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Revelations about the secret organizational chart of the Force al-Quds, whose tentacles strangle more than Iran never

Although decimated by Israeli-American raids, the elite Quds Force remains the vital and clandestine force of the Iranian regime, the that strikes without leaving a trace. Unpublished documents, testimonies of With defectors and Western sources to back it up, Atlantico penetrates the heart of the Quds Force, an octopus wounded by war, but whose tentacles, from mafia trafficking to hidden financing, continue to to threaten Europe and France.



Emmanuel Razavi

A dozen fighters in camouflage gear are advancing in
Silence on the arid ground, in the twilight. It's hard to make out.
their faces, hidden behind scarves and vision glasses
At night. Helmeted, advancing hunched over, their movements are

Discontinuous and cautious. You can sense they are attentive to the slightest sign, ready to fire.

With Zoaf 9mm pistols on their belts and Sayyad S-5.56 assault rifles in their hands, these commandos from the Al-Quds Force cross a wire fence column, then a series of rocky obstacles.

The propaganda video showcasing their operation suggests they infiltrated somewhere along the border between Lebanon and Israel. Whether their target was military or civilian remains unknown.

Their rule is to strike in secret without leaving any trace, any signature, and then disappear.

A few bloody acts, past and present, reveal the nature of this silent war. In 1994, its agents were held responsible for the attack on the AMIA Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, which killed 85 people. In 2011, they targeted the Saudi ambassador, Adel al-Jubeir, in Washington. In 2018, a network of ten men was dismantled in Germany. More recently, a plot to assassinate the Israeli ambassador to Mexico was thwarted in 2025—France itself is not spared, as confirmed by the arrest in Dijon of Bashir Biazar, one of its agents, in 2024.

A former DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) special agent who infiltrated Hezbollah, Amir Hamidi also investigated the Quds Force and tracked down several of its agents. He testifies: "The Quds Force is distinguished by an integrated organization that brings together, within a single structure, all the capabilities necessary for the planning, support, and conduct of external operations. It thus combines intelligence gathering, clandestine operations, logistics, clandestine financing, arms acquisition, technical development, the management of auxiliary forces, and regional operational headquarters."

Today, a "replacement general" is at the helm of this bloodthirsty organization: Esmail Qaani, 68, at the head of a force "conceived" in 1988, at the end of the Iran-Iraq War.

It was on January 3, 2020, just hours after Qassem Soleimani was killed by a US airstrike in Baghdad, that Ali Khamenei appointed him head of the Quds Force. Unlike his predecessor, Esmail Qaani cultivates a discreet, almost bureaucratic profile—some observers describe him as a civil servant rather than a charismatic warlord.

which did not prevent him from becoming one of the most powerful men in the regime.

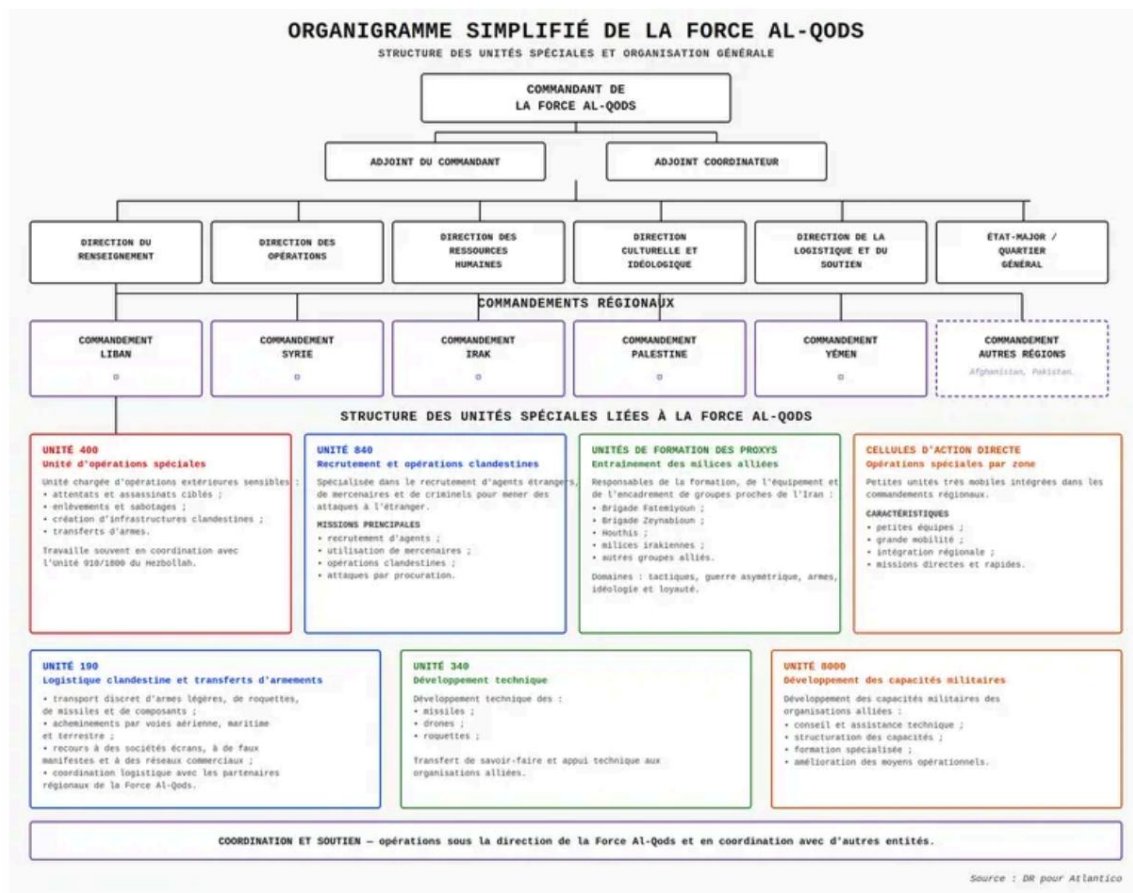
One enigma remains, fueling speculation in both Tehran and Tel Aviv for months: Esmail Qaani has survived all the targeted Israeli strikes that have decimated the IRGC command since the beginning of the war. This has led some observers to suggest he may have been turned by Israeli intelligence.

This theory remains unverified to date, but it speaks volumes about the climate of paranoia that has gripped the Iranian security apparatus.

The Al Quds Force became operational in 1990, in other words, the year following Ali Khamenei's accession to the Supreme Guidance and the creation of his personal "office", the Beyt, which oversees security, political-religious, economic and judicial matters.

Placed under his direct authority although integrated into the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the regime's ideological army, the Quds Force is structured around different regional directorates which conduct clandestine operations from the Persian Gulf to Lebanon via Iraq.

This is confirmed by an organizational chart that was given to us by a source who worked for the Iranian secret services, and whose content we were able to verify and cross-check with recognized specialists of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.



The missions of the Quds Force, which appear to be very diverse, evolve according to events and Iranian strategic interests.

It has several "branches": intelligence, infiltration, sabotage, financial operations, transfers of funds and personnel to proxies, economic warfare, terrorism, influence, and cyberwarfare.

Thanks to the web it has woven, the Quds Force can rely on a range of financial structures, whether it be banks in Lebanon and Iraq, or exchange offices established in Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Indonesia, officially mandated by shell companies based in Africa, China and the Middle East.

It can also rely on Iranian structures that go back to the office of the Supreme Leader: the "Beyt e Rahbari" (House of the Guide in Persian).

As another organizational chart, an excerpt of which we are publishing, shows, the "Beyt é Rahbari" has control over hundreds of associative organizations, ministerial administrations, cultural and religious foundations (which benefit from subsidies and are never controlled), press agencies, ministries, etc.

The evil alliance of dirty money and violence in the name of Allah

On June 10, 2026, several Western countries (including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada and Australia) issued a joint statement condemning the activities of the al- Force Quds Force and the intelligence organization of the Revolutionary Guards, accusing them of carrying out or supporting "plots of assassinations, kidnappings and acts of violence in their territories"

According to the Trends Group research and forecasting institute, the Quds Force was involved in "98 plots and operations" around the world between its creation and 2022. Certainly a low estimate.

The best-known of its units, "Unit 400," is responsible for special operations abroad: attacks, targeted assassinations, kidnappings, sabotage, and the creation of clandestine infrastructure. It uses local, non-professional cells for this purpose and can operate in parallel with Unit 840, which specializes in recruiting foreign or dual-national agents, monitoring Iranian dissidents abroad, and planning attacks outside of Iran.

"It is important to understand that the Quds Force acts like a mafia. It is involved alongside Hezbollah in large-scale drug trafficking and money laundering," recalls Matthieu Ghadiri, a former French counter-espionage agent who infiltrated Iranian intelligence services for several years.

In 2015, US prosecutors uncovered a mafia network involving Lebanese and Iranian traffickers linked to the Quds Force.

During his testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on June 8, 2017, Matthew Levitt, a former FBI analyst and director of the Washington Institute's counterterrorism program, described Hezbollah as a major player in the international cocaine trade. Based on the findings of a DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) investigation, he explained that Hezbollah's criminal activities were supported by the Islamic Republic of Iran, particularly through its Quds Force.

In 2022, a report by the US Treasury Department accused General Behnam Shahriyari (killed by an Israeli strike in June 2025) — an officer in the Quds Force in charge of his aircraft

logistics — to run an international smuggling and money laundering network generating hundreds of millions of dollars.

Ahmad Shahbazi, an investigative journalist and documentary filmmaker for the Iranian opposition channel Dorr TV, a specialist in the inner workings of the Islamic Republic, knows in minute detail the links that unite the Quds Force with the Beyt. He recounts: "During his lifetime, the policy of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei was oriented towards Iran's external interests.

He had neglected domestic affairs because he needed money to support the Islamic Republic's proxies in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. Given the embargoes and international sanctions, he therefore allowed his power projection force, the Quds Force, to engage in opaque international activities. His military strategy, in reality, served mafia interests at the highest levels of the state.

The Franco-Iranian journalist insists: "It was this same Quds Force and its auxiliaries who returned from abroad to carry out massacres of unarmed civilians across Iran on January 8 and 9. In a sermon delivered a few days earlier, the Supreme Leader had accused the anti-regime protesters of being enemies of the Islamic Republic in the pay of the United States and Israel, which gave the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps carte blanche to kill the combatants and orchestrate a bloodbath. All of this had been planned at the highest level, in other words, by the Beyt-e Rahbari, the office of the Supreme Leader."

A cash machine

For Mojtaba Khamenei, the new Supreme Leader—if he is still alive—and for —, his close political circle, the Quds Force remains the most important branch of the Revolutionary Guard. It is a guarantee of revenue and survival for the regime. "We must bear in mind that the Quds Force is responsible for the ultimate goal of the Islamic Republic, namely the destruction of Israel and the de-Westernization of the Middle East. It is also one of Iran's cash cows thanks to the hundreds of companies it owns around the world. The Supreme Leader approves all its operations, including its criminal activities, since they benefit the Islamic Republic. It can therefore solicit and use as much as it wants the administrative and commercial structures that depend on the Beyt-e Rahbari, including religious foundations and universities. Esmail Qaani, the head of the Quds Force, is thus one of the most powerful men in the country after the Supreme Leader," says Matthieu Ghadiri.

Several hundred Iranian and foreign companies — probably between 250 and 400 if we refer to the lists published by the US Treasury Department — have been placed under sanctions since 2007 for having served as shell companies, financial intermediaries or logistics platforms for the benefit of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps or networks linked to it.

The Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN), which is part of the U.S. Treasury Department, published a note on May 11, 2026, stating that "the IRGC and other actors within the Iranian regime rely on clandestine, multi-jurisdictional banking networks comprised of exchange bureaus, trading companies, and shell companies."

These shell companies are estimated to number in the hundreds. According to another note from Financial Trend Analysis in October 2025, they "conducted transactions of approximately \$5 billion in 2024," while "Iranian-linked oil companies carried out transactions amounting to billions of dollars, potentially linked to illicit oil sales."

With two-thirds of Iranians struggling to feed themselves, it becomes clearer how certain leaders of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Iranian religious dignitaries have amassed fortunes. It also explains why they execute or have assassinated those who oppose them and threaten their politico-religious, economic, and mafia-like ecosystem.

The figures are indeed staggering. In November 2013, the Reuters news agency estimated Ali Khamenei's assets at \$95 billion: \$52 billion in real estate assets and \$43 billion in stakes in companies.

On July 7, 2026, the U.S. Treasury Department published a list mentioning a network headed by financier Ali Ansari, who managed a vast portfolio of real estate and commercial assets benefiting Mojtaba Khamenei and other Iranian leaders. According to several investigations, this asset network was worth between €100 million and €400 million.

Another interesting fact: in 2020, the US Treasury Department also placed the prestigious Al-Mustafa University in Qom under sanctions, stating that "Al-Mustafa International University, based in Iran and claiming branches in more than 50 countries, facilitates intelligence operations of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps by allowing its student body, which

It includes a large number of international and American students, serving as an international recruitment network.

Infiltration, intelligence gathering, and terrorist attacks

In a context of war that threatens the foundations of the Islamic Republic, the Revolutionary Guards and their elite unit have a vested interest in using every available resource by deploying their networks around the world to the fullest extent. They face a dual threat, which they consider existential.

Domestically, they face unprecedented opposition. According to a survey by the independent GAMAAN institute, published in France last year by Fondapol, nearly 81% of Iranians say they oppose the continuation of the Islamic Republic, highlighting the failure of its leaders after 47 years in power.

Externally, their structural weakening and the destruction of several of their bases and infrastructures have highlighted their divisions, despite a form of resilience.

Furthermore, the most radical among them, proponents of asymmetric warfare, threaten strikes against Iran's neighboring countries, particularly those hosting American bases. They also threaten Europe and France, hoping to persuade them to get the United States and Israel to stop the war in Iran and Lebanon, and to find diplomatic solutions favorable to the Islamic Republic, its proxies, and its ballistic missile and nuclear programs.

The United States and France, targets of the Quds Force

Mohammad Hossein Torkaman, who worked for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' secret services before defecting in 2010, confirmed to us that the Revolutionary Guards and their Quds Force are present in Europe, and particularly in France.

Having a firm grasp of the inner workings of their organization, he asserts: "Currently, the Iranian government is primarily focused on preserving its national territory. However, if the Iranian authorities were to feel, even slightly, that the country's armed forces were encountering serious difficulties or proving ineffective in conducting a conflict, they might be tempted to resort to destabilizing actions or attacks in Europe, or even the United States. Countries that found themselves facing Iran in the context of the 2015 nuclear agreement negotiations (JCPOA) are targets."

potential threats. They are perceived as being directly involved in actions that Iran considers hostile to its national security. Among European countries, France, in my opinion, occupies a particularly important place, as does Germany.

Mohammad Hossein Torkaman warns that, according to information dating back to 2024, thousands of strategic, port, and military sites have been identified by the Quds Force in several countries. "These infrastructures are considered priority targets in the event of an escalation. They could be targeted either directly by missiles or drones, or indirectly through agents or networks linked to the Islamic Republic present in Europe and trained for many years."

Matthieu Ghadiri qualifies this statement: "At best, they have identified 1,500 to 2,000 targets worldwide. Most of them are military, although there are some civilian objectives."

"They can act anywhere"

Afshin Dadvand, an Iranian Kurdish activist linked to Komala, an Iranian Kurdish opposition movement, has fought against the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and its Quds Force. Just a few months ago, he was confronting them in the mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan, a border region with Iran. His organization is particularly well-informed about the Iranian regime. For him, there is no doubt: "Whether it's the United States, France, or the United Kingdom, the Quds Force can attack any country if it deems that country to have acted against the interests of the Islamic Republic. Its forces can target the Jewish community or attack French soldiers stationed in the Middle East, for example, in the United Arab Emirates."

On July 11, 2026, Hamshahri, a Tehran daily newspaper close to the Revolutionary Guards, published an infographic featuring portraits of thirteen political figures. Among them were Benjamin Netanyahu, Donald Trump, and Emmanuel Macron, all dressed in orange jumpsuits. The message was clear: they were designated as targets.

Is this a threat to be taken seriously, or a provocation?

"This should not be taken lightly," warns Matthieu Ghadiri. The Revolutionary Guards and their elite unit are seeking to create a climate of instability at the heart of our democracies. The Quds Force and the

The Iranian intelligence ministry has forged very close ties with mafia organizations in the West in order to use them for terrorist operations, assassinations, kidnappings, etc. This way, it costs them less.

This analysis is shared by American researcher Adrian Calamel, a specialist in Islamist terrorism and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. He says he takes the threat seriously: "The Quds Force can, of course, also use intermediaries, or simply outsource a mission to another organization. This subcontracting would allow it to avoid being traced back to itself."

Regarding the Quds Force's operational capacity in France, Adrian Calamel explains: "This, in my opinion, is where the main concern lies. Because the Iranian regime is able to rely on local resources, composed of individuals maintaining varying levels of ties with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) or Hezbollah."

One thing is certain: the more the Iranian regime is weakened militarily and politico-religiously, the greater the temptation may be for the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps to shift the battlefield out of the Middle East. And Mojtaba Khamenei, the new Supreme Leader, will not prevent this, as the Islamic Republic's very survival is at stake.

History has proven it: from Lebanon to France, by way of Iraq, the Quds Force excels in unconventional warfare and terrorism. More than just an option, it has now made it a major strategic element. American and European intelligence services are therefore closely monitoring developments in the Middle East conflict and its potential short-term repercussions on their respective territories.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Emmanuel Razavi is a senior reporter specializing in the Middle East. He contributes to publications including Paris Match, Figaro-Magazine, Franc-Tireur, Atlantico, Politique Internationale, Écran de Veille, and Valeurs Actuelles. He has directed several documentaries on Islamist groups in the Middle East, broadcast on Arte.

Planète and M6, which received widespread attention. Author of about ten books, his latest, "The Octopus of Tehran" (Cerf, 2025), reveals the interference and espionage networks of the Islamic Republic of Iran in France and Europe. He is a regular commentator on Europe 1, Sud Radio, LCI, and CNews, discussing the Middle East and Iran. He holds a degree in geopolitics and international relations (Sciences Po).
