



Implications of the Appointment of Mohammad Hossein-Zadeh Hejazi as the Deputy Commander of the Qods Force Dr. Raz Zimmt

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The Implications of Mohammad Hossein-Zadeh Hejazi Appointment

On January 20, the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) appointed **Seyyed Mohammad Hossein-Zadeh Hejazi to the position of the deputy commander of the IRGC's Qods Force**. Hejazi replaced Esmail Qa'ani, who was appointed as the commander of the Qods Force following the assassination of Qasem Soleimani. **Hejazi is considered one of the most prominent officers in the IRGC as a whole and the Qods Force in particular**. His appointment provides **another sign of continuity**, since Hejazi is a highly experienced operative deeply familiar with the Qods Force and its activities. **Hejazi's involvement in the Lebanese arena in recent years, and particularly the project to increase the precision of Hezbollah's missiles, may assist Ka'ani in implementing the Qods Force's missions on Iran's western front, which are focused on Iran's military entrenchment in Syria and the efforts to bolster Hezbollah's capabilities**. His role is particularly crucial given the fact that most of Qa'ani's activities as the deputy commander of the Qods Force centered on Iran's eastern front (Afghanistan and Pakistan) and not the Syrian and Lebanese front.

Mohammad Hejazi's Record

► **Seyyed Mohammad Hossein-Zadeh Hejazi** was born in Isfahan in 1956 and joined the IRGC shortly after the 1979 Islamic Revolution and took part in repressing the Kurdish uprisings in northwestern Iran. During the Iran-Iraq (1980-1988) he served in several command posts in the IRGC. Following the end of the war, Hejazi played several central roles in the organization, including the deputy commander of the Basij arm of the IRGC, the commander of the Basij (1998-2007), and the chief of staff of the IRGC (2007-2008), deputy commander of the IRGC and the commander of the IRGC's forces in the Tehran district (2008-2009). In 2009-2014, he served as the deputy chief of staff of Iran's armed forces for preparedness, logistics and industrial research (Tasnim, January 20, 2020).

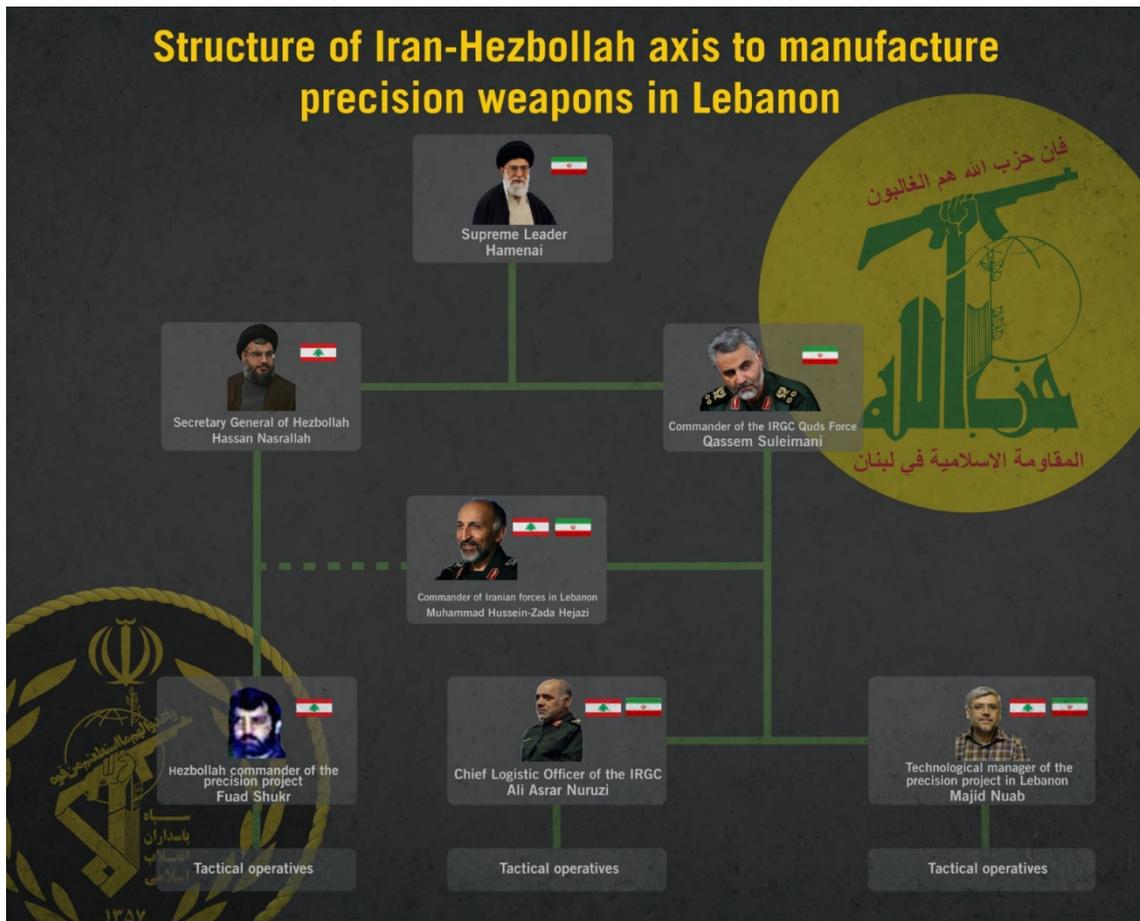
► **In 2007, Hejazi was placed on the list of Iranian individuals under sanctions of the U.S. government**. In October 2011, he was also added to the list of Iranian individuals under

sanctions by the European Union due to his role in human rights abuses, and particularly **the repression of the protests that erupted following the 2009 presidential elections in Iran** (“the Green Movement”).

Hejazi’s Central Role in the Project on Increasing Missile Precision

► In August 2019, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) declassified information showing that **Hejazi was serving as the commander of the Lebanon Corps commander in the IRGC’s Qods Force**. His name was mentioned as **among the leaders of the effort to increase the precision of Hezbollah’s missiles, along two other Iranian officers**.¹ It was reported that following the successful IDF effort to thwart most of the IRGC’s attempts to ferry precision missiles from Iran to Syria between 2013 and 2016, Iran began working to increase the precision of missiles manufactured in Syria. After this project was foiled as well by Israeli airstrikes, **it was decided to move it to Lebanon, by establishing a number of sites across Lebanon focusing on manufacturing and converting ordinary missiles into precise ones**. To this end, **Iran used three routes** for moving the needed components for the manufacture of the missiles: **a ground line of supply through the Syrian border, a maritime line of supply and an aerial line of supply through the Beirut International Airport**. **Iranian officials led the project to increase the precision of missiles, and the central figure among them in Mohammad Hossein-Zadeh Hejazi, the Commander of Lebanon Corps, and the official leader of the project** (IDF website, August 29 and 30, 2019).

¹The two other officers are **Ali Asghar Nowroozi**, the Head of the Logistics’ Wing of the IRGC, responsible for ferrying the equipment and logistical components from Iran to Syria and from there to the sites in Lebanon in which the precision project is taking place; and **Majid Navab**, an engineer specializing in surface-to-surface missiles, which is tasked with the technological components of the project and is operating under the guidance of the Qods Force.



Senior Iranian officials leading the project to increase the precision of Hezbollah's missiles in Lebanon. At the center is Mohammad Hossein-Zadeh Hejazi (IDF website, August 29, 2019).

Hejazi's Positions

► **Seyyed Mohammad Hossein-Zadeh Hejazi holds hardline positions on domestic and foreign affairs.** Following the 2009 protests, Hejazi lambasted the protesters who challenged Iran's regional policies and its continued investment outside of the country's border. He declared that those chanting during the protests "not to Gaza, not the Lebanon, my life [is] for Iran," are harming the religious sentiment and revolutionary thinking of the people. He further claimed that these protesters aim to prevent the export of the Iranian revolution beyond the country's borders, and thus serve Iran's enemies in the West and assist their efforts to weaken the revolution (ana.ir, January 20, 2020). In February 2012, Hejazi addressed the possibility that Israel would strike Iran's nuclear facilities, declaring that Iran is willing to take preventative steps if it believes that its enemies intend to threaten Iran's national interests. He asserted that Iran's current strategy is to not wait for the enemies to attack but to act against them in advance (Fars, February 21, 2012).