



Iran's Reserve of Last Resort

UNCOVERING THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTIONARY
GUARD CORPS GROUND FORCES ORDER OF BATTLE



MARIE DONOVAN, NICHOLAS CARL, AND FREDERICK W. KAGAN

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Executive Summary

Qasem Soleimani's death, the prospect of further US-Iranian military escalation, and the reemergence of large protests in Iran in recent months raise the question of Iran's capacity to conduct military operations beyond its borders while suppressing dissent within them. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Ground Forces are Tehran's reserve of last resort for both internal and external security challenges. They fought extensively in Syria in 2015–16 and could be used to crush domestic opposition in the last extreme, although they have not yet fully taken on that role.

Their capabilities are limited by both their need to remain available to meet internal challenges to regime survival and their reliance on other paramilitary forces to fill out their ranks. They would likely be challenged to handle a large-scale regional conflict at the same time as major domestic unrest, potentially forcing the regime to choose between maintaining internal stability and continuing some external military operations.

- The IRGC Ground Forces are organized around headquarters that are meant to coordinate the operations of Iranian paramilitary forces and support the Quds Force's use of proxy groups such as Iraqi Shi'a militias abroad.
- Their basing in Iran indicates a primary focus on suppressing internal unrest and waging irregular warfare in the rear of an invader rather than on defending against an invasion conventionally.
- Their organizational structure and the pattern of their operations in Syria suggest that they might be challenged to coordinate large-scale (multi-division) operations abroad and possibly at home.
- The fact that the Iranian leadership has not yet had to use them on a large scale to suppress growing domestic unrest suggests that the regime still has a potent reserve force to ensure its survival even if the unrest grows considerably, as long as it does not also face a requirement for large-scale military operations abroad.

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Marie Donovan, Nicholas Carl, and Frederick W. Kagan

The killing of Qassem Soleimani has focused attention on the branch of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) that he commanded—the Quds Force. The Quds Force is the IRGC's external operations arm and has conducted the most well-known attacks against American and other international targets including, most recently, ordering the rocket attack that killed one American and wounded several others in Kirkuk, Iraq, on December 27, 2019.¹ The Quds Force is only a small portion of the IRGC's combat power, most of which resides in the divisions and brigades of the IRGC Ground Forces, however.² Soleimani commanded the Iranian effort to help Syrian despot Bashar al Assad crush Syria's rebellious population, but Soleimani drew on regular IRGC combat units to support the Quds Force at the peak of that fight.³

Soleimani's death calls into question the future of the Quds Force's dominance over Iranian military operations abroad. Its new commander, Esmail Ghaani, has nothing like Soleimani's presence and influence. The regular IRGC forces may come to play a more significant role in shaping and conducting Iran's activities around the region. It is therefore urgent to understand the organization and capabilities of the regular IRGC units.

The regime's response to the most recent round of large-scale protests in Iran underscores this urgency. The regime moved much more rapidly to using brutality and lethal force against protesters in November 2019 than it had in any previous protest suppression

operation.⁴ The operational units of the IRGC Ground Forces seem not to have participated directly in that crackdown, however. They appear to be the only category of forces with an internal security mandate held entirely in reserve during this crisis.

Iran's leaders committed some of those forces to Syria only at the height of combat operations in 2015 and 2016, moreover. The regime leadership's apparent reluctance to use the IRGC Ground Forces in the most severe internal crackdown since the revolution and even in the largest military operation Iran has conducted beyond its borders since the Iran-Iraq War suggests that it sees the IRGC Ground Forces as a reserve of last resort. We therefore must consider the scale and capacity of these forces and at what point the regime might have to choose between supporting foreign activities and ensuring its domestic security if protests worsen as external security requirements rise.

The Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise Institute has therefore developed an order of battle of the IRGC Ground Forces to help make that assessment. An order of battle is a list of units, their relationships to one another, equipment, structure, leadership, and locations. The basic order of battle presented in this report gives insight into the capabilities the Iranian leadership apparently values most in the IRGC Ground Forces—specifically the ability to organize, plan, and oversee the conduct of military, paramilitary, and internal security operations beyond the scale of what the Quds

Force can handle outside Iran and what Iran's Law Enforcement Forces (LEF) and Basij can manage inside the country.

The IRGC Ground Forces in the Context of Iran's Security Services

The Iranian regime maintains four overlapping security services, all but one of which (the Artesh) are present in almost every province of the country. All have some internal security role and have deployed elements to fight in Syria.

Iran's conventional military, the Artesh, has army, navy, and air force components similar to those of any other country's conventional forces and an air defense branch. It is responsible for defending Iran's territory and has historically vied with the IRGC for resources and control over conventional military capabilities.

The IRGC also has an air force and naval forces of its own, in addition to its ground forces, partially duplicating the Artesh services.⁵ The two forces had been differentiated until recently by the IRGC's orientation on defending the Islamic Revolution that Ayatollah Khomeini began in 1979 and the Artesh's focus on defending Iran's borders, a distinction that has steadily eroded over the past few years.⁶

The IRGC also controls the Basij Organization—a vast enterprise including ideological youth movements and highly trained, quasi-professional paramilitary units, among other elements. The IRGC relies on Basij units to fill out its own ranks. The IRGC itself is further divided into operational units—the divisions and brigades presented in this report—and territorial units, which are aligned with Iran's provincial and district boundaries.

Both the Artesh and the IRGC report through the Armed Forces General Staff directly to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, bypassing the Iranian president, who is not in the military chain of command. The president nominally controls Iran's gendarmerie, the LEF that falls under the purview of the interior minister whom the president appoints. The LEF is the regime's first line of defense against protests and civil unrest.

Challenges and Limitations of an IRGC Order of Battle

Laying out even the most basic order of battle of the IRGC Ground Forces is surprisingly difficult. Neither official Iranian websites nor independent analysts have offered a full listing of the IRGC's conventional units, although some sites have partial compilations.⁷ The Iranian government has clearly sought to make the task of compiling this information difficult, in fact, by ensuring that IRGC units have a minimal internet presence.⁸ This attempt at secrecy is somewhat odd for a formally structured military organization that is far from covert.

Important questions thus remain unanswered, such as exactly how the various units relate to one another, the relationship between Ground Forces operational units and provincial units (a distinction we will consider in somewhat more detail presently), and even the locations of some units. The peacetime manning and equipment levels of these units are also unclear. This report therefore does not attempt to determine how brigades might be subordinated to divisions or draw conclusions about the strength or combat effectiveness of IRGC Ground Forces units in general.

Methodology

Iranian efforts to conceal the IRGC Ground Forces' structure have been only partially successful. Ground Forces units have fought and taken losses in Syria, and Iranian media has reported those losses along with the unit affiliations of many of the deceased. Units regularly announce changes of command, and their commanders often speak at local and regional events. IRGC officials sometimes announce which units participate in certain exercises and often describe and praise the actions of particular units helping in disaster responses. Careful compilation and analysis of such atomized bits of information over several years have made possible the basic order of battle presented below.

This project also used the extensive discussions of the activities of IRGC combat units and their leaders

in the Iran-Iraq War published by the IRGC itself to glorify its role in that conflict and Iranian publications about their evolving military doctrine and force structure. It took advantage of satellite imagery available from Google Earth and the markups and comments of users on Wikimapia and other social media sites with necessary corroboration from Iranian media and a healthy skepticism to help pinpoint locations of some IRGC units.⁹

This report does not purport to offer a doctrinal order of battle for the IRGC because IRGC doctrine for the organization of its forces is not available.¹⁰ Iranian military structure generally follows American rather than Soviet lines, which is unusual for the region and likely results from the alliance between the US and the shah before the revolution. The IRGC began as a *sui generis* revolutionary body that initially attempted to shun ranks and formal hierarchy. It gained such structures under the pressure of the Iran-Iraq War and has steadily formalized them as it consolidated its position in Iran's security services after that war. What follows is an assessment based on external observations that does not attempt to discern the underlying doctrine or organizational concept beyond the limited issues the Iranians have publicly discussed.

Composition and Role of IRGC Divisions and Brigades

Many if not most IRGC divisions and brigades likely exist as cadres with a complement of officers and senior noncommissioned officers but relatively few soldiers. These cadres—IRGC Ground Forces unit headquarters—can command high-end paramilitary units of the Basij Organization in case of war or emergency, and some IRGC units may be able to recall soldiers who have been trained and allowed to return home as a kind of ready reserve. But limited evidence suggests that some IRGC Ground Forces units may retain a higher proportion of their soldiers even in peacetime to practice skills difficult to retain in a reserve and to keep a small combat force ready to move at short notice.

The headquarters' elements themselves are thus likely the most salient parts of the IRGC Ground Forces, as they are intended to be the units of organization and execution for large-scale Iranian military and paramilitary operations.

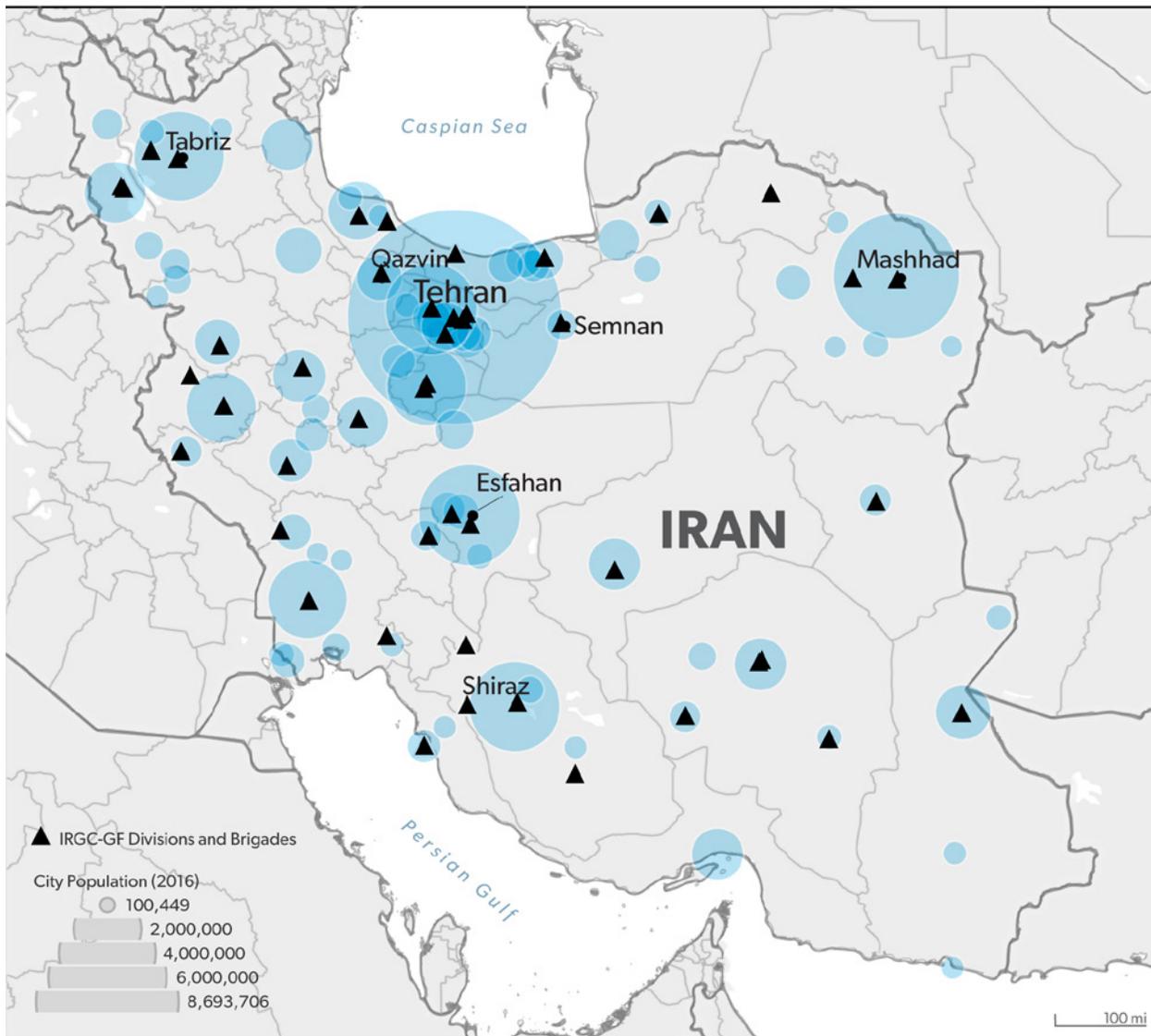
The activities of IRGC Ground Forces units deployed to Syria support this assessment. IRGC divisions and brigades deployed as unit cadres to support Assad's forces starting in 2015 and extending into the summer of 2016.¹¹ They seem to have brought relatively small numbers of individuals (under 100 and probably often under 50 individuals) with them on each deployment, with rotations normally lasting a few months at a time. They appear to have functioned primarily as headquarters coordinating the actions of the various fighters drawn from Lebanese Hezbollah; the Syrian Arab Army; Afghan and Pakistani fighters recruited, trained, and equipped by the Quds Force; Iraqi Shi'a militias; and their own Basijis. They were present for the most intense part of the campaign to stabilize the situation for Assad in the west and then to retake Aleppo City.¹² They suffered serious losses in May 2016, when opposition forces overran a base housing part of the 25th Karbala Division cadre, killing 13 and wounding 21 members of the unit.¹³ After that setback and end of the Battle of Aleppo, the IRGC Ground Forces appear to have stopped sending headquarters cadres as units, at least on the same scale.

IRGC Basing, Doctrine, and Organization

The IRGC's basing posture in Iran offers insight into what threats the regime most fears from internal and external foes—namely, loss of control over its population whether in the context of an external armed attack, as a result of enemy campaigns to generate insurgency in Iran, or from genuine popular disaffection.

The IRGC is not primarily intended to supplement the Artesh in defense at the borders or to conduct a maneuvering defense in-depth should invaders penetrate the front lines. It is not concentrated near the frontier or even at internal choke points, but rather dispersed throughout Iran in a pattern that most

Figure 1. IRGC Locations and Population Density



Source: Authors' research; and City Population, "Iran," <http://www.citypopulation.de/en/iran/cities>.

closely matches population density. It generally lacks the tanks and infantry fighting vehicles that would allow forces deep in Iran to maneuver effectively against an invader.

Its basing allows it to blend into the highest population concentrations in Iran from which to conduct irregular warfare against an invader and to maintain control over the Iranian people by force if necessary. It is likely intended to be able to execute both missions simultaneously.

The idea of the IRGC as a force prepared to conduct irregular warfare against an invader while controlling the population was embodied in the "Mosaic Doctrine," which former IRGC commander Maj. Gen. Mohammad Ali Jafari introduced in 2007.¹⁴ The basic idea behind the doctrine was that the US might turn east after having invaded Iraq and attack Iran, possibly beginning with an air campaign aimed at decapitating the regime. The Mosaic Doctrine thus aimed to decentralize the IRGC and disperse it more among

the Iranian population. Doing so would make it harder for the US to target, facilitate efforts not only to control the population in the face of a US attack but also to conduct irregular warfare, and allow it to continue to operate even if the US succeeded in killing or disrupting the regime's senior leadership.

The Mosaic Doctrine approach, in principle, blurred the lines between IRGC combat units that had previously focused ostensibly on warfighting capabilities and IRGC territorial units whose focus was on internal security. The IRGC had performed both missions during the Iran-Iraq War, and its peacetime units retained the nomenclature and lineage of the numbered divisions and brigades that had fought in that conflict. The IRGC had also created units aligned with province and district boundaries, however, named for the territories for which they were responsible rather than using the lineage and heraldry of Iran-Iraq War organizations. The Mosaic Doctrine apparently meant to integrate the two forces in some way, with the combat unit headquarters joining with, superseding, or subordinating themselves to the provincial IRGC units.

Discussion of the details of the Mosaic Doctrine reform must be vague because it appears that it was only partially implemented. We have so far identified only one area—northern Iran near its border with Azerbaijan—that explicitly described its reorganization along Mosaic Doctrine lines.¹⁵ IRGC combat units elsewhere have continued to exist independently of provincial and district IRGC units, with different commanders and staff structures.

The IRGC appears to have thus retained two parallel structures—a territorial organization focused heavily on security against internal threats (whether resulting from domestic unrest or enemy armed attack) and what the IRGC calls “operational” divisions and brigades that can coordinate the actions of different elements of Iran's security forces facing internal challenges, wage irregular warfare against an invader, and conduct limited operations abroad.

This structure would seem to give the Islamic Republic the ability to sustain combat operations beyond its borders even while managing complex and large-scale internal security challenges. The structure

of the high-end Basij paramilitary organizations suggests that the regime intends to have precisely such a capability. The Basij includes two sets of units whose members are nearly full-time professional soldiers—Imam Hossein Battalions and Imam Ali Battalions.¹⁶

The Imam Hossein Battalions seem designated for combat operations beyond Iran's borders and in Iranian territory in the case of invasion. Imam Hossein Battalions deployed to Syria with IRGC operational division and brigade cadres and took losses there. Imam Ali Battalions appear designated for internal security missions and do not seem to have deployed to Syria. They are supplemented by additional Basij unit types (the Ashoura and al Zahra battalions, among others) aimed at maintaining internal security that do not appear intended to deploy abroad or engage in direct combat against invading forces.

It is unclear, however, whether this apparent bifurcation in organizational roles would persist in the event of major combat operations combined with an internal security challenge—still less how well it would function. The number, manning, and effectiveness of both Imam Hossein and Imam Ali battalions are information gaps. It is far from clear that the IRGC has enough such high-quality units to sustain both major combat operations and large-scale internal security missions simultaneously.

The IRGC might also be challenged to manage command and control of large-scale operations of either type. It has broken Iranian territory into 11 regions, each with an “operational base” to which, apparently, all the territorial and operational IRGC units in the area are subordinated. The operational bases are thus the closest approximation to corps-level organizations in the IRGC and would presumably be responsible for coordinating the activities of both operational and territorial units. Doing so during an invasion or an extremely serious internal security event might prove challenging; an operational base typically has four or five operational units and two to four provincial units in its area of responsibility.¹⁷

It would presumably also coordinate the mobilization of the necessary Basij units of all types, possibly through a regional commander of Basij forces (who might himself be an IRGC officer), although

that is less clear. Further, either provincial or operational IRGC units could manage the mobilization of Basij units in their areas on their own in accord with Mosaic Doctrine principles of decentralization. The process of mobilizing and managing the many different kinds of IRGC and Basij units in the face of serious security challenges and possibly with degraded communications would nevertheless be daunting.

New Leaders, New Questions

The death of Soleimani raises new questions about the future relationship of the Quds Force and the rest of the IRGC. Soleimani played a relatively small role in managing internal security in Iran itself and had established a high degree of independence even from the IRGC commander. His death is therefore unlikely to lead to significant changes in the way the IRGC itself functions in Iran, including in the execution of its internal security missions.

Soleimani's passing does raise the question, however, of how IRGC operational units would function abroad if the regime chose to deploy them to Syria or elsewhere again in the future. Soleimani had been fully in charge of the Iranian military effort in Syria, and the IRGC unit cadres that deployed there were subordinated to him. They appear to have operated within the command framework he had built using his Quds Force officers and the proxy network they controlled. Soleimani's stature in the IRGC, Iran, and the region likely made that subordination tolerable. His brilliance and experience made it work.

His successor is his former deputy of 20 years, Brig. Gen. Esmail Ghaani. Ghaani has worked hardest on the areas outside Soleimani's focus—Afghanistan, Africa, and Latin America most notably.¹⁸ He certainly lacks Soleimani's stature, deep personal connections in the Middle East, and probably his brilliance; people of Soleimani's caliber do not come along often.

The IRGC itself also has seen a change of command since the end of its large-scale Syria deployments: Maj. Gen. Hossein Salami replaced Jafari as

the IRGC commander in April 2019.¹⁹ Where Jafari appears to be thoughtful and intellectually serious, Salami seems much more hotheaded and blustering. The Soleimani-Jafari relationship that was likely essential to permit the apparently smooth functioning of a Quds Force-commanded IRGC operational unit deployment will not likely be replicated between Salami and Ghaani.

This raises the question of whether the IRGC would seek in the future to establish its own command echelon distinct from the Quds Force if it again deployed operational unit cadres abroad. It is not clear how it would do so and whether it could do so without compromising its ability to respond to internal security challenges at the same time.

Conclusion

The Islamic Republic of Iran faces unprecedented security challenges internally and throughout the region. The temporary rallying of Iranians behind the regime following Soleimani's killing did not last long. Protests may well reemerge in the coming months, depending in part on the course of the current US-Iranian crisis, and Iran's leaders may decide to commit the IRGC more fully to suppressing them.

At the same time, Iran's security forces will likely face growing requirements in Iraq and Syria regardless of the continued presence or departure of American troops from those two countries. If the US remains, the regime will likely double down on efforts to expel it, possibly beginning to draw on IRGC Ground Forces capabilities. If it leaves, Iran will have to work hard to consolidate its gains and establish some kind of durable new order it finds suitable. The IRGC is likely to be involved in either effort, possibly more so now than while Soleimani was at the helm of the Quds Force. The order of battle presented in this report is the first step toward assessing the IRGC's capacity to handle the challenges Iran is likely to face in the coming years.

Notes

1. Julian E. Barnes, "American Contractor Killed in Rocket Attack in Iraq," *New York Times*, December 27, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/27/us/politics/american-rocket-attack-iraq.html>.
2. Defense Intelligence Agency, "Iran Military Power: Ensuring Regime Survival and Securing Regional Dominance," November 19, 2019, https://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/Iran_Military_Power_LR.pdf.
3. Paul Bucala and Frederick W. Kagan, "Iran's Evolving Way of War: How the IRGC Fights in Syria," Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise Institute, March 16, 2016, https://www.criticalthreats.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/imce-imagesIrans_Evolving_Way_of_War_IRGC_in_Syria_FINAL-1.pdf.
4. Nicholas Carl and Kyra Rauschenbach, "Iran File: November 22, 2019," Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise Institute, November 22, 2019, <https://www.criticalthreats.org/briefs/iran-file/iran-file-november-22-2019>.
5. The two forces have also partially deconflicted responsibilities even in the midst of their overlapping capabilities. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Navy, for example, generally controls the fleet of small boats that periodically harass US and other ships in the Persian Gulf, while the Artesh Navy controls the larger surface combatants. The IRGC Aerospace Force controls Iran's missile inventory, while the Artesh Air Force focuses on its fixed wing fleet. Much of Iran's mechanized capabilities lie in the Artesh Ground Forces, while the IRGC Ground Forces tend to be much lighter and more infantry centric.
6. Khomeini's theo-ideology purports to be a pan-Islamic ideal that should reshape the entire Muslim community, not just Iran or even just Shi'ism. The IRGC was created to protect that ideal and the emerging state Khomeini created in the 1980s from internal and external threats and also to promulgate it, by force if necessary, in the rest of the Muslim world. The IRGC was therefore from its inception an explicitly ideological and revolutionary force whose mandate extended from internal security to foreign operations. See the excellent work done on the IRGC by Kenneth Katzman, *The Warriors of Islam: Iran's Revolutionary Guard* (1993, New York: Routledge, 2019); Frederic Wehrey et al., "The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps," RAND Corporation, 2009, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG821.pdf; Ali Alfoneh, *Iran Unveiled: How the Revolutionary Guards Is Transforming Iran from a Theocracy into Military Dictatorship* (Washington, DC: AEI Press, 2013); Afshon Ostovar, *Vanguard of the Imam* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016); Stephen Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and Its Armed Forces* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014); and Saeid Golkar, *Captive Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).
7. Galen Wright, "Organizational Analysis," Arkenstone, <http://thearkenstone.blogspot.com/p/military-organization-and-order-of.html>.
8. The websites of many provincial IRGC units, for example, appear to belong to the Basij Organization. See Frederick W. Kagan and Tommy Stiansen, *The Growing Cyberthreat from Iran: The Initial Report of Project Pistachio Harvest*, American Enterprise Institute, April 17, 2015, 27, <https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/growing-cyberthreat-from-iran/>.
9. Facilities housing military forces and their headquarters generally have a predictable footprint. Barriers with entry control points provide security. Bases almost invariably have a parade ground, with a visible reviewing stand, that can also serve as a helicopter landing pad. Warehousing and sheds to protect and conceal vehicles have distinctive patterns that are visibly different from industrial buildings. The multiple historical images available on Google Earth often capture shots of individual armored vehicles, artillery, or other military gear. The more highly built-up IRGC bases have a signature layout and style as well. Satellite imagery thus facilitates both locating military facilities that one can then seek to associate through other means with particular IRGC units and confirming that locations provided in other sources actually point to likely military installations.
10. For an example of a doctrinal order of battle, see Joseph Holliday, *The Syrian Army: Doctrinal Order of Battle*, Institute for the Study of War, February 2013, <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/syrian-army-doctrinal-order-battle>.
11. Paul Bucala, "Iran's New Way of War in Syria," Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise Institute and Institute for the Study of War, February 2017, https://www.criticalthreats.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Iran-New-Way-of-War-in-Syria_Final.pdf;

and Bucala and Kagan, "Iran's Evolving Way of War."

12. Ben Hubbard, "Turning Point in Syria as Assad Regains All of Aleppo," *New York Times*, December 22, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/22/world/middleeast/aleppo-syria-evacuation.html>.
13. Paul Bucala, "What the Khan Tuman Defeat Means for Iran," Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise Institute, May 12, 2016, <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/what-the-khan-tuman-defeat-means-for-iran>.
14. Ali Alfoneh, "What Do Structural Changes in the Revolutionary Guards Mean?," American Enterprise Institute, September 23, 2008, <https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/what-do-structural-changes-in-the-revolutionary-guards-mean/>.
15. Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran, "Iran's Revolutionary Guards Set Up First Provincial Corps in East Azarbayjan," East Azarbayjan Provincial TV, June 28, 2008.
16. Saeid Golkar, *Captive Society: The Basij Militia and Social Control in Iran* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 93–104.
17. Military best practice is to have between three and five direct subordinates assigned to a single commander. Operational bases with as many as six or eight direct subordinates could find controlling all of them in complex operations difficult.
18. Ali Alfoneh, "Who Is Esmail Qaani, the New Chief Commander of Iran's Quds Force?," Washington Institute, January 7, 2020, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/who-is-esmail-qaani-the-new-chief-commander-of-irans-Quds-force>.
19. Parisa Hafezi, "Khamenei Names New Chief for Iran's Revolutionary Guards," Reuters, April 21, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-guards/khamenei-names-new-chief-for-irans-revolutionary-guards-idUSKCN1RXoJN>.

Order of Battle

IRGC Ground Forces Operational Units

The order of battle below lists three echelons of command of the IRGC Ground Forces. Operational bases covering regions of the country are the highest level. Their commanders are brigadier generals first class (equivalent to American major generals) or second class (roughly equivalent to American brigadier generals).¹ The names of the regions covered by these top-level operational bases are ours; the IRGC does not appear to refer to the regions as distinct from the operational bases responsible for them. The term “operational base” is also used to refer to headquarters below this regional-command echelon, however. We have included lower-echelon operational bases that we encountered and whose existence we assess with moderate to high confidence, but the list of lower-echelon operational bases is not exhaustive.

Each regional operational base contains one or more divisions, usually commanded by a brigadier general second class (US one star) or a colonel. They also contain one or more brigades, most often commanded by a colonel but sometimes by a brigadier general second class. We are reasonably confident that we have identified the active operational divisions, but the list of brigades is almost certainly incomplete. Some brigades are likely colocated with their division headquarters and so do not appear as individual units in the Persian reporting. This is one reason we have not attempted to determine which brigades are subordinated to which divisions.

Where we have identified a unit commander we include both the citation and the date of the most recent mention of him in that position.

This order of battle is our initial presentation of the data. Future products will make available the basis on which we assessed each unit's location and other information about the unit bases and previous commanders and senior staff officers.

Figure 2. IRGC Regional Headquarters' Assessed Areas of Responsibility



Note: *The Hamzeh Seyyed ol Shohada and Najaf-e Ashraf operational bases both cover portions of Kermanshah province. It is unclear how the province is divided between the two headquarters. Kermanshah is thus listed under the West Region section of this order of battle solely because the Najaf-e Ashraf Operational Base is likely located in the province—whereas Hamzeh Seyyed ol Shohada is located in West Azerbaijan province. **The Quds Operational Base controls Sistan and Baluchistan Province and some regions in Hormozgan, South Khorasan, and Kerman provinces. The Madinah ol Munawarah Operational Base likely controls the majority of Hormozgan; however, the Samen ol Aemeh Operational Base also likely does in South Khorasan. The Quds Operational Base controls areas around Bam, Fahraj, Ghaleh Ganj, Jiro, Kahnouj, and Narmashir counties in Kerman. It is unclear to which base the remainder of Kerman Province belongs.
Source: Authors.

Region: Northwest

Provinces: Kurdistan and West Azerbaijan²

Operational Bases

Hamzeh Seyyed ol Shohada Operational Base (Urumiyeh, West Azerbaijan province)³

Commander: Brig. Gen. First Class Mohammad Taghi Osanlou (as of September 19, 2019)⁴

Imam Sajjad Operational Base (Mahabad, West Azerbaijan province)

Commander: Col. Taleb Rahimi (as of September 24, 2019)⁵

Divisions

3rd Hamzeh Seyyed ol Shohada Special Forces Division (Urumiyeh, West Azerbaijan province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Yadollah Aberoushan (as of July 21, 2019)⁶

22nd Beyt ol Moghaddas Operational Division (Sanandaj, Kurdistan province)

Commander: Col. Jamshid Rezaei (as of September 23, 2019)⁷

Brigade

2nd Abu Abdollah ol Hossein Brigade (Urumiyeh, West Azerbaijan province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Alireza Talaei (as of May 28, 2018)⁸

Region: North

Provinces: Ardabil, East Azerbaijan, and Zanjan

Operational Base

Ashoura Operational Base (Zanjan city, Zanjan province)⁹

Commander: Brig. Gen. First Class Mohammad Taghi Ousanlou (as of April 8, 2019)¹⁰

Division

31st Ashoura Mechanized Division (Tabriz, East Azerbaijan province)

Commander: Unknown

This unit deployed to Syria and incurred casualties fighting for the Assad regime.¹¹

Brigade

Imam Zaman Mechanized Brigade (Shabestar, East Azerbaijan province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Mostafa Mohammadi (as of September 27, 2019)¹²

Region: West

Provinces: Hamedan, Ilam, and Kermanshah

Operational Base

Najaf-e Ashraf Operational Base (Kermanshah province)¹³

Commander: Brig. Gen. First Class Mohammad Nazar Azimi (as of September 25, 2019)¹⁴

Division

29th Nabi Akram Operational Division (Kermanshah city, Kermanshah province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Ghodratollah Ahmadi Pour (as of April 1, 2019)¹⁵

Brigades

4th Ansar ol Rasoul Operational Brigade (Javanroud, Kermanshah province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Nasr Babab Khani (as of September 22, 2019)¹⁶

11th Amir ol Momenin Brigade (Ilam city, Ilam province)

Commander: Col. Ali Jafari (as of December 23, 2018)¹⁷

32nd Ansar ol Hossein Brigade (Hamedan city, Hamedan province)

Commander: Col. Vali Bahariyan (as of August 17, 2019)¹⁸

This unit deployed to Syria and incurred casualties fighting for the Assad regime.¹⁹

Region: North Central

Provinces: Markazi, Qazvin, Qom, and Semnan

Operational Base

Saheb ol Zaman Operational Base²⁰

Commander: Ali Akbar Nouri (as of October 19, 2017)²¹

Division

17th Ali bin Abu Taleb Operational Infantry Division (Qom city, Qom province)

Commander: Col. Asadollah Ganjali (as of August 26, 2019)²²

This unit deployed to Syria and incurred casualties fighting for the Assad regime.²³

Brigades

12th Ghaem ol Mohammad Independent Brigade (Semnan city, Semnan province)

Commander: Col. Hamid Mohammadi (as of January 8, 2019)²⁴

This unit deployed to Syria and incurred casualties fighting for the Assad regime.²⁵

71st Ruhollah Brigade (Arak, Markazi province)

Commander: Col. Reza Karimi (as of October 20, 2018)²⁶

This unit deployed to Syria and incurred casualties fighting for the Assad regime.²⁷

82nd Saheb ol Amr Brigade (Qazvin city, Qazvin province)

Commander: Col. Mohammad Jafar Khani (as of September 5, 2019)²⁸

This unit deployed to Syria and incurred casualties fighting for the Assad regime.²⁹

83rd Imam Jafar Sadegh Independent Brigade (Qom city, Qom province)

Commander: Hojjat ol Eslam Majid Montazer Zadeh (as of October 6, 2019)³⁰

Note: Hojjat ol Eslam is a clerical rank below that of ayatollah. It indicates that the individual has completed considerable advanced clerical education, in itself no more remarkable than the fact that many American officers hold master's degrees or even doctorates, but unusual among IRGC Ground Forces commanders. The commanders of the brigade based in Qom, the center of Iran's clerical establishment and educational institutions, often hold this clerical rank in addition to their military rank.³¹

Region: Tehran

Provinces: Alborz and Tehran

Operational Base

Sarallah Operational Base (Tehran city, Tehran province)³²

Commander: Unknown

Deputy Commander: Brig. Gen. First Class Esmail Kowsari (as of January 5, 2020)³³

Note: Gen. Kowsari had been a prominent member of the Iranian parliament after his first retirement from the IRGC. Defeated in a reelection bid, he requested and received permission to return to active duty.³⁴ There may not be a commander of this base above him; he would likely be a difficult subordinate if he is actually performing the duties of a general officer.

Divisions

10th Seyyed ol Shohada Operational Division (Karaj, Alborz province)

Commander: Col. Rostam Ali Rafiei Atani (as of September 28, 2019)³⁵

This unit deployed to Syria and incurred casualties fighting for the Assad regime.³⁶

27th Mohammad Rasoul Ollah Operational Division (Tehran city, Tehran province)

Commander: Col. Seyyed Ali Banaei (as of October 1, 2019)³⁷

This unit deployed to Syria and incurred casualties fighting for the Assad regime.³⁸

Brigades

Al Mohammad Security Brigade (Tehran city, Tehran province)

Commander: Unknown

1st Hazrat-e Zahra Brigade (Tehran city, Tehran province)

Commander: Unknown

20th Ramezan Independent Armored Brigade (Hassanabad, Tehran province)

Commander: Col. Mohammad Hadi Safid Chiyan (as of July 3, 2018)³⁹

This unit deployed to Syria and incurred casualties fighting for the Assad regime.⁴⁰

Region: Caspian Coast

Provinces: Gilan, Golestan, and Mazandaran

Operational Base

Ghadir Operational Base (Sari, Mazandaran province)⁴¹

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Ali Shaleykar (as of March 26, 2019)⁴²

Divisions

16th Quds Operational Division (Rasht, Gilan province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Mohammad Ali Haghbin (as of September 8, 2019)⁴³

This unit deployed to Syria and incurred casualties fighting for the Assad regime.⁴⁴

25th Karbala Operational Division (Sari, Mazandaran province)

Commander: Col. Ahmad Barsalani (as of August 3, 2019)⁴⁵

This unit deployed to Syria and incurred casualties fighting for the Assad regime.⁴⁶

Brigades

Mirza Kuchek Khan Special Forces Brigade (Langaroud, Gilan province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Hossein Mostafa Pour (as of February 3, 2019)⁴⁷

3rd Imamate Brigade (Chalous, Mazandaran province)

Commander: Unknown

This unit deployed to Syria and incurred casualties fighting for the Assad regime.⁴⁸

60th Ammar Yasser Independent Armored Brigade (Gonbad-e Kavous, Golestan province)

Commander: Col. Mohammad Hassan Arash (as of December 6, 2018)⁴⁹

Region: Southwest

Provinces: Khuzestan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad, and Lorestan

Operational Base

Karbala Operational Base (Ahvaz, Khuzestan province)⁵⁰

Commander: Brig. Gen. First Class Ahmad Khadam Seyyed ol Shohada (as of September 27, 2019)⁵¹

Division

7th Vali-ye Asr Operational Division (Dezful, Khuzestan province)

Commander: Col. Hassan Hossein Nejad (as of September 19, 2019)⁵²

This unit deployed to Syria and incurred casualties fighting for the Assad regime.⁵³

Brigades

1st Hazrat-e Hojrat Independent Armored Brigade (Ahvaz, Khuzestan province)

Commander: Unknown

This unit deployed to Syria and incurred casualties fighting for the Assad regime.⁵⁴

3rd Hazrat-e Mehdi Infantry Brigade (Dezful, Khuzestan province)

Commander: Col. Ali Najafvand (as of April 3, 2019)⁵⁵

15th Imam Hassan Mojtaba Special Forces Brigade (Behbahan, Khuzestan province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Mehdi Rafeigh Doust (as of October 11, 2018)⁵⁶

This unit deployed to Syria and incurred casualties fighting for the Assad regime.⁵⁷

48th Fath Independent Brigade (Yasouj, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad province)

Commander: Col. Hassan Hekmatiyan (as of August 8, 2019)⁵⁸

57th Abol Fazl Independent Brigade (Khorramabad, Lorestan province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Soltan Moradi (as of November 12, 2019)⁵⁹

Region: Central

Provinces: Chahar Mahal and Bakhtiari, Esfahan, and Yazd

Operational Base

Seyyed ol Shohada Operational Base (Esfahan city, Esfahan province)⁶⁰

Commander: Brig. Gen. First Class Javad Estaki (as of October 21, 2019)⁶¹

Divisions

8th Najaf-e Ashraf Armored Division (Najafabad, Esfahan province)

Commander: Col. Seyfollah Rashid Zadeh (as of October 23, 2019)⁶²

This unit deployed to Syria and incurred casualties fighting for the Assad regime.⁶³

14th Imam Hossein Division (Esfahan city, Esfahan province)

Commander: Col. Mohammad Hashemi Pour (as of October 6, 2019)⁶⁴

This unit deployed to Syria and incurred casualties fighting for the Assad regime.⁶⁵

Brigades

18th Al Ghadir Independent Brigade (Yazd city, Yazd province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Hassan Ali Zadeh (as of August 19, 2019)⁶⁶

44th Ghamar Bani Hashem Brigade (Shahr-e Kurd, Chahar Mahal and Bakhtiari province)

Commander: Col. Ali Afzali (as of September 11, 2019)⁶⁷

Region: Northeast

Provinces: Khorasan Razavi, North Khorasan, and South Khorasan

Operational Base

Samen ol Aemeh Operational Base (Birjand, South Khorasan province)⁶⁸

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Seyyed Hassan Mortezaei (as of July 9, 2019)⁶⁹

Division

5th Nasr Operational Division (Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Hassan Rajab Zadeh (as of January 20, 2019)⁷⁰

Brigades

2nd Javad ol Aemeh Infantry Brigade (Bojnourd, North Khorasan province)

Commander: Col. Mohammad Rouhani Cheytagar (as of August 13, 2019)⁷¹

3rd Ansar ol Reza Infantry Brigade (Birjand, South Khorasan province)

Commander: Col. Gholam Ali Tonaki (as of January 20, 2019)⁷²

21st Imam Reza Independent Armored Brigade (Neyshapour, Khorasan Razavi province)

Commander: Col. Hossein Soleimani (as of December 7, 2016)⁷³

This unit deployed to Syria and incurred casualties fighting for the Assad regime.⁷⁴

Region: South

Provinces: Bushehr, Fars, and Hormozgan

Operational Base

Madinah ol Munawarah Operational Base (Bandar-e Abbas, Hormozgan province)⁷⁵

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Ahmad Sarkheyli (as of March 4, 2019)⁷⁶

Division

19th Fajr Operational Division (Shiraz, Fars province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Eskandar Daneshjouyan (as of March 11, 2019)⁷⁷

This unit deployed to Syria and incurred casualties fighting for the Assad regime.⁷⁸

Brigades

2nd Imam Sajjad Special Forces Brigade (Kazeroun, Fars province)

Commander: Unknown

This unit deployed to Syria and incurred casualties fighting for the Assad regime.⁷⁹

14th Imam Sadegh Infantry Brigade (Bushehr city, Bushehr province)

Commander: Col. Yadollah Keshavaraz (as of August 14, 2019)⁸⁰

This unit deployed to Syria and incurred casualties fighting for the Assad regime.⁸¹

33rd Al Mehdi Airborne Brigade (Jahrom, Fars province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Seyyed Nourollah Hosseini (as of September 28, 2019)⁸²

This unit deployed to Syria and incurred casualties fighting for the Assad regime.⁸³

Region: Southeast

Provinces: Kerman and Baluchistan and Sistan⁸⁴

Operational Base

Quds Operational Base (Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchistan province)⁸⁵

Commander: Brig. Gen. First Class Mohammad Marani (as of October 6, 2019)⁸⁶

Division

41st Sarallah Division (Kerman city, Kerman province)

Commander: Unknown

Brigades

1st Seyyed ol Shohada Independent Infantry Brigade (Bam, Kerman province)

Commander: Unknown

2nd Saheb ol Zaman Independent Infantry Brigade (Sirjan, Kerman province)

Commander: Unknown

38th Zolfaghar Independent Armored Brigade (Kerman city, Kerman province)

Commander: Col. Morad Moin Pour (as of August 13, 2017)⁸⁷

This unit deployed to Syria and incurred casualties fighting for the Assad regime.⁸⁸

110th Salman Farsi Independent Special Forces Brigade (Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchistan province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Ramazan Ebrahimi Atani (as of December 30, 2018)⁸⁹

IRGC Ground Forces Provincial Units

IRGC territorial units are organized around provinces and districts. There is considerable overlap in epithets between provincial units and operational units based in their provinces. Thus, the 21st Imam Reza Independent Armored Brigade is based in Khorasan Razavi province, whose provincial unit is also called Imam Reza. (Neither is surprising since Imam Reza, the eighth Shi'a imam, is buried in Mashhad, the provincial capital.) Iranian media usually, but not always, uses different phrases to distinguish between provincial units and operational divisions; the words "division" and "brigade" in particular do

not normally appear when the provincial unit is being discussed. Even determining that the provincial units are distinct from operational divisions was challenging.

In the end, we focused on identifying the commanders of each and found that most provincial units appear to have commanders different from those of the operational divisions in their provinces. We have not yet determined with any degree of confidence the exact relationship between operational divisions and brigades and provincial or district IRGC Ground Forces units. Neither have we yet attempted to assess the size, composition, or combat capabilities of the territorial units.

Imam Hassan Mojtaba Unit (Alborz province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Seyyed Yousef Moulaei (as of September 25, 2019)⁹⁰

Hazrat-e Abbas Unit (Ardabil province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Jalil Baba Zadeh (as of September 26, 2019)⁹¹

Imam Sadegh Unit (Bushehr province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Ali Razmjou (as of September 26, 2019)⁹²

Ghamar Bani Hashem Unit (Chahar Mahal and Bakhtiari province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Ali Mohammad Akbari (as of September 26, 2019)⁹³

Ashoura Unit (East Azerbaijan province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Abeddin Khorram (as of September 22, 2019)⁹⁴

Saheb ol Zaman Unit (Esfahan province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Mojtaba Fada (as of September 22, 2019)⁹⁵

Fajr Unit (Fars province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Seyyed Hashem Ghiyasi (as of September 26, 2019)⁹⁶

Quds Unit (Gilan province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Mohammad Abdollah Pour (as of September 25, 2019)⁹⁷

Neynava Unit (Golestan province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Hossein Maroufi (as of September 12, 2019)⁹⁸

Ansar ol Hossein Unit (Hamedan province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Mozaher Majidi (as of September 23, 2019)⁹⁹

Imam Sajjad Unit (Hormozgan province)

Commander: Col. Abazar Salari (as of September 24, 2019)¹⁰⁰

Amir ol Momenin Unit (Ilam province)

Commander: Col. Jamal Shakarami (as of September 22, 2019)¹⁰¹

Sarallah Unit (Kerman province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Gholam Ali Abu Hamzeh (as of September 19, 2019)¹⁰²

Nabi Akram Unit (Kermanshah province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Bahman Reyhani (as of September 25, 2019)¹⁰³

Imam Reza Unit (Khorasan Razavi province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Yaghoub Ali Nazari (as of September 26, 2019)¹⁰⁴

Vali-ye Asr Unit (Khuzestan province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. First Class Hassan Shahvar Pour (as of September 24, 2019)¹⁰⁵

Fath Unit (Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Hamid Khorramdel (as of September 23, 2019)¹⁰⁶

Beyt ol Moghaddas Unit (Kurdistan province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Mohammad Hossein Rajabi (as of September 24, 2019)¹⁰⁷

Abol Fazl Unit (Lorestan province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Morteza Kashkouli (as of September 22, 2019)¹⁰⁸

Ruhollah Unit (Markazi province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Mohsen Karimi (as of September 25, 2019)¹⁰⁹

Karbala Unit (Mazandaran province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Mohammad Hossein Babaei (as of September 24, 2019)¹¹⁰

Javad ol Aemeh Unit (North Khorasan province)

Commander: Col. Abol Ghassem Chaman (as of September 22, 2019)¹¹¹

Saheb ol Amr Unit (Qazvin province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Mohammad Shah Rokhi (as of September 26, 2019)¹¹²

Ali bin Abu Taleb Unit (Qom province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Seyyed Mohammad Taghi Shah Cheraghi (as of September 23, 2019)¹¹³

Ghaem ol Mohammad Unit (Semnan province)

Commander: Col. Hamid Damghani (as of September 26, 2019)¹¹⁴

Salman Unit (Sistan and Baluchistan province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Amanollah Gashtasbi (as of November 26, 2019)¹¹⁵

Ansar ol Reza Unit (South Khorasan province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Ali Ghassemi (as of January 9, 2020)¹¹⁶

Seyyed ol Shohada Unit (Tehran city)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Hassan Hassan Zadeh (as of June 29, 2019)¹¹⁷

Mohammad Rasoul Ollah Unit (Tehran province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Mohammad Reza Yazdi (as of September 25, 2019)¹¹⁸

Shohada Unit (West Azerbaijan province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Habib Shahsavari (as of September 25, 2019)¹¹⁹

Al Ghadir Unit (Yazd province)

Commander: Col. Reza Pour Shamsi (as of September 23, 2019)¹²⁰

Ansar ol Mehdi Unit (Zanjan province)

Commander: Brig. Gen. Second Class Jahan Bakhsh Karami (as of September 26, 2019)¹²¹

Notes

1. Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) general officer ranks would translate literally as follows: *Sarlashkar* means division commander; *sartip* means brigade commander. *Sartips* can be “first class” or “second class.” A *sartip* second class has no stars on his epaulets, making the rank appear more similar to that of brigadier in the British system, which is formally equivalent to an American brigadier general but is technically a field officer rank. We regard *sartip* as more like the US brigadier general, despite the rank insignia, because *sardar*, or general, applies to *sartips* of both classes and distinguishes them as general officers (unlike British brigadiers). There are few *sarlashkars* in the IRGC, and they do not command operational or provincial units.
2. The Hamzeh Seyyed ol Shohada and Najaf-e Ashraf operational bases both cover portions of Kermanshah province. It is unclear how the province is divided between the two headquarters. Kermanshah is thus listed under the West Region section of this order of battle solely because the Najaf-e Ashraf Operational Base is likely located in the province—whereas Hamzeh Seyyed ol Shohada is located in West Azerbaijan province.
3. Mizan Online News Agency, “Baa Gharaargaah Hamzeh Seyyed ol Shohada Beeshtar aashnaa shaveem/Gharaargaah-ee Keh beh Gorouhak-haa-ye Zedd Enghelaab Majaal nafs kesheedan nameedahad” [Become more acquainted with the Hamzeh Seyyed ol Shohada Base/A Base that does not give Anti-Revolutionary Groups a Chance to breath], June 27, 2016, <https://www.mizanonline.com/fa/news/190728>.
4. Islamic Republic News Agency, “Aamreekaa dar Pee Oghdeh Gashaei 40 Saaleh aast” [America is after a 40-year Complication], September 19, 2019, <https://www.irna.ir/news/83482063>.
5. Islamic Republic News Agency, “Zareeb-eh Amniyat-eh Azerbaijan-eh Gharbee dar Keshvar Beenazeer aast” [The Security Factor of West Azerbaijan is Unique in the Country], September 24, 2019, <https://www.irna.ir/news/83488024>.
6. Dana Information Network, “Kashf va Zabet-eh 135 Ghabzeh Salah-eh Jangee va Shakari dar Marz-ha-yeh Shomal-eh Gharb + Film” [The Seizure of 135 rifles on the Northwestern Border + Film], July 7, 2019, <https://www.dana.ir/news/1505728.html>.
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8. Iranian Students' News Agency, “Baa Zaban-eh Rouzeh dar Marzeh Torkiyeh va Azerbaijan-eh Gharbi Shaheed shodand” [Martyred While Fasting on the Border of Turkey and Western Azerbaijan], May 28, 2019, <https://www.isna.ir/news/97030703381>.
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10. Arya News, “Sardar Khorram baa Hefz Samt beh Onvaan Jaanesheen Farmaandeh-ee Gharaargaah Montagheh-yeh Ashoura Mansoub shod” [General Khorram with Continued Direction appointed Deputy Commander of the Ashoura Regional Base], March 3, 2018, <http://www.aryanews.com/News/20180303130416430>; and Vatan-e Emrooz, “Jihad-e Moghaddas dar Khuzeestan” [Sacred Jihad in Khuzeestan], April 8, 2019, <http://www.vatanemrooz.ir/Newspaper/Page/2688/1/208161/0>.
11. AhulBayt News Agency, “Shohaadat-eh Javaan-eh Eeraanee-yeh Modaafe-yeh Haram-eh Hazrat-eh Zeynab + Aks” [Testimony of the Young Iranian Defender of the Shrine of Zeynab + Pictures], June 25, 2015, <https://fa.abna24.com/service/iran/archive/2015/06/25/689650/story.html>.
12. Islamic Republic News Agency, “Farmaandeh-ye Teep-eh Mekaneezeh-yeh Emam Zaman: Defa Moghaddas baraayeh Hameesheh Doshman raa aaz Marz-ha-yeh-maan Beeroun raand” [Mechanized Imam Zaman Brigade Commander: The Sacred Defense forever pushes the Enemy out of our Borders], September 27, 2019, <https://www.irna.ir/news/83493227>.
13. Mehr News Agency, “Gharaargaah-yeh Mantagheh-yeh Najaf-e Ashraf 265 Shaheed Etalaat-eh Amleeyat Taghdeem kardeh aast” [The Najaf-e Ashraf Regional Base had offered 265 Intelligence Martyrs], July 28, 2017, <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/4041542>.
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Gharaar daarad” [General Ahmadi Pour: The 29th Hazrat-e Nabi Akram Division has been on 100 Percent High Alert since Yesterday], April 1, 2019, <https://www.parsine.com/fa/news/517184>.

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17. International Quran News Agency, “Farmaandeh-yeh jedeed-eh Teep 11 Aameer ol Momeneen Eelaam Morefi shod” [The new commander of the 11th Amir ol Momenin Brigade was introduced], December 23, 2018, <https://ilam.iqna.ir/fa/news/3774809>.

18. Basij News Agency, “Banaa-yeh Kaar-eh Daftar-eh Namaayandegee-yeh Valee Fagheeyeh Masounsaaazee va Hefz-eh Saazmaan bar Saraat Mostagheem Aast” [The Work of the Office of the Supreme Leader Representative is to Safeguard and Maintain the Organization on Direct Grounds], August 17, 2019, <https://basijnews.ir/fa/news/9166071>.

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26. Iranian Students’ News Agency, “Bargozaree Razmaayesh-eh Shaheed Mehdi Saaroughee dar Aaraak” [Holding the Shahid Mehdi Saroughi Exercise in Arak], October 20, 2018, <https://www.isna.ir/news/markazi-96116>.

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28. Basij News Agency, “Farmaandeh-yeh Teep 82 Sepaah Ghazveen baa Khaanevaadeh-yeh Shaheed Deedaar kard” [82nd Brigade Commander of the Qazvin Corps meets with Martyr’s Family], September 5, 2019, <https://basijnews.ir/fa/news/9171939>.

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35. Basij News Agency, "Baseejeeyaan Saahebaan-eh Aaslee-yeh Enghelaab hastand/Defa Moghaddas Emtedad Ashouraast" [The Basij are the True Owners of the Revolution/The Sacred Defense is the Continuation of Ashoura], September 28, 2019, <https://basijnews.ir/fa/news/9179614>.
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About the Authors

Marie Donovan is a former senior analyst and Iran team lead for the Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise Institute. She holds an MA in Middle Eastern and North African studies from the University of Arizona and a BA in liberal arts from Thomas Aquinas College.

Nicholas Carl is an analyst and Iran team lead for the Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise Institute. He graduated from St. John Fisher College with a BA in political science.

Frederick W. Kagan is a resident scholar and the director of the Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise Institute. He was previously an associate professor of military history at West Point. He holds a PhD in Russian and Soviet military history from Yale University.

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About AEI's Critical Threats Project

The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute seeks to inform and educate policymakers, the intelligence and military communities, and all interested citizens who need to understand the nuance and scale of threats to America's security. The project conducts intelligence analysis on unclassified information to produce continuous assessments of threats to the US and our allies. It develops these assessments into concrete plans for action using best practices drawn from the US military, intelligence community, and diplomatic corps. It provides the executive branch, Congress, the media, and the general public its assessments and recommendations on a nonpartisan basis. Like AEI, CTP accepts no money from the American government or any foreign government. CTP is directed by AEI Resident Scholar Frederick W. Kagan. Its two analytical teams focus on the threats posed by Iran and the global al Qaeda network, especially in Yemen, the Horn of Africa, Libya, and West Africa.

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The conclusions and assessments in this report do not reflect the positions of our technology partners.



Neo4j is a highly scalable native graph database that helps organizations build intelligent applications that meet today's evolving connected data challenges including fraud detection, tax evasion, situational awareness, real-time recommendations, master data management, network security, and IT operations. Global organizations such as MITRE, Walmart, the World Economic Forum, UBS, Cisco, HP, Adidas, and Lufthansa rely on Neo4j to harness the connections in their data.



Ntrepid enables organizations to safely conduct their online activities. Ntrepid's Passages technology leverages the company's platform and 15-year history protecting the national security community from the world's most sophisticated opponents. From corporate identity management to secure browsing, Ntrepid products facilitate online research and data collection and eliminate the threats that come with having a workforce connected to the Internet.



Linkurious' graph visualization software helps organizations detect and investigate insights hidden in graph data. It is used by government agencies and global companies in anti-money laundering, cybersecurity, or medical research. Linkurious makes today's complex connected data easy to understand for analysts.



BlackSky integrates a diverse set of sensors and data unparalleled in the industry to provide an unprecedented view of your world. They combine satellite imagery, social media, news and other data feeds to create timely and relevant insights. With machine learning, predictive algorithms, and natural language processing, BlackSky delivers critical geospatial insights about an area or topic of interest and synthesizes data from a wide array of sources including social media, news outlets, and radio communications.



Sayari is a search company, not a traditional data vendor. They build search products that allow users to find corporate, financial, and public records in hard-target countries. Sayari products cover emerging, frontier, and offshore markets, and include corporate registries, official gazettes, litigation, vital records, customs data, and real property. They collect, structure, normalize, enrich, and index this data, often making it searchable for the very first time.



Microsoft helps empower defense and intelligence agencies with its deep commitments to national security, trust, innovation, and compliance. With world-class security and a wide array of cloud services designed for mission success, the Microsoft Cloud offers a cloud platform designed for flexibility and scale to strengthen partnerships and alliances, create smart work environments and installations, and optimize operations to better meet mission needs and help foster a safer, more secure world.



By combining semantics with entity, path, link and social network analytics, Semantic AI adds a layer of intelligence to make rapid contextual connections throughout vast amounts of disparate data. The Semantic AI™ Platform is designed for augmented human intelligence in the Artificial Intelligence age. This adaptable investigation, analytics and intelligence environment allows users to quickly analyze situations, redirect investigative focus and dive deeply into the most relevant connections.

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