



ANALYSIS NOTE 22/05/2007

IRANIAN SPONSORED TERRORISM IN EUROPE

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**House of Commons
London
May 22, 2007**

(This communication was presented to a security briefing for lawmakers and analysts, organized in the British Parliament under the auspices of “Open Europe” and presided by the Conservative lawmaker Patrick Mercer)

The question I was asked to answer today is not an easy one: is it any real threat of a wave of terrorist attacks sponsored by Iran, in Europe or in the United States, if a military operation is decided to solve the problem of the Iranian nuclear program?

Sadly, I'm afraid the answer to this question is “yes”.

Of course it is extremely difficult to assess terrorist activities which, by their nature, are extremely secret. But we have a few signs that “something” could happen if things turn badly.

As a risk and strategic assessment Centre, we work daily with intelligence and security agencies in Europe and in some other parts of the world, including the Arab world. This opportunity provides us an access to some classified intelligence. Obviously, I cannot be extremely precise in the elements I'll give you today. Nevertheless, I can tell you that the intelligence community in Europe has, in some countries belonging to the EU, some clear indications that, since 12 months, the Iranian secret services and the *Pasdaran* – I will explain latter how those two organisations work – have deployed new human resources in Europe, both in the Iranian embassies and outside those embassies. We assess that they doubled or tripled their intelligence capacities in some embassies.

We know also, that, in some European countries, they have increased the recruitments of sympathizers and they began to try to penetrate some mosques which are well known to shelter extremist activities. It is interesting to underline that those efforts are not focused on the Shia minority which is extremely weak in Europe but on the Sunni community which forms the vast majority of the Muslims in Europe. Actually, this situation is like a reminder of

another situation we faced more than 25 years ago. Just after the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in IRAN, at the very beginning of the eighties, Iran was considered as the beacon of the radical Islam in the world, and the Iranian envoys converted a lot of Sunni from Maghreb descent to the Chiism in some countries in Europe. At the time, they specially targeted the Moroccan communities in Belgium, Netherlands and France. Today, they still conduct most of their intelligence and recruiting operations in the North of Europe (Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, UK, partly in France), but also in Italy. But it is quite impossible to assess how successful those operations are.

So we know that the Iranians are working in some mosques in Europe and we know they try to recruits new activists.

We know also that they conducted, those last months, some reconnaissance missions on possible targets in various European countries we cannot name for security reasons. Those possible targets include industrial facilities, “critical infrastructure” and nuclear power stations. It’s clear that, if the Iranian nuclear program is the victim of an attack, retaliating by attacking nuclear power makes sense.

Last but not least, we know, also that the Hezbollah has considerably increased its capacities – both logistical and operational – in Europe since the last summer. The goal of Hezbollah is obvious: it put itself in the position to attack in Europe if things evolve badly for it in South Lebanon.

But this is not Hezbollah’s only task. It has, also, another mission, directly given to it by its Iranian godfather: serve as a propaganda and terrorist tool for Teheran.

At this point, I must elaborate a little bit on the way the Iranian Intelligence and Special services are working. First, **don’t make a mistake: the Iranian mullahs consider Intelligence and terrorism as very serious matters and they handle it at the highest possible level.**

First of all, at the top of the Iranian security community you’ll find the **Joint Committee for Special Operations** formed by the president, the top religious authorities and senior security officials, including representatives of the Pasdaran, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and, of course, the Ministry of Security and Intelligence. This is a clear sign that the intelligence activities are routinely integrated in the general framework of Iranian diplomacy and foreign actions. As its name indicates it, the Joint Committee coordinate all the Iranian intelligence and Special operations.

The MOIS, **Ministry of Intelligence and Security**, is the most important intelligence agency in IRAN. By the way the Iranian acronym for MOIS is VEVAK which stands for *Vezerat-e Ettela’at va Amniyat-e Keshvar*.

The MOIS is generally considered by the western intelligence community as one of the most important if not the most important Ministry in the country. It posts hundreds of agents abroad, under diplomatic cover or even under Non Official Cover: IRANAIR directors, students, businessmen, etc. The responsible of the MOIS activities is the *Velayat-e Faqih* apparatus of Ali Khamenei the Guide of the Islamic Revolution.

The MOIS has many missions, from illegal acquisition of technologies to classical military and political spying through survey and penetration of the Iranian communities and opposition movements abroad.

It is also responsible for intelligence collection to support terrorist operations.

Last but not least, we find also the PASDARANS or the Guardians of the Revolution, also known as *Iranian Revolutionary Guard* or IRG.

The IRG is an extremely interesting organisation as it is typical of a totalitarian state. If you allow me the comparison, I would compare it with the German SS between 1933 and 1945. Take me right. I do not try to compare the current Iranian regime and the Nazi regime but is interesting to remind that the Nazis didn't feel very secure or comfortable with the army, the Wehrmacht. So they created an ideological army, the SS. The SS began to be the bodyguards of Hitler and his associates in the thirties and, after January 1933, when the Nazis took the power, they were in charge of security inside Germany and of intelligence and special operations abroad. It was both an ideological tool and a military tool, completely and fanatically devoted to the protection of the regime. This is exactly what the PASADRAN are.

The Pasdaran developed its own operation abroad. Like the MOIS, it has its people undercover in embassies but also and mainly working under non official cover.

The foreign operations of the PADARANS are decided by the **Committee on Foreign Intelligence Abroad** and by the **Committee on Implementation of Actions Abroad**.

The ***al-Qods Force*** is the weapon the Pasdaran use to operate outside Iran and, as we'll see in a moment, it is a lethal weapon. The al-Qods (the Arab word for Jerusalem) Force is in charge, among other things, of the liaison between Iran and the Lebanese Hezbollah.

So, at this point, we know that there are some signs of an aggressive Iranian intelligence activity Europe, and I explained to you, more or less, the way the Iranian intelligence apparatus is working. The point, now, is to assess if Iran could use terrorism as a political tool.

And once again, sadly, the answer to this question is "YES". Yes Iran could use terrorism as a political weapon and we know it because it already did it in the past.

Given the figures we have, Iranian sponsored political violence has killed more than 1,000 people in more that 200 terrorist attacks since the 1979 revolution. Those attacks include the elimination of dozens of Iranian opponents, the suicide bombings of American and French military barracks in Beirut in 1983 which killed 299 people, a series of bombings in Paris in September 1986 which killed 12 people, attacks on the Israeli embassy and a Jewish community centre in Buenos Aires in 1992 and 1994 which killed 125 people, and the bombing that killed 19 Americans in Dhahran in June 1995.

In the majority of the cases, those attacks were prepared and funded by the MOIS and the ***al-Qods Force*** but executed by the HEZBOLLAH.

Hezbollah (Party of God) was born at the end of 1982 with the support of Syria but more so of Iran which used it as an instrument of resistance to the Israeli presence in Lebanon as well as a veritable armed branch entrusted with the task of carrying out terrorist missions which Tehran could not carry out openly without incurring a ban by the international community and risking serious retaliations.

We would be wrong, however, to regard the Party of God as a simple, mercenary organisation: it has a real and important popular base.

Hezbollah is an efficient, well structured organization, which explained its great achievements as much in the field of terrorism or military action as in politics.

The organization is pyramidal: at the top, a 7-member Council (the *choura elqara*), a political bureau and executive council. Below this Council, come the regional managements, the sections, the syndicates etc.

The terrorist character of Hezbollah is clear even if, from a purely legal point of view, today only the United States and the United Kingdom regard Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation. The European Council has refused to add Hezbollah to its list of terrorist organisations despite the fact that the European Parliament, on March 10, 2005 voted a resolution in this sense that was adopted by 473 voiced against 33.

Nevertheless, the responsible for the operations and intelligence services of the organisation, Imad Fa'iz Mughnieh (who is generally considered as the main architect of the terrorist actions attributed to Hezbollah) is registered, as individual in this list. He shares this privilege with two other members of the organisation.

The terrorist character of Hezbollah isn't questionable, as proven by this **not exhaustive** list of attacks and other terrorist actions committed by this organisation since 1983. I decided to exclude from this list the attacks carried out in Southern Lebanon between 1982 and 2000 against the Israelis that could be considered by some people as *unconventional war* (acts rather than terrorism):

- October 23,1983, in Beirut: suicidal attacks against the multinational intervention force that tried to put an end to the war : 248 American marines and 58 French parachutists were killed;
- March 1984: targeted kidnapping of the chief of the CIA antenna in Beirut. William Francis Buckley died after 15 months in prison and tortured;
- January 1985: assassination of two non-commissioned French officers in Beirut.
- 1985: beginning of the campaign of kidnappings that was referred to in the Western media as the *Lebanese hostages affair* and that concerned, among others, journalists, diplomats and American researchers, French or English. Journalist Terry Anderson remained a hostage for the longest period : kidnapped on March 15, 1985, is wasn't liberated before December 1991.
- June 14, 1985: hijacking of a TWA Boeing flying Athens-Rome. The American national Robert Stehem was assassinated in the course of this taking of hostages that ended on June 30th;
- 1985-1986: a series of attacks in France ordered by Iran, coordinated by Hezbollah and carried out by a local cell (group Fouad Saleh) killed 12 and wounded 40. At the end of his investigation anti-terrorist judge Gilles Boulouque identified and accused 17 members or supporters of *Hezbollah*.
- January 13, 1987: arrest of Mohammed Ali Hamadé in Frankfurt with 9 litres of a powerful liquid explosive, nitrate of methyl.
- January 17 and 20, 1987: kidnapping in Beirut of two German nationals, Rudolf Cordes and Alfred Schmidt (both were liberated in 1998);
- January 26, 1987: arrest in Frankfurt airport of Abbas Hamadé, brother of Mohammed, he too was carrying several litres of nitrate of methyl;

- February 17, 1988: targeted kidnapping of Colonel William Richard Higgins (US marines), while on duty in a UN mission in Lebanon. He was assassinated on July 6, 1990.
- April 5 1998: hijacking of Kuwait Airways flight 422 leaving Bangkok. The kidnapping lasted 16 days and cost the life of two passengers;
- March 17 1992: suicide attack against the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires (29 dead and 250 injured);
- July, 18, 1994: attack against AMIA, a Jewish association in Buenos Aires: 85 dead and a few hundreds injured;
- **July 26 and 28 1994: attacks against the office of the Jewish organisation and the Israeli embassy in London** (20 injured). Two Palestinians – Jawad BOTMEH and Samar ALAMI - were convinced of “conspiracy” and sentenced to 20 years. But intelligence officials think this was a Hezbollah operation.

In the Lebanese hostage affair, the French attacks of 1985-86 and the two attacks in Buenos-Aires, the track leading from Hezbollah to Iran were obvious. At the end of 2006, the Argentine Government indicted the ex president RASFANDJANI, four Iranian Ministers and a few diplomats of the Iranian embassy in Buenos-Aires.

And it is necessary to underline that the Hezbollah never conducts a terrorist operation abroad without the clear authorisation (if not on order) of Teheran....

Of course, the worst is never sure. But, as a conclusion, I’ll just remind you that Iran was a terrorist State and remains a terrorist State. Given the indication we have and I told you about earlier today, we could fear that Iran – directly or through Hezbollah, or both – is preparing possible attacks in retaliation of a potential strike against its nuclear program.

In this case, the UK, the closest ally of Washington in Europe would be a first-choice target.

So “tomorrow”, Iranian sponsored terrorism could kill people in Great-Britain just as they kill your soldiers, today, in Iraq.