

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)



OVERVIEW

AS OF AUGUST 2026

The IRGC is an armed force charged with defending Iran's regime. The IRGC is composed of ground, naval, and air forces; an internal security militia (the Basij); and an external operations force, the IRGC-Qods Force (IRGC-QF).

The IRGC-QF is one of the Iranian regime's primary organizations responsible for conducting covert lethal activities outside Iran, including asymmetric and terrorist operations. Iran views terrorism as a tool to deter and counter its perceived foes, assert leadership over Shia Muslims worldwide, and project power in the Middle East.

The IRGC-QF has plotted and conducted covert operations worldwide, and it provides guidance, training, funds, and weapons to partners and proxies, primarily Shia militants in the Middle East. These partners and proxies allow the IRGC-QF to maintain military capability in multiple theaters while having a pretense to deny involvement in operations.

Operating Areas

Based in Iran; the IRGC-QF has conducted operations primarily in Iraq and Syria but also operates globally, including in the United States

Members

The IRGC has between 150,000 and 190,000 personnel. The IRGC-QF has between 5,000 and 15,000 personnel, handpicked from the broader IRGC for their allegiance to the regime.

Tactics And Targets

The IRGC-QF attacks US, Israeli, Saudi, and UAE targets, as well as Iranian dissident groups. The IRGC-QF uses its intelligence and military capabilities to support its own terrorist operations and those of its partners and proxies. IRGC elements also conspire with criminals in pursuit of some of their activities.

The IRGC has provided advanced military equipment to Lebanese Hizballah, including air defense systems, coastal defense cruise missiles, long-range rockets, and unmanned aircraft systems (UAS). The IRGC also supplies Iraqi Shia militants with anti-aircraft weapons, explosively formed projectiles, IEDs, rockets, rocket-propelled grenades, and UAS. The IRGC-QF has provided the Huthis in Yemen with advanced weapons and training, which the Huthis used throughout 2024 to attack commercial shipping in the Red Sea.



Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) *(continued)*

OVERVIEW *(continued)*

Terrorist Group Designation

The United States designated the IRGC, including IRGC-QF, as a foreign terrorist organization in April 2019, after having previously designating the IRGC and IRGC-QF as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs) in October 2017 and October 2007, respectively. The United States also designated former IRGC-QF Commander Qassim Soleimani, current IRGC-QF Commander Esmail Ghani, and former IRGC Commander-in-Chief Hosein Salami as SDGTs in October 2011, March 2012, and October 2017, respectively.

KEY LEADERS



Ahmad Vahidi

IRGC Commander-in-Chief since March 2026; former Interior Minister



Esmail Ghani

IRGC-QF Commander since January 2020; IRGC-QF Deputy Commander from 1997 to 2020



Qassim Soleimani [DECEASED]

IRGC-QF Commander from 1997 to 2020; killed in Iraq in January 2020

NOTABLE ATTACK PLOTTING

November 2024

United States

A US indictment reveals that the IRGC plans to use a criminal network to conduct murder-for-hire operations against an Iranian-American dissident, Jewish citizens, and then–Presidential candidate Donald Trump.

August 2024

United States

Asif Merchant, a Pakistani national, is arrested by US law enforcement for plotting to carry out political assassinations after traveling to Iran.



Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) *(continued)*

NOTABLE ATTACK PLOTTING *(continued)*

November 2022

Baghdad, Iraq

The IRGC orchestrates the murder of US citizen Stephen Troell.

August 2022

United States

Shahram Poursafi, an IRGC member, is charged by the US Justice Department for a plot to assassinate former National Security Advisor John Bolton.

2020 to 2022

New York City, United States

An IRGC Brigadier General and associates plot to assassinate an Iranian-American dissident, who Iranian intelligence officials and assets separately plot to kidnap for rendition to Iran.

