

Iran's Revolutionary Guard given the green light for terrorism

November 2023

It is now clear that operations of the terrorist group Hamas are being funded by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), including the attack on Israel on 7 October 2023.



Furthermore, there are reports of plans by the IRGC to carry out terrorist attacks on non-military Western targets, in an attempt to deter countries from showing support to Israel. Alternatively, it may be trying to goad the United States into entering the conflict, in order to damage its reputation (and influence) in the Middle East.

Despite IRGC funding, the Gaza Strip is facing severe shortages of food, clean water, technology and medicine because of the ongoing Israeli embargo – although the supply of rockets continues without disruption. It is well known that the IRGC has been trying to sabotage a Saudi–Israeli normalisation since the reconciliation of Riyadh and Tehran and the signing of the Abraham Accords Declaration. Unfortunately for Israel, these plans seem to be having some effect. This month, a Saudi-led summit of Arab and Muslim leaders declared that Israel has committed ‘war crimes’ in Gaza. Following the restoration of diplomatic relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia in March, the summit also saw Iranian President, Ebrahim Raisi, meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, marking the first trip by an Iranian leader to Saudi Arabia in eleven years.

As well as Hamas, the IRGC also funds the Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen and, through them, carries out terrorist activities. During this new conflict, it is expected that the IRGC will continue to support both Hamas and the PIJ.

However, it is clear that in recent weeks, the IRGC has also supported other proxy groups to carry out attacks on Western military targets. US troops in Iraq and Syria have come under nearly fifty separate rocket and drone attacks since October. This month, the US military launched rounds of airstrikes targeting a facility in eastern Syria which, according to the Pentagon, was being used by the IRGC and its proxies. The airstrikes were said to be in response to a series of attacks against US personnel in Iraq and Syria by IRGC-Quds Force affiliates. These were the second round of US airstrikes in eastern Syria in just two weeks and the Biden administration is continuing to struggle to contain the fallout from the war in Gaza, as well as militia attacks targeting local US bases.

Naturally, these events have already provoked the IRGC to plan a response. In recent weeks, Iranian-backed militias have increased their threats of bombardment in response to the West's support for Israel's war effort against Hamas and the PIJ. Moreover, the IRGC has allegedly been given the green light to carry out terrorist operations on non-military Western targets. It is likely that these terrorist attacks – which will be carried out through their many proxy groups – have been arranged mainly to deter the West from supporting Israel.

However, Iran may also want to provoke the US specifically into entering the war, in order to achieve its longer-term aim of eradicating the US influence in the Middle East and limiting it globally. Given Iran's reconciliation with Saudi Arabia and new common interest with the other Arab nations, goading the US into another war in the Middle East could be the key to their plan.

While the world is trying to stay out of the conflict and avoid a third world war, the temptation for Iran – and therefore, the US – might be too much. The Biden administration has repeatedly warned Iran against directly entering the conflict in Gaza. Whether or not Iran will throw their hat in the ring is not clear. However, in the meantime, the IRGC will certainly continue to support their various proxies involved in this conflict and attempt to destabilise the West through terror attacks.

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