purpose of conducting terrorist attacks.
The indictment lists Mohsen Rabbani, a former Iranian cultural attaché in Argentina, as a key leader directing the AMIA bombing. Source: "AMIA: Prosecutor Accuses Iran of Infiltrating South American Countries," *Buenos Aires Herald*, May 29, 2013, <http://www.buenosairesherald.com/article/132260/amia-prosecutor-nisman-accuses-iran-fugitive-rabbani-of-infiltrating-several-south-american-countries>.
- IRGC Commander Mohammad Ali Jafari admits the IRGC has transferred long-range missile technology to Hamas so the terrorist group can build an unlimited number of missiles.
Source: Thomas Erdbrink, "Iranian Missiles in Gaza Give Tehran Government a Lift," *New York Times*, November 21, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/22/world/middleeast/iran-missiles-in-gaza-give-tehran-government-a-lift.html>.
- Ayatollah Khamenei reportedly orders the IRGC Quds Force to step up attacks against Western targets in retaliation for U.S.-backing of Syrian rebels in that country's civil war.
Source: Con Coughlin, "Iran's Supreme Leader Orders Fresh Terror Attacks on West," *Telegraph* (London), August 22, 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/9490878/Irans-supreme-leader-orders-fresh-terror-attacks-on-West.html>.
- A New York Police Department intelligence report links the IRGC or its proxies to nine foiled international plots against Jewish or Israeli targets.
Source: Mark Hosenball, "Exclusive: New York Police Link Nine 2012 Plots to Iran, Proxies," Reuters, July 20, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/07/20/us-iran-hezbollah-plots-idUSBRE86JOSW20120720>.
- **June 19, 2012:** Kenyan police arrest two Iranians, Ahmad Abolfathi Mohammad and Sayed Mansour Mousavi, for allegedly planning attacks against Israeli and American targets in the country.
Mohammad and Mousavi are believed to be IRGC members. Source: Randy Kreider, "Iranians Planned to Attack US, Israeli Targets in Kenya: Officials," ABC News, July 2, 2012, <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/iranians-planned-attack-us-israeli-targets-kenya-officials/story?id=16699615>.
- **March 14, 2012:** Azerbaijan announces the arrest of 22 Azerbaijani citizens accused of plotting with the IRGC against the American and Israeli embassies.
Source: "Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps," Anti-Defamation League, April 2012, <http://archive.adl.org/nr/exeres/a8f45a87-2b3d-42e9-95cd-98bbdd80b164.db7611a2-02cd-43af-8147-649e26813571.frameless.html>.

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- The U.S. Department of the Treasury designates IRGC Quds Force General Gholamreza Baghbani as a Specially Designated Narcotics Trafficker under the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (Kingpin Act).
This is the first use of the Kingpin Act against an Iranian official. Source: "Treasury Designates Iranian Quds Force General Overseeing Afghan Heroin Trafficking through Iran," U.S. Department of the Treasury, March 7, 2012, <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg1444.aspx>.
- **February 21, 2012:** The Azerbaijani National Security Ministry announces the arrest of an unspecified number of people working for the IRGC and Hezbollah.
The suspects are accused of planning attacks against the Israeli embassy and a Jewish cultural center. Source: "Access ADL: Israeli Diplomats in India and Georgia Latest Targets Abroad," Anti-Defamation League, February 14, 2012, <http://accessadl.blogspot.com/2012/02/israeli-diplomats-in-india-and-georgia.html>.
- **February 13, 2012:** An Israeli diplomat's wife is wounded in a car bomb attack in New Delhi, which is credited to the IRGC.
Members of the IRGC had reportedly discussed the plan in 2011 with an Indian journalist, who claimed he had been in touch with the IRGC for almost 10 years. Source: Neeraj Chauhan, "Cops Name Iran Military Arm for Attack on Israeli Diplomat," *Times of India*, July 30, 2012, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/Cops-name-iran-military-arm-for-attack-on-israeli-diplomat/articleshow/15263013.cms>.
- Quds Force Commander Qasem Soleimani pledges additional military aid to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in Syria during a meeting in Syria.
Source: Jay Solomon and Siobhan Gorman, "Iran's Spymaster Counters U.S. Moves in the Mideast," *Wall Street Journal*, April 6, 2012, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303816504577305742884577460>.
- The Quds Force provides training to Taliban forces in Afghanistan on small unit tactics, small arms, explosives and indirect fire weapons such as mortars, artillery and rockets.
Source: "Country Report on Terrorism 2012 State Sponsors of Terrorism Overview," U.S. Department of State, May 30, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2012/209985.htm>.
- After the United Kingdom breaks diplomatic ties with Iran, hundreds of protesters allegedly led by the Basij overrun the British embassy in Tehran.
Source: Robert F. Worth and Rick Gladstone, "In Tehran, Protesters Storm British Embassy," *New York Times*, November 29, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/30/world/middleeast/tehran-protesters-storm-british-embassy.html>.
- **October 11, 2011:** The U.S. Department of Treasury names five people, including four members of the IRGC Quds Force, for suspected involvement in a plot earlier that month to assassinate the Saudi ambassador to the United States.
Source: "Treasury Sanctions Five Individual Tied to Iranian Ploy to Assassinate the Saudi Arabian Ambassador to the United States," U.S. Department of the Treasury, October 11, 2011, <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/pages/tg1320.aspx>.
- **April 29, 2011:** President Obama issues Executive Order 13572, placing sanctions on perpetrators of human rights abuses in Syria, including the IRGC Quds Force, for its use of violence and torture against peaceful protesters.
Source: "Text of H.R. 854: Quds Force Terrorist Designation Act (Introduced Version)," GovTrack.us, February 27, 2013, <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/hr854/text..>
- The U.S. and EU accuse the IRGC Quds Force of providing equipment and support to the Syrian regime to suppress revolts.
Source: Greg Bruno, "State Sponsors: Iran," Council on Foreign Relations, October 13, 2011, <http://www.cfr.org/iran/state-sponsors-iran/p9362>.
- Using teargas, batons and live fire, the Basij assists riot police to quell protesters chanting anti-government slogans in Tehran.
Source: Saeed Kamali Dehghan, "Iran Protests See Reinvigorated Activists Take to the Streets in Thousands," *Guardian* (London), February 14, 2011, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/feb/14/iran-protests-reinvigorated-activists>.
- The IRGC Quds Force increases its number of operatives in Venezuela in order to build terrorist networks throughout the region so they may be called upon in case of a military conflict with the U.S. over Iran's nuclear program.
Source: Bill Gertz, "Iran Boosts Quds Shock Troops in Venezuela," *Washington Times*, April 21, 2010, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/apr/21/iran-boosts-quds-shock-troops-in-venezuela/>.
- IRGC Commander Mohammad Ali Jafari reportedly slaps President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad across the face for suggesting that the government relax restrictions on the media during a Supreme National Security Council meeting.
Source: Robert Mackey, "Ahmadinejad Was Slapped by General, Leaked Cable Says," *New York Times*, January 3, 2011, <http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/01/03/ahmadinejad-was-slapped-by-general-leaked-cable-says/>.
- The IRGC Quds Force and Hezbollah agree to cooperate in carrying out global attacks against Israeli, U.S., and Western targets.
Source: Matthew Levitt, *Hizballah and the Quds Force in Iran's Shadow War with the West* (Washington: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2013), 1, January 2013, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyFocus123.pdf>.
- **December 30, 2009:** British computer expert Peter Moore is released after being taken hostage by Iraqi Shiite militants in 2007. Moore's four security guards who were captured with him are reported dead.
The *Guardian* reveals that the IRGC kidnapped and held the four men in Quds Force-run prisons. Source: Mona Mahmood, Maggie O'Kane, and Guy Grandjean, "Revealed: Hand of Iran behind Britons' Baghdad Kidnapping," *Guardian* (London), December 30, 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/dec/30/iran-britons-baghdad-kidnapping>.
- The Iranian regime announces plans to create 6,000 Basij centers in elementary schools across the country to promote the ideals of the Islamic Revolution.

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Naqdi announces a new era of “super media power” cooperation between the media and the IRGC. Source: Robert F. Worth, “Iran Expanding Effort to Stifle the Opposition,” *New York Times*, November 24, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/24/world/middleeast/24iran.html>.

- IRGC Commander Mohammad Ali Jafari tells Iranian media that anyone speaking against the government would be labeled an enemy of the state.
Source: Michael Slackman, “Iran Warns West Against Interference,” *New York Times*, July 7, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/07/world/middleeast/07iran.html>.
- The Quds Force is implicated in custodial deaths, killing election protesters, and other acts of politically motivated violence, including torture, beatings, and rape.
Source: “Text of H.R. 854: Qods Force Terrorist Designation Act (Introduced Version),” GovTrack.us, February 27, 2013, <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/hr854/text>.
- **June 12, 2009:** Following Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s reelection as president of Iran, protests break out in Tehran alleging electoral fraud. The Basij violently suppresses protests in Tehran. Source: “Ahmadinejad Hails Election as Protests Grow,” CNN, June 13, 2009, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/06/13/iran.election/index.html>.
- IRGC forces take control of Iranian naval operations in the Persian Gulf.
Source: “Iran’s Revolutionary Guards Patrol Persian Gulf, U.S. Says,” CNN, November 29, 2007, <http://www.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/meast/11/29/iran.navy/index.html>.
- **October 25, 2007:** The U.S. designates the Quds Force as a terror supporting organization for supporting proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
Source: “Text of H.R. 854: Qods Force Terrorist Designation Act (Introduced Version),” GovTrack.us, February 27, 2013, <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/hr854/text>.
- **September 29, 2007:** Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei gives the IRGC’s commander total authority over the Basij as part of a broader reorganization of the IRGC to face possible foreign attack or invasion.
Source: Ali Alfoneh, “What Do Structural Changes in the Revolutionary Guards Mean?” AEI Middle Eastern Outlook, no. 7, September 2008, http://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/20080923_23487MEO07_g.pdf.
- Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair accuses “elements of the Iranian regime” of arming the Taliban in Afghanistan.
Source: Fisman Abrashi, “Iran’s President ‘Doubts’ Arming Taliban,” *USA Today*, August 14, 2007, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/topstories/2007-08-14-2803528991_x.htm.
- **May 29, 2007:** Shiite militants in Baghdad kidnap British computer expert Peter Moore and four private security guards.
A year-long investigation by the *Guardian* concludes in 2009 that the men were kidnapped at the IRGC’s behest and held in a Quds Force detention center inside Iran where they were later murdered. Sources: Sean Rayment and Damien McElroy, “British Hostages in Iraq Named after Bodies Found,” *Telegraph* (London), June 21, 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/5594701/British-hostages-in-iraq-named-after-bodies-found.html>; “Revealed: Hand of Iran Behind Britons’ Baghdad Kidnapping,” *Guardian* (London), December 30, 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/dec/30/iran-britons-baghdad-kidnapping>.
- **May 28, 2007:** U.S. and Iranian representatives meet in Iraq to discuss the deteriorating security situation.
The Iranian ambassador continuously calls for breaks to report back to and seek further instructions from IRGC Quds Force Commander Qasem Soleimani. Sources: John Ward Anderson, “U.S., Iran Open Dialogue On Iraq,” *Washington Post*, May 29, 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/05/28/AR2007052800080.htm>; Bozorgmehr Sharafedin, “Iran’s Qasem Soleimani Wields Power behind the Scenes in Iraq,” BBC News, June 17, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27883162>.
- U.S. forces detain five IRGC-Quds Force members during a raid of the Iranian government’s liaison office in Irbil, Iraq, for conspiring with Iraqi militants to attack U.S. forces.
Source: Mary Jordan and Robin Wright, “Iran Seizes 15 British Seamen,” *Washington Post*, March 24, 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/23/AR2007032300574.html>.
- **December 22, 2006:** A U.S. federal judge rules that Iran is responsible for the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing and orders the Iranian government to pay \$254 million to the families of 17 American victims.
Source: Carol D. Leonnig, “Iran Held Liable In Khobar Attack,” *Washington Post*, December 23, 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/22/AR2006122200455.html>
- The IRGC Quds Force reportedly trains members of Lebanese Hezbollah in Qom, Iran.
Source: Michael R. Gordon and Andrew W. Lehren, “Leaked Reports Detail Iran’s Aid for Iraqi Militias,” *New York Times*, October 22, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/23/world/middleeast/23iran.html>.
- **August 3, 2005:** Hardliner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a Basij volunteer during the Iran-Iraq War, is sworn in as Iran’s president.
Sources: Frederic Wehrey et al., *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps* (Santa Monica, Arlington, and Pittsburgh: RAND Corporation, 2009), 103, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG821.pdf; “Iran Hardliner Becomes President,” BBC News, August 3, 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4740441.stm.
- **February 14, 2005:** A bombing in Beirut kills 23 people, including former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri.
Hezbollah is suspected of carrying out the attack at the instigation of Iran. Source: Dexter Filkins, “The Shadow Commander,” *New Yorker*, September 23, 2013, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/09/30/the-shadow-commander>.
- The U.S. Congress agrees to a request by President George W. Bush to fund covert operations from Iraq into Iran to combat the IRGC’s Quds Force, gather intelligence on Iranian nuclear strategy, and destabilize the religious leadership.
Source: Seymour M. Hersh, “Preparing the Battlefield,” *New Yorker*, July 7, 2008, http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/07/07/080707fa_fact_hersh?currentPage=all.

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- The IRGC forces the newly opened Imam Khomeini Airport to close.
Source: Frederic Wehrey et al., *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps* (Santa Monica, Arlington, and Pittsburgh: RAND Corporation, 2009), 111, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG821.pdf.
- The Iranian government institutes a constitutional amendment allowing young men to avoid active military service by joining the Basij.
Source: Frederic Wehrey et al., *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps* (Santa Monica, Arlington, and Pittsburgh: RAND Corporation, 2009), 46, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG821.pdf.
- The Basij militia quashes anti-regime student protests.
Source: Ali Alfoneh, "The Basij Resistance Force | The Iran Primer," United States Institute of Peace, accessed February 27, 2015, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/basij-resistance-force>.
- In response to celebrations across Iran after the country wins a spot in soccer's World Cup, the Iranian regime decides to revamp the Basij in order to reclaim control of the streets.
Source: Neil Macfarquhar, "Shadowy Iranian Vigilantes Vow Bolder Action," *New York Times*, June 19, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/19/world/middleeast/19basij.html>.
- Following the election of purported reformist Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, the IRGC begins to reassert itself as a traditionalist intelligence agency loyal to the supreme leader.
The IRGC's move is in reaction to what the IRGC feels was the Ministry of Intelligence and Security's (MOIS) increasingly sympathetic position towards Khatami. Source: Frederic Wehrey et al., *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps* (Santa Monica, Arlington, and Pittsburgh: RAND Corporation, 2009), 30, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG821.pdf.
- **June 25, 1996:** A truck bomb blows up a dormitory complex at Saudi Arabia's Khobar Towers, a military housing complex for U.S. Air Force pilots and staff.
Nineteen Americans are killed and 372 wounded. An FBI investigation finds Shiite militants "inspired, supported, and directed by elements of the Iranian government" responsible for the bombing. Sources: "Attorney General Statement," U.S. Department of Justice, June 21, 2001, <http://www.fas.org/irp/news/2001/06/khobar.html>; *United States vs. al-Mughassil*, FindLaw, June 19, 2001, <http://news.findlaw.com/hdocs/docs/khobar/khobarindict61901.pdf>.
- **February 25, 1996:** Twin Hamas bus bombings in Jerusalem kill 40 people.
A U.S. court later holds Iran responsible for the attack. Source: Rachel Gottlieb, "Parents of Two Bombing Victims Take on Iran," *Hartford Courant*, February 9, 1999, http://articles.courant.com/1999-02-09/news/9902090099_1_gaza-strip-bombing-killed.
- **July 18, 1994:** A truck bombing at the AMIA Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, Argentina kills over 80 and wounds 300.
Hezbollah and the IRGC are suspected of orchestrating the attack and Argentine officials issue an indictment in 2006 for former Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani for involvement in the attack. Source: "Iran Charged over Argentina Bomb," BBC News, October 25, 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/6085768.stm>.
- **September 17, 1992:** Four Iranian Kurdish dissidents are assassinated at Mykonos, a Greek restaurant in Berlin, Germany.
In 1997, a German court issues an international arrest warrant for Iranian Intelligence Minister Hojjat al-Islam Ali Fallahian after determining that he had ordered the dissidents' assassination with the knowledge of Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani is also implicated. Source: Roya Hakakian, "Looking Back at the Mykonos Trial: The End of the Dispensable Iranian," *Spiegel Online*, October 4, 2007, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/looking-back-at-the-mykonos-trial-the-end-of-the-dispensable-iranian-a-476369.html>.
- **March 17, 1992:** A suicide bomber in a pickup truck blows up at the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina, killing 29 and wounding 242.
Hezbollah admits to orchestrating the attack. Source: Matthew Levitt, "Hezbollah's 1992 Attack in Argentina Is a Warning for Modern-Day Europe," *Atlantic*, March 19, 2013, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/03/hezbollahs-1992-attack-in-argentina-is-a-warning-for-modern-day-europe/274160/>.
- **July 13, 1989:** Iranian Kurdish dissident Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou is shot to death in Vienna, Austria, along with Fadil Rasoul and Abdullah Ghaderi, after being lured to a supposed negotiation with Iranian regime officials.
The three Iranians who committed the murders were arrested by Austrian authorities but later released. Austrian police confirmed that at least one of the suspected killers carried an Iranian diplomatic passport. However, the suspected killers were allowed to return to Iran after pressure from the Iranian regime. Sources: "Iranian Wounded in Vienna Killings," *Los Angeles Times*, July 17, 1989, http://articles.latimes.com/1989-07-17/news/mn-2921_1_iranian-kurdish; "Iranian President Allegedly Involved in Vienna Murders," *Austrian Times*, June 18, 2009, <http://www.austriantimes.at/index.php?id=14092>.
- The IRGC cedes some of its intelligence-gathering role to Iran's newly created Ministry of Intelligence and National Security (MOIS).
Source: Frederic Wehrey et al., *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps* (Santa Monica, Arlington, and Pittsburgh: RAND Corporation, 2009), 30, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG821.pdf.
- **October 23, 1983:** A suicide truck bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut kills 241 U.S. service personnel.
Hezbollah is suspected. Source: "Beirut Marine Barracks Bombing Fast Facts," CNN, June 13, 2013, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/06/13/world/meast/beirut-marine-barracks-bombing-fast-facts/index.html>.
- **April 18, 1983:** A Hezbollah suicide attack on the U.S. embassy in Beirut kills 63 and wounds 120.
Source: "Incident Summary for GTDID: 198304180001," Global Terrorism Database, START: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, accessed February 27, 2015, <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=198304180001>.
- Hezbollah, a pro-Shiite Islamist group, emerges in Lebanon during the country's 15-year civil war.
The IRGC provides Hezbollah with crucial financial support and training. Source: Jonathan Masters and Zachary Laub, "Hezbollah (a.k.a. Hizbollah, Hizbu'llah)," Council on Foreign Relations, January 3, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/lebanon/hezbollah-k-hizbollah-hizbullah/p9155>.

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- **June 28, 1981:** The People's Mojahedin of Iran (MEK) bombs the headquarters of the regime's ruling Islamic Republic Party, killing 72 government officials.
The IRGC and Basij execute 7,000 MEK members in retaliation for the bombing. Source: Frederic Wehrey et al., *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps* (Santa Monica, Arlington, and Pittsburgh: RAND Corporation, 2009), 110, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG821.pdf.
- - : The IRGC becomes a major player in Iran's operations abroad during the Iran-Iraq war.
Sources: "Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)," United Against Nuclear Iran, accessed February 14, 2017, <https://www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com/report/islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps-irgc>; Greg Bruno, Jayshree Bajoria, and Jonathan Masters, "Iran's Revolutionary Guards," Council on Foreign Relations, June 14, 2013, <http://www.cfr.org/iran/irans-revolutionary-guards/p14324>.
- A Basij informant prevents a royalist coup (called the "Nojeh coup") by infiltrating the group and reporting back to the Ayatollah's regime.
Source: Frederic Wehrey et al., *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps* (Santa Monica, Arlington, and Pittsburgh: RAND Corporation, 2009), 27, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG821.pdf.
- **April 30, 1980:** Khomeini's regime creates "The people's militia," or Basij.
Source: Ali Alfoneh, "The Basij Resistance Force | The Iran Primer," United States Institute of Peace, accessed February 27, 2015, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/basij-resistance-force>.
- **November 25, 1979:** Khomeini calls for the creation of a "twenty million man army."
Source: Ali Alfoneh, "The Basij Resistance Force | The Iran Primer," United States Institute of Peace, accessed February 27, 2015, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/basij-resistance-force>.
- **May 5, 1979:** Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini creates the IRGC to be the "ideological custodian charged with defending the Islamic Republic against internal and external threats."
Source: Greg Bruno, Jayshree Bajoria, and Jonathan Masters, "Iran's Revolutionary Guards," Council on Foreign Relations, June 14, 2013, <http://www.cfr.org/iran/irans-revolutionary-guards/p14324>.

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Violent history:

IRGC and IRGC-Quds Force

The Council on Foreign Relations describe the IRGC and Quds Force as Iran’s “primary mechanism for cultivating and supporting terrorists abroad.”¹⁰⁵ According to a 2010 Pentagon report, the Quds Force “maintains operational capabilities around the world,” and “it is well established in the Middle East and North Africa and recent years have witnessed an increased presence in Latin America, particularly Venezuela.”¹⁰⁶

Further, the report concluded that if “U.S. involvement in conflict in these regions deepens, contact with the IRGC-QF, directly or through extremist groups it supports, will be more frequent and consequential.”¹⁰⁷ Illustrating this point, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in 2012 reportedly ordered the Quds Force to step up attacks against Western targets in retaliation for U.S.-backing of Syrian rebels in that country’s civil war.¹⁰⁸

According to a 2013 bill in the U.S. House of Representatives to label the Quds Force a terrorist organization, the Quds Force “stations operatives in foreign embassies, charities, and religious and cultural institutions to foster relationships, often building on existing socio-economic ties with the well-established Shia Diaspora, and recent years have witnessed an increased presence in Latin America.”¹⁰⁹

The IRGC and IRGC-QF have been accused of the following acts in individual countries:

Afghanistan:

- The Pentagon has accused the Iranian regime of providing “ongoing” support to insurgents – and insurgent leaders Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Ismail Khan in particular – through Quds forces, which are working with non-governmental organizations and political opposition.¹¹⁰ “Arms caches have been recently uncovered [in Afghanistan] with large amounts of Iranian-manufactured weapons, to include 107 millimeter rockets, which we assess IRGC-QF delivered to Afghan militants,” according to a 2010 Pentagon report.¹¹¹
- The U.S. State Department suspects Iran, through the IRGC-QF, of providing training and weapons—including “small arms and associated ammunition, rocket propelled grenades, mortar rounds, 107mm rockets, and plastic explosives—to Taliban fighters in Afghanistan.”¹¹²

Argentina:

- On July 18, 1994, a suicide bomber exploded at the Argentine Jewish Mutual Association (AMIA) community center in Buenos Aires, killing 85 people and wounding 300.¹¹³ Hezbollah and Iran are suspected.
- In 2007, Argentine prosecutors named several Iranian suspects in the AMIA bombing, including then Defense Minister Gen Ahmed Vahidi, who was the commander of a special unit of the IRGC at the time of the attack.¹¹⁴
- In May 2013, an Argentine prosecutor releases a 500-page indictment in the AMIA bombing case, in which he accuses Iran of creating terrorist networks in Argentine and other Latin American countries to conduct terrorist attacks. He names Mohsen Rabbani, a former Iranian cultural attaché in Argentine, as a key leader directing the attack.¹¹⁵

Austria:

- On July 13, 1989, Iranian Kurdish dissident Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou was shot to death along with Fadol Rasoul and Abdullah Ghaderi after being lured to a supposed negotiation with Iranian government officials. The three Iranians who committed the murders were arrested by Austrian authorities, but later released. Austrian police confirmed that at least one of the suspected killers was bearing an Iranian diplomatic passport.¹¹⁶ However, the suspected killers were allowed to leave Austria and return to Iran “after the Austrian government came under massive pressure from the Iranian government.”¹¹⁷ Iran’s Minister of Information and Security, Ali Fallahian, later boasted of the assassinations in a televised interview, saying: “we were able to deal vital blows to the cadres” of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, Ghassemlou’s group.¹¹⁸

Azerbaijan:

- In January 2012, Azerbaijani authorities arrested at least two local men, linked to Iranian intelligence agencies, for plotting to attack the Israeli ambassador to Azerbaijan and a local rabbi.¹¹⁹

Bahrain:

- The government of Bahrain has accused the Quds Force of providing explosives training to Bahraini militants opposed to the government. On December 29, 2013, the Bahraini Coast Guard intercepted a speedboat carrying weaponry and explosives meant for Shiite militants in Bahrain,

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particularly the 14 February Youth Coalition.¹²⁰ Following the incident, authorities discovered weapons caches in Bahrain, dismantled a car bomb, and arrested 15 Bahraini nationals.¹²¹

Germany:

- Four Iranian Kurdish dissidents are assassinated at Mykonos, a Greek restaurant in Berlin. In 1997, a German court issued an international arrest warrant for Iranian Intelligence Minister Hojjat al-Islam Ali Fallahian, after determining that he had ordered the assassination with the knowledge of Supreme Leader Ali Khomeini.¹²² A report by Amnesty International noted that the Mykonos killings constituted part of a broader pattern of murder of Iranian political dissidents, with reports of state-directed assassinations both inside Iran and in neighboring Turkey.¹²³

India:

- Delhi Police accused the IRGC of involvement in a February 13, 2012, bomb attack against an Israeli diplomat in New Delhi. According to the *Times of India*, members of the IRGC had discussed the plan with an Indian journalist in 2011, and the journalist, Syed Mohammad Ahmad Kazmi, had been in touch with the IRGC for almost 10 years.¹²⁴

Iran:

- The IRGC has been accused of numerous violent acts against the Iranian population, particularly during the 2009 protests against Ahmadinejad's reelection. The Basij paramilitary organization is accused of brutally suppressing protests after the June 2009 election.¹²⁵
- According to Human Rights Watch, hundreds of protesters were arrested after the June 12, 2009, elections and the Basij militia attacked student dormitories, beating the students and ransacking their rooms. Human Rights Watch also reported members of the Basij militia appearing in large groups at mass demonstrations and attacking protesters. There were reports of Basij members armed with clubs and chains beating up anyone suspected of participating in the protests against the government.¹²⁶

Iraq:

- Former U.S. President George W. Bush accused Iran, and the IRGC in particular, of providing roadside bombs to militants within Iraq in 2007.¹²⁷
- In 2007, Shiite militants, under the direction of the IRGC, kidnapped British computer expert Peter Moore and four security guards, who are held in Quds Force-run prisons.¹²⁸ Moore was released in December 2009, but the four guards were killed.
- The U.S. Treasury Department added the Quds Force to its list of terrorist supporters after coalition forces captured a number of Iraqi militants with alleged ties to Hezbollah and the Quds Force.¹²⁹
- According to the Pentagon, Quds forces are supporting terrorists through Iranian embassies in Iraq. In 2010, the outgoing Iranian ambassador to Iraq, Hassan Kazemi-Qomi, and the new ambassador, Hassan Danafar, were identified as Quds Force members.¹³⁰
- The United States has also accused the Quds Force of providing Iraqi militants with armor-piercing explosives, homemade bombs, anti-aircraft weaponry, rockets, RPGs, and explosives.¹³¹
- Eliminating the possibility that Quds Force operations in Iraq are undertaken by a handful of individuals acting under their own volition, the Pentagon has linked the Quds Force's actions in Iraq directly to the Iranian regime. "Although its operations sometimes appear at odds with the public voice of the Iranian regime, it is not a rogue outfit. It receives direction from the highest levels of the government and its leaders report directly, albeit informally, to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei."¹³²
- In 2008, General Hossein Hamedani, deputy commander of a volunteer militia in the IRGC, told an Iranian news agency that the IRGC is providing weapons to "liberation armies" in the Middle East, including in Lebanon and Iraq.¹³³
- On December 2, 2017, CIA Director Mike Pompeo said he had recently sent a letter to Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani that the United States would hold Iran accountable for any attacks by Iran-backed forces on U.S. interests in Iraq. Khamenei's chief of staff, Mohammad Mohammadi Golpaygani, told the Associated Press that Soleimani had ignored the letter.¹³⁴
- On March 13, 2022, an Iranian barrage of 10 missiles strikes near the U.S. consulate in Irbil, Iraq. There are no U.S. casualties or damage to U.S. property. The IRGC claims it targeted a training center belonging to Israel's Mossad spy agency. Iranian media reports multiple Israeli casualties, which Israel does not confirm. Iranian media calls the strikes a response to "recent crimes of the fake Zionist regime" and exacted a "heavy toll on Zionists."¹³⁵

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Israel:

- After Hamas fired Iranian-made Fajr-5 missiles at Israel in 2012, IRGC head Mohammad Ali Jafari admitted that Iran had shared the missile technology, along with other military assistance, with Hamas.¹³⁶
- On December 11, 2017, Quds Force leader Qasem Soleimani declared in a phone call with Palestinian leaders in the Gaza Strip that Iran was prepared to support Palestinian groups in the coastal enclave against Israel. The IRGC's website reported the call but did not identify to which groups Soleimani was speaking.¹³⁷
- On November 17, 2020, Unit 840 of the Quds Force allegedly planted anti-personnel mines in Israeli territory along the Syrian border. Israel's military disarmed the mines. Unit 840 is a secretive unit within the Quds Force allegedly responsible for coordinating opposition to Western targets outside of Iran. Israel launched airstrikes against Syrian and Iranian targets in Syria in response. The Israeli military claimed to strike storage facilities, military compounds, and Syrian surface-to-air missile batteries.¹³⁸
- In 2019, Iran and Israel began trading attacks on sea vessels as Israel attacked Iranian supply lines to its regional proxies.¹³⁹ The conflict escalated in 2021 as Iran began to openly target Israeli vessels. On February 26, an explosion damaged the Israeli-owned cargo ship MV Helios Ray in the Gulf of Oman, causing damage but no casualties.¹⁴⁰ On March 25, an Iranian missile hit the Israeli-owned container ship the Lori in the Arabian Sea.¹⁴¹ On April 13, a missile struck an Israeli-owned ship near the United Arab Emirates, causing minor damage but no injuries. The attack was reportedly retaliation for an alleged Israeli cyberattack on Iran's Natanz nuclear facility earlier that week.¹⁴²

Lebanon:

- The IRGC provided Hezbollah with its initial financial support and training when the group emerged in the early 1980s.¹⁴³
- The Quds Force is Iran's primary instrument for passing on support to Hezbollah, some of which is in the form of cash, while the rest is in weaponry.¹⁴⁴ The U.S. Department of Defense estimated in 2010 that Iran provides Hezbollah with \$100 million to \$200 million annually.¹⁴⁵

Mexico:

- Iran's Quds Force is suspected of paying the Mexican drug cartel Los Zetas to carry out a failed 2011 attempt to blow up the Israeli embassy in Washington, D.C., and the Saudi and Israeli embassies in Argentina.¹⁴⁶
- As part of the 2011 plot, the Quds Force also attempted to negotiate a deal with Los Zetas to smuggle opium from the Middle East to Mexico.¹⁴⁷

Saudi Arabia:

- A truck bomb exploded on June 25, 1996, at a dormitory complex at Saudi Arabia's Khobar Towers, housing U.S. Air Force pilots and staff, killing 19 Americans and wounding 372 other people.¹⁴⁸ A U.S. federal grand jury in 2001 indicted the leader of Saudi Arabia Hezbollah and 13 other members for the 1996 Khobar Towers attack, and charged "elements of the Iranian government inspired, supported, and supervised members of the Saudi Hizballah. In particular, the indictment alleged that the charged defendants reported their surveillance activities to Iranian officials and were supported and directed in those activities by Iranian officials. This indictment did not name as defendants individual members of the Iranian government."¹⁴⁹
- Six Hezbollah members captured after the attacks implicated Iranian officials. After "overwhelming" evidence presented by experts on Hezbollah, U.S. Federal Judge Royce C. Lamberth ruled in December 2006 that Iran was responsible for the Khobar Towers bombing, and ordered the Iranian government to pay \$254 million to the families of 17 Americans victims.¹⁵⁰ Lamberth pointed to evidence that the Iranian military worked with Saudi Hezbollah members to carry out the attack, and the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security provided money, plans, and maps to help carry out the bombing.¹⁵¹

Syria:

Syria is Iran's main supply route to Hezbollah in Lebanon¹⁵² and thus a strategic asset. As such, the Iranian government has an interest in keeping besieged Syrian President Bashar Assad in power.

- Before the Syrian civil war, between 2,000 and 3,000 IRGC officers were stationed in Syria, helping to train local troops and managing supply routes of arms and money to neighboring Lebanon.¹⁵³

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- By Iran's own admission, members of the Quds Force are acting in an advisory capacity to Syrian government forces in that country's civil war, and Iran has committed itself to providing arms, financing, and training to Iraqi Shiite fighters in the war. A retired senior IRGC commander claims there are at least 60 to 70 Quds Force commanders in Syria at any given time.¹⁵⁴
- In April 2011, the United States and the European Union accused the Quds Force of providing equipment and support to help the Syrian regime suppress revolts.¹⁵⁵
- In 2013, two senior Quds Force commanders were killed in fighting in Syria. According to Iranian media, Commander Mohammad Jamalizadeh Paghaleh, killed in November 2013 in Aleppo, was volunteering to defend Sayyida Zainab mosque in Damascus, more than 200 miles away from Aleppo.¹⁵⁶

Turkey:

- In February 1996, two Iranians thought to be members of the opposition National Council of Resistance of Iran were assassinated in Turkey. An Iranian citizen, Reza Massoumi, was convicted of the killings. At his trial, he stated that he had acted on orders from the Iranian government.¹⁵⁷
- In the aftermath of the 2009 election crisis in Iran, Iranian refugees in Turkey began to report facing monitoring and harassment from Iranian government agents inside Turkey.¹⁵⁸

United States:

- According to the U.S. Treasury Department, Mansour Arbabsiar, a naturalized U.S. citizen holding both Iranian and U.S. passports, acted on behalf of the Quds Force to plan a failed assassination attempt on the Saudi ambassador to the United States in Washington, D.C., in 2011.¹⁵⁹ The Treasury named Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani; senior Quds Force officer Hamed Abdollahi, who coordinated aspects of the plot and oversaw the other Quds Force officials directly responsible for coordinating and planning this operation; Abdul Reza Shahlai, a Quds Force official who coordinated the operation; and Ali Gholam Shakuri, a Quds Force official who met with Arbabsiar to discuss the assassination and other planned attacks.¹⁶⁰
- Abdul Reza Shahlai, a Quds Force official who coordinated the failed assassination attempt on the Saudi ambassador, had previously been linked to the killing of U.S. forces in Iraq, according to Col. Timothy J. Geraghty, USMC (retired).¹⁶¹
- A 2012 New York Police Department intelligence report linked the IRGC or its proxies to nine foiled international plots against Jewish or Israeli targets.¹⁶²
- On August 10, 2022, the U.S. Department of Justice charged IRGC member Shahram Poursafi with attempting to assassinate Ambassador John Bolton, the former national security adviser under President Donald Trump. According to the indictment, Poursafi sought to arrange for Bolton's assassination in October 2021 in retaliation for the January 2020 death of Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani. The Justice Department alleges Poursafi attempted to pay individuals in the United States \$300,000 to carry out the murder in Washington, D.C., or Maryland. Poursafi is charged with use of interstate commerce facilities in the commission of murder-for-hire and with providing and attempting to provide material support to a transnational murder plot. He remains at large.¹⁶³

Yemen

- The IRGC has provided financial aid and material support to Houthi rebels in Yemen. The Iranian ship Jihan I was seized allegedly en route to Yemen in 2013 with arms meant for the Houthis, including "Katyusha rockets M-122, heat-seeking surface-to-air missiles, RPG-7s, Iranian-made night vision goggles and 'artillery systems that track land and navy targets 40km away.'"¹⁶⁴
- In September 2014, IRGC-aided Houthi rebels took over Yemen's capital city of Sanaa.¹⁶⁵ That December, an Iranian official confirmed that the IRGC Quds Force has "a few hundred" military personnel in Yemen training Houthi rebels.¹⁶⁶
- In early 2015, U.S. officials reported that the IRGC had trained Houthi rebels in the use of advanced weapons.¹⁶⁷
- In 2016, the IRGC has been suspected of providing Houthi rebels with long-range missiles they have used against Saudi Arabia. Iranian media have praised the Houthis' use of the Iranian Zelzal-3 rocket.¹⁶⁸ Iran reportedly increased its supply of weapons to the Houthis in late 2016.¹⁶⁹

The Basij:

While it was involved in the Iran-Iraq War, the Basij was primarily a domestic organization within Iran, where it acted as an extra-judicial police force.

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- During the early years of the revolution, before the new regime could establish an effective police force, the Basij was responsible for maintaining security, removing anti-revolutionary components and Shah loyalists from the system. To do this, it created an information network nicknamed “the 36 million information network.”¹⁷⁰
- In July 1980, loyalists to the Shah attempted a coup, called the Nojeh coup attempt, but a Basij spy had infiltrated the group and reported it to the ayatollah’s regime.¹⁷¹
- The Basij was kept out of the Iran-Iraq War during its first year, but its later participation is credited with transforming Iran’s position from defensive to offensive.¹⁷²
- The Basij paramilitary organization is accused of brutally suppressing protests after the contested June 2009 election.¹⁷³ According to Human Rights Watch, hundreds of protesters were arrested after the June 12 elections and the Basij militia attacked student dormitories, beating students and ransacking their rooms.¹⁷⁴ Human Rights Watch also reported members of the Basij militia appearing in large groups at mass demonstrations and attacking protesters.¹⁷⁵ There were reports of Basij members armed with clubs and chains beating up anyone suspected of participating in the protests against the government.¹⁷⁶ Hezbollah and Hamas were also suspected of working with the Basij to quash the protests.¹⁷⁷ On December 27, 2009, on the Shiite holy day of Ashura, during which violence of any kind is forbidden, Basij forces opened fire on the largest protest rally since the contested June presidential election, resulting in the death of 15 and arrest of hundreds.¹⁷⁸

Naval Activities:

The IRGC naval branch has seized foreign oil tankers and harassed ships in or near Iranian waters.

- **March 23, 2007-April 4, 2007:** On March 23, the IRGC’s navy seizes 15 British Royal Navy personnel in what the British claim are Iraqi waters and the IRGC claim are Iranian waters. Iran allows the detained British navy personnel to return home on April 4.¹⁷⁹
- **February 25, 2015:** IRGC speedboats attack a replica of a U.S. aircraft carrier during large-scale naval drills.¹⁸⁰
- **April 28, 2015:** IRGC patrol vessels order the Marshall Islands-flagged cargo vessel Maersk Tigris to stop while it is in the Strait of Hormuz on its way into the Persian Gulf. The patrol boats then fire warning shots across the container ship’s bridge. Members of the IRGC Navy board the ship, which is then escorted to the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas.¹⁸¹
- **August 24, 2016:** Four IRGC vessels attempt a “high-speed intercept” of the USS Nitze while in international waters in the Strait of Hormuz. According to a U.S. defense official, the IRGC ships do not respond to repeated radio communications or flares. It is unclear whether the IRGC leadership sanctioned the harassment or whether it was carried out by rogue commanders.¹⁸²
- **September 4, 2016:** An IRGC vessel comes within 100 yards of the USS Firebolt in the central Persian Gulf, forcing the ship to change course.¹⁸³
- **March 6, 2017:** Fast moving Iranian boats, thought to belong to IRGC Navy, approach the USNS Invincible while transiting with three British Royal Navy vessels through the Strait of Hormuz. U.S. officials say the Iranian vessels stopped in front of the U.S. and British ships approximately 600 yards out, forcing them to change course to avoid a collision. Another Iranian ship attempts to insert itself in between the U.S. and British ships.¹⁸⁴
- **October 26, 2018:** Six IRGC follow the USS Essex in the Persian Gulf. Two of the IRGC vessels come within 300 yards of the American warship.¹⁸⁵
- **December 21, 2018:** Thirty IRGC vessels follow the U.S. aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis and its strike group in the Strait of Hormuz, at one point launching rockets away from the aircraft carrier and flying a drone nearby.¹⁸⁶
- **July 10, 2019:** Three armed IRGC boats approach the British Heritage oil tanker in the Strait of Hormuz and order the tanker to change course and stop in nearby Iranian territorial waters. The British warship HMS Montrose positions itself between the tanker and the IRGC boats, which turn away after a verbal warning from the Montrose. The IRGC denies involvement.¹⁸⁷
- **July 19, 2019:** The IRGC capture two foreign oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz. Iran claims the British-flagged Stena Impero infringed maritime regulations and the IRGC escorted it and its 23-member crew into an Iranian port. IRNA reports the Stena Impero was seized due to a collision with an Iranian fishing boat. The Stena Impero’s owners argue “unidentified small crafts and a helicopter” approached the ship while it was in international waters. Iranian media report the second ship, the British-operated Liberian-flagged Mesdar, was briefly detained in the strait of Hormuz and given a notice to comply with environmental regulations. The Mesdar’s Glasgow-based operator, Norbulk Shipping UK, confirms armed guards had boarded the Mesdar but then allowed the ship to leave.¹⁸⁸

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- **July 31, 2019:** The IRGC intercept an oil tanker near Farsi Island, which the IRGC uses as a naval base. The IRGC accuses the unidentified ship of smuggling approximately 185,000 gallons of fuel for Arab countries. Iranian state media claims the ship is Iraqi.¹⁸⁹
- **September 16, 2019:** The IRGC seizes an unnamed vessel in the Strait of Hormuz, allegedly smuggling 66,000 gallons of diesel fuel on its way to the United Arab Emirates. The IRGC impounds the vessel and arrests the crew.¹⁹⁰
- **April 15, 2020:** Eleven IRGC boats approach six U.S. warships in the Persian Gulf, near Iranian waters, before disengaging. The United States accuses Iran of harassing U.S. ships in international waters.¹⁹¹
- **January 5, 2021:** The IRGC seize the MT Hankuk Chemi, a South Korean-flagged chemical tanker, in the Strait of Hormuz. The IRGC detain the tanker’s crew and demand the release of \$7 billion of Iranian funds in South Korean banks frozen because of U.S. sanctions. Iran releases the ship in April 2021 after South Korea pledges to try to secure the release of the frozen funds.¹⁹²
- **February 8, 2021:** The IRGC reportedly receive a new fleet of approximately 340 speedboats armed with machine guns and small missiles.¹⁹³
- **April 2, 2021:** Three IRGC fast-attack crafts and one ship known as Harth 55 harass two Coast Guard ships patrolling international waters in the southern Persian Gulf. The incident occurs just as the United States and Iran announce talks on resuming negotiations on renewing the 2015 nuclear deal.¹⁹⁴
- **April 26, 2021:** Three IRGC Navy speedboats, armed with machine guns and rocket launchers, come within 62 meters of the USS Firebolt and a U.S. Coast Guard patrol boat Baranof on their patrol of the Persian Gulf. The Firebolt issues multiple warnings before firing warning shots, at which point the IRGC boats disperse.¹⁹⁵
- **May 10, 2021:** A group of 13 IRGC Navy fast in-shore attack craft (FIAC) make a high-speed approach on the U.S. Navy guided-missile cruiser USS Monterey, patrol coastal ships USS Thunderbolt, USS Hurricane and USS Squall, Coast Guard patrol boats USCGC Wrangell and USCGC Maui, and the guided-missile submarine USS Georgia in the Strait of Hormuz. U.S. ships fire warning shots at the IRGC boats, which, according to the U.S. Navy, maneuvered in an unsafe and unprofessional manner and failed to exercise due regard for the safety of U.S. forces as required under international law.¹⁹⁶
- **October 8, 2021:** Iranian state television airs footage of two IRGC speedboats intercepting a U.S.-flagged vessel in the Persian Gulf. A voice in the background says in Farsi, “Keep chasing them.” The footage is undated and the U.S. Navy says no such incident took place within the past two days.¹⁹⁷
- **October 24, 2021:** The IRGC seize the Vietnamese-flagged oil tanker MV Southys in the Gulf of Oman. Iranian state television airs reports accusing the U.S. Navy of a tanker carrying Iranian oil and the IRGC liberating the ship and returning it to Iran. Video of the tanker’s capture airs on state television. Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji thanks the IRGC for “rescuing the Iranian oil tanker from American pirates.” The United States accuses Iran of illegally seizing the tanker. Iran releases the tanker on November 9 after the tanker allegedly released its oil to Iran.¹⁹⁸
- **November 2021:** On November 3, Iran accuses a U.S. Navy vessel in the Gulf of Oman of attempting to confiscate crude oil onboard an Iranian tanker violating U.S. sanctions on Iran’s oil industry. The IRGC claims to thwart U.S. attempts to collect the oil. The Pentagon refutes the Iranian narrative and claims no such encounter took place. Pentagon spokesman John Kirby calls Iran’s claims “absolutely, totally false and untrue.” Salami calls the confrontation a “humiliation for an empire on the decline.”¹⁹⁹
- **November 20, 2021:** An IRGC naval unit stops an oil tanker in the Persian Gulf and detains its 11-member crew. The IRGC claim to confiscate more than 150,000 liters of smuggled diesel from the ship, which the IRGC says was in Iranian waters when it was captured.²⁰⁰
- **April 9, 2022:** Iranian media report the IRGC has seized a foreign vessel carrying 220,000 liters of smuggled fuel in the Persian Gulf and arrested its crew of 11. The IRGC also claimed it captured an Iranian boat carrying 20,000 liters of diesel destined for the foreign ship.²⁰¹
- **April 15, 2022:** The IRGC announce the seizure of two vessels off Iran’s coast on the Gulf and the nearby Gulf of Oman for allegedly smuggling fuel. The IRGC detains seven crew members from one ship and seizes 480,000 liters of fuel from the two vessels.²⁰²
- **May 27, 2022:** The IRGC seizes two Greek tankers in the Persian Gulf for unspecified “violations.” According to Greece’s foreign ministry, the Greek flagged vessel Delta Poseidon was sailing in international waters, 22 nautical miles from the Iranian shore, when an Iranian naval helicopter landed on the ship and Iranian officers took the crew—including two Greek citizens—hostage. The foreign ministry said a similar incident happened aboard another Greece-flagged ship, though the ministry did not name the ship. The seizures came a month after Greek authorities impounded the Iranian-flagged Pegas, with 19 Russian crew members on board, near the coast of the southern island of Evia due to European Union sanctions. Iran promised “punitive action” after the seizure.²⁰³

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Designations:

Designations by the U.S. Government:

- ○ **October 25, 2007:** The Department of the Treasury designates Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)-Qods Force as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) under Executive Order 13224.²⁰⁴
- **October 25, 2007:** The Department of the Treasury designates Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferators and their Supporters under Executive Order 13382.²⁰⁵
- **October 25, 2007:** The Department of the Treasury designates Hosein Salimi, commander of IRGC air force; Brigadier General Morteza Rezaie, deputy commander of the IRGC; Vice Admiral Ali Akbar Ahmadian, in 2007 the most recent former chief of the IRGC Joint Staff; Brigadier General Mohammad Hejazi, in 2007 the most recent former commander of Basij militia; Brigadier General Qasem Soleimani, commander of the Qods Force, as Individual associated with IRGC, designated under Executive Order 13382.²⁰⁶
- **September 29, 2010:** The Department of the Treasury designates Mohammad Ali Jafari, then commander of the IRGC forces; Sadeq Mahsouli, then Minister of Welfare and Social Security; Qolam-Hossein Mohseni-Ejel, then Prosecutor General of Iran; Saeed Mortazavi, former Tehran Prosecutor-General; Heydar Moslehi, then Minister of Intelligence; Mostafa Mohammad Najjar, then Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Armed Forces; Ahmad-Reza Radan, then Deputy Chief of Iran’s National Police; Hossein Taeb, then Deputy IRGC Commander of Intelligence, as Human rights abusers under executive order 13553.²⁰⁷
- **February 2011:** The Department of the Treasury designates Abbas Jafari Dolatabadi, Tehran Prosecutor General; Mohammed Reza Naqdi, commander of IRGC’s Basij Forces, as Human rights abusers under executive order 13553.²⁰⁸
- **March 27, 2012:** The Department of the Treasury designates Esmail Ghani as a Specially Designated National.²⁰⁹
- **October 13, 2017:** The U.S. Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control labels the IRGC a Specially Designated Global Terrorist for its activities “in support of the IRGC-Qods Force (IRGC-QF) ... for providing support to a number of terrorist groups, including Hizballah and Hamas, as well as to the Taliban.”²¹⁰
- **April 15, 2019:** The U.S. Department of State designates the IRGC as a foreign terrorist organization under Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act.²¹¹
- **March 26, 2020:** The U.S. Department of the Treasury designates Sayyed Yaser Musavir as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist.²¹²
- **March 26, 2020:** The U.S. Department of the Treasury designates Mehdi Ghasemzadeh as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist.²¹³
- **October 22, 2020:** The U.S. Department of the Treasury designates Iranian Islamic Radio and Television Union (IRTVU) and International Union of Virtual Media (IUVM) for being owned or controlled by the IRGC-Qods Force.²¹⁴

Designations by Foreign Governments and Organizations:

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- Bahrain designated the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a group suspected of terrorism on October 23, 2018.²¹⁵
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- Canada listed Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ Qods Force as a terrorist entity in December 2012.²¹⁶
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- The European Union levied financial sanctions on the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in March 2012.²¹⁷ The European Union has also levied financial sanctions on individuals affiliated with the IRGC, including: Qasem Soleimani,²¹⁸ Chief of IRGC Joint Staff Ali Akbar Ahmadian,²¹⁹ Basij commander Mohamed-Reza Naqdi,²²⁰ IRGC General Commander Muhamed Ali Jafari,²²¹ and IRGC Intelligence Commander Hussayn Taeb.²²² On April 12, 2021, the European Union sanctioned IRGC chief Hossein Salami, Basij head Gholamreza Soleimani, IRGC Ground Forces chief Mohammad Pakpour, and IRGC commander Hassan Shahvarpour for their response to the November 2019 demonstrations in Iran.²²³
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- Saudi Arabia designated the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a group suspected of terrorism on October 23, 2018. Saudi Arabia also designated Qods Force commander Qasem Soleimani and Qods Force member Hamed Abdollahi and Abdul Reza Shahlai.²²⁴
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- The United Nations designated several individuals affiliated with the IRGC, including Qasem Soleimani on March 24, 2007;²²⁵ Mohammad Reza Naqdi on March 3, 2008;²²⁶ and IRGC Air Force Commander Salimi Hosein on December 23, 2006.²²⁷

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Associations:

Ties to other extremist groups:

The IRGC-Quds Force provides training, logistical assistance and material and financial support to many extremist groups. For example:

- **Taliban**²²⁸

The U.S. government has accused the IRGC's Quds Force of providing logistical, financial, and material support to the Taliban.²²⁹ General Hossein Musavi and Colonel Hasan Mortezaei, senior IRGC members, were designated on August 3, 2011 as terrorists under Executive Order 13224 for providing financial and material support to the Taliban.²³⁰ On October 23, 2018, the Treasury Department and the Terrorist Financing Targeting Center (TFTC) designated IRGC officers Mohammad Ebrahim Owahdi and Esma'il Razavi for providing support to the Taliban. The TFTC is an international organization that includes Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.²³¹

In 2010, ISAF General Stanley McChrystal stated that Iran was training Taliban insurgents and providing them with weapons. This was corroborated by a Taliban commander who stated that Iran was training Taliban fighters in "small unit tactics" because they "both want to kill Americans."²³² The U.S. government has accused the IRGC of providing the Taliban with 107mm rockets.²³³

On October 13, 2017, the U.S. Department of the Treasury sanctioned the IRGC for its support of the Taliban and other groups.²³⁴

- **Hamas**²³⁵

The U.S. government has accused the IRGC's Quds Force of providing logistical, financial, and material support to Hamas.²³⁶ IRGC head General Mohammad Ali Jafari admitted in November 2012 to transferring missile technology and other military assistance to Hamas.²³⁷

Khaled Meshaal, the former head of Hamas's political bureau, has traveled to Iran to improve ties and receive increased material support. "We [Hamas] stretch our hand of cooperation for materializing the Palestinian cause, because Palestine is an essential issue that needs more efforts," Mahmoud al-Zahar, a senior Hamas official, told Al-Manar television, a network affiliated with Hezbollah.²³⁸

On October 13, 2017, the U.S. Department of the Treasury sanctioned the IRGC for its support of Hamas and other groups.²³⁹

- **Hezbollah**²⁴⁰

The Iranian government uses the IRGC Quds Force to transfer cash and weaponry to Hezbollah in Lebanon.²⁴¹ On October 13, 2017, the U.S. Department of the Treasury sanctioned the IRGC for its support of Hezbollah and other groups.²⁴²

Israeli authorities have accused the IRGC of directly arming Hezbollah. On November 4, 2009, Israel intercepted merchant vessel FRANCOPIA carrying 36 containers (60 tons) of weapons to Hezbollah. The cache includes 122mm katyushas, 107mm rockets, 106mm antitank shells, hand grenades and light-weapon ammunitions.²⁴³ The weapons transfer was reportedly coordinated by the IRGC, given its bases in Lebanon and financial support for Hezbollah, which is estimated at \$100-200 million annually.²⁴⁴ An Iranian IRGC commander and six Hezbollah fighters were killed on January 18, 2015, by an Israeli strike, indicating increased cooperation between Iran and Hezbollah.²⁴⁵ Israel has subsequently targeted multiple Iranian targets in Syria that it says were aiding Hezbollah.²⁴⁶

IRGC officials have openly stated their military and financial support for Hezbollah. "The Islamic Republic of Iran has helped Iraq, Syria, Palestine and the Lebanese Hezbollah by exporting the technology that it has for the production of missiles and other equipment, and they can now stand against the Zionist regime, the ISIL [Islamic State group] and other Takfiri [apostate] groups and cripple them," IRGC aerospace force commander Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh said in February 2015.²⁴⁷ In October 2018, IRGC commander Mohammad Ali Jafari pledged that Iran would "stand side by side the Lebanese Hezbollah until Israel is totally annihilated."²⁴⁸

- **Palestinian Islamic Jihad**²⁴⁹

The IRGC has provided Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) with "training, logistical assistance and material and financial support," according to the U.S. Department of the Treasury.²⁵⁰ The IRGC reportedly began sending support after PIJ was exiled to Lebanon in 1987.²⁵¹

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Between August 5 and August 7, 2022, PIJ launched approximately 1,100 projectiles toward Israel in a conflict that also saw Israel strike multiple PIJ targets across the Gaza Strip and kill two senior PIJ commanders. During an August 6 meeting in Tehran between PIJ leader Ziad al-Nakhalah IRGC commander-in-chief Hossein Salami, Salami pledged the Palestinians were not alone and the IRGC was with them “until the end.”²⁵²

- **South American terrorist networks**

According to a 2010 Pentagon report, Quds Force members are actively developing terrorist networks in Venezuela and other parts of Latin America to attack the United States in the event of a breakdown in the nuclear negotiations between Iran and the West.²⁵³ The report further claims the Quds Force engages in “paramilitary operations to support extremists and destabilize unfriendly regimes.”²⁵⁴

- **Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine–General Command²⁵⁵**

The Iranian regime has been a long-time benefactor of the PFLP-GC, providing logistical, financial, and material support, according to the U.S. government.²⁵⁶ Iran and the PFLP-GC were the prime suspects in the aftermath of the 1988 bombing of Pan-Am Flight 103.²⁵⁷ U.S. officials have said there is “no question” about ties between Iran and the PFLP-GC.²⁵⁸

- **Los Zetas²⁵⁹**

The IRGC reportedly plotted with Mexican drug cartel Los Zetas in 2011 to blow up the Israeli embassy in Washington and the Saudi and Israeli Embassies in Argentina.²⁶⁰

According to a 2010 Pentagon report, Quds Force members are actively developing terrorist networks in Venezuela and other parts of Latin America to attack the United States in the event of a breakdown in the nuclear negotiations between Iran and the West.²⁶¹ The report further claims the Quds Force engages in “paramilitary operations to support extremists and destabilize unfriendly regimes.”²⁶²

- **Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba**

Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (“the Virtuous”) is an Iraqi Shiite militia that has fought against ISIS as part of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) in both Iraq and Syria.²⁶³ The 10,000-man-strong group is loyal to Iran and reportedly answered directly to Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani, whom al-Nujaba has praised in online media for fighting the United States and ISIS. Al-Nujaba has declared that it and Hezbollah are “the twins of the resistance.”²⁶⁴

In March 2017, the Quds Force reportedly developed a new branch of al-Nujaba called the Golan Liberation Brigade, named for the Golan Heights, which Israel captured from Syria in the 1967 Six Day War. That November, the leader of al-Nujaba, Sheikh Akram al-Ka’abi, told media that his group and the Golan Liberation Brigade stood ready to “participate in any war with the Syrian Arab Army to liberate the Golan if the Syrian state agrees or requests so.”²⁶⁵ Al-Nujaba claims that multiple special forces comprise the Golan Liberation Brigade. A March 2017 al-Nujaba video featured columns of its soldiers marching with a banner declaring that “Israel will be destroyed.”²⁶⁶

Ties to foreign governments/leaders:

- **Syrian government²⁶⁷**

Iran has threatened to use the IRGC to repel foreign attacks on Syria.²⁶⁸ The IRGC has “several hundred” operatives in Syria advising the Syrian army and fighting on behalf of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in his country’s civil war.²⁶⁹ In October 2018, IRGC spokesman Ramezan Sharif pledged that IRGC forces would remain in Syria as long as Tehran finds it “effective and useful” and as long as the Syrian government demands it.²⁷⁰

The U.S. Treasury Department has also accused Iran of using its oil industry to aid the Assad regime in Syria. According to Treasury, Syrian national Mohammad Amer Alchwiki and his Russia-based Global Vision Group aid the delivery of oil from Iran to Syria as well as financial transfers from Iran to its terrorist proxies.²⁷¹

- **Venezuela**

The IRGC plays a central role in Iran’s supportive relationship with Venezuelan dictator Nicolás Maduro. In April 2019, Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif offered to send the IRGC to Venezuela to protect Maduro in light of growing opposition as Venezuela struggles with food and medicine shortages.²⁷² Despite U.S. sanctions on Iran’s oil industry, Iran began shipping gasoline to the South American country in May 2020.²⁷³ In July 2020, an IRGC-linked grocery retailer opened in Venezuela. According to the U.S. government, any Iranian business

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must receive authorization from the IRGC to operate overseas.²⁷⁴ In August 2020, Maduro announced he was considering buying missiles from Iran.²⁷⁵ That October, U.S. officials threatened to destroy any weapon shipments from Iran to Venezuela.²⁷⁶

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IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps)

Media Coverage:

Media coverage/analysis of group

The international media, for the most part, agrees on the brutal nature of IRGC's domestic action, condemning the Basij's practice of silencing dissidents and acting as a morality police. But there is disagreement – largely in non-Western media and media from countries with stronger relations with Iran – over whether the IRGC's role in international terrorism has been exaggerated in order to tarnish Iran's reputation and bolster the U.S. argument that Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons.

Given the adversarial relationship between Iran and the West over the Iranian nuclear issue, Western media has prominently covered the activities of the IRGC and its branches in recent years. Global Western media outlets such as the Associated Press and Reuters have widely reported on the presence of IRGC forces in Syria and the role of the IRGC in fighting on behalf of the Syrian regime. The 2009 protests in the aftermath of Iran's disputed presidential elections were also widely covered, and many outlets reported violent crackdowns by IRGC forces, particularly the Basij militia.

Western media typically acknowledges the IRGC's involvement in anti-U.S. activities, extremism in Iran, and support of terrorism. A 2007 NPR report on the Guards describes the organization's evolution from a "people's army" meant to mobilize the Iranian population against foreign threats to actively creating Hezbollah and other terror networks abroad.²⁷⁷

Globally, however, the media – just like members of the international community – do not always agree with Western claims that the IRGC supports terrorism and will ignore or justify IRGC actions. Just as the international community has been unable to agree on a singular definition of terrorism, the global community appears split between the hemispheres on the IRGC, with media in non-Western countries portraying Iran in a positive light, as standing up to the American hegemon.

A 2007 piece in the *Asia Times*, for example, argues against the U.S. designation of the IRGC, claiming that the "case for the designation of the IRGC as terrorists has been built on thin empirical grounds and even thinner legal grounds."²⁷⁸ Ahead of Iran's 2013 elections, Zimbabwe's *Herald* reported on the IRGC encouraging high voter turnout and interviewed a senior IRGC commander, but did not mention any of the IRGC's terrorist ties or even its involvement in the Syrian civil war.²⁷⁹

Columnists in Canadian media, on the other hand, appeared largely to support the country's 2012 designation of the Quds Force as a terrorist entity. Former Canadian justice minister and international commentator Irwin Cotler praised the Canadian government for adding the Quds Force to the terror list, but accused the government of a "piecemeal" strategy and said it needed to add the entire IRGC organization.²⁸⁰ Cotler goes on in a *Jerusalem Post* column to declare that the IRGC "has been at the forefront of a long-standing global campaign of terror against perceived opponents of Iran."²⁸¹

In European media, particularly in countries that have better relations with Iran than the United States, the role the IRGC plays is considered more open to interpretation. The *Guardian's* Henry Newman questioned in a 2009 column how much power the IRGC actually has, noting that despite Khomeini's directive that the IRGC remains apolitical, the IRGC has "an increasingly significant role in Iranian politics."²⁸² Newman points out the IRGC's economic power, citing its forced closure of the Imam Khomeini Airport in 2004 because it lost its bid to control the airport to a Turkish firm – and that the IRGC has been in "temporary" control of the airport since 2008.²⁸³ He further points out that the Iranian regime has to increasingly rely on "repression and a culture of fear" and as such the role of the IRGC is growing.²⁸⁴

The *Guardian's* Ian Black and Saeed Kamali Dehghan wrote in a 2014 article about the IRGC's increased role in battling ISIS in Iraq. The article obliquely acknowledged the IRGC's ties to terrorism by placing the group in an offensive role, describing the Quds Force's mission as carrying out "a range of highly sensitive functions: intelligence, special operations, arms smuggling and political action – anything that constitutes protecting the revolution or attacking its enemies, Israel foremost among them."²⁸⁵

Even in the United States, some pundits take a more sympathetic position on the IRGC, making supportive and apologist arguments. In September 2009, for example, author and analyst Juan Cole cited an IRGC commander in charge of Iran's missile program who said Iran would act militarily only in response to external military threats.²⁸⁶ Pointing to Western media reports that Iran's missile tests coincided with Iranian threats to wipe out Israel, Cole contended that the IRGC had made a "no first strike" pledge and "no current high official in the Iranian executive has threatened war against Israel...."²⁸⁷ In 2012, after the IRGC's Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh said Iran would destroy Israel if "the Jewish state"

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attacked, Cole argued that “this is not a threat to commit an act of aggression” as “Iran has a ‘no first strike’ policy” reaffirmed by Khamenei, and Iran is only “threatening to retaliate with everything he has if Iran is itself the victim of a naked act of aggression.”²⁸⁸

Even in the Arab media, the role of the IRGC is not so clearly presented. Iranian dissident Akbar Ganji describes the IRGC’s economic power in Al Jazeera, but ignores the organization’s terrorist ties, even whitewashing them by laying the blame for a “securitised” Iranian society and political process on “nearly 35 years of military threats, by Iraq, the US, Israel, and others....”²⁸⁹

Iran’s English media, of course, shed a sympathetic light on the IRGC, often taking IRGC statements at face value. An April 2014 article by the Fars News Agency (FNA) cited Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari defending the group’s role in Syria, claiming that the IRGC provided only Iran’s intelligence support and not physical support.²⁹⁰ FNA provided no balance in the article, providing only a quote from another IRGC commander who agreed with Jafari.

Sympathetic journalists who view the United States as unfairly targeting the Islamic Republic are more skeptical of reports on the IRGC’s involvement in global terrorism, viewing these reports as propaganda to further cast the Iranian regime as an enemy of freedom. Just as some pundits denounce Hamas’s and Hezbollah’s deadly attacks against Israel while upholding the “legitimacy” of their causes, the IRGC’s involvement with these and other terrorist organizations is viewed as noble Iranian aid. In a 2012 article on the IRGC’s transfer of missile technology to Hamas, the *Tehran Times* did not comment on the IRGC chief’s statement that, “Iran provides technological assistance to help the world’s Muslims and the oppressed so that they can stand up to tyrants and the hegemonistic system....”²⁹¹ While Iranian media is subject to extreme censorship by the government, sympathetic coverage of the IRGC is not limited just to Iranian sources. On the whole, global media acknowledges the IRGC’s role as a harsh enforcer of the Iranian revolution’s ideals domestically and abroad, but there remains dissention on whether the IRGC is a politically powerful domestic militia or a global terrorist organization.

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IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps)

Rhetoric:

Ismail Ghaani, Quds Force commander, March 15, 2022

Addressing a group of Quds Force commanders two days after Iranian missiles strike an alleged Israeli spy facility in Erbil, Iraq:

“The criminal Zionist regime, which once chanted slogans from the Nile to the Euphrates, is now so humiliated that they sleep in fear and are shaking with fear at night, worried that they will wake up and lose part of their occupied territories.”²⁹²

IRGC, March 13, 2022

Statement following an IRGC missile strike against an alleged Mossad training facility in Iraq:

“Once again we warn the criminal Zionist regime that repetition of any evil act will face tough, decisive and destructive responses.”²⁹³

Mohammad Bagheri, chief of staff of IRGC Armed Forces, February 9, 2022

“The Islamic Republic of Iran is consistently improving its missile capabilities to counter aggressors, oppressors, global arrogance as well as murderous Zionists.”²⁹⁴

Ismail Ghaani, Quds Force commander, January 7, 2022

During a ceremony marking the second anniversary of the death of Qasem Soleimani:

“We will prepare ground for the hard revenge against the US from within their homes, as we do not need to be present as supervisors everywhere, wherever is necessary we take revenge against Americans by the help of people on their side and within their own homes without our presence.

“This revenge has begun. Americans will be uprooted from the region.”²⁹⁵

Ali Fadavi, IRGC deputy commander-in-chief, January 4, 2022

Interview with Hezbollah’s Al-Manar:

“This is the status of the Americans, this is the status of the enemies of Allah, and this is the status of those who stand with the axis of Falsehood. We do not have the slightest doubt that at the right time, when we strike America — the Great Satan — and its Zionist followers, we will strike them with great force.”²⁹⁶

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