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Country Report on Terrorism 2021 - 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 military, has played a central role in Iran's use of terrorism as a key tool of Iranian statecraft since its inception. 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 organization'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 IRGC is also influential in domestic politics, and many senior officials have passed through its ranks.

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

Activities: The IRGC — most prominently through its Qods Force (QF) — directs and carries out a global terrorist campaign. The IRGC in 2011 plotted a brazen attack against the Saudi ambassador to the United States on American soil. In 2012, IRGC-QF operatives were arrested in Türkiye and Kenya for plotting attacks.

An IRGC operative was convicted in 2017 of espionage for a foreign intelligence service; he had been surveilling a German-Israeli group. In 2018, Germany uncovered 10 IRGC operatives involved in a terrorist plot in Germany. In 2018 a U.S. federal court found Iran and the IRGC liable for the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing that killed 19 U.S. citizens. The QF is active in Syria in support of the Assad regime.

The IRGC 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, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq and Harakat al-Nujaba in Iraq, al-Ashtar Brigades and Saraya al-Mukhtar in Bahrain, and other terrorist groups in Syria and around the Persian Gulf. Iran also provides up to \$100 million annually in combined support to Palestinian terrorist groups, including Hamas, Palestine Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command.

Strength: The IRGC has upward of 125,000 members.

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

Funding and External Aid: The IRGC continues to engage in large-scale illicit financing schemes and money laundering to fund its malign activities. In 2017 the IRGC 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.