



## Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center

August 26, 2009

**Ahmad Vahidi, wanted by Interpol for participation in the 1994 terrorist attack in Buenos Aires, is the new designated defense minister of Iran (still unratified by the Parliament). His nomination signals the increasing strength of the Revolutionary Guards and Ahmadinejad's intention to continue defying the West and subverting the Middle East.**

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**Wanted**  
VAHIDI, Ahmad

25 August 2009

2007/49957 VAHIDI AHMAD

**Legal Status**

Present family name: **VAHIDI**  
Forename: **AHMAD**  
Sex: **MALE**  
Date of birth: (unknown)

**Offences**

Categories of Offences: **CRIMES AGAINST LIFE AND HEALTH, HOOLIGANISM/VANDALISM/DAMAGE**  
Arrest Warrant Issued by: **BUENOS AIRES / Argentina**

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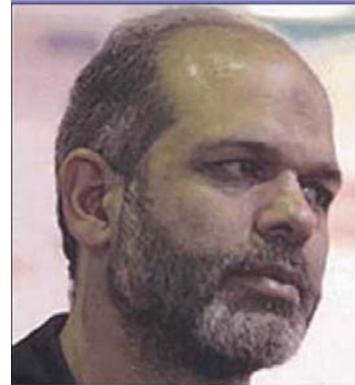
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**Ahmad Vahidi, designated Iranian defense minister and wanted by Interpol for his participation in the terrorist attack in Buenos Aires (Source: Interpol website).**

## Ahmad Vahidi chosen as defense minister

1. In a television interview on August 19, Iranian President Ahmadinejad presented the 21 ministers of his new government, among them three women and seven ministers who had served in the previous government. Conspicuous was the appointment of **Ahmad Vahidi**, the former commander of the Qods Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, to **the post of defense minister** (replacing Mostafa Mohammad Najjar, the new interior minister). The list of ministers has been passed on the Majlis (Iranian Parliament) for ratification. Ahmad Vahidi was also deputy defense minister during Ahmadinejad's first term as president and chairman of the political-security committee of the Iranian Expediency Discernment Council.



2007/49957 VAHIDI AHMAD

**Ahmad Vahidi**  
(Source: Interpol website).

2. **Ahmad Vahidi** commanded the Qods Force of the Revolutionary Guards from the late 1980s to the early 1990s. The Qods force is the covert wing for special operations beyond Iran's borders. It specializes in exporting the Iranian Islamic revolution and supporting terrorist organizations and other groups subverting pragmatic Arab regimes, operating in a variety of ways, including terrorism and subversion.<sup>1</sup>

3. Ahmad Vahidi played a major role in planning and directing the suicide bombing attack of the Jewish community building in Buenos Aires (See below). He was also involved in the car bombing terrorist attack of the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia (June 25, 2006), carried out by a group calling itself "Hezbollah Hijaz." The attack, in which the Revolutionary Guards, the office of Supreme Leader Khamenei and the Iranian intelligence ministry were directly involved, claimed the lives of 19 American soldiers and one Saudi Arabian national, and wounded more than 400.<sup>2</sup> Ahmad Vahidi's name has also been linked to Iran's nuclear program and since June 24, 2008. He had been on the European Union's list as connected to Iran's nuclear and ground-to-ground missile activity,<sup>3</sup> and it is forbidden to have dealings with him of any sort.

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<sup>1</sup> For further information see our April 2, 2007 bulletin "Using the Quds Force of the Revolutionary Guards as the main tool to export the revolution beyond the borders of Iran" at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/html/iran\\_e0307.htm](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/iran_e0307.htm).

<sup>2</sup> <http://rantburg.com/poparticle/php?ID=277126&D=2009-08-21&SO=&HC=2>  
<http://the-case-against-iran.blogspot.com/2006/12/khobar-towers-bombing.html>  
[http://www.mehr.org/Deeds\\_vs\\_Words.htm](http://www.mehr.org/Deeds_vs_Words.htm)  
<http://www.securefreedomradio.org/2009/08/24/monologue-questions-for-obama>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.iranwatch.org/international/EU/eu-council-regulation4232007-062308.pdf>.

## **The major role played by Ahmad Vahidi in planning and directing the suicide bombing attack in Buenos Aires**

4. Ahmad Vahidi, along with four other senior Iranian figures, is wanted by the Argentinean authorities and Interpol (at Argentina's request) because of the major role he played in planning and directing the suicide bombing attack on the Jewish community center (AMIA) building in Buenos Aires. The attack was carried out by a **Hezbollah suicide bomber** in the early morning hours of July 18, 1994, and **killed 85 people** who were in the building and nearby. More than 240 people were wounded. A large part of the building collapsed and heavy damages were incurred by adjacent structures.

5. The Argentinean authorities appointed a team to investigate the bombing. On October 25, 2006, after a thorough investigation, the Chief Prosecutor of Argentina, **Dr. Alberto Nisman**, issued a detailed report of more than 800 pages which he presented at a press conference. The report, based on a large amount of information gathered by the Argentinean prosecution, determined unequivocally that the attack was ordered by the **Iranian leadership**. It was carried out by Hezbollah, a proxy for implementing Iranian policies.<sup>4</sup>

6. According to the report, **Ahmad Vahidi played a key role in planning and directing the AMIA attack**: "It has been established that the **highest authorities** of the Iranian government at the time of the attack namely Mssrs. **Rafsanjani, Fallahijan, Velayati, Rezai and Vahidi, were the parties that planned and decided to carry out the AMIA attack**, executed diagrams showing how the attack should be carried out, entrusted execution of the attack to the Lebanese terrorists organization Hezbollah (which acted in this case as a mere appendage of the wishes of the Iranian government) and took charge of the final phase of the operation which consisted of blowing AMIA on July 18, 1994" (Translation of the Spanish summary of the report; ITIC emphasis).

7. On November 9, 2006, Argentinean judge Rodolfo Canicoba Corral adopted the prosecution's recommendations and issued international arrest warrants for seven Iranians and one Hezbollah operative who were involved in the attack in Buenos Aires (defined by the Argentinean prosecutor as "**a crime against humanity**"). Following Argentina's request the

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<sup>4</sup> For the main points of the Argentinean report see the appendix to our November 14, 2006 bulletin "Argentina accuses Iran of responsibility for the Hezbollah terrorist attack Argentina accuses Iran of responsibility for the Hezbollah terrorist attack which destroyed Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires, 1994" at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/html/argentina\\_amia\\_e.htm](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/argentina_amia_e.htm). On November 12, 2006, the investigating Argentinean judge issued international arrest warrants for seven senior Iranian figures, including the former president, and for senior Hezbollah operative Imad Moughnieh. **Also see** our March 28, 2007 bulletin, "Following an appeal from the Argentinean Attorney General, Interpol issued international extradition warrants for five senior Iranians and one senior Hezbollah operative," at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/html/argentina\\_e0307.htm](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/argentina_e0307.htm).

administrative committee of Interpol issued international “red notices” for **five senior Iranians**, Ahmad Vahidi among them, and Hezbollah terrorist operative Imad Moughnieh (who was killed in Damascus) for their involvement in the terrorist attack. Three names were later removed from the list: former Iranian President Rafsanjani, former Foreign Minister Velayati, and former ambassador to Argentina Soleimanipour, all of which, in our assessment, were removed for political reasons.

8. The five Iranians for whom Interpol issued warrants were:

- i. **Ahmad Vahidi**, former commander of the Qods Force and today designated minister of defense in Ahmadinejad’s new government.
- ii. **Ali Fallahijan**, former Iran 's minister of intelligence and security, today advisor to Supreme Leader Khamenei.
- iii. **Ahmad Riza Asghari**, third secretary of the Iranian embassy at the time of the attack.
- iv. **Mohsen Rezaei**, former commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, lost the recent elections to the Iranian presidency.
- v. **Mohsen Rabbani**, Iranian cultural attaché in Buenos Aires at the time of the attack.



The list of wanted men issued by Argentina following the investigation (Website of Argentina’s Chief Prosecutor). Interpol did not issue international arrest warrants for Ali Rafsanjani (left) or Ali Velayati (third from left), in our assessment out of political considerations. Bottom right: Ahmad Vahidi (ITIC emphasis).

9. In October 2008 an Iranian court informed the legal authorities in Argentina that it had no intention of detaining the senior Iranian officials accused by Argentina of having been behind the bombing of the AMIA building. The 19-page Iranian statement was sent to the Iranian foreign ministry in Argentina, which passed it along to Federal Judge Rodolfo Canicoba Corral, who had issued the arrest warrants.

10. Following the announcement of Ahmad Vahidi's appointment as foreign minister, Argentinean prosecutor Roberto Nisman was interviewed by AP and quoted by the British *Guardian* on August 22, 2009. Nisman repeatedly emphasized the central role played by Ahmad Vahidi in the bombing of the AMIA building. According to the *Guardian*, "Argentinean prosecutor Alberto Nisman, who led the investigation into the 1994 bombing, yesterday said Vahidi is accused of being **'a key participant in the planning'** of the attack. 'It has been demonstrated that Vahidi participated in and approved of the decision to attack AMIA during a meeting in Iran on August 14, 1993. Iran has always protected terrorists, giving them government posts, but I think never one as high as this one,'" he told the Associated Press.

### **The internal Iranian, regional and international aspects of Ahmad Vahidi's appointment**

11. The affair of the appointment of Vahidi, a member of the Revolutionary Guards with a terrorist record, and statements made by Ahmadinejad after he was elected for a second term as president, **may indicate that Iran will continue to promote its revolutionary agenda**. According to that agenda, an emphasis will be put on **supporting terrorist and Islamic organizations throughout the world, especially in the Middle East** and attempting to undermine America's political agenda for promoting the peace process. That will be done by increasing military, economic and political support for the peace camp rejectionists. That includes support for terrorist organizations in the Middle East, including Hezbollah, Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

12. From the internal Iranian point of view, the appointment of Vahidi and other ministers shows that Ahmadinejad continues to pursue his overall plan **to strengthen the grip of the Revolutionary Guards (and the Basij militias) on various centers of power in Iran** (the government, the heads of the various districts and economic bodies). The process, which in our assessment is carried out at the



Left: Ahmad Vahidi. Right: Yahya Raheem Safavi, formerly Revolutionary Guards commander and today Supreme Leader Khamenei's military advisor (Fars News Agency, Iran).

expense of the religious establishment, will lead to a militarization of Iran's politics and economy.

13. For the international community, Vahidi's appointment **indicates a clear defiance of the West** and signals that **Ahmadinejad flaunts self confidence, perhaps exaggerated, and shows contempt, insensitivity and lack of consideration for international norms**. The appointment is a translation into deeds of the "promises" he made on a number of occasions since his election to conduct **a more assertive foreign policy**, which would raise Iran's international status and promote its positions at the expense of the "arrogant nations" (i.e., the West, particularly the United States), especially in all issues concerning influence in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East.

### **Iranian responses**

14. Ahmad Vahidi's appointment as defense minister raised an international commotion, so far widely criticized in Israel and Argentina.<sup>5</sup> Iran was quick to react to the criticism, which it called "a Zionist plot," with the following claims:

i. **Israel's protests will only encourage the Majlis to ratify his appointment** – Alaa' al-Din Boroujerdi, chairman of Iran's Parliamentary Committee for National Security and Foreign Policy, rejected out of hand what he called Israel's "artificial accusations" regarding Vahidi's involvement in terrorism. "The judge of the AMIA dossier confessed that he had been bribed, and this issue displays that the foreign and Zionist media are spreading manipulated reports against the Islamic Republic," he said, adding that "Zionists efforts in this regard shows that they have not sat aside idly." Boroujerdi said he believes "that these hues and cries will cause an increase in the parliament's yes vote to General Vahidi."<sup>6</sup>

ii. **The Argentinean judicial system pursues judicial cases in line with interests of the Zionists** – Hassan Qashqavi, Iranian government spokesman, said that the Argentinean criticism of the Vahidi's appointment was "meddling in the domestic affairs of the Islamic Republic." He added that Iran "strongly condemned" the

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<sup>5</sup> Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak said in a statement that appointing Ahmad Vahidi, a terrorist, to the post of defense minister again revealed the true nature of the Iranian regime and the intentions of its regime (Israeli Defense Ministry, August 23, 2009). The Argentinean foreign ministry said in a statement that "appointing Vahidi to the post [of defense minister] is an insult to the Argentinean judicial system and to the victims of the terrorist attack" (Zvi Bar'el for *Haaretz*, August 23, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8806011310>

allegations as illegal. He said it was “an insult to the intelligence of the Argentinean people that their judicial system pursues judicial cases in line with interests of the Zionists,” and suggested that the government of Argentina “identify the real agents behind this terrorist act.”<sup>7</sup>

iii. **Argentina is interfering Iran’s internal affairs** – The head of the South American desk in the Iranian foreign ministry invited the Argentinean diplomatic representative in Iran to a meeting where he chastised him for his country’s position on Vahidi’s nomination.<sup>8</sup> “Argentina’s announcement,” he said, “was clearly an intervention in Iranian internal affairs, and we condemn it in the strongest possible terms,” as reported in the Iranian media (*Haaretz*, August 25, 2009).

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=104306&sectionid=35102010>.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.asriran.com/fa/pages/?cid=82098>