The role of drones in the Quds Force’s incitement of regional war and terrorism

Newly disclosed information about UAV production centers, use, storage, training, and export

The IRGC’s resort to drones and missiles to cover up fundamental weaknesses of the Air Force

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Drones are one of the primary weapons used by the Iranian regime to export terrorism and warmongering, which is why, over the past decade, Tehran has invested heavily in drone production despite drastic economic challenges.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Quds Force is chiefly using various unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for its terrorist operations as well as for supplying its proxies in the region. To an extent, the regime is trying to compensate for its outdated and decrepit Air Force with this technology.

Today, for the first time, we are sharing information about production and utilization systems on the basis of information obtained from the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK).

Section 1
UAV production by the Ministry of Defense and the Aerospace Force of the IRGC

To produce UAVs, the clerical regime smuggles some of the main parts, such as engines and electronic components, from foreign countries; other required components are produced in various industries within Iran.

There are, according to our information, 8 industries in Iran responsible for manufacturing UAVs. Some of these industries operate under the "Aviation Industries Organization" of the Ministry of Defense, including Quds Air Industries, Iran Aircraft Manufacturing (HESA), Fajr Industries, and Basir Industries.

Other sections of these complexes are affiliated with the IRGC Aerospace Force or the regime’s various armed forces, or operate under the guise of private institutions.
1 - Ghazanfar Roknabadi Industries
Ghazanfar Roknabadi Industries, affiliated with the IRGC Aerospace Force, is involved in the production of drones. This entity provides support and training for the IRGC Aerospace Force factories. It builds different parts of drones for the IRGC and other industries related to Aerospace.

The Ghazanfar Roknabadi complex includes dozens of sheds and buildings. The workspace for engines and drone cameras is located in the northern part of the complex, which is shown in subsequent aerial photos. The storage space for various parts related to the Aerospace Force is located in the southern part of the complex.

According to reports obtained, the raw materials for making drone parts, such as fabrics and special fibers, are imported from China.
This center is located at the Old Karaj Road (Fatah Highway), Bilal Boulevard (Sepahe Eslam), eastern side of the boulevard.

Building 1 is the security office, Bldg. 2 is the engine and camera workshop, Bldg. 3 is the production hall.
2 - The armed forces drone production in Semnan

Beginning in 2019, the regime's armed forces launched a new drone complex, a specialized drone unit headquartered in Semnan. All military institutions, including the IRGC, Bassij, State Security Forces (SSF) and Army defense, are jointly active in this complex. This complex is essentially a specialized working group for the production of UAVs, and works on the design and reproduction of light and quiet UAVs. A number of information technology specialists and engineers are working in this unit. The drones produced are intended to control the western and eastern borders of the country. The specialists transport the parts in separate pieces to the desired location and assemble the final product there.
**3 - Quds Air Industries**

Quds Air Industries operates under the Aviation Industry Organization of the Ministry of Defense. It changed its name to "Light Aircraft Design and Construction Industries" on December 13, 2019. The headquarters is located at km 4 of the Tehran-Karaj special highway and is adjacent to the IRGC’s Ghadr Airbase at Mehrabad Airport.
1 is a new administrative bldg.; 2 a design section; 3 an assembly hall; 4 a computer section; 5 final testing sections

4 - Fajr Industries
Fajr Aerospace Industries and Composite Materials is one of the factories controlled by the Aviation Industry Organization of the Ministry of Defense. It produces small single-engine aircraft. Some materials and parts related to UAVs are also produced by Fajr. Fajr Industries is located next to Quds Air Industries on the Karaj special road.
5 - **Iran Aircraft Manufacturing Company (HESA)**
This company is one of the largest subsidiaries of the Aviation Industry Organization of the Ministry of Defense. It is located in Shahin Shahr, Isfahan. In addition to manufacturing aircraft parts, it is also involved in the construction of UAVs and their components. The so-called Ababil UAV, a smaller type of drone, was first built by this company. The current head of this company is Hamid Reza Nouri.

6 - **Basir Industries (in Babol)**
Basir Industries is a subsidiary of the Aviation Industry Organization of the Ministry of Defense. It produces various parts and components for the aerospace and marine industries, including the production of small batteries for UAVs and also diesel engines for IRGC speedboats. This company is located at km 1 of Babol - Amol highway.
7 – Bespar Sazeh Composite Company
Bespar Sazeh Composite manufactures UAV body parts. It was established in 2015. The company primarily operates in the areas of design, modeling, molding and production of various composite and metal parts.

The original address of this company in 2015 was near the location of Quds Air Industries on Karaj Road. In 2016, it was moved to the Mallard area in the southwest of Tehran. The new location is near the IRGC missile and UAV barracks, including Falaq Barracks and Sajjad Barracks.
According to reports obtained from inside Iran, this company produces the fuselage of various types of UAVs, including for the so-called Mohajer drones.

According to these reports, the company procures roughly 50% of its required raw materials from inside Iran. The remaining 50% is smuggled from abroad. At present, other types of raw materials are imported from China, Turkey and South Korea. In the past, the company imported high-quality glass fibers from France and some other materials, such as high-quality resin, from Germany and the United States. However, they are no longer able to do so as a result of sanctions, and instead obtain lower-quality raw materials from China.

**8 - Paravar Pars Company and Sepehr Airport**

In 1995, the IRGC began setting up an airport and a military-industrial complex east of Imam Hossein University. The Sepehr Airport and the complex operate under the supervision of Paravar Pars Company, which belongs to the Aviation Research Unit of the IRGC's Imam Hossein University. The company copies existing models and builds UAVs, ultralight planes, and drones and also installs cameras and other equipment on drones. The Paravar Pars Company and Sepehr Airport have been placed under the control of the IRGC Aerospace Force since 2005. The Aerospace Force of the IRGC uses this airport for training with drones and light aircraft.
Section 2
Storage and utilization centers for drones used by the IRGC Aerospace Force

The IRGC Aerospace Force, which has replaced the Air Force in the IRGC structure, has five commands, one of which is the UAV Command. The UAV Command has several groups that are stationed at various bases in Iran.

**IRGC Aerospace Force UAV Command:** In addition to UAV command, the IRGC Aerospace Force includes Missile Command, Air Command, Air Defense Command, and Space Command.

The IRGC Aerospace Force Drone Command Center: The Drone Command Center is one of the subdivisions of the Aerospace Force. The Aerospace Force, headed by IRGC Brig. General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, also includes the missiles command, air command, air defense command, and the space command units. There are 7 UAV maintenance and utilization centers, which include:

- The headquarters of the drone command center in Dastvareh (headquarters of the IRGC Aerospace Force) in northwestern Tehran
- Karimi Air Base in Kashan
- Badr Base in Isfahan
- Aerospace Base in Ahvaz
- The UAV unit in Kermanshah
- Sajjad Garrison and Falaq Garrison belonging to the IRGC Aerospace Force in the Mallard region (west of Tehran)
UAV command post in the Aerospace Force (Dastvareh Garrison):
The UAV command post is located in Dastvareh Garrison, which is also the headquarters of the IRGC Aerospace Force located in a separate building. Brigadier General Saeed Aqajani, the current commander of the UAV Command, is stationed at this location.

UAV command is located at Dastvareh Garrison, which is IRGC’s Aerospace Force headquarters.
Map of Iran showing 8 UAV manufacturing centers and 7 UAV maintenance and utilization centers.
Section 3
Organizational structure of the Quds Force in relation to UAVs

The IRGC’s Quds Force has assigned departments in its headquarters to the drone program in a bid to equip its mercenaries and militias in the region with UAVs.

Quds Force Intelligence Directorate:

Within the Quds Force Intelligence Directorate, a division is responsible for ordering and procuring UAVs. This division identifies the quantity and types of UAVs needed in accordance with the particular designs and objectives for each target country. These requests are then submitted to the Ministry of Defense. The requested drones are primarily provided by the main drone production facility, which is a subsidiary of the Aviation Industries Organization in the regime’s Ministry of Defense.

Quds Force Training Directorate:

The Quds Force Training Directorate is in charge of training the regime's mercenaries and proxies. It brings the mercenaries of militant groups from different countries to Iran and specifically to the headquarters of this department at the Imam Ali Garrison. Subsequently, the agents are sent to various sections based on the kind of UAV training they need in relation to the level and type of their intended missions.

In addition to training on the use of missiles and sabotage operations, the Quds Force Training Department provides systematic training on the use of drones. There are different training groups at the Quds Force Imam Ali Garrison (located at the 20km exit of the Tehran-Karaj highway). One of the groups is the so-called specialized (technical) unit. This group includes three subdivisions: UAV, missiles, and heavy weaponry and its repair.

The missile training section is known as code 340. UAV training is code 330. Heavy weapons and repairs is code 320.

In addition to providing training on the use of missiles, the specialized unit of the Training Department, which is located near the city of Semnan, provides training on the use of drones to the mercenaries of the Quds Force.

Some areas of higher-level training on the use of UAVs are provided by UAV experts of the IRGC Aerospace Force at the Karimi Base in Kashan.
**Quds Force Logistics Directorate:**

Within the Quds Force Logistics Directorate, there is a smuggling office in charge of smuggling weapons and equipment to agents in regional countries.

This office uses various air, land and sea pathways to send weapons and equipment, including UAV parts, to the countries of the region.

**Air:** Some of the weapons and equipment are routinely sent to target countries through the IRGC base at Mehrabad Airport.

**Land:** Some of this equipment, hidden in containers, is sent by truck to Iraq, Syria and Lebanon via the land border.

**Sea:** Other equipment is smuggled on IRGC boats through ports controlled by the IRGC to Yemen and other areas.

In this way, the Quds Force, in conjunction with the Ministry of Defense and the Aerospace Force, transfers UAV weapons and training and other requirements to its mercenary groups.
Quds Force uses various air, land and sea pathways to send weapons and equipment, including UAV parts, to its proxies in the countries of the region.

**Terrorist attacks using drones in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and Palestine**

After the drones are sent by the Quds Force headquarters in Iran to other countries in the region, they are assembled in military barracks (such as the former Camp Ashraf in Iraq) by trained personnel.

The drones that are subsequently either produced by the IRGC Aerospace Force officers, who operate under the command of the Quds Force branch in that country, or by trained personnel of the Quds Force mercenary groups, are used in reconnaissance or operational missions in the host country.
How the Quds Force uses drones in 5 specific regions:

**Syria:** Over the course of the Syrian conflict, the IRGC has consistently used UAVs to identify and attack Syrian opposition forces and to shore up the Bashar Assad army. A number of IRGC Aerospace Force personnel are currently stationed in Syria (as of the summer of 2021). One of the airports used to operate UAVs is the Palmyra Airport. The IRGC Aerospace Force personnel go to this airport to carry out missions. The headquarters of the IRGC Aerospace Force is in the city of Palmyra. The drones sent to Syria are sent in pieces, and assembled by the IRGC in its workshops and factories in Syria. Some parts, such as UAV engines, are procured directly from China and shipped to Syria.

**Iraq:** In the years since the withdrawal of the multi-national coalition forces, the IRGC has made extensive use of drones inside Iraq, making them available to IRGC-affiliated militant groups. An example of this is shown in this photo of the drones delivered to the Al-Nujaba group in Iraq, which acts as one of the mercenaries of the Quds Force. In a parade organized by the Popular Mobilization Front in June 2021, these groups, including Al-Nujaba, displayed their drones. All the parts of these drones had been sent by the IRGC from Iran.

Drone parts are sent separately by air to Baghdad airport or by land to the Hashad al-Shaabi groups. These parts are assembled in IRGC-affiliated workshops.

**Lebanon:** In 2003, seven members of the Lebanese Hezbollah received training for the first time on the Mohajer-4 aircraft at the Quds Air Industries, which produces UAVs. Subsequently, the regime sent several of these aircraft to Hezbollah in Lebanon. Due to the importance of using UAVs for terrorist acts, in 2006, Imad Mughniyeh visited Sepehr Airport during a visit to Tehran to see how UAVs were launched from vehicles.

**Yemen:** The IRGC’s Quds Force also provides drones to the Yemeni Ansarollah (Houthis) on a wide scale. The Houthis consistently use drones in their attacks, and their drones are constantly shot down in Saudi territory. According to a report on November 27, 2016, the seizure of six Qasef-1 UAVs being transferred from Oman to Yemen (which is a common smuggling route to Yemen) shows that Qasef-1 was not made in Yemen but transferred from Iran. The Qasef-1 drone is similar to the Ababil-2 drones built by the IRGC.

**Kurdish regions:** The clerical regime also uses drones to attack the Kurdish regions in order to suppress Iranian Kurdish groups and refugees. In recent weeks, the regime has used such drones to suppress Iranian Kurds in these regions.
Conclusion*:

A review of the complete cycle of production, use and export of drones and its expansion in recent years reveals the following:

1. Despite and in part due to the concessions made through the nuclear deal and Western countries' decision to turn a blind eye to the clerical regime's destabilizing activities, the export of terrorism and incitement to war in the region remain a pillar for the regime's preservation, and have gained more prominence in the eyes of the regime.

2. The regime is spending billions of dollars on its missiles and UAV programs while 80 percent of the Iranian people live under the poverty line and the budgets for health care, education and other national requirements are abysmally lower than military expenditures. During the coronavirus pandemic, the regime did not assist the Iranian people in any way and the number of victims has reached 450,000 to date, by far outpacing other countries on a per capita basis. Over the past few years, the Iranian people have chanted "No to Gaza, no to Lebanon, my life only for Iran," and "Leave Syria, think about us instead."

3. These activities prove that the billions of dollars that the regime earned from the easing of sanctions in the context of the nuclear deal and plundered from Iran's national wealth are expropriated by the regime to build and produce such weapons in order to export terrorism and warmongering in the region.

4. Any dealings with the regime in Tehran by all Western sides, especially after the ascendance of Raisi, must end. All activities, including production, use and research on drones and the regime's missile program must be included in demands. Otherwise, because of its severe domestic weaknesses, the clerical regime will place more emphasis on creating regional instability in order to buy time and to preserve its rule.

5. None of the sanctions against the regime should be lifted until it has stopped all its rogue behavior and intransigence in the region and its repression of the Iranian people.

* The National Council of Resistance of Iran-US Representative Office (NCRI-US) acts as the Washington office for Iran's parliament-in-exile, the National Council of Resistance of Iran, which is dedicated to the establishment of a democratic, secular, non-nuclear republic in Iran. It will serve as a provisional government led by its President-elect Maryam Rajavi and based on her Ten Point Plan, once the theocracy is ousted. Its primary responsibility will then be to hold free and fair elections within six months after the fall of the regime. NCRI-US has been instrumental in exposing Tehran's nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, ballistic missile programs, and its terrorist network. These materials are being distributed by the National Council of Resistance of Iran - U.S. Representative Office. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.