

## Iranian Embassies & IRGC Role in Assassinations and Kidnappings

### *Abstract:*

*Since coming to power in 1979, the Iranian regime, through The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has been implicated in more than three hundred sixty assassinations, terrorist plots, and terrorist attacks in more than forty countries [1]. This does not include arrest, torture, and killing of thousands of political activists or journalists inside Iran. The hierarchy of all these terrorist activities starts with IRGC then trickles down to Ministry of Intelligence, Intelligence Organization of IRGC, and ultimately reaches Quds Force and Embassies who jointly execute the plan. Iranian diplomatic personnel, most of whom are either members of IRGC or Iranian Intelligence, have repeatedly been implicated in these assassinations. The IRGC has also been using criminal gangs, drug cartels, and other third parties to carry out its assassination plots around the world.*

For years, the Iranian embassies have been working with IRGC, a terrorist organization designated by the United States to execute terror and kidnappings. The RGC is a branch of the Iranian Armed Forces, founded after the Iranian Revolution on 22 April 1979 by order of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The IRGC has an unspecified budget, along with enormous assets and annual income worth tens of billions of dollars ranging from telecommunication, banking, construction, gas, oil, mining, and weapon industries to drug trafficking, money laundering, and kidnapping. The presence of its members all over the governmental branches such as Parliament, the president's cabinet, and judiciary branch has given them full control of Iran's budget.

The IRGC has around 250,000 Ground Forces and Paramilitary Forces (Basij), Aerospace Force, Navy, and Quds Force (another terrorist organization designated by the United States and Europe). The IRGC is also in control of Iran's political branches, important ministries, and most of all, in charge of all projects that are worth millions of dollars through its engineering firm Khatam-al Anbiya Construction Headquarters. This firm, also known as GHORB, is the IRGC's major engineering arm and one of Iran's largest contractors in industrial and developmental projects. The Cabinet of Iran and the Parliament's National Security and Foreign-Policy Committee members along with several other important Committees are all dominated by former or current IRGC members.

Quds Force specializes in unconventional warfare and military intelligence operations. It is comparable to a combination of the CIA and the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) in the United States. Because it is responsible for extraterritorial operations, the Quds Force supports non-state actors in many countries. Included in this grouping are Lebanese Hezbollah, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad in the State of Palestine's Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Yemeni Houthis, and Shia militias in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan. The Quds Force reports directly to the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei.

According to the U.S. Department of State and other Western intelligence agencies, many Iranian dissidents have been assassinated in Europe, North America, and the Middle East over the past decade.

- In 2007, Robert Alan Levinson, a former FBI agent working for CIA, was lured onto Kish Island in Iran by Dawud Salahuddin formerly known as David Theodore Belfield, an American fugitive working for the Iranian Intelligence agency. Since then Iranian officials are denying any knowledge of his whereabouts. Dawud Salahuddin is also accused of killing the prominent former Iranian diplomat Ali Akbar Tabatabaei in 1980 in Bethesda, Maryland. The family of Mr. Levinson believes he is no longer alive based on the information they received recently from US government officials [2].
- Since 2018, Asadollah Asadi, an Iranian diplomat to Austria, remains in a Belgian prison awaiting trial based on evidence that he provided explosives to bomb a dissident rally in Paris.
- In March 2020, senior Turkish officials accused Iranian diplomats of ordering and coordinating the killing of Masoud Molavi Vardanjani in November 2019.
- In 1991, Iranian agent Vakili Rad, with the help of Iran's embassy staff in Paris, killed ex-Iranian PM Shapour Bakhtiar in a chillingly executed operation using a knife. Later on, after he was released, he received an enthusiastic welcome in Tehran by Foreign Ministry staff
- Two Iranian diplomats are among Iranian officials subject to INTERPOL Red Notices for the 1994 bombing of the AMIA community center in Argentina that killed eighty-five people.
- Mohsen Rabbani, the alleged mastermind of the bombing in Argentina, was the cultural attaché at the Iranian Embassy in Buenos Aires with support from Ahmad Reza Asghari. Asghari was a member of the IRGC, who used a position as third secretary at the Iranian Embassy as cover.
- In a memoir of his presidency, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani wrote that the special envoy of Sultan Qaboos, the King of Oman, had warned him that an Iranian diplomat based in Muscat was planning to assassinate an official guest of the government of Oman.
- A former chief pilot for President Rafsanjani, Ali Akbar Mohammadi, who had defected and claimed asylum in Germany in 1986, was gunned down in the streets of Hamburg right after his arrival. The killing was the joint effort of Iran's Embassy staff and IRGC members. Mohammad Hassan Mansouri and Ahmad Moradi Talemi, two other Iranian pilots who had respectively fled to Canada and Iraq, were also assassinated and killed by the Iranian embassy and IRGC personnel. Col. Ahmad Moradi-Talebi was assassinated in Geneva, Switzerland in August 1987.
- In April 1990 Kazem Rajavi, the first Iranian ambassador to the UN's Office in Geneva, was shot to death in Switzerland by agents of the Intelligence Ministry in a joint effort of Iran's embassy in Geneva.
- In 1992 Sadegh Sharafkandi, secretary-general of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran, who was a Kurdish opposition leader killed by a machine gun at Mykonos restaurant by IRGC Intelligence agency in a joint effort of embassy staff in Berlin.
- Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, also a leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran, was killed in July 1989 in the very room in which he had been holding negotiations with Iranian government envoys.

Multiple countries have issued arrest warrants for Iranian diplomats because of the killings of dissidents and others perceived as threats to the Iranian regime and its ideology.

The United States and Europe must designate Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Intelligence Organization of IRGC as terrorist organizations since they have been implicated in more than three hundred sixty assassinations, terrorist plots, and terrorist attacks in more than forty countries. Furthermore, all Iranian Embassy officials must be scrutinized in advance to ensure they have not been part of these two terror organizations or Quds Force. Furthermore, the employees should also not have been involved in any human rights violations inside Iran. Oftentimes, embassy staff are recruited among these three terror organizations and their branches. In fact, the vast majority of employees of Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its high-ranking officials are either former or current members of these three terror organizations. Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei is the one who approves the Ministry of Foreign Affairs once the Minister is nominated by the President.

References:

1. <https://www.state.gov/irans-assassinations-and-terrorist-activity-abroad/>
2. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/family-concludes-former-fbi-agent-robert-levinson-died-iran-n1169056>