

Report

The Risk of Terrorist Actions and Intelligence Operations of the Iranian “Security” Apparatus against the Iranian Opposition in Exile in 2022

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1- Presentation of the expert

At the age of 63, I have followed the "security and strategic affairs" linked to Iran since 1981, first as a journalist, then (for 20 years) as a field agent for the DGSE (French foreign intelligence) and later, since 2002, as co-founder and co-director of a strategic consulting firm, ESISC¹.

In this capacity, **I have investigated the following cases in particular:**

- Attack against the **American embassy in Beirut** (18 April 1983, 63 dead);
- Attack against the "**DRAKKAR**" building in Beirut, housing the French military contingent of the multinational force (on 23 October 1983, 64 dead, including 58 French soldiers);
- French part of the "**hostage crisis in Lebanon**" (1985-1988);
- **Paris bombings** (1985, 1986, 14 bomb attacks resulting in 14 dead and 3030 wounded);
- Assassination of **Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou**, leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran or KDPI and NCRI member until 1984, his assistant **Abdullah Ghaden Azar** and an Iraqi intermediary, **Fahdil Rassoul** (13 July 1989);
- Assassination of the **former Iranian Prime Minister, Shapour Bakhtiar**, in Paris (6 August 1991);
- Attack on the **Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires** (17 March 1992, 29 dead and 242 wounded);
- Assassinations of **Iranian Kurdish leaders Sadegh Sharafkandi, Fattah Abdoli and Homayoun Ardalan** and their translator, **Nouri Dehkordi**, at the "**Mykonos**" restaurant in Berlin (17 September 1992);
- Attack on the **AMIA Jewish Cultural and Social Centre in Buenos Aires** (18 July 1994, 85 dead and hundreds injured);
- Thwarted attempted attack on the **Israeli embassy in Baku**, Azerbaijan (February 2011);
- Attack against a **bus of Israeli tourists in Burgas**, Bulgaria (18 July 2012, 6 dead and 32 wounded);
- **Plot to bomb the annual MEK** (Mujahedin-e-Khalq, the People's Mujahedin Organization of Iran, the main Iranian opposition group) at the end of June 2018 **in Villepinte, near Paris**.

To perform those investigations, I travelled extensively across Europe, the United States, Middle East and North Africa and met dozens of experts, scholars and

¹ European Strategic Intelligence and Security Center, company number 0878853652, www.esisc.org

academics, military and intelligence officials, Iranian diplomats and Iranian opponents.

I am, moreover, the author of about twenty books (documents) on history, terrorism, and intelligence. In this work as an author, I have specifically devoted a book (in French) to Iran:

- **"Iran, un Etat Terroriste?"² »**

In three other books (also in French), co-authored with **Genovefa Etienne**, I have devoted one or more chapters to "state terrorism" practiced, supported or sponsored by Iran:

- **"Histoire de l’Espionnage mondial"**³, volume 2 ;
- **"La Guerre sans visage"**⁴;
- **"Les services secrets pour les Nuls"**⁵ ».

In 2020, I was an expert for the plaintiffs (civil parties) in the trial of the Iranian spy-diplomat **Assadolah Assadi** and his associates in Antwerp, Belgium (trial of the attempted Villepinte attack in June 2018). At the end of this trial, Assadolah Assadi was sentenced to 20 years in prison. He did not appeal, and his sentence is now final.

I carried out the current expertise mission in complete independence, without preconceived ideas and seeking above all to establish the truth, based on my knowledge of the "Iranian security system" and the decision-making mechanisms at the helm of power in Tehran.

² Editions de Passy, Paris, 2011.

³ Editions du Félin et Editions Luc Pire, Bruxelles et Paris, 2002.

⁴ Editions Michel Lafon, Paris, 2002.

⁵ Collection « Pour les Nuls », Editions First, Paris, 2016.

2- Executive summary

Iran's Intelligence apparatus, composed of several different and at times independent services, plays a vital role in securing the regime's stay in power.

Certain components of the intelligence community **focus primarily on the exiled opposition using various tactics ranging from surveillance to infiltration and manipulation to physical liquidation** through different assassination methods.

Among the different Intelligence and Security instances, the **Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS)** remains the Iran regime's main instrument to survey, infiltrate, demonize and assassinate dissidents abroad. But for these missions, the regime could also rely on the **Islamic Revolution Guard Corp (ITCG)**, the **al-Quds Force** and on "proxy allies" as the Lebanese **Hezbollah**.

The regime has sent its agents to European countries as refugees or "businessmen" engaged in commercial activities. Iranian communities abroad have provided the basis for the MOIS to recruit agents and sleeper cells for propaganda purposes and future terror plots.

The **resistance's defectors have been an important target of recruitment by the MOIS**, used for disseminating disinformation and gathering information with terrorist intentions.

With the degrading political situation in Iran, MOIS activity against the opposition abroad is seeing an upsurge in tandem with oppressive measures against the resistance inside the country.

The current report is a risk assessment for members of the Iranian opposition, as well as their foreign political supporters, in the face of extensive terrorist threats by Iran's regime outside Iran. The study attempts to shed light on some important aspects:

- The **extent of MOIS network and its central focus**, the extent the regime recruits former opposition elements as agents for its operations;
- Is the Iranian attempts at collecting intelligence abroad **a prelude to assassination attempts** against political opponents?
- What are the **prospects for a rapid creation of a network abroad, in Albania for example**, focusing on the main opposition movement MEK following the latter's resettlement in the Balkan country in 2016?
- **Should foreign nationals affiliated with the MEK, including Europeans, have security concerns** due to the terrorist nature and conducts of the regime?

Past operations of the Iranian regime during the last four decades are studied by considering the most important details in a bid to answer the above questions.

Dozens of terrorist acts committed or incited by the Iranian regime have been investigated and tried in Europe, the United States, Argentina, and other countries. Iranian "diplomats" have been expelled from several countries for espionage, among other reasons, (and often) against the opposition in exile.

What emerges from this immense documentation, and what we have (very) briefly summarized in this expert report, is that the Iranian regime uses intelligence and terrorism intensively, not only to further its interests but also to silence the opposition.

Ravaged by an economic crisis that can be explained as much by international sanctions as by corruption or mismanagement, the country is facing increasingly frequent and violent revolts. This leads the regime, in its paranoia, to attack the opposition more and more frequently and more violently.

Terror is used **to support Iran's political agenda in the Middle East and to extend its influence over the so-called "Shiite Crescent"** (encompassing Iraq, Syria, Lebanon), **to fuel tensions in the Gulf** (for instance in Yemen and Bahrain) and, thus, to undermine Iranian opposition by claiming that the country is "under siege", **to provoke the Israeli "arch-enemy"** (and offering the mullahs the possibility to pose as the "only fighters against the Zionist oppressor") or **to eradicate opponents living in exile.**

Most parts of the world were targeted by Iranian sponsored terrorism: Middle East and the Arab world, obviously, but also South America, Asia, and Europe. Most of the time, **Iran is cautious enough to hide its involvement behind smoke screens and to act through proxy organizations (as the Lebanese Hezbollah) but orders, funding and even sometimes arms and explosives come from Tehran, as it was proved in various judicial investigations during the past 40 years.** On some specific occasions, however, Iranian agents are clearly identified as the main planners and, even, executors of attacks.

This is not an accident. It is a political choice which was made at the very beginning of the so-called Iranian Islamic Revolution.

Since its inception, the Iranian regime has used all possible means to advance its interests and to destabilize its perceived enemies.

Thus, it has organized an impressive "security" apparatus designed not to protect the country, as it is the case for most nations, but to spread its ideology.

Given the importance of the Iranian intelligence community and the fact that it dedicates much of its energy, personnel and resources to the fight against the opposition, and particularly against the MEK, and given the regime's ideology and appetite for violence, the answer to the latter question is, unfortunately, "yes": **MEK members and supporters in exile, Europeans who are close to the movement, as well as journalists and experts who try to do their honest work on Iran, have reason to be concerned about the actions of the Iranian regime.**

3- Foreword

In this expert report, through a general study of the Iranian Intelligence and Security apparatus and a further study of specific cases, we'll try to answer the following questions with respect to the main Iranian opposition movement:

1. Does the Iranian regime have a network of agents who are essentially focused on MEK?
2. Does this network engage in collecting intelligence, which could also be used for terrorist activities?
3. Has the regime set up a network in Albania focusing on the MEK following the latter's resettlement in the Balkan country since 2016?
4. Does the regime recruit former members of the opposition, including MEK, as agents for its operation?
5. Should anyone closely affiliated with the MEK, including Europeans, have security concerns due to the terrorist nature and conducts of the regime?

4- Introduction: The Iranian Intelligence Galaxy; The Position of the MEK in the Iranian opposition

To better answer these questions, it seems necessary to first outline the general framework in which the Iranian intelligence community evolves and develops and to summarize the methods it employs.

Secondly, we will examine the place occupied by the MEK in the Iranian opposition.

A. The Iranian Intelligence Community

The highest-ranking authority in the Iranian intelligence and security establishment is the **Supreme National Security Council, or SNSC** (*Showrāye Āliye Amniyate Mellī*). This body is so important that a separate chapter of the Constitution is dedicated to it⁶.

The SNSC is presided over by the President of the Republic who selects its secretary but its decisions are effective only after approval by the Supreme Leader. The Council is the highest national authority (second to the Supreme Leader) on all the matters related to security, intelligence, and foreign policy. It adopts all decisions regarding intelligence and terrorist operations and oversees their execution and progress⁷.

As of January 10, 2022, the SNSC is formed of **22 permanent members**:

⁶ Chapter XIII, consisting in a single article (176). It is reproduced in an annex of this report, from the unofficial translation of the Iranian Constitution, University of Bern.

⁷ For a more detailed view of the organization of the Iranian intelligence community and its concrete involvement in terrorism, see our report : THE RECENT IRANIAN TERRORIST PLOTS IN EUROPE, ESISC, February 2019; <http://www.esisc.org/upload/publications/analyses/the-recent-iranian-terrorist-plots-in-europe/IRAN%20-%20RECENT%20TERRORIST%20PLOTS%20IN%20EUROPE.pdf>

- The **President of the Republic** (currently: Ebrahim Raissi), President of the Council⁸.
- The **vice President of the Republic** (Mohammad Mokhber)
- The **Secretary** (Ali Shamkhani⁹), also personal representative of the Supreme Leader.
- The **Speaker of the Parliament** (Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf¹⁰)
- The **Chief Justice** (Gholam-Hosseini Mohseni-Eje'i¹¹)
- The **Secretary of the Guardian Council** (Ahmad Jannati)
- A **Second Representative of the Supreme Leader** (Saeed Jalili¹²)
- The **Chief of the General Staff** (Mohammad Bagheri¹³)
- The **Chief of the army** (Abdolrahim Mousavi)
- The **Chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps** (Hossein Salami)
- The **Chief of the Islamic Republic of Iran Law Enforcement Forces** (Hossein Ashtari¹⁴)
- The **Minister of Energy** (Ali Akbar Meharbian)
- The **Minister of Foreign Affairs** (Hossein Amir-Abdollahian)
- The **Minister of Finances** (Ehsan Khandozi)
- The **Minister of Defense** (Mohammad-Reza Gharaei Ashtiani)
- The **Minister of Information** (Eisa Zarepour)
- The **Minister of Interior** (Ahmad Vahidi¹⁵)
- The **Minister of Intelligence** (Esmail Khatib)
- The **Minister of Science** (Mohammad Ali Zolfigol)
- The **head of Management and Planning Organization** (Massoud Mir Kazemi¹⁶)
- The **Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran** (Mohammad Eslami)
- The **Permanent Representative of Iran to the United Nations** (Majid Takht-Ravanchi)

⁸ It is interesting to note that Ebrahim Raissi, elected on 18 June 2021, is said to have been one of the main organizers of the massacre of thousands of political prisoners held in Iranian prisons in the summer of 1988, mostly members of the MEK.

⁹ Rear Admiral Ali Shamkhani, an engineer by formation, was the commander of the Iran Revolutionary Guards Corp Navy and then the Minister of Revolutionary Guards. He was appointed Minister of Defense in August 1997 (until August 2005) and became the Secretary of the SNSC on September 10, 2013.

¹⁰ Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf is a former military officer who spent a large part of his career in the hierarchy of the "Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps" (IRGC), of which he was, among other things, head of the air force. He was then head of the Iranian police (2000-2005) before occupying various political posts.

¹¹ Mohseni-Eje'i was the Minister of Intelligence from 1984 to 1985. He was then Representative of the Head of Judiciary to the Ministry of Intelligence (1986–88) before serving, from 1989 to 1990, as Head of the Prosecutor's Office for economic affairs. He was then, again, Representative of the Head of Judiciary to the Ministry of Intelligence, from 1991 to 1994; He was appointed Minister of Intelligence on 24 August 2005 and until 26 July 2009.

¹² Saeed Jalili was a member of the Basij, the "volunteer reserve" of the Revolutionary Guards and is a former secretary of the Council (20.10.07-10.09.13).

¹³ Mohammad Bagheri is a former commander of the Revolutionary Guards.

¹⁴ Hossein Ashtari was a member of the IRGC and is a former chief of the Intelligence and Security Police (NAJA).

¹⁵ Vahidi is an IRGC member and was the commander of the al-Quds Force, the external special operation int of the IRGC.

¹⁶ Kazemi is a member of the IRGC.

It is interesting to note that **7 out of 22 permanent members of the SNSC have been subject to US sanctions** (Jannati, Shamkhani, Bagheri, Vahidi), **EU sanctions** (Mokhber), **or both** (Mohseni-Eje'i), or UN sanctions (Salami). **One of the members of the SNSC, Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi, is even subject of a “Red notice” issued by Interpol** which wants him for "aggravated murder" in the context of the attack of 12 July 1994 against the AMIA Jewish mutual society in Buenos Aires. To our knowledge this is a unique case in the world.

The architecture of the SNSC is complex and several (sometimes competing) major power centers are represented. It was therefore necessary to create a coordination body between the Council itself and the Ministry of Intelligence specifically for intelligence (and terrorism) operations. This is how the **Supreme Council for Intelligence Affairs** (SCIA) was founded:

“In 1996 the Iranian government created an organization called the Supreme Council for Intelligence Affairs under the minister of intelligence and security to coordinate policies with the Supreme National Security Council. The minister of intelligence and security is in charge of the Supreme Council for Intelligence Affairs. The umbrella organization has 20,000 employees and 12 different departments. The objective of creating this council is not clear; however, it may be assumed that the Islamic Republic is trying to create a system parallel to the SNSC to ensure that each council’s functions are aligned with the views of the Supreme Leader”¹⁷.

There are three main organizations in Iran in charge of intelligence and clandestine operations (terrorist or otherwise) abroad: the **Ministry of Intelligence**, the **Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps** and the **al-Quds Force**.

Ministry of Intelligence¹⁸: The *Vezerat-e Ettela'at Jomhuri-ye Eslami-ye Iran* which is also known as the **Ministry of Intelligence and Security** (MOIS) and under various acronyms (VAJA, VEVAK, SAVAMA...) replaced the infamous SAVAK of the Shah. **It must be underlined that numerous members of the SAVAK were incorporated in the new intelligence organization**: if hundreds of officers were executed, and approximately 3 000 others jailed, thousands of SAVAK members continued to work in the mullahs’ intelligence body. The most evident case of this “soft transition” was **Hussein Fardust**^{19,20} (1917-1987), former SAVAK “number 2” and close friend of the Shah: after a short term in jail, he served as an adviser to the new regime for creating and organizing the MOIS.

Beginning as a "classical" intelligence and security agency, the MOIS became a full ministry on August 18, 1984²¹. The current Minister of Intelligence is Esmail Khatib. After more than a decade of tumult, the MOIS began to “professionalize” itself in the 1990’s and especially benefited from a close relation established with the Russian

¹⁷ « Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence and Security: A Profile”, Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, December 2012, page 16, <https://irp.fas.org/world/iran/mois-loc.pdf> .

¹⁸ The MOIS has an official website (in Persian): <http://vaja.ir/Portal/Home>

¹⁹ Claude Moniquet, *L'Iran, un Etat terroriste ?*, Les Editions de Passy, Paris, 2011 ; pages 83-84.

²⁰ Fardust was arrested again in December 1985, suspected to be an informant of the Soviet intelligence...

²¹ Moniquet, op.cit.; page 85.

foreign intelligence, the SVR²². The SVR trained MOIS officers and has taught hundreds of them on disinformation tactics, which were a specialty of the KGB. Today, the Disinformation Department of the MOIS is one of the most important departments. It specializes in creating “materials” to discredit opponents and sow divisions among them, which is often a first step before a physical elimination²³.

With a large budget (which is secret²⁴), the MOIS is one of the most powerful Iranian ministries and answers directly to the President and to the “Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution” (Ruhollah Khomeini from 1979 to 1989 and Ali Khamenei since 1989). In case of divergence between the Supreme Leader and the President, the Constitution clearly establishes that the last word and the final decision belong to the Supreme Leader²⁵.

Even if the exact figure is not known, **Western intelligence services and specialists estimate that the MOIS employs approximately 30 000 officers**²⁶.

It has an extensive range of duties, both in Iran and abroad which involve: internal security and surveillance of opposition, external intelligence, procurement, censorship, disinformation operations, detention of “suspects”, etc.: *“The Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) uses all means at its disposal to protect the Islamic Revolution of Iran, utilizing such methods as infiltrating internal opposition groups, monitoring domestic threats and expatriate dissent, arresting alleged spies and dissidents, exposing conspiracies deemed threatening, and maintaining liaison with other foreign intelligence agencies as well as with organizations that protect the Islamic Republic’s interests around the world”*²⁷.

Three departments of the MOIS are directly in charge of clandestine (and terrorist) operations abroad:

- **Directorate of Overseas Affairs:** it supervises the networks of the service outside Iran and especially focuses on operations against the MEK.
- **Directorate of Foreign Intelligence and Liberation Movements:** it conducts “classical” intelligence operations but also liaises with terrorist organizations supported by Tehran, such as the Hezbollah.
- **Directorate for Security:** despite its name, this department is primarily responsible for assassination of opponents abroad.

²² *Sluzhba vneshney razvedki*, formerly the “First Directorate” of the KGB.

²³ MOIS officers use an Arab word to refer to disinformation: **Nefaq**, which means “discord”.

²⁴ The MOIS is not, even, accountable to other governmental branches...

²⁵ Article 176 (1) 1.: “*In order to safeguarding the national interests and preserving the Islamic Revolution, the territorial integrity, and the national sovereignty, a Supreme Council for National Security presided over by the President shall be constituted to fulfil the following responsibilities: 1. Determining the defence and national security policies within the framework of general policies determined by the Leader*”.

²⁶ “*Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence and Security: a Profile*, page 24.

²⁷ “*Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence and Security: a Profile*”; op. cit.; page 1.

When it posts its officers abroad, the MOIS often assigns them in embassies²⁸ with an “official cover” of diplomats and all the immunities attached to this status. But it could also use “non-official covert” (NOC) and assigns its agents to Iran Air offices, state-controlled banks (as the Bank Melli, which has agencies in France, Germany or United Kingdom) or in “cultural centers” and organizations. And of course, others could enjoy positions without any visible link with an Iranian official organization and pose as students, shopkeepers or even...opponents.

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps: the IRGC or *Sepâh-e Pâsdârân-e Enghelâb-e Eslâmi* also known as “Pasdaran” was founded in May 1979, just after the “revolution”. Today, it is directed by **Hossein Salami**.

Primarily created to counter the possible influence of the regular army, the IRGC began as a relatively small organization (around 10 000 members) but it took advantage of the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) to become a real army, controlling its own ground, naval and air forces as well as its own intelligence organization and special forces. **It probably counts, today, between 120 000 and 150 000 men.**

Inside the borders of Iran, the Pasdaran serve both as a *Praetorian Guard* for the regime “*constituting the backbone of the Islamic Republic*”²⁹ and a tool of repression of any kind of opposition. **The importance of the IRGC dramatically increased in 2005 when the organization was tasked with a critical mission: supervise and protect the nuclear program.** To fulfill this mission, the IRGC created a new organization, ***Oghab 2*** (“Eagle 2”).

We have, here, a new and interesting window into how those things are done in Tehran: with a probable team of a few thousand officers, ***Oghab 2* is a creation of the Revolutionary Guards but reports both to the IRGC and to the MOIS.** Both organizations are, thus, in a position to know what the other one is doing.

It is also interesting to consider that **the IRGC is also running hundreds of “private” companies in Iran**, providing money for the regime and its officials but also covert organization for its secret and terrorist operations.

Outside Iran, the IRGC conducts non-conventional (and most of the time, undeclared) military operations to protect the interests of the regime and/or support and train its local allies. It is, today, particularly active in Iraq, Yemen, Syria and Lebanon.

The IRGC has its own Intelligence services, the **Intelligence Organization of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps**, which was established in 2009 and is active both inside and outside Iran. This organization, comprised of thousands of members, gives full independence to the IRGC which doesn’t need to rely on the MOIS to collect

²⁸ The Iranian embassies in Paris, Berlin and Vienna are particularly known by the European intelligence services to be important spots of the MOIS.

²⁹ Carl Anthony Wege, *Iran’s Intelligence Establishment*, in **The Intelligencer** (published by the Association of Former Intelligence Officers), Falls Church, Volume 21, Number 2, Summer 2015; pages 65.

intelligence useful to its operations. It is directed by **Hossein Taeb**³⁰, a former Basij³¹ commander.

Taeb was also the commander of the Security Directorate of the MOIS (new example of the inter-connection of the intelligence/security organizations), which is tasked with eliminating opponents abroad (see above).

The Quds Force: The Quds Force was created during the Iran-Iraq war and rapidly grew to become the “foreign special forces unit” of the ICRG. It was deployed in Lebanon in 1982 and was particularly involved in the creation of **Hezbollah** (which continues to enjoy the full support of the Quds Force to this day).

Quds Force reports both to the IRGC chief and directly to the Supreme Leader. Its precise size is unknown, but estimates of **Western intelligence services assess its forces to be between 2 000 and 5 000 men, but some sources evoke “10 000 to 20 000” members**³². It was placed, for the last twenty years under the command of **Major-General Qassem Suleimani**. Since the elimination of Suleimani during an American operation outside the Baghdad airport on January 3, 2020, **it is commanded by Esmail Qaani**³³

The Quds Force was designated as a terrorist organization by the United States on 25 October 2007 and by Canada on 17 December 2012.

The Quds Force is divided into eight directorates in alignment with the regions of the world it is active in: Western Countries; former Soviet Union; Iraq; Afghanistan, Pakistan and India; Israel, Lebanon and Jordan; Turkey; North Africa and Arabic Peninsula³⁴.

Quds Force is (or was) engaged in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Sudan, Yemen, but also **at the borders of Europe, more precisely in the Balkans, in Bosnia** (at least in the 1990’s, but when the Quds forces “lands” somewhere, it usually creates support infrastructures that can last for years and be utilized even 10 or 15 years later for other purposes...).

In 2013, Matthew Levitt, one of the foremost American experts on Iranian intelligence³⁵ wrote: “*In January 2010, the Quds Force—the elite unit of Iran’s Islamic*

³⁰ Hossein Taeb is blacklisted in the European Union (were his properties are frozen) and by the U.S. governments for his involvement in the repression of “peaceful protestors in Iran” in 2009.

³¹ The Basij or “Mobilization Resistance Force” (*Sāzmān-e Basij-e Mostaz’afin*) is a paramilitary volunteer reserve force of the IRGC, which was created in 1979 and incorporated in the Revolutionary Guards in 1981.

³² Dexter Filkins, *The Shadow Commander*, in *The New Yorker*, September 30, 2013.

³³ Since 27 March 2012, Qaani was added to the Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons list by the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s.

³⁴ David Dionisi, *American Hiroshima: The reasons why and a call to strengthen America’s democracy*, Trafford Publishing, 2005, page 8.

³⁵ Matthew Levitt, a former FBI analyst, and a former senior executive as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis at the U.S. Department of the Treasury and now a fellow

Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)— decided that it and Hizballah, its primary terrorist proxy, would embark on a new campaign of violence targeting not only Israel but U.S. and other Western targets as well. Since then, the two organizations have been cooperating but also competing to launch attacks across the globe...”³⁶

This “new trend” was, apparently, a retaliation against the covert effort to slow down and to stop the Iranian nuclear program: “*Since then, Suleimani has orchestrated attacks in places as far flung as Thailand, New Delhi, Lagos, and Nairobi—at least thirty attempts in the past two years alone. The most notorious was a scheme, in 2011, to hire a Mexican drug cartel to blow up the Saudi Ambassador to the United States as he sat down to eat at a restaurant a few miles from the White House...”³⁷*

A.1. Penetration of Western Intelligence Services and Attacks on European Citizens

One of the targets of MOIS and other relevant Iranian organisations is the **Western intelligence community**.

The aim here is multiple: the Iranian services can obviously hope to **collect information on the methods of the targeted services** - and in particular the operations and methods used against Iran - to **identify their Iranian informants** but also to **collect the multiple information that Western intelligence services may have on the Iranian opposition movements present on their soil**.

Several **very recent cases** have, at least in part, shed light on this particular focus of MOIS's work:

- On **January 20, 2020**, A **German-Afghan man who worked for years as an interpreter and adviser for the German military went on trial on charges of spying for Iranian intelligence**.

The 51-year-old man, who has been identified only as Abdul S. in line with German privacy rules, is charged with “a particularly serious case” of treason and with breaching official secrecy laws in 18 cases. Prosecutors have given few details of the case.

- On **September 25, 2021**, Swedish newspapers, including Aftonbladet and Expressen, reported that a **former Swedish security police chief had been arrested for spying on behalf of the Iranian regime between 2011 and 2015**. As identified by local and Persian language websites, the arrested spy is **Peyman Kia**, 40 years old. He had **obtained Swedish citizenship and worked as a director in the Swedish Security Police**

Researcher at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy has extensively worked on “Iranian affairs” for the last 15 years.

³⁶ Matthew Levitt, *Hizballah and the Qods Force in Iran's shadow war with the West*, The Washington Institute for Near east policy, Policy Focus 123, January 2013, page 1.

³⁷ Dexter Filkins, op. cit.

(SAPO) and an analyst in a Swedish military organization while he was spying for Tehran.

- In **January 2022**, an **Iranian spy ring in Israel was dismantled**. The network was made up exclusively of women (Jews of Iranian origin) and at least **two of them had asked their sons to try to join military intelligence (“Aman”) during their military service**. They would have been able to indirectly collect information from this service.

The **Lebanese Hezbollah**, created, trained and supervised by the Revolutionary Guards, uses the same methods: in April 2021, a **former U.S. military translator** pleaded guilty of divulging classified information to a **Lebanese national with suspected ties to the Lebanese Hezbollah**.

Mariam Taha Thompson, 63, who worked as a contract linguist for the U.S. military from 2006 to 2020, pleaded guilty to one count of delivering national defense information to aid a foreign government. Born in Lebanon and a U.S. citizen since 1993, she was arrested in February 2020 at a U.S. special operations base in Irbil, Iraq. Prosecutors say she used her top secret clearance to pass the names of U.S. intelligence assets to the Lebanese national in whom she had a romantic interest.

After a U.S. airstrike killed Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani in December 2019, the Lebanese national, **her unindicted co-conspirator**, asked Thompson to provide Hezbollah with **information about the human assets who had helped the U.S. target Soleimani, according to prosecutors**.

Over a six-week period leading up her arrest in February 2020, **Thompson provided the Lebanese national with the identities of at least 10 clandestine human assets; at least 20 U.S. targets; and multiple tactics, techniques and procedures**, according to the Justice Department.

In addition to the specific cases discussed below, **it should be noted that the actions of the Iranian regime's intelligence services threaten not only the opposition in exile or countries hostile to the regime, but also “ordinary” citizens**.

For example, **on 11 October 1993, the Norwegian publisher William Nygaard** was the target of an assassination attempt as he left his home in Oslo. Left for dead with three bullets in his body, Nygaard was to survive, but the investigation was to stall for over twenty years.

On 10 October 2018, just a few days before the statute of limitations expired, the Norwegian police announced that Nygaard's assassination attempt was "certainly related to his work as a publisher: “We have **no reason to believe there is any other motive for the attempted killing than the publication of “The Satanic Verses,”**” announced Ida Dahl Nilssen, a spokeswoman for Norway’s **National**

Criminal Investigation Service³⁸. The shooting was about more than an attack on one man, she said, it was **a violent attempt to shut down free speech**.

As a reminder, in 1989, shortly after the book's initial publication in English, Iran's supreme leader, **Ayatollah Khomeini, declared it offensive to Islam and called on Muslims to kill the author, Salman Rushdie and anyone involved in publication of the book**. But Mr. Nygaard, then the chief of the publishing house Aschehoug, which his family controls, went ahead with publication of a Norwegian-language edition, two months after the ayatollah's edict.

The decision of the Norway's police allowed the authorities to file new charges under a rarely used article of the criminal code, protecting "fundamental societal values" from attack. And the investigation continued.

Three years later, it was announced that **charges had been brought against Mohammad Nik-Khah, a former Iranian diplomat poste at the Tehran embassy in Oslo** as a First secretary at the time³⁹.

B. The Place of the MEK in the Iranian Opposition

There are several opposition movements in Iran: the "Green Movement", "Jundallah" (an insurgent group from the province of Baluchistan), Kurdish movements, the Worker-Communist Party of Iran, Azeri movements, monarchists, etc.⁴⁰

But all observers agree that the most important opposition movement is the "**Mujahedin-e Khalq**" (MEK), aka the **People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran** (PMOI).

A July 2014 report of the Council on Foreign Relations, a US think tank specializing on foreign policy and international affairs, states that the MEK is "reputedly the largest militant Iranian opposition group committed to the overthrow of the Islamic Republic"⁴¹.

The MEK, created in 1965 by leftist students and advocating a liberal Islam, feminism, and social progress, has an already long and complicated history: it was a force of opposition to the Shah's regime in the 1970s, took part in the 1979 revolution but quickly opposed the theocratic and terror regime put in place by the clerics.

In 1980, Massoud Rajavi, the only MEK leader to have survived the executions of the movement's leaders and who had just spent seven years in the Shah's jails, wanted to be the candidate of a coalition of left-wing and center parties and of ethnic and religious minorities in the presidential election, but Ayatollah Khomeini forbade him to run.

³⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/10/world/europe/norway-satanic-verses.html>

³⁹ <https://intelnews.org/2021/11/15/01-3106/>

⁴⁰ For an overview of these movements and their importance, see: "Iran: Political Opposition Groups, Security Forces, Selected Human Rights Issues, Rule of Law", Austrian Red Cross, Austrian Centre For Country of Origin & Asylum Research And Documentation (ACCORD), July 2015, pages 26 to 67: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/559baae44.pdf>

⁴¹ CFR – Council on Foreign Relations: Mujahadeen-e-Khalq (MEK), 28 July 2014 <http://www.cfr.org/iran/mujahadeen-e-khalq-mek/p9158>

In June 1981, a large peaceful demonstration organized by the MEK to demand respect for freedoms was violently crushed. The organization then went underground and launched an armed struggle against the new regime. On 28 July 1981, Rajavi fled to France, accompanied by the first president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Bani Sadr, who had just been deposed, on board an Iran Air Force 707 tanker-plane whose flight crew were Resistance members.

In the eighties, the leadership of the group was in exile in Paris, but in 1986, the government of Jacques Chirac expelled Rajavi and much of the MEK as part of a deal with Tehran that in exchange freed French hostages held by pro-Iranian groups in Lebanon.

The MEK was then welcomed into Iraq and continued its campaign against the Islamic Republic, including multiple targeted attacks on high-ranking officials.

In 1988, Ayatollah Khomeini ordered the massacre of 5,000 to 30,000 (sources differ) political prisoners, almost all of them MEK-related, held in his prisons since the Revolution, notably Monireh Rajavi, the younger sister of Massoud Rajavi.

“As part of the 2003 invasion, U.S. forces initially attacked MEK military targets in Iraq despite the group’s claims of neutrality. The two sides eventually negotiated a cease-fire that disarmed MEK members and confined them to Camp Ashraf, a 14-square-mile former Iraqi military base in the country’s northeast. [...] Iraq and the UN reached an agreement with MEK in December of that year that would relocate Ashraf residents to Camp Liberty outside Baghdad, a ‘temporary transit station’ from which group members could eventually be taken in by other countries. As of May 2014, approximately 3,000 MEK members resided at Camp Hurriya (Liberty), near Baghdad, awaiting resettlement to third countries.”⁴²

Several thousand MEK members have since been welcomed in Albania. The MEK leadership is now based partly in Albania and partly in France, in the Paris region.

The MEK has extensive networks in Iran and has been very active in youth mobilizations against the regime in recent years. It also benefits from clandestine sources in all Iranian circles, sources that have enabled it, among other things, to provide first-hand information of great interest to Western intelligence agencies about the Iranian nuclear program.

Following the November 2019 nationwide uprising in Iran, the supreme leader Ali Khamenei showed his fear of the MEK on January 8, 2020. Referring to the MEK and Albania, where the MEK members are situated, Khamenei complained about the MEK’s leading role in the uprising: “Several days before the uprising, in a small and sinister country in Europe, an American and a number of Iranians drew up plans, which we saw in the gasoline incident. As soon as (protesting) people came to the scene, the enemy’s operatives began. Demolishing, torching, murdering, destroying, and fomenting war. This was a renewal of the work they had carried out before. And they continue to do these, and they will do whatever they can,” he said.

In the same events, Hossein Ashtari, the Commander of State Security Forces (SSF), said on November 17, 2019⁴³ : “Our investigations show that behind the scenes, anti-revolutionary organizations and the MEK led these movements. The country’s

⁴² CFR, op.cit.

⁴³ The state-run Fars News agency, November 17, 2019

security and law enforcement entities have identified these individuals, and God willing, they will be punished for their actions at the right time.”

In an analysis published by a state-run outlet⁴⁴ MEK and its Resistance Units’ role in shaping the protests were addressed:

“In the past, the counter revolution forces led by the MEK were present in the country but today they have infiltrated in all classes such as truckers, marketers, those who lost their assets to credit institutions, teachers, workers, etc...

“The rioters led by the MEK lack political considerations. They do not recognize any faction within the establishment. They show as much respect for the reformists as they do for the hardliners! Which means that the trust and attachment to any faction has disappeared.

“[The rioters] have formed groups they call the Resistance Units that have both the ability to multiply and the potential to replace the leaders of the scene.”

With continuous uprisings following one after the other, the regime feels unsafe vis-à-vis growing action by resistance units inspired and led by the MEK.

After the recent uprisings of November 2021 in the central city of Isfahan, officials were outspoken over the growing [MEK role](#) in shaping and leading social dissent.

⁴⁴ Baharestaneh state-sponsored website, August 28, 2018

4- Answer to the questions

A. Does the Iranian regime have a network of agents who are essentially focused on the MEK?

The Iranian intelligence services **concentrate abroad on four main missions** which, for Tehran, are essential and even strategic:

- The advancement and protection of the nuclear program and, more generally, the reinforcement of armaments.
- The maintenance or increase of Iranian influence over its Shiite allies (whether state or sub-state: Iraq, Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthi militias in Yemen...);
- The latent war against the Sunni Gulf States and Israel;
- The fight against the opposition abroad.

Depending on the international context, each of the first three missions may, at one time or another, take precedence over the others and receive more resources. **The fourth mission, on the other hand, is consistently given a high priority** because, since the regime has been regularly shaken by internal crises for more than ten years, with the youth revolting against it, it fears the influence that this exiled opposition can have on its population.

In these four missions, the Iranian intelligence apparatus always uses the same methods: infiltration of undercover Iranian agents, recruitment of 'sources' in the targeted circles with a view to carrying out 'classic' espionage operations, 'active measures' (disinformation, propaganda), and special operations (sabotage, assassination).

For the past ten years, a new weapon has been added to the arsenal of the Iranian intelligence community: cyber-espionage (hacking, phishing) practiced essentially by a specialized cell nicknamed '**Charming Kitten**' (aka: **APT35**, aka **Phosphorus**, aka **Ajax Security**, aka **NewsBeef**) which has been described by several Western governmental agencies and by computer security companies as being under the direction of the IRGC.

As the government considers MEK and the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) to be the most threatening organizations among the opposition, one of the main responsibilities of the Intelligence and "Security" apparatus of the regime has always been and continues to be to organize and conduct overt and covert operations against them, including "surveillance", infiltration attempts, cyber-operations, disinformation, and assassinations.

The MEK has been its prime victim, especially since widespread protests erupted in late December 2017, which is widely blamed on the organization by the regime's officials, including Khamenei⁴⁵.

⁴⁵ ISNA, Iranian Students' News Agency, 9 January 2018, *Khamenei addressing a group of people from the holly city of Qom*. (<https://en.isna.ir/news/96101910197/Recent-damage-inflicted-on-Iran-by-U-S-will-gain-a-response>)

It should be noted that **during the massacre of political prisoners in 1988, ALL the MEK members who were detained and refused to betray their ideals were executed.**

There is no doubt in our mind that **parts of MOIS, IRGC and the Quds Force are dedicated to the fight against the MEK.** This is not a personal opinion, but one based on objective facts and widely shared by the European intelligence community, as we will explain below.

This assessment is also based on our personal observations: in the course of missions into the details of which we are not allowed to enter, we were able to observe, on several occasions, that Iranian "diplomats" posted in the Iranian embassies in several European capitals were exclusively in charge of one mission: the collection of operational intelligence on the MEK and the deployment of "active measures" against this organization.

In its 2013 report, the **United Kingdom Border Agency** states:

"The Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) is Iran's intelligence and state security service. The agency is responsible for fighting opposition to the regime not only at home but also abroad. Some Iranian intelligence agents have operated in foreign locations under diplomatic cover, as part of a drive to collect intelligence on Iranian opposition elements operating outside Iran. The MOIS has had a particular focus on the Mujahideen e-Khalq (MEK) opposition militia group and its allied political group, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI).⁴⁶"

The Dutch Intelligence Service (AIVD) in its 2011 annual report⁴⁷ wrote:

"Teheran's efforts to undermine the opposition People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (Mujahedin-e- Khalq, MEK) in the Netherlands continued unabated in 2011. In a campaign coordinated and financed by the Iranian intelligence services, the media and several politicians and other public servants were approached with a view to portraying the MEK in a highly negative light."

And, last but not least, The **Swedish Security Service** wrote in its 2020 report:

"Iran's intelligence activities targeting refugees are mainly geared towards minority groups considered by the Iranian regime to pose a threat. The Iranian regime uses its intelligence services to carry out security-threatening activities in Sweden. This involves monitoring regime critics and targets in Sweden linked to opposition groups considered by Iran as being or potentially being destabilizing or potentially destabilizing to the regime. The primary goal of the Iranian regime is to secure its own survival by countering internal and external threats wherever identified, including in Sweden. Exiled opposition groups are considered an internal threat

⁴⁶ [Refworld | Country of Origin Information Report - Iran](#)

⁴⁷ Netherland's General Intelligence & Security Service, Ministry of the Interior & Kingdom relations Annual Report 2011:
<https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwi5uOiqmoL1AhUxRuUKHbZOD9oQFnoECAMQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fenglish.aivd.nl%2Fbinaries%2Faivd-en%2Fdocuments%2Fannual-report%2F2012%2F06%2F28%2Fannual-report-2011%2Fjv-eng-def-tbv-website.pdf&usg=AOvVawipHnYgLgQpHrjxvJlM3ATy>

located outside the country's borders. Such groups and individuals exist in Sweden. There are several international examples of how the actions of the Iranian leadership have endangered people's lives and well-being."⁴⁸

A recent case (a plot to attack an MEK meeting in Albania in 2018, see below) reinforces this analysis. On 23 October 2019, **the head of the Albanian National Police stated in an official communiqué:**

*"We note that since 2014, in coordination with the United Nations and the United States, Albania has hosted a number of MEK members, an organization that sees itself as an opposition in exile and as a viable alternative to the Iranian regime and this is why the Iranian regime views it as a serious threat to its survival. MEK is a key target for Iranian security forces, which tend to attack members of the organization wherever they may live and operate outside Iran. Albanian security institutions are constantly working to halt these attacks."*⁴⁹

In another case in Belgium, the "**Assadi Plot**" against the annual international meeting of the MEK in Villepinte, near Paris (see below), the Belgian Federal police and the State security unveiled a complex operation involving a serving diplomat in Vienna, from where he coordinated the MOIS operations against MEK in Europe, including with the help of Iranian agents planted inside the MEK. According to a **State security report** submitted during the trial, in November 2020:

"Intelligence officers and other MOIS personnel follow up the opposition from Iran, but equally intelligence officers are sent abroad for short or long-term missions. During missions abroad, the intelligence officers mainly use a diplomatic cover: they become a diplomat accredited at an embassy, they are part of an official delegation."

"Those affiliated with an embassy are part of the MOIS station of that particular embassy. There are only a handful of embassies in Europe with a MOIS station. This means that a MOIS officer often operates in a range of countries where he is not accredited and runs an agent network that is not limited to the country where he is accredited."

"In some cases, ordinary Iranian diplomats are also called in for (support of) intelligence work. Such diplomats can be described as co-optees of the MOIS. The Iranians also make use of other, classic, covers by journalist (associated with Iranian state media), businesspeople or representative / official of Iranian government services or religious centers."

"The main task is primarily to gather information about the various opposition parties and dissidents (activities, members, structure, contacts, functioning, financial resources). The classical methods for this are:

- *Infiltration into the movement by recruiting members*
- *Infiltration into government services that meet opponents*
- *Social media follow-up of opponents and their movements*

⁴⁸ [The Swedish security service annual report 2020 \(sakerhetspolisen.se\)](https://www.sakerhetspolisen.se)

⁴⁹ <https://www.asp.gov.al/drejtori-i-pergjiithshem-i-policise-se-shtetit-ardi-veliu-se-bashku-me-drejtore-in-e-drejtore-se-antiterrorit-gledis-nano-ne-deklarate-per-mediat-per-parandalimin-e-nje-sulmi-terrorist/>

- *Photographing and filming (public or otherwise) of the activities of the opposition party*
- *Hacking of e-mail accounts, websites, ... of opposition members”*

“The information gathered can then be used for various actions by the MOIS to prevent and disrupt the activities of the opposition.”⁵⁰

In **Germany**, on October 28, 2015, the Attorney General reported that the 31-year-old **Maysam Panahi** had been arrested for alleged spying. He was accused of espionage on behalf of the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence (MOIS) against the Iranian opposition group People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (MEK/PMOI) and the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI).

After 9 months of extensive investigations and after nine days of debate within a two month period, the Berlin Court (2nd Criminal Division) announced, on July 19, 2016, that Panahi was sentenced to two years and four months in prison and ordered to pay the costs of the trial.

During the trial, the following facts were revealed:

- Meysam Panahi has been working since 2013 as an agent of the Iranian intelligence services and had the task of collecting information for intelligence and recruiting new recruits to form a spy network of MOIS in European countries against the MEK and the National Council of Resistance of Iran.
- His commander was a senior officer of the MOIS named "Kianmehr" with the code name "Sadjad", who is in contact with people in Germany, France and other European countries, in order to collect information about the PMOI and the NCRI, in order to denigrate and demonize them.
- Panahi transmitted information about the PMOI in Germany, France, Albania and the Liberty Camp to Sadjad. In the indictment against him there were several indications of his activities to recruit and expand the Iranian intelligence spy network at the European level.
- Panahi travelled secretly to Iran for 19 days in April 2014 with a senior MOIS official from Turkey in order to obtain appropriate instructions for his espionage activities and to be trained by the secret services.
- The identified documents and information show that Panahi received at least € 28,600 for the information he provided. It is believed that the real amount can be much higher, because the majority of this sum only concerns the months of March to October 2015.
- Panahi admitted that he passed information about Camp Ashraf and Camp Liberty (both in Iraq) to Sadjad. One of the people who had been recruited by Sadjad was Masoud Dalili, who guided the terrorist commandos on 1 September 2013 in Camp Ashraf, which killed 52 members of the PMOI. Dalili himself was

⁵⁰ Belgian State security report in the trial of Assadollah Assadi and associates, Antwerp, November 2020.

also killed by the commando forces in question and his face was burned to prevent him from being identified. μ

- One of the main tasks of the Iranian intelligence agents in Germany, a fact also confirmed by the German security authorities, is the dissemination of disinformation against the PMOI and the NCRI and their demonization. During the trial, it was revealed that "Sadjad" needed at least the services of three people to write a number of lies against the MEK and NCRI, which can then be published by the secret services as "observations and memories".
- According to the statements of a federal official, Mousa Akbari-Nasab and another individual were temporarily arrested for having had many contacts with "Sadjad" and received financial support. "Sadjad" managed to host contacts among the MEK and to form a whole network. Those in contact with "Sadjad" have been encouraged to delete their telephone contact lists and chat history or to keep themselves out of sight, so that they remain inaccessible to others, such as the police.
- Ms. Tempel, of the German **Federal Criminal Police** (BKA) said in her testimony: *"We received notifications in June 2014 claiming that Iranian intelligence was carrying out certain activities against the organization of the People's Mojahedin of Iran. Afterwards we've had more detailed information from the BND (Federal Intelligence Service, in German Bundesnachrichtendienst), which confirmed these activities. This information is from an anonymous source, but includes some names. It was clear that this was about the people in the Liberty Camp"*. She added: *"The information could clearly note that Sadjad is a senior intelligence officer in Iran"*.
- Helias Neumann, a federal official from Meckenheim, testified that there is no doubt that he acted as a spy, because "Sadjad" recruited defectors from the MEK. "Sadjad" contacted these people on instant messaging applications like "Viber", "Telegram", or similar communication programs by phone and computer. "Sadjad" wrote some notes about these people and guided them through the channels to these other people.
- On the allegations of the spies who were trying to spread defamatory statements against the MEK to justify their cooperation with the Iranian intelligence services (MOIS), the prosecutor replied that Panahi's cooperation with Iranian intelligence had nothing to do with his stay in the MEK, and that instead this cooperation was based on financial incentives.
- The documents submitted by the NCRI, which they received from their sources from Iran, also show that immediately after the arrest of agents of the Iranian regime in Germany, "Sadjad" ordered other agents of the MOIS in Europe - particularly in France- to support Maysam Panahi and to make his arrest look like a conspiracy by the MEK against one of its "dissidents." Subsequently, the presumed officers of the MOIS wrote letters to German judicial authorities and published articles on loyal sites of the intelligence services in order to prevent the trial. These attempts were unsuccessful.

The **German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution** (BFV) states, in its 2020 annual report:

“The priorities of the Iranian intelligence services are to spy on and suppress opposition movements and actors at home and abroad. In addition, the services gather political and military intelligence in Western countries. Iran sees itself as a regional power and is intent on shaping politics beyond its own borders, with a pronounced anti-Western and anti-Israeli thrust. As a result, the Iranian regime is interested in information on the future policy of the West – for example Germany’s foreign and security policy. Iranian intelligence activities are driven by the crises and conflicts in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf region. The main organisations behind these activities are the Ministry of Intelligence (VAJA, usually rendered as MOIS) and the Quds Force, a special intelligence unit of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, both of which operate in Germany.... On 4 February 2021, an Iranian diplomat previously accredited in Vienna, Austria, was sentenced by a Belgian court to the maximum penalty of 20 years in prison. He was found guilty of having organized a bombing at a convention of the People’s Mujahedin Organization of Iran (MEK) opposition group in France in 2018 on behalf of the Iranian intelligence service MOIS. He was arrested in Germany on 1 July 2018 on a European arrest warrant and subsequently extradited to Belgium. The Federal Prosecutor General at the Federal Court of Justice is also investigating the diplomat. Three others were found guilty of helping to carry out the bombing and also received long prison sentences.”⁵¹

B. Does this network engage in collecting intelligence, which could also be used for terrorist activities?

The facts we underlined in the previous section of this report show very clearly that **an important part of the work of the Iranian intelligence community, when it comes to the operations against the MEK, serve only one purpose: to organize terrorist attacks against the organization.**

The nature of certain questions put by Iranian intelligence officers to their agents infiltrated or recruited within the structures of the opposition in exile, and in particular the MEK, make it possible to affirm that part of the information gathered is used for 'classic' intelligence operations (evaluation of the political influence of the targeted movement, of its structures, of its projects), while another part can only be explained within the framework of the preparation of 'physical' operations (abduction or assassination): taking photos of people and their offices/houses, collection of their working hours and travel routes, reconstitution of plans of premises, collection of information on security measures adopted by executives and leaders of the targeted movement, etc.

In the past, the Iranian intelligence community has carried out numerous operations to assassinate opponents in exile: former officials or high-ranking civil servants of the Shah's regime, Kurdish or Arab opponents or members of the MEK.

⁵¹

https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/publikationen/DE/verfassungsschutzberichte/2021-06-brief-summary-2020-report-on-the-protection-of-the-constitution.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=11 , pages 43-44.

Regarding the latter organization, many MEK leaders or activists residing outside Iran have been targeted for assassination since the 1980s. We'll only recall, among others, the murder of **Kazem Rajavi** in Geneva on April 24, 1990. Kazem Rajavi, the elder brother of Massoud Rajavi, founder and leader of the MEK, was shot dead and the investigations of the Swiss justice stated that the murder was planned by Iran's government and executed by 13 "Iranian diplomats" using "service passports" to enter the country. Arrest warrants were issued against the 13 "diplomats" directly involved in the murder and against **Ali Fallahian**, the minister of Intelligence at the time.

Several recent cases in Europe suggest that the Iranian intelligence community continues to use terrorism as a common tool and to target the MEK specifically:

- **In Germany, in April 2016**, two Iranians Maysam P. and Saied R. were accused for spying on the MEK and NCRI, on behalf of Tehran⁵².
- **In Albania, on March 22, 2018**, the State Intelligence Service (SHISH, *Shërbimi Informativ Shtetëror*) foiled a plot planned against a meeting of the MEK for the Nowruz (Iranian New Year). Two MOIS agents were arrested and expelled.
- **In Netherlands, on June 7, 2018**, the government decided to expel two staff members of the Iranian Embassy in The Hague. This was officially confirmed by the AIVD – *Algemene Inlichtingen en Veiligheidsdienst* or "General Intelligence and Security Service", the service in charge of internal and Foreign intelligence in the Low Countries⁵³. The authorities refused to divulge any details on the matter, but it is generally assumed, given the international context, that those Iranian diplomats were involved in surveillance operations against the Iranian opposition and/or Jewish or Israeli facilities.
- **In Belgium and in France, on June 30, 2018**, because of a joint operation between the intelligence services and police forces of France, Belgium and Germany, two Iranian citizens were arrested in Brussels as they were departing to Paris with a bomb in their car to blow up the annual international meeting of the MEK in Villepinte, near Paris. This meeting is particularly important as numerous prominent political figures from Europe and other parts of the world were present. This includes, for instance, Rudolph Giuliani, the former Mayor of New York and the personal lawyer of former President Donald Trump.
- **In Scandinavia**, on 30 October 2018, **Danish authorities** accused Iran's Intelligence agencies of planning to assassinate an opposition activist in Denmark. It was established that the arrested would-be assassin was in direct contact with the Iranian embassy and the ambassador in Oslo.⁵⁴
- It was reported on June 26, 2020, that a **"Danish court sentenced a Norwegian citizen to seven years in jail after convicting him of spying for an Iranian intelligence service** and complicity in a suspected plot to kill

⁵² <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-charges-two-for-spying-on-irans-mek-on-behalf-of-iranian-intelligence/a-19175147>

⁵³ <https://www.rferl.org/a/netherlands-expels-two-members-of-iranian-embassy-staff/29347627.html>

⁵⁴ [Iran attempted political assassination in Denmark: PET \(thelocal.dk\)](#)

an Iranian Arab opposition figure in Denmark.... **Mohammad Davoudzadeh Loloei**, a 40-year-old Norwegian with Iranian heritage, was arrested in October 2018 after a major police operation in which Denmark temporarily closed its international borders.”⁵⁵ A **Danish high court on May 6, 2021 “upheld the seven-year sentence given to a Norwegian citizen** of Iranian origin for spying and complicity in a failed plot to kill an Iranian Arab opposition figure in Denmark. “A unanimous jury in the Eastern High Court has found an Iranian man guilty of illegal intelligence activities and complicity in an attempted murder of an exiled Iranian in Ringsted,” the Danish public prosecutor said.”⁵⁶ Davoudzadeh had originally tried to infiltrate the NCRI office in Oslo. The NCRI staff were suspicious of his offer to work as volunteer and after some investigation informed the police that Davoudzadeh is an agent of the Iranian regime. The NCRI did not have concrete evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt. However, it was confident of its information. Therefore, it refused to have any contact with him. Regrettably, police did not take any action.

C. Does the regime in particular have set up a network in Albania focusing on the MEK?

The investigation on the March 2018 Iranian plot against the MEK in Albania (see above) sheds particular light on how the Iranian intelligence community operates against the opposition and, more specifically, against the MEK.

Tehran dramatically increased its intelligence presence and operations in Albania after the government decided, in May 2013, to welcome around 3000 MEK members who were under attack by Iranian proxies in Iraq.

Albania being a small country, the Iranian embassy was not so important but, after 2013, it suddenly became one of the most staffed in Europe. The **MOIS** bureau in the embassy – which counted 25 officers - was headed by **Fereidoun Zandi-Aliabadi**, a senior intelligence officer from 2014 to 2017. In 2016, Tehran decided to assign **Gholam Hossein Mohammadnia** as its ambassador in Tirana. Prior to this assignment, Mohammadnia was a vice-minister of Intelligence, in charge of International affairs. And in 2017, a new chief was in charge of the MOIS bureau of the embassy: **Mostafa Roodaki**, the former chief of Iranian intelligence in the Vienna embassy.

The appointment of Mohammadnia as an ambassador means that not only the intelligence activities of the embassy but all the Iranian diplomatic affairs in Albania were under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Intelligence.

Eventually, Edi Rama, the Albanian Prime minister, decided to expel Gholam Hossein Mohammadnia and Mostafa Roodaki.

On December 19, 2018, Albanian Foreign Ministry spokesman told The Associated Press that the two diplomats were expelled for "violating their diplomatic status."

⁵⁵ [Norwegian found guilty of spying for Iran in Denmark | Reuters](#)

⁵⁶ [Danish high court upholds conviction of Norwegian man in Iran spy case | Reuters](#)

In an interview on the same day, Albanian Interior Minister Sandër Lleshaj said:

“The Iranian regime is recognized as the leading state sponsor of terrorism in the world... “The People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK) have been threatened in other country. This is a method used by the Iranian regime’s security agents under the cover of diplomats. We don’t consider the PMOI/MEK as a threat to Albania’s security. This is the position of the Albanian government, police and security officials. Our viewpoint about the PMOI/MEK is without any bias or prejudice. They are friends that have been welcomed to reside in Albania and this has nothing to do with their political activities.”

The MOIS was not the only Iranian intelligence organization to be involved in the Albanian plot, as Ardi Veliu, director of the National police in Tirana, revealed on October 23, 2019⁵⁷:

“A terrorist network led by the Iranian regime has been discovered in Albania. The target of the network was to carry out attacks on the Iranian opposition movement (MEK)... The terrorist cell is run by a QUDS Forces operative, known as PEYMAN. PEYMAN is a permanent resident of Iran and directs a number of operations in Albania and elsewhere in Central and Western Europe. Among other things, he initiated and implemented the attempted attack in March 2018 . PEYMAN controls many operatives, some for intelligence gathering and others to carry out terrorist attacks.”

The official statements give unusual and interesting details on the way Iranian intelligence community is working, when it comes to organizing terrorist plots against the opposition abroad and, particularly, against the MEK. So we learn that, **when it comes to such an operation, everything is decided in Tehran and controlled from there and that the Iranian intelligence use not only the human and material resources of its embassies but also Iranian operatives planted in the country targeted or in other countries, and moreover it relies on local organized crime:**

“One of these operatives [controlled by PEYMAN] is Alireza NAGHASHZADEH, Naghashzadeh was sent by PEYMAN to gather information in Albania on several separate visits as part of plans for an attack that was eventually halted. Another operative is Abdolkhalegh MALEK ZADEH, an Iranian living in Turkey and running the operating cell. MALEK ZADEH (also known by criminal connections under the nickname "Ferhat") has continued to work over the past two years with Abdulselam TURGUT, a well-known Turkish organized crime figure, to plan terrorist attacks at the behest of PEYMAN and the QUDS Forces.... TURGUT also has long-standing links to organized crime in Albania.”

“Balkan-based criminal operatives who are subordinates of TURGUT or a related Turkish drug trafficker since 2018 have been sent to Albania to advance the planning of attacks against MEK, as dictated by MALEK ZADEH and the QUDS Forces. Albanian authorities have identified these individuals and information provided by whistleblowers from within criminal organizations has allowed the Albanian

⁵⁷ <https://www.asp.gov.al/drejtore-i-pergjithshem-i-policise-se-shtetit-ardi-veliu-se-bashku-me-drejtore-in-e-drejtoreise-se-antiterrorit-gledis-nano-ne-deklarate-per-mediat-per-parandalimin-e-nje-sulmi-terrorist/>

authorities to prevent the March 2018 plot and eventual planning for attacks by organized crime figures aimed at MEK on behalf of the Iranian regime.”

So, the Quds force has a unit which “deals exclusively with organizations opposed to the regime,” by using “third party proxies”.

D. Does the regime recruit former members of the opposition, including MEK as agents for its operation?

We saw in the previous parts of this report that the Iranian intelligence community is extensively recruiting opposition and MEK members to conduct and support its operations.

In the already quoted **Federal Research Division, US Library of Congress** report, in December 2012, we read:

“From 1990–93, MOIS recruited former members of Mojahedin-e-Khalq (MEK)—also known as the People’s Mujahedin of Iran (PMOI) or MKO— in Europe and used them to launch a disinformation campaign against MEK. The Iranian government and its intelligence apparatus consider MEK the most serious dissident organization with regard to the Revolution...”

“The recruitment of a British subject, Anne Singleton, and her Iranian husband, Masoud Khodabandeh, provides a relevant example of how MOIS coerces non-Iranians to cooperate.

She worked with MEK in the late 1980s. Masoud Khodabandeh and his brother Ibrahim were both members of MEK at the time. In 1996 Masoud Khodabandeh decided to leave the organization. Later, he married Anne Singleton. Soon after their marriage, MOIS forced them to cooperate by threatening to confiscate Khodabandeh’s mother’s extensive property in Iran. Singleton and Khodabandeh then agreed to work for MOIS and spy on MEK. In 2002 Singleton met in Tehran with MOIS agents who were interested in her background. She agreed to cooperate with MOIS to save her brother-in-law’s life—he was still a member of MEK at the time.

During her stay in Tehran, she received training from MOIS. After her return to England, she launched the iran-interlink.org Web site in the winter of 2002. After she made many trips to Iran and Singapore—the country where the agency contacts its foreign agents—MEK became doubtful of Singleton and Khodabandeh’s loyalty to the organization. In 2004 Singleton finally met her brother-in-law, Ibrahim, who was sent from Syria to Iran after the Syrians arrested him (it appears that Syrians closely cooperate with MOIS). Eventually, MOIS forced him to cooperate as well.”⁵⁸

While Massoud Khodabandeh has for years claimed to be a critic of the regime or later an independent expert on Iran, after exposing his ties to the regime, he now openly supports the Iranian regime. His brother Ebrahim has also been appointed head of one of the MOIS subsidiaries.

⁵⁸ « Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence and Security: A Profile”, Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, December 2012, page 26-27, <https://irp.fas.org/world/iran/mois-loc.pdf>.

The **Library of Congress report** also states:

“MOIS infiltrates Iranian communities outside of Iran using a variety of methods. For instance, a society called “Supporting Iranian Refugees” in Paris is used to recruit Iranian asylum seekers to spy on Iranians in France. MOIS also has agents who abduct individuals abroad, return them to Iran, and then imprison or kill them. MOIS’s tactics of penetrating and sowing discord within the opposition abroad are discussed in an article on a Web site affiliated with the current Iranian government. The article (“How Do Iranian Intelligence Forces Operate Outside of the Country?”) discusses how Iran uses different mechanisms to penetrate the foreign-based opposition. MOIS uses its former members and/or people willing to cooperate with the ministry. They are sent to prison temporarily and become known as activists opposed to the Islamic Republic. After some time, no one questions their previous political activities; being a political prisoner is enough to be acknowledged as an opposition figure. Activists abroad may help get such a prisoner out of the country with the assistance of an international organization, or MOIS may send the prisoner abroad, calling him/her an “escaped dissenter.” This mechanism of releasing political prisoners to go abroad sows mistrust within the opposition in exile.”

One example of the method is Mehrdad Arefani’s case. Mehrdad Arefani who was sentenced by a Belgian court to 17 year imprisonment last February for his role in the attempted bombing of the NCRI annual gathering in 2018, started to cooperate with the regime while in prison in Iran. He was later sent to Europe. He claimed to be a poet, a human rights activist, and even an atheist in order to distance himself from the regime. He even launched a campaign against Iranians visiting Iran to gain credit as an opponent of the regime. However, he claimed to be a political sympathizer with the MEK and acted as sleeper cell for nearly 18 years.

“The ministry also engages in disinformation. The largest department within MOIS, the Department of Disinformation (Farsi: nefaq), uses psychological warfare and disinformation against the government’s opponents. This department is also in charge of employing psychological warfare to manipulate the media and to mislead other intelligence agencies about Iran’s intelligence and military capabilities. However, it is unclear exactly where this department is located in the ministry. As a matter of course, the department may spread news, which might be 80–90 percent reliable and 10–20 percent disinformation. Ali Younesi, the former minister of intelligence and security, reported on state television in October 2004 that the ministry’s Department of Disinformation had hired thousands of agents, including some former MEK members, to boost the department’s function.”⁵⁹

In its (already quoted) report to the tribunal in the Assadi case, in Belgium, the **Belgian State security** wrote:

“The MOIS infiltrates opposition movements. Intelligence officers have various levers available to recruit people within the opposition and to induce them to share information about their movement and environment. This information can then be in turn used for other actions by the MOIS against the opposition. An intelligence officer can recruit and run a source in several ways. Possible instruments are:

- *Threatening the opponent or his family (in Iran)*
- *Money*

⁵⁹ Idem, page 30.

- *Playing on the ego*
- *Blackmailing*
- *Offering the possibility to travel to Iran*
- *Intervening in all kinds of administrative problems (for example, obtaining official documents)*
- *Exploiting problems with law enforcement or the police*

It is mainly a combination of the above instruments that an intelligence officer deploys to the 'tailor' of the person he is recruiting or running. The instruments used can also shift in the course of the treatment (for example, initially threaten and pay later) ... Some officers work from Iran and occasionally make transfers to a third country, meet their agent / source. A third country is a country other than Iran and the country where the agent resides. This is done in function of the operational safety of the contact. Sources / agents also sometimes move to Iran to meet their treating officer. Several MOIS officers are under diplomatic cover in Europe. They also move usually to third countries to meet their sources and agents.”⁶⁰

The State security report adds:

“The MOIS contributes to portray the opposition in a negative light and describes them as terrorists.

The MOIS is particularly active in the field of anti-MEK (Mujahedin-e Khalq, Iranian opposition group) propaganda in the European Parliament. The MOIS may direct several networks engaged in the dissemination of propaganda and lobbying. The propaganda agents of these networks are mainly former MEK members spread over several European countries. Other organizations and minorities are also victims of similar propaganda.”

We can now turn to a review of some recent cases in which the involvement of the Iranian intelligence has been exposed:

The attack on Camp Ashraf (Iraq), on September 1st, 2013: The camp was attacked by Quds Force commandos. 52 people were killed and seven hostages were taken. One of the attackers was identified as **Bahman Afrazeh** aka **Massoud Dalili**, a former resident of Ashraf who had left the camp and was staying at the “Mohajer Hotel” (a known base of Iranian intelligence in Iraq), where he was recruited by the Iranian regime.

Dalili accompanied the attackers and showed them the way to the residence of 101 residents. While in Ashraf, he was one of the security guards of the camp. Therefore, he had good information about the different roads and buildings inside the camp. He played the role of a guide for the assailants. Without his knowledge of the buildings, the attackers could not have carried out the operation so quickly.

After the operation, the assailants killed him to clear the evidence of the crime and poured acid on his face so that he would not be identified.

The “Albanian case” (see above): In the “C” part of this report, we mentioned **Ali-Reza Naghaszadeh**, an agent of the Iranian intelligence used to gather intelligence on the MEK. Below are some additional details about him:

⁶⁰ Belgian State security report in the trial of Assadollah Assadi and associates, Antwerp, November 2020.

- Naghashzadeh was expelled from the MEK in 1999 while in Camp Ashraf in Iraq due to his suspicious behavior, but he requested to remain and be given another chance to be part of the movement. In July 2004, he was expelled from the MEK and went to Iran on July 31, 2007, where he started full cooperation with the **Nejat Association**, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Intelligence (MOIS).
- On December 19, 2010, the Nejat Association published a letter by him addressed to the US Secretary of State, requesting not to delist the MEK. He was subsequently sent to Austria, under the cover of “refugee” for propaganda activities against the MEK, and under guise of “former member” of the organization for the purpose of gathering information for the Quds Force.
- For a while, Naghashzadeh was active in the context of the regime’s disinformation campaign against the MEK along with a network of the regime’s agents in Europe.
- He first appeared abroad on November 21, 2008 on a joint program in Paris led by **Ali Akbar Rastgoo**, head of a network of MOIS agents in Germany. In addition to the Ministry of Intelligence, he also cooperated with the **IRGC’s Quds Force**.
- After the MEK members moved to Albania, his mission became information gathering in Albania. He traveled to Albania on several occasions and tried to contact others who were no longer with the MEK, to debrief and recruit them to work with the regime’s embassy in Tirana.

There is **another interesting case in Albania: Hadi Sani-Khani**, who left the MEK in 2016 in Albania and contacted the mullahs’ embassy and was, for some years, the main coordinator of the embassy’s recruitments against the MEK

On February 14, 2021, he wrote a lengthy letter to the United Nations Secretary General⁶¹.

Sani-Khani explained in detail the activities of the MOIS, which establishes direct relations with MEK defectors and pays them €500 a month to write 12 articles on different social media outlets against the MEK.

Sani-Khani specifically explained the role of the Albanian contact in coordinating MOIS action against the MEK across Europe through a tripartite relation with MOIS agents in the UK, Germany, and Iran.

According to Sani-Khani, the MOIS continuously asked him to provide tactical information on the whereabouts of MEK leaders and officials to be used for terrorist ends:

“Four days after I left the PMOI, I received a phone call from Ebrahim Khodabandeh in Tehran, who congratulated me for leaving the PMOI. He is in charge of the Nejat association, which is tied to the regime’s Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS). Immediately after, his brother Masoud Khodabandeh (agent of the MOIS based in the UK) contacted me. These two brothers suggested that I should go to the Iranian regime’s embassy in Tirana.

⁶¹ We have a copy of this letter.

The first person to whom I spoke in the embassy introduced himself as Haji. I later found out that his real name was Fereidoun Zandi Aliabadi, and that he was the head of the intelligence station of the regime and worked under the title of the first attaché in the embassy. I found out through the agents that Fereidoun Zandi had formed a network of agents against the PMOI since 2014 in close cooperation with the head of the intelligence station of the regime in Iraq whose nom de guerre was Sajjad.

In March 2017, I was tasked to lead a network of some agents. The main responsibility of this group was to write articles against the PMOI. The Khodabandeh brothers and Zandi would select and decide the main topics and talking points for these articles. I would then send the articles written by the agents to be published on MOIS-affiliated websites like the Nejat Association, Faragh website, Rah-e-No'e Site, Iran Interlink (run by Masoud Khodabandeh)- Kanoon Ava (run by Ali-akbar Rastgoo in Germany) – the “Sects” in Paris.

The regime’s mercenaries in Albania are divided into two groups. In the first group are those who are openly in contact with the embassy and must prove their allegiance to the Ministry of Intelligence so that they can gain permission to go to Iran. According to the embassy’s orders, these mercenaries are required to create at least one account on Facebook and Instagram, and to produce and publish 12 articles against the PMOI every month, and to continuously relay and republish topics and content identified by the embassy or the Ministry of Intelligence.

The second group of people work secretly for the embassy and the regime’s intelligence station to spy and gather information about and identify PMOI centers. These mercenaries are paid 300 euros a month and will be paid more if they do more work.”

The “German Case”: **Maysam Panahi** (who was sentenced to 2 years and four months in Berlin for having spied on the MEK on behalf of the MOIS; see above) was a former MEK member, expelled from Camp Liberty in Iraq before being recruited by the Iranian secret services. With the help of the MOIS, he declared himself as "asylum seeker" in the Federal Republic of Germany. **Another German case highlights the methods of the MOIS.**

In January 2000, a Berlin court put on trial **Hamid Khorsand**, an Iranian national recruited by the MOIS. The indictment by the Federal prosecutor reads as follows: ⁶²

“Hamid Khorsand, an unmarried Iranian national... resident of Berlin, is accused of spying, from 1995 to his arrest, for the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS). He was assigned by this ministry to conduct surveillance and to spy on the organizational structure of the People’s Mojahedin Organization and National Council of Resistance of Iran, as well as their members and activities.”

“His initial activities were directed by an agent of the Intelligence Ministry attached to the Iranian Consulate in Berlin. Subsequent to the expulsion of this agent in April 1997 in the wake of the Mykonos trial⁶³, the accused was directed by telephone from Tehran by an individual named ‘Seyyed.’”

⁶² <https://moisdisinformation.com/en/images/Library/Arrested%20in%20Germany.pdf>

⁶³ On September 17, 1992, Three Iranian Kurdish Leaders (Sadegh Sharafkandi, Fattah Abdoli, Homayoun Ardalan) and their translator, Nouri Dehkordi, were gunned down at the Mykonos Greek restaurant, on Prager Strasse, in Berlin. Three suspects, two of them Iranian (Kazem Darabi, a grocer and Abdolraham Banihashemi, an intelligence officer) and a Lebanese (Abbas Hossein Rahayel) were

The indictment stated that in the course of some of these telephone conversations, it became apparent that “Seyyed” had traveled to Germany to coordinate espionage and terrorist operations and had given the telephone number of the person accompanying him to the agent.

Two officials from the German security services testified in court during Khorsand’s trial on MOIS methods:

“In September 1995, we began tapping Hamid Khorsand’s telephone. In 1997, he acquired a cell phone. We also put a tap on that phone and became aware that he was in contact with an individual called “Saeed” in the Intelligence Ministry in Tehran. It became apparent to us that after the Mykonos trial, the Iranian regime’s agents were being very careful. The Intelligence Ministry changed its methods of communication; most now used cell phones and were in direct contact with Iran. In April 1997 they used pay phones.

For years, the Iranian regime had been watching its dissidents and appeared very sensitive about them. It was constantly tracking down opposition activists. For example, a telephone conversation between “Saeed” and Khorsand about Leila (Mojahedin official Mahin Afshar) demonstrated to us that they were all really intent on following up on opposition activists, their community, and their organizational network. We are concerned about preserving and protecting the lives of foreign nationals. We cannot permit the regime to threaten the Mojahedin.

Prior to the Mykonos trial, numerous people who were Iranian Intelligence Ministry officers worked on the administrative staff of the Iranian embassy in Germany. For example, in Bonn, the third floor of the embassy was transferred to Iran after the Mykonos trial. They conduct their activities abroad from Iran in a centralized manner. They do so by telephone, by direct contact, or through third party countries.”

“The regime’s primary target is the Mojahedin. The Mojahedin are the most active opposition force and seek to overthrow the regime through warfare. Naturally, the Mojahedin are targeted by the regime more than anyone else.

For example, through Hamid Khorsand they wanted to conduct surveillance on a person named Leila in Germany, and even to assassinate her. Just like they did in Turkey, when they conducted surveillance on a woman named Rajabi and her companion, and then assassinated them.

The Iranian Intelligence Ministry is obsessed with surveillance of the Mojahedin, and the Mojahedin Organization tries its utmost to wage a political campaign throughout Europe. Which is why it is the only Iranian organization active in political circles such as the G-8 Summit. It is also very active at the parliamentary level. The Iranian government is trying to strike back at the Mojahedin. The Mojahedin have a lot of contacts in the media and are in close communication with the press. They provide the press with lots of interesting information. They have even given the press the names of many of the regime’s spies.”

The “Belgian Case”: In the 2018 Assadi plot to bomb the MEK annual meeting near Paris, three other individuals were sentenced. Two of them, **Amir Saadouni**

found guilty of murder by a German court, in October 1993 and sentenced to life terms. On April 10, 1997 the court issued an international arrest warrant against the Iranian Intelligence Minister, Ali Fallahian, stating that he directly ordered the murders.

(sentenced to 15 years) and his wife, **Nasimeh Naami** (sentenced to 17 years) were posing as MEK supporters for years.

Amir Saadouni was an MEK sympathizer in Belgium who took part in demonstrations and other public events organized by supporters of the MEK or the NCRI in Belgium and France. He became acquainted with Nasimeh, who lived in Iran, online. They even got married while living in two different countries and had never seen each other physically.

Nasimeh then moved to Belgium as a refugee in 2007 to join her "husband". Shortly afterwards, Amir became interested in spending more time as a sympathizer to help the resistance. According to the court report, Amir has been working with Nasimeh in the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence since 2007. The court paper also shows that Nasimeh Naami played the leading role of this couple. After Amir Saadouni himself became a trusted agent, they no longer lived together and, according to Nasimeh Naami, she had begun relations with another man. Nasimeh in prison, during a recorded meeting between her and Amir, tells Amir that he should minimize her role. Finally, Nasimeh confessed that in the months before the planned operation, she disguised herself as another woman from Iran and fell in love with Amir, encouraging and even controlling him.

Another interesting “Belgian” Case: On 21 April 2015, an Israeli court sentenced the Iranian-born Belgian **Ali Mansouri** (aka **Alex Mans**), to seven years in prison for spying for the Iranian regime. He was traveling on a Belgian passport and planned to pave the way for future trips by registering a company in Israel, according to media reports⁶⁴. Ali Mansouri had also made failed attempts to infiltrate the Iranian opposition movement, the MEK. The Belgian daily “Le Soir” reported on October 1 that the suspect “had identified himself as ‘an agent dispatched to Belgium to the infiltrate the PMOI(MEK)’.”⁶⁵

D.1. Two Recruitment Methods

A- Exploiting home visits for recruiting agents

One of the **methods routinely used by the regime is to arrest Iranian immigrants who travel to Iran, debrief them, and threaten to cooperate with the MOIS on their return to Europe.**

In one case, a journalist who is not even friendly with the MEK revealed that when he went to Iran, he was pressured to write an article criticizing the MEK. In his book “*Un Printemps en Iran*” [Spring in Tehran], Armin **Arefi, a French-Iranian journalist**, explains how his Iranian contact, who helped him return to Iran after a nine-year ban, put him in touch with members of the Nejat Society, an offshoot of MOIS. The clear goal of the MOIS agent was to persuade the "Iran expert" to write an article smearing the MEK's image in France, where it has its European headquarters.

In a video interview with the website *L'Opinion* on February 5, 2019, Arefi recounts his experience in Iran: “I go to Iran for my magazine, Le Point, but I know that behind

⁶⁴ [Court jails Belgian for 7 years for spying for Iran | The Times of Israel](#)

⁶⁵ [Ali Mansouri, Iranian regime's spy who failed to infiltrate PMOI \(MEK\) - NCRI \(ncr-iran.org\)](#)

me there is someone who will look at everything I write and everything I do while I am there [...] That person arranges a meeting with officials, especially from Iranian NGOs, who introduced me to former members of the People's Mojahedin [...], which is the only – one of the only – federated organizations in Iran to oppose the Islamic regime [...] That is when Mr. Nejati plays that card to put pressure on me: 'where is your article on the People's Mojahedin? I told you it would be good, it would help your case, to write something about them' [...] And so it becomes a kind of blackmail on the People's Mojahedin (MEK)."

Sometime later, fulfilling a commitment set by the regime, he wrote a negative article about the MEK.

In another example, an Iranian-French interpreter working with the French judiciary revealed in her memoirs that she was arrested, pressured, and not released until she provided all information she had about the MEK and NCRI because of her role as an interpreter. **Mehrnoushe Solouki**, a French citizen of Iranian origin, explained her case in her book "*Fatwa de sang*" (Fatwa of blood) published in 2010 in Paris.

Ms. Solouki who, as a filmmaker on visit to Tehran in 2007, was arrested by the MOIS and taken to the notorious "209" MOIS ward in Tehran's Evin prison for having filmed the Khavaran cemetery, where thousands of political prisoners extrajudicially executed in 1988 on Khomeini's fatwa are buried in mass graves. When in prison, she was forced to provide the MOIS with a detailed testimony on the MEK and the NCRI, whose HQ in France's Auvers-sur-Oise was raided by the French police in 2003. Ms. Solouki had at that time accompanied the French police on their raid as official Farsi to French translator and had thus witnessed the raid. She was forced to explain in writing every detail of the NCRI HQ in France to her interrogators in the Evin prison.

After that, she was asked by the MOIS to "cooperate" with them through making a film on the Khavaran cemetery while presenting the regime in a favorable light, certainly to demonize the MEK. They threatened her that otherwise, she might receive a long prison term on charges of espionage.

Ms. Solouki writes that she finally was able to save herself from the MOIS clutches through fleeing to the French embassy in Tehran during her provisional furlough and staying in the embassy compound for a long time before a vast campaign by *Reporters Sans Frontieres* and other NGOs obliged the regime to let her go.

In another example according to Norwegian sources "in 2018, the NRK (Skille, Strand & Kjellberg 2018) reported on a **Norwegian-Iranian woman who is said to have been arrested, imprisoned and ill-treated while visiting Iran in the summer of 2014. There she was questioned about the activities of her mother, who was associated with the MEK activities** in Norway. The woman told NRK that she was shown pictures of her mother participating in demonstrations in Oslo and by other exiled Iranians in Norway and was asked questions about them. Before she was released, she was allegedly asked to monitor her mother and get more involved in her activities."

B- “Honey trapping”: another widely-used MOIS method

Over the past four decades, the Iranian regime has adopted various methods to confront the opposition, one of the most effective of which is **the use of honey trap, in Farsi “Parastoo.”**

The term refers to **women who are recruited by Iran’s security agencies against political activists and other individuals in order to trap them through emotional and sexual relationships and gather evidence that can later be used against them**⁶⁶ in such a way that they are forced to take measures against their will to prevent moral disgrace. The Iranian regime has also repeatedly used “honey trap” to abduct wanted individuals or carry out terrorist acts. Here are some examples.

B.1. The Case of Ruhollah Zam

In October 2019, the MOIS agents abducted **Ruhollah Zam, the founder and host of the Persian news website Amadnews in France**, to Iraq, from where he was abducted and transferred to Iran. Later, in a tragic and unjust trial, Zam, a resident of France, was sentenced to death for Moharebeh [waging war against God] and "corruption on earth." Authorities hanged him on December 12, 2020, despite international appeals and calls for sparing his life.

After the arrest of Ruhollah Zam, the specialized intelligence and espionage website ‘intelnews.org’⁶⁷ reported: “The Iranian government may have used a female intelligence officer to lure a leading Iranian dissident from his home in France to Iraq, where he was abducted by Iranian security forces and secretly transported to Iran.”

The website quoted a report in the Times of London as saying **Ruhollah Zam had been in a relationship with a woman for two years, and then she convinced him to travel to Jordan and then to Iraq** to meet with Ayatollah Sistani. Zam was eventually arrested in Iraq and transferred to Iran.

B.2. The Abduction of Habib Asyud in Turkey

On November 2, 2020, Mojtaba Zolnouri, the chair of the Iranian Parliament (Majlis) National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, confirmed that the MOIS had abducted **Habib Farajollah Chaab (Asyud)**, an Iranian Arab dissident. Earlier, MOIS agents had lured this dissident to Istanbul and abducted him through a honey trap. He is currently in prison in Iran.

Turkish intelligence agencies provided the media with images of surveillance cameras and traffic cameras from different parts of the country, showing the abduction of Habib Farajollah Chaab, the former head of the ‘Arab Struggle Movement for the Liberation of Ahwaz’.

These images show a **“Parastoo” of Iranian intelligence agency named Sabrin Saedi**, who in the past three years, under the guise of an active Ahwazi poet, was able

⁶⁶ This method is classical for the Russian intelligence (SVR and FSB) as it was in the past for the KGB. The compromission material is called **“Kompromat”**.

⁶⁷ Iranians may have used female spy to ‘honey-trap’ dissident living in France: intelnews.org

to reach Ahwazi activists in Britain and infiltrate Ahwazi activists living abroad. Turkey provided Sky News with the news of Chaab's arrival in Turkey, the moment he was abducted at a gas station, and the process of coordinating the operation by Sabrin Saeedi with Iranian MOIS elements.⁶⁸

B.3. The Case of Amir Saadouni and Nasimeh Naami

The couple **were ordered to bomb the annual NCRI rally in the suburbs of Paris on June 30, 2018.** They were sentenced to 15 and 17 years in prison, respectively.

Amir Saadouni was an MEK sympathizer in Belgium who took part in demonstrations and other public events organized by supporters of the MEK or the NCRI in Belgium and France. He became acquainted with Nasimeh, who lived in Iran, online. They even got married while living in two different countries and had never seen each other physically.

Nasimeh then moved to Belgium as a refugee in 2007 to join her "husband". Shortly afterwards, Amir became interested in spending more time as a sympathizer to help the resistance. According to the court report, Amir has been working along with Nasimeh for the Ministry of Intelligence since 2007. **The court papers also show that Nasimeh Naami played the leading role of this couple.** After Amir Saadouni himself became a trusted agent, they no longer lived together and, according to Nasimeh Naami, she had established relations with another man.

B.4. Case of the "Fugitive Judge"

An Iranian court charged **former Judge Gholamreza Mansouri** with a € 500,000 corruption case. He had previously fled to Romania. Mansouri denied the allegations and announced his readiness to return to Iran. However, **his lifeless body was found in Bucharest the day before his flight to Tehran on June 19, 2020.** Officials reported that Mansouri had committed suicide, but unconfirmed reports say he was thrown into a honey trap planned by Tehran.

Farnaz Eftekhari, a female agent of the Ministry of Intelligence and Security stationed in France, who had already been in contact with Mansouri, befriended him. Eftekhari provided Mansouri with a mobile phone and a SIM Card.

Mansouri traveled with her on land from France to Germany and then to Austria and from there to Romania. They were in a Romanian coastal town called Constance in late February 2020.

Farnaz Eftekhari's social media account until the day before Mansouri's death introduced her as a resident of Paris, a graduate of the Islamic Azad University in the north of Tehran. The day before Mansouri was killed, Eftekhari's photo was removed from the account, and the letter E replaced Eftekhari. Ten days later, on July 1, the name of this account changed again, and "Farnaz" became "Sahar."

⁶⁸ [Habib Chaab: Files show how Iranian dissident was kidnapped in Turkey after 'honeytrap by Iran' | World News | Sky News](#)

B.5. Case of Ali Javanmardi

“A court in the Iraqi Kurdish-state of Erbil sentenced **Samira Morad-Pour**, a female terrorist of Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS), to five years in prison for **attempting to assassinate Ali Javanmardi, an Iranian journalist holding a U.S. citizenship** on Tuesday, March 30,” wrote Avatoday.net directed by Javanmardi on the same day.⁶⁹

The agent had previously identified herself as the editorial chief of Rojman weekly in Sanandaj, the capital of the western Iranian province of Kurdistan. In 2019, along with an Iranian intelligence team, she recruited agents from Tehran and Sanandaj and tried to approach Javanmardi. They had primarily planned to kidnap the journalist or assassinate him if their initial plan failed.

However, Javanmardi’s security team foiled the plot and identified, detained, and handed over the terrorists to security officials in Iraqi Kurdistan.

B.6. Case of Mohammad Ali Najafi - Former Mayor of Tehran

In Iran, after the murder of the wife of Mohammad Ali Najafi, the former mayor of Tehran, the issue of honey traps was extensively publicized. He claimed that his wife had links with security agencies and had killed her for it. Although the Ministry of Intelligence denied it, some high-ranking Iranian officials commented in this regard:

Ali Motahari, a member of parliament from Tehran, commented on Instagram about the use of honey traps in a way that revealed it to be a common method adopted by the Iranian regime. He said: "From the news, and especially from Mr. Najafi himself, it became clear that people in the country have Parastoos who sometimes fly around politicians who are considered critics or opponents, and then make videos and photos to shut their mouth and remove them from the political scene.”

B.7. Non-Iranian targets

In addition to several sources, the Iranian regime uses Parastoos to trap citizens of other countries in order to obtain information in various fields.

Reuters reported in July 2017 that **hackers possibly organized by the Iranian regime were using sex traps or Parastoos to infiltrate strategic industry owners**. They have commissioned a woman named Mia Ash on social media to infiltrate and gather information. She introduces herself as a photographer and sends a survey form to her victims, which, when opened, steals their computer information and contents. The report added that Ms. Mia's victims were mostly middle-aged men working in high-ranking oil and gas, aerospace, and communications industries, mostly from countries such as India, Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United States.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ [!دادگاه اربیل مرکز اقلیم کردستان عراق يك تروریست اعزامی جمهوری اسلامی را به ۵ سال زندان محکوم کرد | AvaToday](#)

⁷⁰ [Iranian hackers used female 'honey pot' to lure targets: researchers | Reuters](#)

E. Should anyone closely affiliated with the MEK, including Europeans, have security concerns due to the terrorist nature and conducts of the regime?

Thousands of pages and hundreds of books and reports have been written over the past 40 years about Iran's intelligence services, their links with terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah, Hamas or the Houthis in Yemen and the way they suppress and fight any opposition.

Dozens of terrorist acts committed or incited by the Iranian regime have been investigated and tried in Europe, the United States, Argentina and other countries. Iranian "diplomats" have been expelled from several countries for espionage, among others, (and often) against the opposition in exile.

What emerges from this immense documentation, and what we have (very) briefly summarized in this expert report, is that the Iranian regime uses intelligence and terrorism intensively, not only to further its interests but also to try to silence the opposition.

Ravaged by an economic crisis that can be explained as much by international sanctions as by corruption or mismanagement, the country is facing increasingly frequent and violent revolts. This leads the regime, in its paranoia, to attack the opposition more frequently and more violently.

In a report published three years ago⁷¹, we wrote:

*“Terror is used to **support Iran’s political agenda in the Middle East and extend its influence** on the “Shiite Crescent” (Iraq, Syria, Lebanon), **to fuel tensions in the Gulf area** (for instance in Yemen and Bahrain) and, thus, to undermine Iranian opposition by claiming that the country is “under siege”, **to provoke the Israeli “arch-enemy”** (and offering the mullahs the possibility to pose as the “only fighters of the Zionist oppressor”⁷²) or **to eradicate opponents** living in exile.*

*Most parts of the world were targeted by Iranian sponsored terrorism: Middle East and the Arab world, obviously, but also South America, Asia and Europe. On most occasions, Iran is cautious enough to hide its involvement behind smoke screens and to act through proxy organizations (as the Lebanese **Hezbollah**) but orders, funding and even, sometimes arms and explosives come from Tehran, as it was proved in various judicial investigations during the past 40 years. But on some specific occasions, Iranian agents are clearly identified as the main planners and, even, perpetrators of those attacks.*

This is not an accident. It is a political choice which was made at the very beginning of the so-called Iranian Islamic Revolution.

Since its inception, the Iranian regime has seen itself as a “revolutionary” one and, as the Soviet Union at its beginnings, it uses all the possible means to advance its interests and destabilize its enemies.

⁷¹ <http://www.esisc.org/upload/publications/analyses/the-recent-iranian-terrorist-plots-in-europe/IRAN%20-%20RECENT%20TERRORIST%20PLOTS%20IN%20EUROPE.pdf>, page 9.

⁷² “Zionist oppressor”, “Zionist regime” or “Zionist entity” are some of the terms used by the Iranian officials when they refer to Israel...

Thus, it organized an impressive “security” apparatus designed not to protect the country, as it is the case for most nations, but to spread its ideology.”

Given the importance of the Iranian intelligence community and the fact that it dedicates much of its energy, personnel and resources to the fight against the opposition, and particularly the fight against the MEK, and given the regime's ideology and appetite for violence, **the answer to the latter question is, unfortunately, "yes": MEK members and supporters in exile, Europeans who are close to the movement, as well as journalists and experts who try to do their honest work on Iran, have reason to be concerned about the actions of the Iranian regime.**