

DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE IN DEFENSE OF THE NATION

HOME | ABOUT DIA | HISTORY | CAREERS | COLLEGE | CONTRACTING | PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Home » Public Affairs » Testimonies & Speeches »

Email Print Share...

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Overview

Press Releases

Public Statements

Multimedia

» Testimonies & Speeches

Speeches

Contact DIA

FOIA

OUR MISSION

Provide timely, objective, and cogent military intelligence to warfighters, defense planners, and defense and national security policymakers.

[Learn more about DIA »](#)

CONNECT WITH DIA

Facebook

MySpace

Twitter

YouTube

Flickr

RSS



1961-2011
CELEBRATING OUR LEGACY
FORGING OUR FUTURE

STATEMENT: IRAN'S MILITARY POWER

Statement before the United States Senate Committee on Armed Services

14 April 2010

*Lieutenant General Ronald L. Burgess, Jr.,
United States Army
Director, Defense Intelligence Agency*

Good morning, Chairman Levin, Ranking Member McCain, and members of the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to testify regarding Iran's military posture, and for your continued support to the dedicated men and women of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), many of whom are forward-deployed directly supporting our military forces in Afghanistan, Iraq, and around the world.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Contact Defense Intelligence Agency Office of Public Affairs at:

- 703 695-0071
- DIA-PAO@dia.mil

IRAN'S STRATEGY AND DOCTRINE

The strategic objectives of Iran's leadership are first and foremost, regime survival; making Iran the preeminent regional power; attaining a leading role in the Islamic world and on the international stage; and turning Iran into an economic, scientific, and technological powerhouse.

Iranian leadership pursues a security strategy intended to deter an attack on its territory and increase its relative power in the region. For years, it has promulgated its "20-Million Man Army" and asymmetric warfare doctrine as deterrents to any would-be invader. Iran has also extended its outreach and support to governments and groups which oppose U.S. interests and threaten regional security. Diplomacy, economic leverage, and active sponsorship of terrorist and paramilitary groups are tools Iran uses to implement or further its aggressive foreign policy. In particular, Iran uses terrorism to pressure or intimidate other countries and more broadly to serve as a strategic deterrent.

Iran's military strategy is designed to defend against external threats, particularly from the United States and Israel. Its principles of military strategy include deterrence, asymmetrical retaliation, and attrition warfare. Iran can conduct limited offensive operations with its strategic ballistic missile program and naval forces.

IRAN'S REGIONAL INFLUENCE

Iran's 20-year outlook plan from the year 2005 seeks to make Iran a "top regional power". Among other objectives, its current five-year plan seeks to expand bilateral, regional, and international relations, strengthen Iran's ties with friendly states, and enhance its defense and deterrent capabilities. Commensurate with that plan, Iran is seeking to increase its stature by countering U.S. influence and expanding ties with regional actors while advocating Islamic solidarity. It also seeks to demonstrate to the world its "resistance" to the West. Iran is attempting to secure influence in Iraq and Afghanistan while undermining U.S. efforts by furnishing lethal aid to Iraqi Shia militants and Afghan insurgents. It also provides weapons, training, and money to Lebanese Hizballah, its strategic proxy and partner.

The Iranian regime uses the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force (IRGC-QF) to clandestinely exert military, political, and economic power to advance Iranian national interests abroad. The Qods Force conducts activities globally, including gathering tactical intelligence; conducting covert diplomacy; providing training, arms, and financial support to surrogate groups and terrorist organizations; and facilitating some of Iran's provision of humanitarian and economic support to Islamic causes.

Iran also provides Lebanese Hizballah and Palestinian terrorist groups – notably, HAMAS, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) – with funding, weapons, and training to oppose Israel and disrupt prospects for Arab-Israeli peace. The Qods Force is Iran's primary vehicle for providing materiel and lethal support to Lebanese Hizballah, which Iran views as an essential mechanism for advancing its regional policy objectives.

Iran continues to drive a multi-pronged soft power strategy in Iraq, including continued support to select Iraqi surrogate groups. The Qods Force Ramadan Corps is responsible for carrying out Iran's policy in Iraq. To more effectively execute regime policy, the Qods Force posts officers in Iran's diplomatic missions throughout Iraq. Both outgoing Iranian Ambassador to Iraq, Hassan Kazemi-Qomi, and incoming Ambassador, Hassan Danafar, are Qods Force officers.

Iran also continues to provide money, weapons, and training to select Iraqi Shia militants and terrorists despite pledges by senior Iranian officials to cease such support. Iran offers strategic and operational guidance to militias and terrorist groups to target U.S. forces in Iraq. In addition to providing arms and support, the Qods Force is responsible for training Iraqi insurgents in Iran, sometimes using Lebanese Hizballah instructors. The Qods Force provides insurgents with the training, tactics, and technology to conduct kidnappings, small unit tactical operations, and employ sophisticated improvised explosive devices (IEDs). In addition to weapons and support, Iran continues training Iraqi Shia militants in the use of IEDs, particularly deadly IEDs known as explosively formed penetrators (EFPs), and the counter-measures designed to defeat these weapons.

Iran continues to influence events in Afghanistan through a multi-faceted approach involving support for the Karzai government while covertly supporting various insurgent and political opposition groups. Tehran's support for the Government of Afghanistan is reflected in its diplomatic presence and the numerous Iranian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in the country. Tehran has also pledged over a billion dollars in aid, but has actually paid only small fraction of that pledge. Iran has used the threat of repatriating the large Afghan refugee population residing in Iran as a lever to



influence the Government of Afghanistan, especially during the harsh winter months. Iranian officials met with President Karzai and his main opponent Abdullah Abdullah throughout the presidential election campaign, and worked hard to appear as the consensus maker during the post election period. Tehran has also leveraged longstanding relationships with numerous Afghan leaders including Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Ismail Khan, both of whom lived in Iran for a period of time.

Arms caches uncovered in Afghanistan over the last three years contained large amounts of Iranian manufactured weapons, including 107mm rockets, which we assess IRGC-QF delivered to Afghan militants.

Iran has been involved in Lebanon since the early days of the Islamic Republic, seeking to expand ties with the large Shia population. The IRGC played an instrumental role in the establishment of Lebanese Hizballah and has continued to be vital to the development of the organization.

IRAN'S MILITARY FORCES

According to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic, the Supreme Leader is commander-in-chief of the armed forces, which consists of three main components: the regular military (sometimes referred to as the Artesh); the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) or Pasdaran, and the Law Enforcement Force (LEF). The regular military and IRGC come under the control of the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics (MODAFL). These forces are responsible for defending Iran's borders and providing for internal security. The LEF is formally subordinate to the Ministry of Interior, and plays a key role in internal security and frontier security. Iran's defense spending as a share of GDP is relatively low compared to the rest of the region.

The Islamic Republic of Iran Ground Force (IRIGF) comprises armored, infantry, and commando divisions, as well as several independent armor, infantry, airborne, and commando brigades, and artillery groups. Additionally, the IRGC Ground Resistance Forces (IRGCGRF) includes Provincial Corps, which generally include armor and infantry brigades and artillery groups. Each brigade is allocated Basij battalions which support brigade combat operations.

DIA assesses the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy (IRIN) includes some 18,000 personnel. The IRIN is organized into four naval districts, which likely include submarine, missile boat, patrol boat, and auxiliary units; naval aviation units and naval riflemen and marine commando units. An additional 20,000 personnel comprise the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy (IRGCN), which also includes missile, torpedo, and small patrol boat units, several anti-ship coastal defense missile batteries, and naval riflemen and commando units.

The Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force (IRIAF) is estimated to comprise 52,000 personnel, stationed at 10 fighter bases, 19 fighter/fighter bomber and trainer squadrons, one reconnaissance squadron, and 10 transport/tanker squadrons. While the exact force structure is unclear, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Air Force (IRGCAF) is estimated to include 5,000 additional personnel and possess some capability to support ground attack missions.

The IRIAF remains largely dependent on 1970's-era U.S. aircraft like the F-4 Phantom II, the F-14A Tomcat, and the F-5E Tiger II. Its most advanced fighter is the MiG-29 Fulcrum, and it has managed to keep a substantial portion of its fleet of U.S.-supplied aircraft flying. While Iran has not procured significant numbers of new aircraft in over 10 years, it has sought to meet some of its requirements by developing an indigenous combat aircraft, most of which is derived from its U.S.-built F-5A Freedom Fighters and F-5E Tiger IIs. One noteworthy project is the twin-tailed Saeqeh (Thunderbolt), of which several examples have apparently been built. Iran's military exercises and literature make it clear its air planners understand the value of airborne early warning and C4I systems, airborne intelligence, electronic warfare platforms, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and airborne refueling. Iran has an active program and two families of reconnaissance, target and lethal UAVs. However, the IRIAF has been unable to progress in other areas. For example, the IRIAF's lone airborne early warning and control system platform crashed in September 2009, killing all seven people on board. Iran is also building precision-guided munitions for the IRIAF, but recent large-scale exercises showed fighters delivering conventional unguided munitions.

The Air Defense Force includes a headquarters element and regional air defense sectors. Iran has a small, but growing, number of surface-air-missile (SAM) sites, and numerous anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) sites.

In 2009 Iran established a separate air defense force under the command of Brigadier General Ahmad Miqani, as a fourth force in the Artesh. The new service consolidates equipment and personnel under a single commander and has authority over both regular and IRGC air defense units. Publicly, Iranian officials gave a number of reasons for creating an air defense force, including the need to better defend its nuclear sites, improve the maneuverability and capability of its air defense forces, and consolidating information-gathering and air defense forces in a single service. Iran is unlikely to seek to develop a fully integrated nationwide air defense system. Instead, it seems to prefer a point defense strategy, with its strongest defenses located around key strategic centers.

Tehran continues to invest heavily in advanced air defenses, and the potential acquisition of the Russian SA-20 SAM remains a major part of its air defense modernization efforts. Iran's procurement of modern SAMs with automated command, control, and communications systems will be a significant upgrade to existing Iranian air defense capabilities and improve its ability to protect senior leadership and key nuclear and industrial facilities. Iran acquired modern SA-15 short range surface-to-air missiles in 2007 and has displayed newly acquired and indigenously built radar systems at its Holy Defense Week parade.

Coastal defense cruise missiles (CDCMs) are an important layer in Iran's defense of the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz. Iran can attack targeted ships with anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs) from its own shores, islands, and oil platforms using relatively small mobile launchers.

The C801/802 is Iran's primary CDCM, first imported from China in 1995. It is capable of engaging targets at a range of six nautical miles, and has greater accuracy, a lower cruising altitude, and a faster set-up time than the Seersucker missile Iran used during the Iran-Iraq War. The C801/802 allows Iran to target any point within the Strait of Hormuz and much of the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. Iran has worked with China to develop shorter range missiles, including the C701, for deployment in narrow geographic environments.

Iran can readily deploy its mobile CDCM launchers anywhere along its coast. These systems have auto control and radar homing guidance systems, and some can target using a remote air link. Iran's

Contact | Access and Strat. Info | Home | Iran can attack targeted ships with anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs) from its own shores, islands, and oil platforms using relatively small mobile launchers. | Intelligence.gov | Defense.gov | USA.gov

objective is to overwhelm enemy air defenses with mobile CDCMs, combined with multiple rocket launchers (MRLs), coastal artillery, and ballistic missiles.

Iran has historically placed the majority of its conventional force strength—to include armor, mechanized infantry, and infantry units—close to its borders with Iraq and Turkey. This reflects its defensive military doctrine, which is designed to slow an invasion and force a diplomatic solution to hostilities. Iranian military training and public statements echo this defensive doctrine. Iran continues to build its capability to counter more advanced adversaries, including the recent merger of the Basij Resistance Forces with IRGC ground forces.

Iran's unconventional forces, to include its paramilitary forces trained according to its asymmetric warfare doctrine, would present a formidable force on Iranian territory. These forces would include commando and special forces units, smaller specially trained teams embedded within the conventional force units, selected Basij forces, and combat patrols of the Law Enforcement Forces. Numbers of personnel could exceed one million.

THE IRGC QODS FORCE (IRGC-QF)

Iran established the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps – Qods Force in 1990 as an elite unit within the IRGC. Although its operations sometimes appear at odds with the public voice of the Iranian regime, it is not a rogue element; it receives direction from the highest levels of government, and its leaders report directly, albeit informally, to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. The Qods Force employs complementary diplomatic and paramilitary strategies.

The Qods Force stations operatives in foreign embassies, charities, and religious/cultural institutions to foster relationships with people, often building on existing socio-economic ties with the well established Shia diaspora. At the same time, it engages in paramilitary operations to support extremists and destabilize unfriendly regimes. The IRGC and Qods Force are behind some of the deadliest terrorist attacks of the past three decades, including the 1983 and 1984 bombings of the U.S. Embassy and annex in Beirut, the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, the 1994 attack on the AMIA Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires, the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia, and many of the insurgent attacks on Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces in Iraq since 2003. Generally, it directs and supports groups actually executing the attacks, thereby maintaining plausible deniability within the international community.

Support for these extremists takes the form of providing arms, funding, and paramilitary training. In this, Qods Force is not constrained by ideology; many of the groups it supports do not share, and sometimes openly oppose, Iranian revolutionary principles, but Iran supports them because of common interests or enemies.

The Qods Force maintains operational capabilities around the world. It is well established in the Middle East and North Africa, and recent years have witnessed an increased presence in Latin America, particularly in Venezuela. As U.S. involvement in global conflicts deepens, contact with the Qods Force, directly or through extremist groups it supports, will be more frequent and consequential.

Each Provincial Corps in the Qods Force possesses a unit, called Saberín, which has limited special operations capabilities. These units rotate to northwest Iran to perform counter-insurgency operations against the Kurdish Free Life Party (PJAK) and to the southeast against Jundallah.

IRAN'S SUPPORT TO TERRORISM

Over the last three decades, Iran has methodically cultivated a network of sponsored terrorist allies and surrogates capable of conducting effective, plausibly deniable attacks against the United States and Israel.

Through its longstanding relationship with Lebanese Hizballah, Iran maintains a capability to strike Israel and threaten Israeli and U.S. interests worldwide. With Iranian support, Lebanese Hizballah has exceeded 2006 Lebanon conflict armament levels. On November 4, 2009, Israel interdicted the merchant vessel *FRANCOP*, on which Iran was attempting to smuggle weapons probably destined for Lebanese Hizballah including large quantities of 122mm and 107mm surface-to-surface rockets, 106mm antitank shells, mortar shells, hand grenades, and small arms ammunition. The Qods Force operates training camps in Lebanon, training LH and other fighters. Iran also provides hundreds of millions of dollars per year in funding to support Lebanese Hizballah.

Iran provides Kata'ib Hizballah (KH)—an Iraqi Shia terrorist group—and other Iraqi militant groups with weapons and training. Inside Iran, the Qods Force or Lebanese Hizballah-led training includes: small arms, reconnaissance, small unit tactics, and communications. Selected individuals or groups receive more specialized training in assassinations, kidnappings, or explosives. Iranian materiel assistance and training increased the lethality of roadside Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) and improvised rockets, enhancing the capabilities of the supported groups in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Levant.

Iran's support to Palestinian groups—including HAMAS, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command—produced improvements in their capabilities and increased the threat to Israeli and U.S. interests in the region. Iranian training and materiel support assisted HAMAS in the development of the Qassam rocket, extending its range to 40km. Iran also continues to smuggle weapons, money, and weapons components into the Gaza Strip through tunnels in the Philadelphi corridor. The Qods Force has provided limited and measured lethal support to select Afghan insurgent and terrorist groups since at least 2006. Iranian supplied 107mm rockets, plastic explosives, and mortar rounds have been recovered in Taliban-affiliated cache locations.

IRANIAN'S NUCLEAR AND BALLISTIC MISSILE WEAPONS CAPABILITIES

Iran is actively developing its nuclear program, including uranium enrichment and heavy water nuclear reactor activities in direct violation of multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions. This includes construction of the secret enrichment facility located on an IRGC military base near Qom that was revealed in the fall 2009. Iran also continues to develop ballistic missiles which could be adapted to deliver nuclear weapons.

Tehran has refused to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency, particularly by refusing full access to facilities, documents, and personnel as the IAEA investigates Iran's nuclear program. Iran's nuclear activities and related lack of openness with the international community raise serious questions about Iran's intent and pose a significant threat to the peace and stability of the Middle East.

Iran has gone to great lengths to protect its nuclear infrastructure from physical destruction. It has placed an emphasis on a number of factors to include locating facilities in buried sites, establishing hardened facilities and attempting to acquire sophisticated air defense systems.

Over the past two decades, Iran has placed a significant emphasis on developing and fielding ballistic missiles. Iran began ballistic missile acquisition and production programs in the 1980s during the Iran-Iraq War to address its inability to counter Iraqi missile attacks. Iran currently has the largest deployed ballistic missile force in the Middle East. Since 2006, Iran has demonstrated its missile capabilities in four highly publicized exercises, nicknamed "Noble Prophet." Iran continues to develop ballistic missiles capable of targeting Arab adversaries, Israel, and central Europe, including Iranian claims of an extended-range variant of the Shahab-3 and a 2,000-km medium range ballistic missile (MRBM), the Ashura. Beyond the steady growth in its missile and rocket inventories, Iran has boosted the lethality and effectiveness of existing systems with accuracy improvements and new sub-munition payloads.

Short-range ballistic missiles provide Tehran with an effective mobile capability to strike coalition forces in the region. Iran continues to improve the survivability of these systems through technological advances, such as solid-propellant and the use of anti-missile defense tactics.

Iran has also developed medium-range ballistic missiles, and continues to increase the range, lethality, and accuracy of these systems. The Shahab 3, based on the North Korean No Dong, can reach all of Israel. The Ashura or "Sejil" is an indigenous, two-stage missile under development, which uses solid-propellant technology, reducing the launch preparation and footprint. DIA assesses that, with sufficient foreign assistance, Iran could develop and test an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) capable of reaching the United States. In late 2008 and early 2009, Iran launched the Safir, a multi-stage space launch vehicle (SLV), demonstrating progress in some technologies relevant to ICBMs. Iran displayed its next-generation SLV, the Simorgh, in February 2010. The Simorgh is much larger than the Safir and shows progress in booster design which could be applicable to an ICBM design.

CONCLUSION

In summary, Iran seeks to increase its regional power by countering Western influence, expanding ties with its neighbors, and seeking a leadership role in the Islamic world. Diplomacy, economic leverage, and active sponsorship of terrorist and paramilitary groups are the tools Iran uses to drive its aggressive foreign policy. Nevertheless, internal security remains the regime's primary focus. While it is unlikely to initiate a conflict intentionally or launch a pre-emptive attack, Iran uses its military forces to defend against both external and internal threats. Iran does have the capability to restrict access to the Strait of Hormuz with its navy temporarily and threaten U.S. forces in the region and our regional allies with missiles. Iran assesses the benefits gained from its use of terrorist surrogates outweigh the costs. Tehran has gone to great lengths to protect its nuclear infrastructure from physical destruction. Iran presents a wide array of threats and challenges to the United States and its allies.

Let me conclude by saying the potential threats posed by and evolving trends in Iran are among the highest priorities for the Defense Intelligence Agency. As General Petraeus noted to this committee last month, "the Iranian regime is the primary state-level threat to stability" in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility. It is a core responsibility of the DIA to ensure our nation has the best available intelligence to protect deployed U.S. personnel and their families, our allies, and partners from the threats posed by Iran. DIA also retains a core responsibility to prevent strategic surprise on a larger scale from any quarter, including Iran. In my recent visits with DIA's military and civilian personnel deployed to the Middle East, I remain impressed by — and thankful for — their willingness to serve the nation. On their behalf, I thank this committee for your strong support and continuing confidence in the Defense Intelligence Agency and its mission.

This page was created on **September 1, 2010**, and last updated **January 31, 2011**.