

Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Israel Intelligence Heritage & Commemoration Center (IICC)

Using the Quds Force of the Revolutionary Guards as the main tool to export the revolution beyond the borders of Iran

Revolutionary Guards emblem

Hezbollah emblem





Left: The emblem of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. Right, the emblem of Hezbollah, an organization set up by the Revolutionary Guards and operated by the Quds Force. The similarities between the two are obvious: both have upraised arms holding assault rifles, symbols of the revolution; above the rifles appear militant Qur'an verses in identification with radical Islam; in the background both have globes of the earth, giving Islamic militancy a universal dimension; both have books(?)' in all probability meant to be understood as the Qur'an; under the rifles are sprigs with leaves, either symbols of growth or peace, intended to soften the message sent by the more militaristic symbols. Similar motifs also appear in emblems of some of the Palestinian terrorist organizations.

The Islamic Republic of Iran's concept of exporting the revolution

1. The aspiration to export the Islamic revolution to all Muslim societies (and to all human society as well) was an integral part of the philosophy of the Ayatollah Khomeini, who led the revolution and founded the Islamic republic in 1979. Khomeini and his supporters sought to ignore the religious and national differences between Shi'ites and Sunnis, and to create a revolutionary Islamic force. Such a force would, under Iranian leadership, destroy the "root of evil," the superpowers which were corrupting the world, led by the United States ("the great evil") and its ally, Israel ("the little evil"). That would be done while efforts continued to establish Shi'a as the dominant Islamic sect.

2. The concept of exporting the revolution was, for Khomeini and his heir the Iranian "leader" Ali Khamenei, a tool for advancing Iran's strategic interests, at the center of which was Iran's desire to achieve regional hegemony and further the campaign against Israel and the West, while meddling in the internal affair of other countries (including neighboring Arab-Muslim countries in the Middle East and beyond).

The Quds Force as the main tool for exporting the revolution

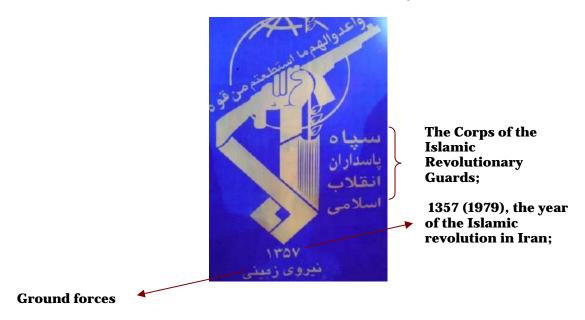
3. The Quds¹ (Jerusalem) Force is one of five branches of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, which is the strongest military-security body in the country and the regime's main support. The Quds Force is an elite unit numbering, as far as is known, several thousand. It was established at the beginning of the 1990s to help export the revolution beyond the

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¹ Also known as the "Qods Force."

borders of Iran, and became the main Iranian apparatus working secretly beyond its borders.

The emblem of the Revolutionary Guards



Above the upraised hand holding the assault rifle is a militant verse from the Qur'an reading, "Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power," [from the 60th verse of the eighth Surah, Al-Anfal ("The Spoils of War")]. The verse is a call to prepare for a war with the enemy.

- 4. The Quds Force is widely active beyond Iran's borders. Its activities range from establishing educational systems for indoctrination and civilian infrastructures supporting Iran and its radical ideology, through dealing with opponents of the regime, to setting up and operating armed terrorist and guerilla cells² and acting to subvert secular, pro-Western Arab-Muslim regimes.
- 5. Since March 1998 the Quds Force has been headed by Brigadier General Qassem Suleimani.³ The force's structure includes a general headquarters and

 $^{^2}$ For further information see our April 1, 2003 Bulletin entitled "Iran as a State Sponsoring and Operating Terror / April 2003 ," at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia//ENGLISH/IRAN/PDF/APR_03.PDF.

³ Suleimani is the Quds Force's second commander. He replaced Brigadier General **Ahmad Vahidi** (1998-1990) today Iran's deputy minister of defense. An international extradition warrant is expected to be issued for him for his and the Quds Force's involvement in the suicide bombing attack at the Jewish Community Center Building (AMIA) in Argentina in 1994.

its departments, designated commands dealing with various secret areas of specialization, and regional administrations responsible for defined geographical areas. Quds Force operatives are conspicuous for their militancy and adherence to ideology. The force, has much prestige with Iran's upper echelons, **enjoys the use of many resources** and influence strategic-defense decision-making in Tehran, especially concerning sensitive external issues related to Iran's activity in countries such as Iraq, Lebanon and Afghanistan.





Left: Brigadier General Qassem Suleimani, commander of the Quds Force since 1998. Right: in a rare television interview, talking about one of his comrades killed during the Iran-Iraq war (Iranian TV Channel 1, March 18, 2007).

6. In line with Iran's policy of exporting the revolution, the official missions of the Quds Force are the following:

- A. Carrying out special activities along and beyond Iran's borders.
- B. **Supporting terrorist organizations**, the most prominent of which is Hezbollah in Lebanon (which also symbolizes the success of exporting the revolution).
- C. **Operating sleeper networks** of terrorists and supporters in the Middle East and in countries throughout the world.
- D. Providing military and financial support for Islamic opposition parties in the Arab-Muslim world.
- E. Collecting intelligence.

- F. Operating against Iranian opposition to the regime beyond Iran's borders.
- 7. The Quds Force's missions have as their objective the advancing of the Iranian Islamic regime's strategic goals in two main categories:
 - A. **Implementing Iran's ideological-political doctrines**, the most important of which are installing Iranian hegemony throughout the Arab-Muslim world, extending Shi'a over all Islam and continuing the campaign to destroy the State of Israel.
 - B. **Destroying American supremacy** and harming American interests in the Arab-Muslim world in general and the Middle East in particular, through subversion and terrorist attacks against the West and its allies, without, insofar as is possible, leaving Iranian footprints.
- 8. The Quds Force is aggressive in advancing its missions, particularly through the traditional use of secret military operations. In recent years the Quds Force exploited the democratic process the United States has tried to instill in the Middle East, using it to improve the status of the terrorist organizations (the "resistance"), the militias and radical Islamic groups supported by Iran. That is done by creating political tools which can be used to establish Iranian influence, and includes paying off supporters in the various Arab states. While doing so the Quds Force has been careful to hide the fact that its agenda is to further solely Shi'ite Islam, and it has attempted to get a foothold in Sunni populations as well.

Focal points of Quds Force activity

9. The activity of the Quds Force is focused in three main arenas in the Middle East: **Lebanon, among Palestinians, and Iraq**. At the same time, Iran continues setting up sleeper cells throughout the world which will be activated

when Iran feels the time has come, independently and in collaboration with Hezbollah:

Lebanon

10. Lebanon, located within the heart of the Arab world, is the greatest "achievement" of the plan to export the Iranian revolution. Lebanon is considered the finest example of Quds Force "success" and is used as the front line in the campaign against Israel. The Force operates in Lebanon through local headquarters nicknamed "the Lebanese corps." Every activity undertaken by the Quds Force in Lebanon is **coordinated with the Syrian regime**, and Syria serves as the conduit through which weapons are shipped from Iran to Lebanon.



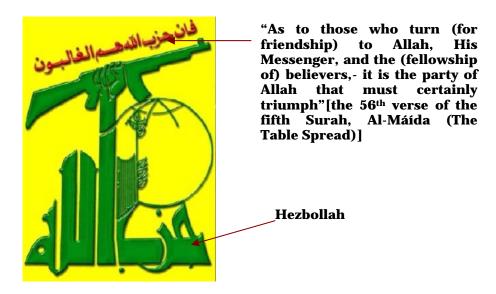
Ali Larijani, Supreme National Security Council secretary (at right) conversing with Brigadier General Qassem Suleimani (second from the right, front row), commander of the Quds Force, as they leave a meeting with Syrian president Bashar Assad (Iranian TV Channel 1, September 20, 2006).



Qassem Suleimani (at right) after the meeting with the Syrian president (Iranian TV Channel 1, September 20, 2006).

11. The Revolutionary Guards were behind the establishment of Hezbollah, originally set up to compete with and eventually replace the Amal Shi'ite movement, which is nationalist-secular, and which refused to subordinate

itself to the revolutionary Islamic regime in Tehran.⁴ Since the beginning of the 1990s the Quds Force has fostered and supported Hezbollah. During that time it has managed to strengthen and install Hezbollah among the Shi'ites in Lebanon and to help the organization construct a vast military infrastructure with capabilities of a state and not of a terrorist organization. It has done that through generous funding (hundreds of millions of dollars a year), formulating operative plans, supplying with various types of weapons (including medium- and long-range rockets which can penetrate into the heart of Israel) and by providing Hezbollah operatives with military training.



The Hezbollah emblem, inspired by that of the Revolutionary Guards. The globe, above which there is a Qur'an verse, symbolizes the universal aspect of Hezbollah and radical Islam.

12. The Quds Force gave Hezbollah massive active support during the second Lebanon war (July-August 2006) and was integrated into the organization's command structure. After the war it performed a significant role in rehabilitating Hezbollah's military might, one of whose manifestations was the smuggling of weapons from Iran to Lebanon. Qassem Suleimani, the Quds Force commander, speaking on the occasion of Jerusalem Day (which fell on

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⁴ Hezbollah was established by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards in 1982. In June of the same year the first 1500 arrived in Lebanon, called "the forces of Muhammad Rasoul Allah." Their commander was Mohsen Rafiq-Dust, who was later appointed as Revolutionary Guards minister in the Lebanese government (from *Hizballah between Iran and Lebanon*, (Hebrew), by Shimon Shapira, pub. Hakibbutz Hameuchad pp. 97-98.

October 20, 2006), said the following of the results of the second Lebanon war and its influence on the Palestinian arena:

"Following Hezbollah's victory in Lebanon a new Middle East was created, **not American but Islamic...**While the jihad groups were forming in Palestine, a Shi'ite organization called Hezbollah in Lebanon succeeded in exporting to Palestine a model of the way of life of faith. **Hezbollah performed a central function in turning the stones of Palestine into rockets...**Hamas's steadfastness strengthened the security of the Arab states, but unfortunately, the Arab leaders betrayed..."⁵

13. The sections which follow describe some of the areas in which Iran has provided support for Hezbollah through the Quds Force:

Smuggling weapons into Lebanon

14. Most of the weapons originating in Iran reach Hezbollah in Lebanon in air shipments directed by the Quds Force. They are loaded onto Iranian planes and land in Damascus' international airport, coordinated with Syria and with Syrian collaboration. From there they are smuggled overland to Hezbollah in Lebanon.

15. During the years before the second Lebanon war the Iranians transferred weapons to Hezbollah in an almost unbroken stream by taking advantage of various opportune situations. For example, at least nine times the Quds Force used Iranian and Syrian cargo planes flying humanitarian aid in to the earthquake victims at Bam (in southeastern Iran) to take large quantities of weapons for Hezbollah on their return flights (December 2003 – January 2004).

Training Hezbollah operatives in Iran and Lebanon

16. The Quds Force plays a central role in the training received by Hezbollah operatives in camps in **Iran**, using bases and facilities belonging to the

⁵ For further information see our November 2006 Bulletin entitled "The hate industry. At Jerusalem Day, initiated by Iran and celebrated in the Arab-Muslim world and in London, calls were heard for the elimination of Israel...," at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/jerusalem_d_e.pdf.

Revolutionary Guards. The training is intended to raise the Hezbollah operatives' military level and to teach them to use the modern weapons Iran provides them with. Revolutionary Guards also train Hezbollah operatives in **Lebanon**, especially at bases and facilities in the Beqa'a Valley.

17. Hezbollah operatives undergo various types of training in Iran, from integrated maneuvers to launching anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons, including Sagger and TOW missiles. Special attention is given to training Hezbollah operatives in the use of strategic and advanced weapons, such as ground-to-ground rockets with a range of more than 75 km (46.4 miles) and unmanned planes. Revolutionary Guards officers helped Hezbollah launch an Iranian-made unmanned plane into Israel in November 2004.

18. The two main camps used most often by the Quds Force for the training of foreign terrorist-operatives are the **Imam Ali camp in Tehran and the camp at Bahonar near Karaj, north of Tehran**. Two Hezbollah terrorists who were captured by the IDF during the second Lebanon war stated during interrogation that they had been trained by Revolutionary Guards operatives at the camp near **Karaj**. One of the terrorists was **Hussein Ali Suleiman**, a Hezbollah terrorist who was involved in the abducting of the two IDF soldiers, Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser, the act which led to the outbreak of the war. He stated that he had been trained in Iran by the Revolutionary Guards as part of a group of 40-50 Hezbollah operatives from Lebanon. Their passports were not stamped in either Syria or Iran to hide the fact that they had undergone training in Iran.



Hussein Ali Suleiman, who took part in the abduction of the two Israeli soldiers (Photo courtesy of the IDF spokesperson). He was trained in Iran by the Revolutionary Guards.

Supervising the construction of Hezbollah's military force and preparing if for a possible confrontation with Israel

19. During the six years after the IDF withdrawal from Lebanon (May 24, 2000) the Quds Force in Lebanon occupied itself with establishing and improving Hezbollah's offensive and defensive capabilities in preparation for a possible confrontation with Israel. The Quds Force set up a defensive deployment in south Lebanon and turned Hezbollah into an organization with the military capabilities of a state, arming it more like an Iranian division than a terrorist organization. Hezbollah's infrastructure was constructed, supervised and advised by operatives of the Revolutionary Guards, who frequently visited south Lebanon and in several instances even approached the fence separating Lebanon from Israel.

20. Proof of the above was provided by one of the Hezbollah terrorists captured during the second Lebanon war, who stated that a year and a half previously, while he was standing guard in south Lebanon, two Iranians accompanied by two Hezbollah officers visited his post. He identified one of the two Iranians as a member of the Revolutionary Guards who in the past had trained him in anti-aircraft warfare in Iran.

Funding Hezbollah's activity

21. Iran provides Hezbollah with several hundreds of millions of dollars a year. The money serves to finance the organization's terrorist activity, purchase weapons, pay operatives' salaries, train operatives and transfer funds to terrorist infrastructures in the Palestinian Authority-administered territories. In addition, the Iranian money is used to pay the organizations' expenses and support its wide range of social activities (which include operating schools, hospitals, clinics, welfare institutions, etc.), and for **propaganda and indoctrination activities**, through which Hezbollah spreads Iranian Islamic revolution ideology throughout Lebanon and fosters the personality cult of the "leader," Ali Khamenei.

22. To transfer funds to Hezbollah the Iranians use the Quds Force and the foreign ministry through the embassies in Damascus and Beirut. Iranian semi-governmental institutions also transfer funds, among them charitable societies controlled by Khamenei which have branches in Lebanon.

23. After the IDF left the security zone in south Lebanon, Iran's financial support of Hezbollah increased, both to improve its military capabilities and to provide more money for Palestinian terrorist activities in the Palestinian Authority-administered territories. After the second Lebanon war the Iranians provided Hezbollah with considerable resources, in our assessment several hundred million dollars,⁶ to repair the severe damage done to Shi'ite population centers in Beirut and south Lebanon.

The Palestinian arena

24. The Quds Force encourages and finances terrorist attacks, and smuggles weapons into the PA-administered territories. In addition, it supports and aids most of the prominent Palestinian terrorist organizations (the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and Jibril's PFLP-GC) whose headquarters are in Damascus. It supports them with money and training and provides them with

⁶ Hezbollah publicly promised \$150 million to repair damaged houses, especially in south Lebanon and the Dahiya (the south Beirut suburb inhabited by Shi'ites). Hezbollah can only get that amount of money from Iran.

technological-operational aid, including the know-how to improve weapons such as powerful side charges. The Force works in collaboration with the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security.

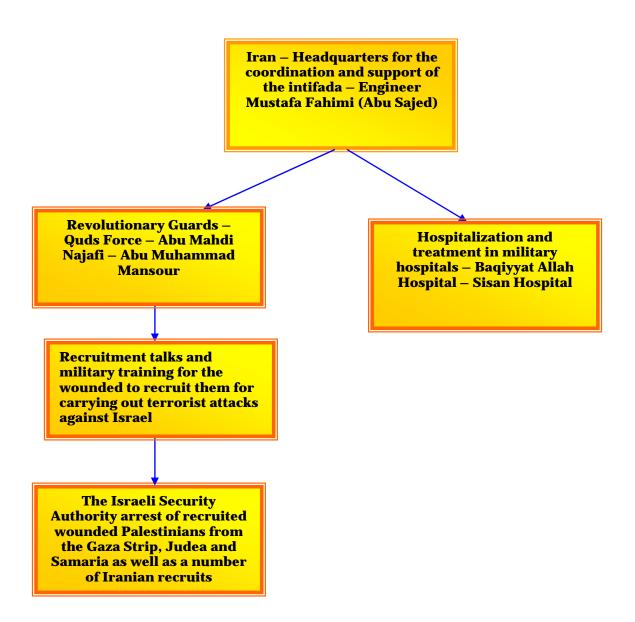


Hamas's homemade explosively formed projectiles (EFPs) called *shawaz* (flame). They were discovered by the IDF on September 12, 2006, near the main road in the Gaza Strip. They have higher penetration capabilities than the charges usually used by the Palestinian terrorist organizations, and are able to pierce more than 200 mm (8") of steel. Their higher capabilities are the result of improvements and the use of more powerful explosives, both based on technical know-how supplied by Iran and/or Hezbollah.

25. Members of the Quds Force were involved in the first stages of the Palestinian terrorist campaign (intifada) through enlisting Palestinians who were wounded in terrorist attacks and went to Iran for medical treatment. During their stay in the country some of them were recruited by Quds Force activists and underwent training intended to prepare them to attack Israeli targets. The Israeli security forces detained wounded terrorists from the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria who were recruited by the Iranians and sent to the PA-administered territories.

26. The following diagram shows the process of the Quds Force recruitment of wounded Palestinians:⁷

⁷ For further information see our April 2003 Bulletin entitled "Iran as a State Sponsoring and Operating Terror / April 2003," pp. 43-47, at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia//ENGLISH/IRAN/PDF/APR_03.PDF.



27. Apparently after the second Lebanon war Iran increased its support of the Palestinian terrorist organizations as part of an attempt to strengthen its influence with the Hamas government. The Quds Force is also involved in Hezbollah activities which support and direct terrorist attacks against Israel carried out by the Palestinian terrorist organizations.⁸

⁸ For further information see our March 2007 Bulletin entitled "Anti-Israeli Terrorism, 2006: Data, Analysis and Trends," at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/terrorism_2006e.pdf.

The inspiration of Revolutionary Guards and Hezbollah symbols on Palestinian terrorist organization iconography

28. The motif of the upraised arm holding an assault rifle and the use of militant verses from the Qur'an appear on Palestinian terrorist organization propaganda material, inspired, in our assessment, by the Revolutionary Guards and Hezbollah. The main difference is in their universal aspect (the globe of the earth in the background), as opposed to the local-Palestinian nature of the Palestinian terrorist organizations (the map of "Palestine," the Palestinian flag).



The Hezbollah emblem



The Revolutionary Guards emblem

Jerusalem Battalions of the PIJ



A PIJ poster commemorating Mahmoud Tawalbeh, commander for the Jerusalem Battalions. It bears the inscription "Jerusalem Battalions," the name of the organization's terroristoperative wing, above which is an upraised arm holding an assault rifle and a verse from the Qur'an.



A Hamas poster bearing the inscription "Hamas," above which is the same upraised arm holding an assault rifle and a verse from the Qur'an.



The emblem of the PRC, bearing the same iconography.

Iraq

29. The Quds Force leads the Iranian collaboration with the various organizations in Iraq to strengthen Iran's influence there and to support them in their campaign against the United States and the coalition forces. It provides some of the organizations (for example, the Badr Brigade and the Mahdi Army) with money, equipment and weapons. The weapons, particularly powerful IEDs, have led to the deaths of scores of coalition force troops serving in Iraq.

30. In the past few months the Western media have made much evidence public (based mainly on American or British sources) regarding the support the Quds Force gives the various organizations in Iraq, especially the Shi'ite organizations. For example:

A. On December 22, 2006, and at the beginning of January 2007 American forces in Iraq detained Iranian activists, among them some belonging to the Quds Force, on suspicion of involvement in subversive activities and terrorism. Among those detained (and later released) were **Brigadier General Mohsen Shizari** and **Colonel Abu Ahmad Davari**, both highly placed in the Quds Force. Several Quds Force activists were detained in an American raid on the Iranian liaison office in Erbil in northern Iraq. It has been suggested that the abduction of the 15 British sailors was planned in advance to supply hostages to trade for the Revolutionary Guards and intelligence officers captured by the Americans in Iraq.⁹

B. At the end of February 2007 a British newspaper revealed that 100 sniper rifles sent to Iran by the Austrian firm of Steyr-Mannlicher between 2004 and 2005 for use against drug smugglers operating along the Afghanistan border found their way into the hands of the Shi'ite opposition and were actually used to carry out attacks against the coalition forces in Iraq. The rifles are extremely accurate and their

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⁹ The Sunday Telegraph, March 25, 2007.

ammunition (some of which is manufactured in Iran) can pierce armor at a distance of 1.5 km (.93 miles). 10

C. Two high-ranking commanders of the Mahdi Army, the Shi'ite militia led by Moqtada Sadr, told an AP reporter that hundreds of Shi'ite militiamen had gone to Iraq to be trained by the Quds Force. They stated that Iran was funding Mahdi Army deserters (AP, March 22, 2007).

D. At a February 11, 2007 press briefing, senior American military personnel in Baghdad showed examples of explosives bearing serial numbers and Iranian script. One of the Americans said that the Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force had supplied the explosives and that instructions for their use had come from highly-placed sources in the Iranian government.¹¹

E. In a raid on a Shi'ite arms storehouse in the city of Hillah in southern Iraq, Iranian-manufactured armor-penetrating side charges had been found. Some of them were plate charges which had been camouflaged in plastic made to look like rocks, reminiscent of the charges used by Hezbollah in south Lebanon against the IDF. Infrared sensors were also found, as were electronic detonators and information about explosives exclusive to Iran. Ten Strella anti-aircraft missiles were also found in the raid, which had been manufactured in China and repainted by Iran. ¹²

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 $^{^{10}}$ See the article by Miki Segal, "Iran's Smoking Gun – From Vienna to Baghdad?," (Omedia Website, March 3, 2007)

¹¹ The New York Times, February 11, 2007.

¹² Miki Segal, "The Annual Intelligence Survey: Iran," (Hebrew) (Omedia Website, March 2, 2007). Also see http://www.globalsecurity.org/org/news/2007/070226-iran-claims.htm.



A side charge, apparently of Iranian manufacture, found in south Lebanon. Similar charges were found in Iraq.

F. At the hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee Annual Threat Assessment on February 27, 2007, Mike McConnell, Director of National Intelligence, said the following in answer to a question about the depth Quds Force involvement in Iraq: "We know there are Iranian weapons manufactured in Iran. We know that Qods Forces are bringing them into [Iraq]." McConnell added that he was of the opinion that a large quantity of the weapons arriving in Iraq came through Syria and noted that there was Iranian-Syrian collaboration in everything concerning support of Hezbollah. He also stated that 170 American soldiers had been killed as a result of Iranian weapons supplied by the Quds Force. 13

31. The Quds Force is currently active in improving the operational capabilities of the anti-American elements working in Iraq, and is also establishing an infrastructure in Iraq which will be able to carry out attacks encouraged and directed by Iran. At the same time, it is setting up communications channels with power centers in the political arena for Iran to be able to strengthen its influence over Iraq and to weaken the influence of the United States there.

 $^{{\}color{blue}^{13}} \ \underline{\text{http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/2007_hr/022707transcript.pdf}}. \ Also see \ Miki \ Segal, \\ \emph{\it ibid.}$

The involvement of the Quds Force in global terrorism

32. On the morning of July 18, 1994, there was an explosion at the Jewish Community Center building (AMIA) in Buenos Aires. The blast killed 85 individuals who were in the building or close by, and wounded hundreds. A large part of the building collapsed and severe damage was done to neighboring structures. The explosion was caused by a car bomb detonated by a Hezbollah suicide bomber, who used hundreds of kilograms of explosives. The bombing was similar to that at the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires on March 17, 1992, which killed 30 and wounded more than 220.





The ruins of the AMIA building

33. On October 25, 2006, the Dr. Alberto Nisman, the Argentinean attorney general, and attorney Marcelo Martínez Burgos presented the findings of the special team which investigated the terrorist attack which destroyed the Jewish Community Center building (AMIA) in Buenos Aires. The detailed report unequivocally showed that the decision to blow up the building was taken by the highest echelons of the Iranian government and that the commander of the Quds Force at that time, Ahmad Vahidi, had been involved. The Iranians had asked Hezbollah, which also serves as a tool for its strategies beyond the Lebanese arena, to carry out the attack.

34. The Argentinean attorney general asked for international arrest warrants to be issued for seven senior Iranian figures who had been involved in the attack, among them **Ahmad Vahidi**, at the time of the bombing commander of the Quds Force. On November 9, 2006, Argentinean judge Rodolfo Canicoba Corral complied with the request and issued the warrants. Argentina also appealed to Interpol. In March 2007 Interpol's Executive Committee issued international extradition warrants ("Red Notices") for a senior Hezbollah operative (Imad Moughnieh) and five high-ranking Iranian official who were on the list presented by the Argentineans, among them **Ahmad Vahidi**. Iran is expected to appeal the warrants, which will put off Interpole's decision to November 2007.

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¹⁴ For further information see our March 28, 2007 Bulletin entitled "Following an appeal from the Argentinean Attorney General, Interpol issued international extradition warrants for five senior Iranians and one senior Hezbollah operative," at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/argentina_e0307.pdf.



Former Quds Force commander Ahmad Vahidi



Argentina's wanted list. Bottom right: Ahmad Vahidi

35. In recent years Iran has avoided direct involvement in terrorist attacks carried out abroad for fear of affecting its image. However, the Quds Force and the Iranian intelligence services continue to build sleeper cells throughout the world, directly or through Hezbollah. That is done to establish operational capabilities which will enable Iran to carry out terrorist attacks when it feels the time has come, against Western and Jewish and/or Israeli targets, both directly and independently and by using Hezbollah as a contractor.