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COUNTRY REPORT ON TERRORISM 2019 -

CHAPTER 5 - ISLAMIC REVOLUTIONARY GUARD CORPS (IRGC)

Aka IRGC; The Iranian Revolutionary Guards; IRG; The Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution; AGIR; Pasdarn-e Enghelab-e Islami; Sepah-e Pasdaran Enghelab Islami; Sepah-e Pasdaran-e Enghelab-e Eslami; Sepah-e Pasdaran-e Enqelab-e Eslami; Pasdaran-e Inqilab; Revolutionary Guards; Revolutionary Guard; Sepah; Pasdaran; Sepah Pasdaran; Islamic Revolutionary Corps; Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps; Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps; Islamic Revolutionary Guards; Iran's Revolutionary Guards; Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution.

Description: Designated as an FTO on April 15, 2019, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), part of Iran's official military, has played a central role in Iran's use of terrorism as a key tool of Iranian statecraft since its inception 40 years ago. The IRGC has been directly involved in terrorist plotting; its support for terrorism is foundational and institutional, and it has killed U.S. citizens.

The IRGC was founded in 1979 and since then has gained a substantial role in executing Iran's foreign policy and wields control over vast segments of the economy. The IRGC's ties to nonstate armed groups in the region, such as Hizballah in Lebanon, help Iran compensate for its relatively weak conventional military forces. Answering directly to the supreme leader, the corps is also influential in domestic politics, and many senior officials have passed through its ranks.

The IRGC is composed of five primary branches: the IRGC Ground Forces, IRGC Air Force, IRGC Navy, the Basij, and the IRGC-Qods Force (IRGC-QF).

Activities: The IRGC – most prominently through its Qods Force (QF) – directs and carries out a global terrorist campaign. The IRGC-QF in 2011 plotted a brazen terrorist attack against the Saudi Ambassador to the U.S. on American soil. In 2012, IRGC-QF operatives were arrested in Turkey and Kenya for plotting attacks. An IRGC operative was convicted in March 2017 of espionage for a foreign intelligence service; he had been surveilling a German-Israeli group. In January 2018, Germany uncovered ten IRGC operatives involved in a terrorist plot in Germany. In September 2018, a U.S. federal court found Iran and the IRGC liable for the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing which killed 19 Americans. The QF is active in Syria in support of the Assad regime.

The IRGC-QF is Iran's primary mechanism for cultivating and supporting terrorist groups abroad. The IRGC continues to provide financial and other material support, training, technology transfer, advanced conventional weapons, guidance, or direction to a broad range of terrorist organizations, including Hizballah, Kata'ib Hizballah in Iraq, al-Ashtar Brigades in Bahrain, and other terrorist groups in Syria and around the Gulf. Iran also provides up to \$100 million annually in combined support to Palestinian terrorist groups, including Hamas, PIJ, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command.

Strength: The IRGC has upwards of 125,000 troops under its command.

Location/Area of Operation: Iran, Iraq, Syria, Europe, and the Gulf

Funding and External Aid: The IRGC-QF continues to engage in large-scale illicit financing schemes and money laundering to fund its malign activities. In 2017, the IRGC-QF engineered a plot to produce counterfeit currency by deceiving European suppliers to procure advanced printing machinery and other necessary materials. It then printed counterfeit Yemeni bank notes, which were used to support its destabilizing activities in Yemen.