



## Spotlight on Iran<sup>1</sup>

March 12 – 26, 2017  
Editor: Dr. Raz Zimmt



### Main Points

- ✓ The political deputy commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) rejected reports published following Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to Moscow that Iran was planning to construct a naval base in Latakia, Syria. The deputy commander claimed that the reports were intended to incite the countries of the region against Iran and justify the deployment of American forces in Syria.
- ✓ Mahmoud Alavi, Iranian minister of intelligence, said Iran had sent equipment to Syria to collect information about terrorists operating in the country.
- ✓ Ali Shamkhani, secretary of the Supreme Council for National Security, warned the United States and Saudi Arabia against deploying military forces to Syria.
- ✓ Iran strongly condemned the Israeli attack in Syria on the night of March 17, 2017, and called on the UN to prevent further attacks.
- ✓ A delegation of the IRGC-affiliated Tasnim News Agency visited Lebanon and Syria, and met with senior Hezbollah officials, including Hassan Nasrallah, the secretary general.
- ✓ An IRGC fighter was killed near Tel Afar, west of Mosul, Iraq.

### General Information

1. Hojjat-ul-Islam Ali Saidi, representative of the supreme leader to the IRGC, said the Islamic Revolution in Iran was a prelude to the internationalizing of Islam. He said the revolution faced both internal and external threats, especially from the "arrogance front" led by the United States and secular liberals within Iran. Speaking at a conference in Tehran, he said the might of the Islamic Revolution had so far succeeded in thwarting American plots and plans. He added that the United States

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<sup>1</sup> Spotlight on Iran is an Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center bulletin illuminating Iran's activities to establish its influence in the Middle East and beyond. It is based on reports in the Iranian media and written for the ITIC by Dr. Raz Zimmt, an expert on Iran's politics, society, foreign policy and social networks.

itself considered Iran as one of the most influential powers in the world and that its influence could be seen in the regional balance of power. The American strategy of providing the Zionists with security had not only failed, but the "Zionist occupiers," who in the past pursued a strategy of "from the Nile to the Euphrates," were not secure even within the borders of the "occupied territories" (Sepah News, March 15, 2017).



**Hojjat-ul-Islam Ali Saeidi, representative of the supreme leader to the IRGC**  
(Sepah News, March 15, 2017).

2. Bahram Qasemi, spokesman for the Iranian foreign ministry, strongly rejected American claims that Iran supported terrorism. He claimed the American accusations of Iranian involvement in terrorism were fabricated, baseless and entirely political. He made the statement in response to the decision of the American State Department to designate the Bahraini al-Ashtar Brigades, which are supported by Iran, as a terrorist organization and impose sanctions on the organization's activists (Tasnim, March 18, 2017).

## Iranian Intervention in Syria and Lebanon

3. Rasoul Sanaei-Rad, IRGC commander's political deputy, rejected reports published in the media following Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to Moscow, according to which Iran was planning to construct a naval base in Latakia, Syria. He claimed the reports were baseless and that their objectives were to accuse Iran of establishing a permanent presence in an Islamic state, incite the countries of the region against Iran and justify the deployment of American forces in Syria. Rasoul Sanaeirad said Iran had no interest in constructing a naval base in Latakia, where the Russians have a military base, and that Iran's presence in Syria was based exclusively on

advisors, who were there at the official request of the Syrian government (Tasnim, March 12, 2017).



**Rasoul Sanaeirad (Tasnim, March 12, 2017).**

4. Mahmoud Alavi, Iranian minister of intelligence, said Iran has sent equipment to Syria to collect information about terrorists operating in the country. At a conference in Isfahan he said a technical crew from the ministry of intelligence had installed powerful surveillance devices in Syria to monitor activity at terrorist bases (Fars, March 14, 2017).



**Mahmoud Alavi, Iranian minister of intelligence (Tasnim, March 14, 2017).**

5. Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of the Supreme Council for National Security, warned the United States and Saudi Arabia not to deploy military forces to Syria. He said the

presence of foreign forces in Syria without its government's authorization was "occupation" and support for terrorist elements in the country. He accused the American administration and the Saudi Arabian regime of ongoing support for the terrorists operating in Syria (IRNA, March 17, 2017). His remarks were in response to statements made by Mohammad bin Salman al-Saud, minister of defense and deputy crown prince of Saudi Arabia, who, after having met with James Mattis, the American secretary of defense, said Riyadh might consider deploying forces to fight in Syria.

6. Iran strongly condemned the Israeli attack in Syria on the night of March 17, 2017. Bahram Qasemi, spokesman for the Iranian foreign ministry, called on the UN to condemn the attack and act to prevent the "Zionist regime" from further attacks, which undermined peace and security. He said the Israel attack proved that Israel was interested in strengthening the "Zionist-infidel terrorists" (Fars, march 18, 2017).

7. A delegation of the IRGC-affiliated Tasnim News Agency visited Lebanon and Syria, and met with senior Hezbollah officials, including Hassan Nasrallah, the organization's secretary general. Meeting with Nasrallah, Majid Qolizadeh, Tasnim News managing director, said his agency had invested large sums of money in its foreign bureau to provide the best possible coverage of international news for its regional audience. The delegation also met with Sheikh Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah deputy secretary general, and with the head of Hezbollah's operational committee, Hashem Safi al-Din (Tasnim, March 14, 2017).



**Members of the Tasnim News delegation to Lebanon visit the graves of Imad and Jihad Mughnieh (Tasnim, March 14, 2017).**

## Iranian Intervention in Iraq

8. Mojtaba Sardad, an IRGC fighter, was killed at Tel Afar, west of Mosul, Iraq.



**Mojtaba Sardad IRGC fighter killed at Tel Afar (Twitter, March 19).**