



## **IRAN'S MINISTRY OF INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY: A PROFILE**

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★ 64 Years of Service to the Federal Government ★  
1948 – 2012

## PREFACE

This report presents an overview of Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security and attempts to provide an inclusive assessment of the organization, including characteristics such as its history and development, organizational structure, and recruitment.

The information in this report was collected mainly from Farsi and English journals, online news Web sites, and Iranian blogs. In conducting this analysis, an effort has been made to ensure the reliability of the information by comparing and contrasting all information across multiple sources. However, because of the secretive nature of the organization and its operations, information about the ministry is difficult to locate and evaluate.

Because of the extreme degree of control of the media and news by the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iranians have to depend on alternative sources such as blogs to receive daily news. For example, in 2005 Iran had the third-largest number of bloggers in the world after the United States and China, an indication of the importance of the communication and dissemination of news through blogs and social media. Needless to say, the Ministry of Intelligence and Security does not publish information about its activities on Iranian Web sites. Consequently, in the absence of official government information, this report occasionally relies on social media, in particular blogs, as a source of information more than might ordinarily be warranted. The reliability of blog-based information may be questionable at times, but it seems prudent to evaluate and present it in the absence of alternatives.

In view of the secrecy that surrounds the ministry, many aspects of its organization, leadership, and activities are poorly understood. The role of the ministry outside of Iran and its cooperation with the Quds Force are topics that merit more careful study. In addition, knowledge of the ministry's cyber capabilities would give better insight into Iran's possible intentions in a cyber war.

As noted above, this report relies extensively on sources in Farsi. For the convenience of the reader, the bibliography and footnotes list those sources with English translations of their titles first, followed by the original Farsi titles in brackets. The Web addresses presented in the report were current as of November 2012.

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) uses all means at its disposal to protect the Islamic Revolution of Iran, utilizing such methods as infiltrating internal opposition groups, monitoring domestic threats and expatriate dissent, arresting alleged spies and dissidents, exposing conspiracies deemed threatening, and maintaining liaison with other foreign intelligence agencies as well as with organizations that protect the Islamic Republic's interests around the world.
- Although Islamist hard-liners in Iran are in charge of the ministry under the guidance of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the organization encompasses a mixture of political ideologies.
- Every minister of intelligence must hold a degree in *ijtihad* (the ability to interpret Islamic sources such as the Quran and the words of the Prophet and imams) from a religious school, abstain from membership in any political party or group, have a reputation for personal integrity, and possess a strong political and management background.
- According to Iran's constitution, all organizations must share information with the Ministry of Intelligence and Security. The ministry oversees all covert operations. It usually executes internal operations itself, but the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps for the most part handles extraterritorial operations such as sabotage, assassinations, and espionage. Although the Quds Force operates independently, it shares the information it collects with MOIS.
- The Iranian government considers Mojahedin-e-Khalq to be the organization that most threatens the Islamic Republic of Iran. One of the main responsibilities of the Ministry of Intelligence and Security is to conduct covert operations against Mojahedin-e-Khalq and to identify and eliminate its members. Other Iranian dissidents also fall under the ministry's jurisdiction.
- The ministry has a Department of Disinformation, which is in charge of creating and waging psychological warfare against the enemies of the Islamic Republic.
- Iran's ability to collect covert information is limited; specifically, its signals intelligence capability represents only a limited threat because it is still under development.
- Even though Iran has created a well-equipped counterintelligence system to protect its nuclear program, it appears that other countries' operatives still succeed in infiltrating the system, as well as some other parts of Iran's intelligence apparatus.

## 2. GROUP NAMES AND ALIASES

The Iranian intelligence service is called the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS), or *Vezerat-e Ettela'at va Amniat-e Keshvar* (VEVAK) in Farsi. MOIS agents are known as “Unknown Soldiers of Imam Zaman,”<sup>1</sup> the name that Ayatollah Khomeini gave them.<sup>2</sup>



Previous MOIS Emblem  
Source: <http://www.iranfocus.com>



Current MOIS Emblem  
Source: <http://cyber-army.blogfa.com>

The above left image has been the ministry's emblem since its establishment. A graphic design of Allah (i.e., God) is located at the top. Below the Allah symbol are the words in Farsi for the Islamic Republic of Iran, and, on the bottom, the Ministry of Intelligence. The figure on the right shows the ministry's possible new emblem, which has appeared during news programs on national television. It forms a star with eight corners (a polygon). In Islamic culture, a polygon is a religious symbol. Two *las* (*la* in Arabic means “no” or “not”) on the right and left side (stylized as pointed salients) are interpreted as “Neither East, nor West, Islamic Republic.” In the center of the star, an eye conveys the role of the ministry as a surveillant of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

<sup>1</sup> Twelver Shia Muslims believe that Imam Zaman (The Leader of the Age) was appointed by Allah to be the savior of mankind. Among his many other names, he is also known as “the Mahdi” (The Rightly Guided One). Iman Zaman is the Twelfth Imam in the succession of Islamic leaders of Shi'a Muslims.

<sup>2</sup> “Destruction of a Spy Network Linked to the CIA and Detention of 30 American Spies” [انهدام شبکه جاسوسی وابسته] [به سیا و بازداشت 30 جاسوس آمریکایی], Fars News Agency [Tehran], May 21, 2011, <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9002315207> (accessed March 20, 2012). Fars News is a semi-official news agency with ties to the Iranian government.

### 3. GROUP TYPE

MOIS is the most powerful and well-supported ministry among all Iranian ministries in terms of logistics, finances, and political support. It is a non-military governmental organization that operates both inside and outside of Iran. Intelligence experts rank MOIS as one of the largest and most dynamic intelligence agencies in the Middle East.<sup>3</sup>

The current minister of intelligence and security has described his ministry as being uninfluenced by foreign intelligence services: “One of the characteristics of MOIS is that it formed from inside of the revolution; and in fact, this organization was formed on the basis of the needs of the revolution in contrast with other intelligence services around the world that imitate each other.”<sup>4</sup>

### 4. OBJECTIVES

Iran's constitution defines MOIS's functions as:

- collecting, analyzing, producing, and categorizing internal and external intelligence;
- uncovering conspiracy, subversion, espionage, sabotage, and sedition against the independence, security, and territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran;
- protecting intelligence, news, documents, records, facilities, and personnel of the ministry; and
- training and assisting organizations and institutions to protect their significant records, documents, and objects.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> “Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security,” *Iran Focus* [UK], May 6, 2005, [http://www.iranfocus.com/en/?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=2020](http://www.iranfocus.com/en/?option=com_content&task=view&id=2020) (accessed January 31, 2012). Iran focus is a UK-based news Web site that provides news on Middle East countries; “Five Major Duties of VAVAK Inside and Outside of the Country,” *Enghelab-e-Eslami*, 2011, <http://enghelabe-eslami.com/5-2880/ها-تحليل-و-گزارشات-و-تحریر-ها.html> (accessed May 22, 2012). This is the Web site of Abul Hassan Banisadr, the first president of Iran after the Revolution. He had to escape from Iran to save his life. He is now a critic of the Islamic Republic.

<sup>4</sup> “The Minister of Intelligence's Report of Successes / Outside Opponents and Internal Dissidents of 1388 [2009] Have Become Active Again” [گزارش وزیر اطلاعات از موفقیت ها/بخش خارجی و هادیان داخلی فتنه 88 مجدداً فعال شده اند], Raja News [Tehran] (probably 2010 or more recent), <http://www.rajanews.com/detail.asp?id=95793> (accessed April 4, 2012). Raja News is a conservative Iranian news agency based in Iran that supports the Supreme Leader of Iran.

<sup>5</sup> “Intelligence and Law” [اطلاعات و قانون], *Jame Jam Online* [Tehran], February 11, 2009, <http://www.jamejamonline.ir/papertext.aspx?newsnum=100898802936> (accessed April 4, 2012). This conservative Web site is the Web site of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting Service (IRIB), which advocates the Supreme Leader's policies.

MOIS's internal activities are a priority unless it is deemed necessary for MOIS to become involved directly in external operations. It is possible that the Supreme National Security Council or the Supreme Leader determines MOIS's external operations (see Organization, below).

MOIS has a proven record of accomplishment in the execution of these functions. In carrying out its constitutional duties, MOIS conducts liaison with other foreign intelligence agencies as well as with organizations such as Lebanese Hezbollah that protect and promote the Islamic Republic's foreign agenda.<sup>6</sup>

## 5. ETHNIC, POLITICAL, AND RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION

### 5.1 Ethnic Composition

As an official Iranian government agency, MOIS is overwhelmingly staffed by Iranians. It does, however, recruit other nationalities for its missions. For example, Anne Singleton, who is British, allegedly works for MOIS (see Membership and Recruitment, below).

### 5.2 Political Affiliation and Religious and Ideological Orientation

Until the reelection of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2009, most MOIS personnel were not uniformly hard-line Islamists, although they were vetted for ideological conformity. For example, in an article on the Fars News Web site in July 2005, the former minister of intelligence and security, Ghorbanali Dorri Najafabadi, said that when he consulted the former foreign minister, Ali Akbar Velayati, about whether to accept an offer from President Mohammad Khatami (president, 1997–2005) to become head of MOIS, Velayati told him “the Ministry of Intelligence is like a city which is governed by various insights and trends.”<sup>7</sup>

After the reelection of President Ahmadinejad, the country became divided between “reformists”—those Iranians who planned to keep the core values of Iran's Revolution and to change the system to include more freedom and democracy—and “hard-liners”—those who opposed any such changes. This division occurred even among officials who formerly held important and sensitive positions. The Ministry of Intelligence and Security was no exception.

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<sup>6</sup> Cyrus Maximus, “The Ministry of Intelligence and Security,” *Iran Channel*, September 16, 2010, <http://iranchannel.org/archives/357> (accessed March 21, 2012); Iran Channel criticizes the Iranian government's policies. It is unclear where it is based.

<sup>7</sup> “Dorri Najafabadi Spoke About his Selection as the Minister of Intelligence” [دری نجف آبادی درباره چگونگی انتخاب خود] [به عنوان وزیر اطلاعات سخن گفت], Fars News Agency [Tehran], July 18, 2005, <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8404270109> (accessed March 22, 2012); United Kingdom, Home Office, UK Border Agency, “IRAN: Country of Origin Information (COI) Report,” June 28, 2011, 39, <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/policyandlaw/coi/iran/report-0611.pdf?view=Binary> (accessed March 21, 2012).

Many high-ranking intelligence agents supported Mir Hossein Mousavi, President Ahmadinejad's rival and a reformist. However, the right wing immediately started to remove reformist supporters from the ministry. For example, Saeed Hajjarian, a reform theorist and strategist in Iran, was imprisoned after the 2009 election even though he had been one of the founders of MOIS after the Revolution.<sup>8</sup>

MOIS operates under the direct supervision of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, who claims to be the leader of the Muslim world. As noted above, MOIS agents are known as "Unknown Soldiers of Imam Zaman," who is the Twelfth Imam in the succession of Islamic leaders of Shi'a Muslims. However, the organization is not bound by Shi'a beliefs. To advance its goals, MOIS recruits individuals regardless of their beliefs, including Arabs or Jews to spy in Israel. For example, the deputy minister of MOIS, Saeed Emami, was appointed to a key position in the ministry because of his family record, despite allegedly being Jewish by birth.<sup>9</sup>

## 6. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Iran's intelligence and security system is a difficult subject to study because so little information about it is publicly available. Nevertheless, a review of the history of Iran's intelligence agencies should lead to a better understanding and an improved assessment of the present-day Iranian intelligence apparatus. Iran's intelligence strategy must be understood in the historical context of the Cold War and Iran's 1979 Revolution. Iran's intelligence activities are best divided into two parts: before and after the Revolution.

After World War II, Iran became a major player on the side of the West in the Cold War. Consequently, Iran received assistance from Britain and the United States to conduct covert operations against the Soviet Union, its northern neighbor.

In 1957 the United States and Israel cooperated with the shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, to create the National Security and Intelligence Organization known as SAVAK (Sazman-e Ettela'at va Amniat-e Keshvar). Its objective was to protect the regime from internal opposition.

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<sup>8</sup> "Ahmadinejad Is Cleaning Up the Ministry of Intelligence" [احمدی نژاد وزارت اطلاعات را پاکسازی مینماید!], *Our South Azerbaijan* [Iranian blog], August 2009, [http://www.oursouthazerbaijan.com/osa\\_at.htm](http://www.oursouthazerbaijan.com/osa_at.htm) (accessed April 15, 2012). The reliability of the blog is questionable. "Reza Malek's Letter, the Former Deputy of the Ministry of Intelligence from Evin: Chain, House Arrest, Unknown Graves Will Not Keep Dictatorship [In Power]," *Balatarin*, May 1, 2012, <http://balatarin.com/permlink/2012/5/2/3013377> (accessed May 21, 2012). Balatarin is a popular Iranian community Web site, which posts mostly anti-Iranian government news, blogs, etc.

<sup>9</sup> "A Man Called Saeed Emami," *Iran Terror Database*, January 22, 2006, <http://www.iranterror.com/content/view/178/26/> (accessed March 21, 2012).

SAVAK was also responsible for ensuring that communists and other leftist party members did not penetrate the armed forces or other government organizations. Although the main responsibility of SAVAK was domestic intelligence, it also engaged in external activities. SAVAK was mostly run by military personnel. After the 1979 Revolution, a published pamphlet showed the scope of SAVAK activities, demonstrating that SAVAK was a full-scale intelligence agency with 15,000 full-time agents and thousands of part-time informants.<sup>10</sup>

SAVAK initially was created to counter the Tudeh Party (Communist Party in Iran supported by the former Soviet Union), but it gradually expanded its activities and became a sophisticated intelligence agency. SAVAK was directly in touch with the Office of the Prime Minister, and its director was assumed to be the deputy of the prime minister for national-security affairs. Many well-defined investigative methods were designed to monitor all types of political activity. SAVAK dedicated a censorship office to monitoring journalists, literary figures, and academics across the nation. Many organizations, including universities, labor unions, and peasant organizations, were under intense surveillance by SAVAK. Over time, SAVAK evolved into an organization above the law by acquiring legal authority to arrest assumed antiregime activists, some of whom remained in jail without any record for extended periods. As a result, SAVAK earned a worldwide reputation as a brutal intelligence agency.<sup>11</sup>

In the early 1960s, SAVAK's main concern was the Soviet-allied Tudeh Party and, to a lesser extent, other opposition groups, including nationalist, secular, and liberal parties. In the early 1950s, the Tudeh Party had supported Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh because of his effort to nationalize Iran's oil industry. However, this support vanished during the 1953 coup that was backed by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and the British to oust Mossadegh's popular government. Opposed to a takeover of their oil interests, the British supported Operation AJAX, which helped the shah regain power.<sup>12</sup>

In the early 1960s, the regime successfully suppressed increased protests by the opposition against the shah, with SAVAK silencing dissenters by penetrating their organizations and arresting them. Such was the case with many university students, who after 1963 waged guerrilla

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<sup>10</sup> Oliver Jones, "Iran Insights—Iran's Intelligence and Security Apparatus," UK Defence Forum, December 2011, 2, <http://www.ukdf.org.uk/assets/downloads/RS84CiraninsightsIran%E2%80%99sintelligenceandsecurityapparatusx.pdf> (accessed March 22, 2012); Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Iran: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: GPO for the Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1989), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/irtoc.html> (accessed May 2, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> Metz, ed., *Iran: A Country Study*.

warfare against the shah's regime. The same was true of the communist group "Fadaye Guerrilla," which received training from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and other groups affiliated with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). SAVAK also closely monitored dissident students abroad and plotted assassinations of opposition figures in exile.<sup>13</sup>

After the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iranian intelligence functioned like intelligence organizations in every other revolutionary country—it identified and eradicated opponents and defectors inside and outside of the country. Thus, collecting information was not the priority. At this time, the PLO was providing the most foreign information to the Iranian government. However, the Soviet KGB allegedly used this exchange of information to feed the revolutionary government inaccurate information as a way of complicating the United States–Iran relationship more than was already the case after the Revolution.<sup>14</sup>

From the beginning of the Revolution in 1979, internal security was in the hands of Islamic Revolutionary Komitehs (literally, committees), which Ayatollah Khomeini ordered to be formed because of concerns that a police force might be more loyal to the shah than to the new revolutionary regime. People established Komitehs in their neighborhoods in places such as police stations, mosques, and youth centers. In addition to having responsibility for security, each Komiteh had a unit to gather information (intelligence) on its neighbors. Ayatollah Mohammad Reza Mahdavi Kani, who was one of the revolutionaries close to Ayatollah Khomeini, was in charge of the Komitehs. Komitehs may have operated under the Ministry of Interior.<sup>15</sup> Other groups were involved in gathering information as well, including judges who were in charge of cases dealing with sabotage by opposition groups and with counter-intelligence.

The interim government and the Revolutionary Council formed by Ayatollah Khomeini to lead the Revolution while he was exiled in Paris endeavored to revive parts of SAVAK, especially its eighth directorate, a counterintelligence unit in charge of monitoring foreign embassies and detecting espionage. This directorate focused on Eastern Bloc countries, in particular the Soviet Union, and Arab states. After the Revolution, Dr. Ebrahim Yazdi, the first

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<sup>12</sup> Jones, "Iran Insights—Iran's Intelligence and Security Apparatus," 2.

<sup>13</sup> Jones, "Iran Insights—Iran's Intelligence and Security Apparatus," 3.

<sup>14</sup> Jones, "Iran Insights—Iran's Intelligence and Security Apparatus," 4.

<sup>15</sup> "Untold [Incidents] About the Ministry of Intelligence" [ناگفته هایی از وزارت اطلاعات], *Aftab News* [Tehran], September 6, 2005, <http://www.aftabnews.ir/vdccc4xqs.2bqii8laa2.html> (accessed May 18, 2012). Aftab News is a news Web site based in Iran, with a pro-government viewpoint.

minister of the revolution, broadened the directorate's jurisdiction by focusing on more countries and by continuing to use SAVAK personnel.<sup>16</sup>

In 1979–80 the revolutionary government created a variety of small agencies, but the most distinctive and prestigious was the National Intelligence and Security Agency (Sazman Ettela'at va Amniat Melli Iran—SAVAMA). It was built on SAVAK's foundation. SAVAMA successfully used the same methods as SAVAK to collect foreign intelligence, while the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) was established to guard the Revolution and deal with domestic threats. Later, the IRGC became involved in foreign intelligence operations.<sup>17</sup>

The Iranian intelligence apparatus operated relatively successfully at the beginning of the revolutionary era. In July 1980, it uncovered the Nojeh Coup, an attempt to overthrow the new government by air force officers loyal to the shah. Then, the number of security and intelligence agencies increased dramatically, causing disorder in the intelligence system. As a consequence, Mohammad Ali Rajaei, the second president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, formed the Prime Minister's Intelligence Office (Daftar-e- Ettela'at Nokhostvaziri) in 1981. At this time, intelligence responsibilities were divided among the Prime Minister's Intelligence Office, the IRGC, the army, the Kumitehs, and the police force.<sup>18</sup>

In August 1983, parliament approved the formation of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security by merging three organizations that had had four continuous years of experience in dealing with foreign intelligence services and confronting antirevolutionary groups. The three intelligence organizations, which had been operating separately since 1979, were IRGC intelligence, the Kumitehs, and the Prime Minister's Intelligence Office. At that time, many former SAVAK agents were granted amnesty by religious leaders so that MOIS could benefit from their experience. Specifically, SAVAK agents were needed to boost Iran's intelligence capacity to deal with the war with Iraq in the 1980s.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> “Untold [Incidents] About the Ministry of Intelligence,” [ناگفته هایی از وزارت اطلاعات].

<sup>17</sup> Jones, “Iran Insights—Iran's Intelligence and Security Apparatus,” 4.

<sup>18</sup> “Untold [Incidents] About the Ministry of Intelligence,” [ناگفته هایی از وزارت اطلاعات].

<sup>19</sup> “Untold [Incidents] About the Ministry of Intelligence,” [ناگفته هایی از وزارت اطلاعات]; Amir Farshad Ebrahimi, “Who Is Saeed Emami?” [کیست؟] [سعيد اسلامي (امامي)], *Hokoomat Nezami* [Iranian blog], May 10, 2008, <http://gavras.wordpress.com/2008/05/10/%D8%B3%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%85%DB%8C-%DA%A9%D9%8A%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%9F-%D8%A7%D9%85%DB%8C%D8%B1-%D9%81%D8%B1%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D8%A8/> (accessed May 18, 2012).

The new ministry was charged with the development of a strong intelligence capability that could confront the intelligence agencies of Iran's enemies. These foreign agencies had penetrated antirevolutionary groups, and some had also infiltrated vital parts of the government during the Iran–Iraq war. Furthermore, the government had to deal with dissidents outside of the country who constantly opposed the Iranian government.<sup>20</sup>

Targeting externally based Iranian opponents of the Revolution was one of the main objectives of MOIS in the 1990s. The ministry was responsible for many terrorist attacks and assassinations of dissidents during this decade, such as the assassination of Shahpour Bakhtiar (the last prime minister under the shah). MOIS agents also were directly involved in the collection of information for the possible assassination of Salman Rushdie, an Indian-born author who wrote *The Satanic Verses*. Because of the alleged un-Islamic content of the book, Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa in February 1989 calling on all good Muslims to kill Rushdie and his publishers. The assassination of four Iranian-Kurdish members of the Iranian Democratic Party of Kurdistan in Berlin at a Greek restaurant named “Mykonos” in 1992 received international attention. Kurds and other minority ethnic groups such as Baluchis, Turks, and Arabs come under MOIS's surveillance because these peoples seek independence from the central government.<sup>21</sup>

The “Chain Murders” in Iran were a series of assassinations that took place in the 1990s to silence Iranian dissident intellectuals. After an investigation, MOIS took responsibility for the murders by proclaiming that some of its agents committed these crimes without its awareness (see Key Historical Events and Setbacks, below). An Argentine court also blamed MOIS for enlisting Hezbollah to bomb the Israeli embassy and the Jewish center in Buenos Aires in 1992 and 1994.<sup>22</sup> However, the IRGC was responsible for these incidents, although MOIS certainly

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<sup>20</sup> “How Did the Ministry of Intelligence Form?” [وزارت اطلاعات ایران چگونه شکل گرفت؟], *Khanevadeh Kooch* [Iranian blog, Tehran], March 1, 2011, <http://www.kooch.com/thread1703.html> (accessed March 22, 2012).

<sup>21</sup> “Five Major Duties of VAVAK Inside and Outside of the Country”; “Mostafa Poormohammadi: I Had No Role in Chain Murders” [مصطفی پورمحمدی: در قتل های زنجیره ای نقشی نداشتم.], *BBC Persian*, February 27, 2012, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2012/02/120227\\_132\\_poormohamadi\\_iranian\\_murder.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2012/02/120227_132_poormohamadi_iranian_murder.shtml) (accessed May 17 2012); Alison Flood, “Salman Rushdie Reveals Details of Fatwa Memoir,” *Guardian* [Manchester], April 12, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2012/apr/12/salman-rushdie-reveals-fatwa-memoir> (accessed May 19, 2012); “Secret Execution of Four Arab Political Prisoners” [وزارت اعدام مخفیانه چهار زندانی سیاسی عرب: خبر اجرای حکم به خانواده ها توسط], *Gooya News*, June 21, 2012, <http://news.gooya.com/politics/archives/2012/06/142395.php> (accessed June 21, 2012). Gooya News is a popular news Web site. It presents articles and news about the Iranian government's opposition. The reliability of the content on this Web site is relatively high.

<sup>22</sup> Muhammad Sahimi, “The Chain Murders: Killing Dissidents and Intellectuals 1988-1998,” *Tehran Bureau*, PBS, January 5, 2011, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2011/01/the-chain-murders-killing->

had some role in these operations. MOIS provided logistics, communication among the operatives, as well as documents needed for the operations.<sup>23</sup>

For the past decade, Iran's nuclear program has brought increased scrutiny by Western intelligence operatives in Iran. In return, MOIS has become more focused on countering foreign intelligence activities. The creation of a special counterintelligence unit and the capture of a number of alleged spies through MOIS's counterintelligence unit have in effect engaged Iran and its adversaries in an intelligence war. (Activities of MOIS in the early 2000s will be discussed throughout this report.)

## 7. ORGANIZATION

MOIS answers directly to the Supreme Leader of Iran. Although the president appoints the head of the ministry, the Supreme Leader must approve the appointment, and the president cannot remove the appointee without the Supreme Leader's approval. This principle was on display when President Ahmadinejad asked the current minister, Heydar Moslehi, to resign in April 2011 because of disagreements between Moslehi and the president's adviser, Rahim Mashaei, who was assumed to be the architect of the president's policies and has many critics among conservatives (hard-liners). Following Moslehi's resignation, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei refused to endorse Ahmadinejad's request and the president was forced to keep Moslehi in his cabinet.<sup>24</sup>

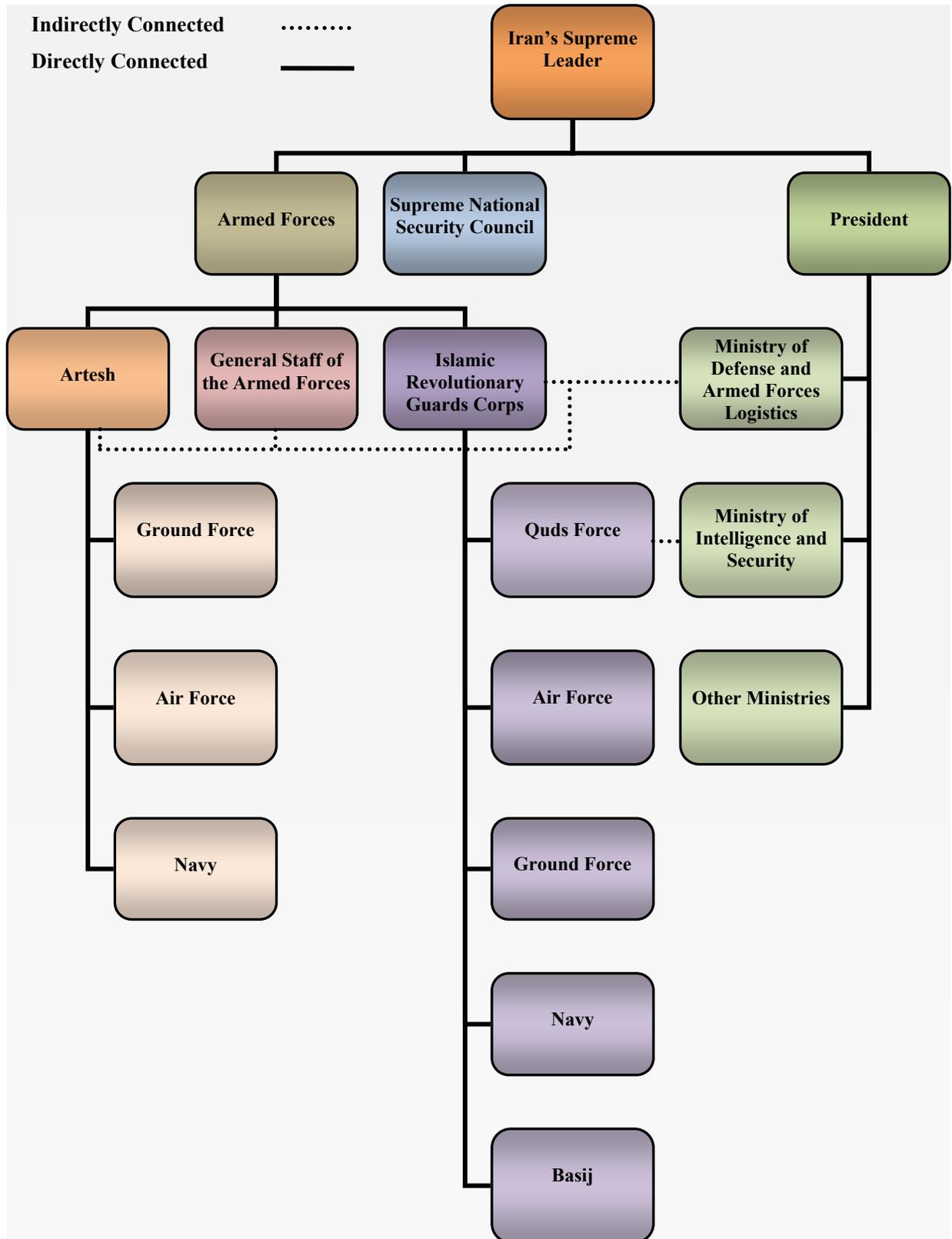
The following figure shows the place of MOIS in the hierarchy of Iran's intelligence agencies (see also Appendix: Figure 4).

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dissidents-and-intellectuals-1988-1998.html (accessed March 22, 2012). Tehran Bureau Web site claims to be an independent source of news on Iran and the Iranian diaspora; however, the tone of news published by this Web site is critical of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It started to collaborate with the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) in the United States in September 2009; Muhammad Sahimi, "The Chain Murders," *Tehran Bureau*, PBS, December 14, 2009, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2009/12/the-chain-murders-1988-1998.html> (accessed March 22, 2012).

<sup>23</sup> "Iran, Argentina Clash over Jewish Center Bombing Iranian Cleric is Linked to Buenos Aires Bombing. That Killed 87 People in '94," *Baltimore Sun*, May 21, 1998, [http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1998-05-21/news/1998141013\\_1\\_rabbani-iran-bombing](http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1998-05-21/news/1998141013_1_rabbani-iran-bombing) (accessed March 22, 2012); "Five Major Duties of VAVAK Inside and Outside of the Country."

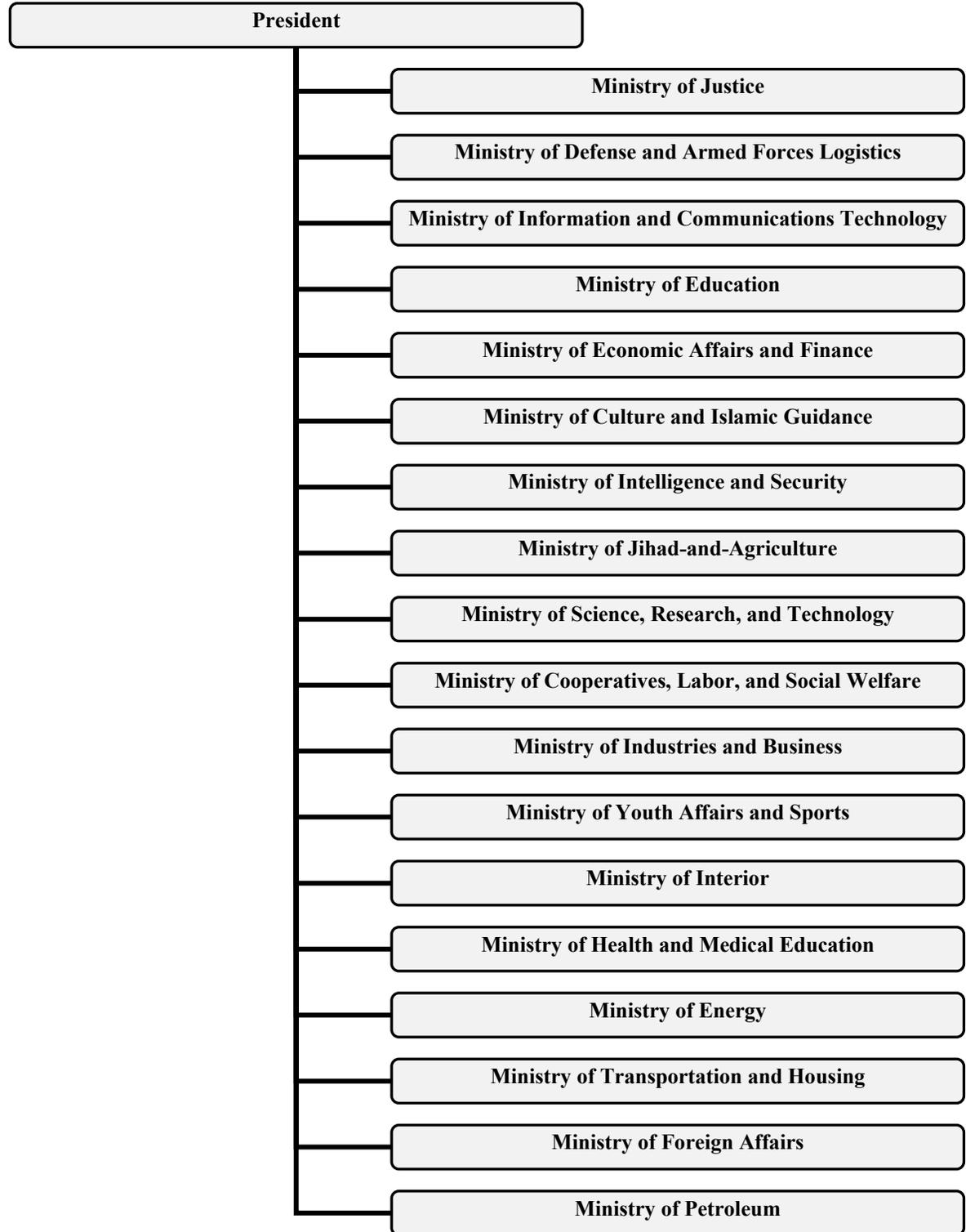
<sup>24</sup> "Moslehi Fired by Ahmadinejad at Cabinet Meeting," *Daneshjoo News*, May 4, 2011, <http://www.daneshjooews.com/news/politics/7174-1390-02-14-15-43-38.html> (accessed March 22). Daneshjoo News seems to be based in Iran. "Economist: Rahim Mashei Was Wiretapped by Moslehi" [اکنونومیست: مصلحی رحیم مشایبی را شنود می کرد], *BBC Persian*, May 6, 2011, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2011/05/110506\\_u01\\_economist-moslehi.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2011/05/110506_u01_economist-moslehi.shtml) (accessed May 18, 2012).



**Figure 1. Structure of Iran’s Intelligence Agencies**

Source: Based on information from <http://www.jerusalemreports.com/?m=201201> and <http://www.dolat.ir/NSite/Service/Cabine/?&Serv=6>

The ministries that operate under the president are listed in the following chart:



**Figure 2. Ministries under President**

Source: Based on information from <http://dolat.ir/>

According to Iran's constitution, the Supreme Leader sets the direction of foreign and domestic policies. He is commander in chief of the armed forces and controls intelligence operations. Hence, both MOIS and IRGC Intelligence, including the Quds Force, report directly to the Supreme Leader.

The president is the second-highest-ranking official in Iran. However, the constitution limits his authority in such a way that it subordinates the entire executive branch—and specifically MOIS and a small number of other ministries including the foreign and oil ministries—to the Supreme Leader.<sup>25</sup>

Iran's intelligence apparatus is composed of a number of entities, one of which is MOIS. According to the Islamic Republic of Iran's constitution with regard to the establishment of the ministry, article 1, clause 1, requires military organizations to coordinate with MOIS on military intelligence. The same article, clause 2, requires all ministries, institutions, governmental companies, and military and police forces that gather specialized information to share it with MOIS and to provide MOIS with any other information it demands. The constitution also stipulates that MOIS is in charge of intelligence activities inside and outside of Iran. In addition, articles 5 and 6 define the responsibilities of the IRGC and the ministry and how they should cooperate. Article 5 requires the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps to comply with the policy of the Ministry of Intelligence and Security with regard to combating domestic antirevolutionary dissidents, and the IRGC is entitled to collect, analyze, and produce information to identify the antirevolutionaries by way of helping MOIS.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, the IRGC and its external operational wing, the Quds Force, are required to report their activities to MOIS as the highest intelligence authority in the Islamic Republic of Iran. In return, MOIS provides logistical support and handles the communications aspect of operations involving Quds Force operatives and foreign organizations that work with the Quds Force, such as Hezbollah.<sup>27</sup>

MOIS is the main organization involved in intelligence operations that protect national security by collecting information; however, the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) determines national-security policies and makes sure the policies are aligned with the Supreme

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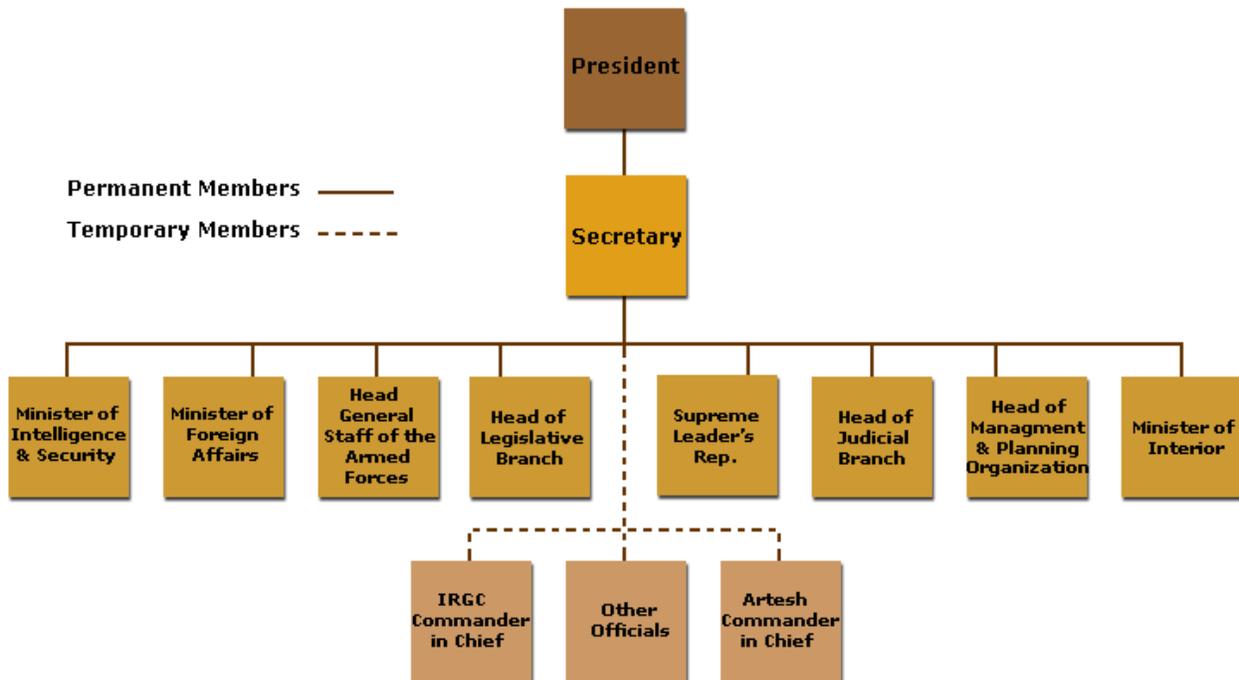
<sup>25</sup> "The Structure of Power in Iran," *Iran Chamber Society*, n.d., [http://www.iranchamber.com/government/articles/structure\\_of\\_power.php](http://www.iranchamber.com/government/articles/structure_of_power.php) (accessed April 11, 2012).

<sup>26</sup> "Intelligence and Law."

<sup>27</sup> "Five Major Duties of VAVAK Inside and Outside of the Country."

Leader's views. Article 176 of Iran's constitution established the Supreme National Security Council and charges it with responsibility for “preserving the Islamic Revolution, Iran's territorial integrity, and national sovereignty.” The members of the council include the president; the head of the legislative branch (speaker of parliament); the head of the judiciary; the chief of the combined general staff of the armed forces; the ministers of foreign affairs, interior, and intelligence; and two representatives of the Supreme Leader of Iran, one of whom usually becomes the secretary of the council. The council may have temporary members, including the commander(s) of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and the regular military (Artesh), as well as ministers or officials with responsibilities related to a specific issue. The Supreme Leader of Iran oversees the activities of the SNSC (see figure 3, below).<sup>28</sup>

### Iran's Supreme National Security Council



**Figure 3. Organizational Chart of Iran's Supreme National Security Council**

Source: Compiled from information on <http://www.rferl.org>

As mentioned previously, the IRGC is also involved in Iranian intelligence operations. The relationship between Supreme Leader Khamenei and IRGC leaders—established in 1980 at the

<sup>28</sup> “The Structure of Power in Iran”; “The Supreme National Security Council” [شورای عالی امنیت ملی], *Iran's Judicial Laws Bank* [Tehran], n.d., [http://libc.ir/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=126:1391-01-17-05-56-](http://libc.ir/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=126:1391-01-17-05-56-)

beginning of the Iran–Iraq war when Khamenei was minister of defense—has led to greater IRGC involvement in many aspects of the government. The uncompromising support of the Supreme Leader for the IRGC has turned this organization into the most powerful entity in the Iranian government in several sectors, including the military and economy, as well as in the political arena (for instance, in the current administration, more than half of the ministers are IRGC officers).<sup>29</sup> Consequently, in the intelligence field, the IRGC is highly active as well. The Quds Force (mainly in charge of extraterritorial operations beyond Iran's borders) and IRGC Intelligence are two other effective intelligence organizations of the Islamic Republic of Iran whose work parallels that of MOIS. IRGC Intelligence initially operated as a directorate called the IRGC Intelligence Directorate from the time of the establishment of the IRGC in 1980. After the 2009 presidential election, the IRGC Intelligence Directorate continued its activities in the form of an “organization” that receives orders from the Supreme Leader of Iran.<sup>30</sup>

The creation of yet other intelligence organization in Iran took place when Mohammad Khatami became president in 1997. Lack of trust in the new administration because of Khatami's more liberal views led the Supreme Leader to create and rely on other intelligence groups, such as the IRGC, the police, and judicial intelligence. After Ahmadinejad's election as president in 2005 and because of numerous disagreements between him and the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei decided to keep the IRGC Intelligence Organization as an alternative organization that would work parallel to MOIS—because the president can influence the ministry's direction one way or another, whereas the IRGC is completely under the Supreme Leader's command.<sup>31</sup>

Article 6 of the constitution indicates that IRGC Intelligence's duties are

- to supply military intelligence;
- to obtain the necessary information from the Ministry of Intelligence and Security before carrying out any operation ordered by judicial authorities (the IRGC is one of the organizations that acts as the executive arm of Iran's judicial system); and

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00&catid=55:1391-01-14-11-53-01&Itemid=70 (accessed September 6, 2012).

<sup>29</sup> Elliot Hen-Tov and Nathan Gonzalez, “The Militarization of Post-Khomeini, Iran: Praetorianism 2.0” (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, Winter 2011), 50, <https://csis.org/files/publication/twq11winterhentovgonzalez.pdf> (accessed May 22, 2012).

<sup>30</sup> “Iran's Minister of Intelligence: The Intelligence [Forces] Working Parallel [with MOIS] Have to Be Stopped” [وزیر اطلاعات ایران: باید جلوی موازی کاری اطلاعاتی گرفته شود], *BBC Persian*, May 29, 2012, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2012/05/120529\\_139\\_intelligence\\_parallel-activities.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2012/05/120529_139_intelligence_parallel-activities.shtml) (accessed May 29, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> “Iran's Minister of Intelligence: The Intelligence [Forces] Working Parallel [with MOIS] Have to Be Stopped.”

- to deliver intelligence to the Ministry of Intelligence and Security.<sup>32</sup>

The Quds Force works closely with MOIS. In fact, it appears that the Quds Force operates as an external intelligence arm of Iran, whereas MOIS focuses more on internal affairs. However, MOIS is integral to operations outside of Iran in the following cases:

- infiltrating Iranian opposition groups;
- creating terrorist networks and military groups (also the Quds Force's area of interest);
- identifying external threats, specifically those aimed at Iran's nuclear activity, and countering foreign intelligence agencies such as the CIA and Mossad;
- disseminating of misinformation; and
- acquiring technology for Iran's military industry.<sup>33</sup>

There is no clear division of powers and responsibilities between MOIS and the IRGC Intelligence Organization, and analysts believe this lack of definition of their responsibilities and their overlapping jurisdictions have caused friction between them. Apparently in some cases, the IRGC's Quds Force and IRGC Intelligence do not share information with MOIS as they are supposed to do. This gap was wider when Khatami was president, and many reformists held key positions at the ministry. After the 2009 presidential election, the IRGC blamed MOIS for not fulfilling its duties, claiming that was why the disputed election (of Ahmadinejad) caused massive and unprecedented turmoil.<sup>34</sup>

In 1996 the Iranian government created an organization called the Supreme Council for Intelligence Affairs under the minister of intelligence and security to coordinate policies with the Supreme National Security Council. The minister of intelligence and security is in charge of the Supreme Council for Intelligence Affairs. The umbrella organization has 20,000 employees and 12 different departments.<sup>35</sup> The objective of creating this council is not clear; however, it may be assumed that the Islamic Republic is trying to create a system parallel to the SNSC to ensure that each council's functions are aligned with the views of the Supreme Leader.

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<sup>32</sup> "Intelligence and Law."

<sup>33</sup> "Five Major Duties of VAVAK Inside and Outside of the Country."

<sup>34</sup> "Iran's Minister of Intelligence: The Intelligence [Forces] Working Parallel [with MOIS] Have to Be Stopped"; "Five Major Duties of VAVAK Inside and Outside of the Country."

<sup>35</sup> Carl Anthony Wege, "Iranian Intelligence Organizations," *Taylor Francis Online*, 1997, 288, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/08850609708435351> (accessed March 22, 2012).

According to available information, MOIS has 15 directorates: 1) Security, 2) Counterintelligence, 3) Foreign [Operations], 4) Security Investigation (Hefazat, which means “protection” in Farsi), 5) Technology, 6) Politics, 7) Evaluation and Strategic Affairs, 8) Education, 9) Research, 10) Archives and Documents, 11) Manpower, 12) Administration and Finance, 13) Legal-Parliamentary [Relations], 14) Economy, and 15) Cultural-Social.<sup>36</sup>

Little information is available about these directorates, but MOIS has multiple offices, which are shown below (see table 1). It is believed that the Security Directorate has a vital role in the organization, possibly because its responsibility is directly related to national security.<sup>37</sup>

There is a special section in MOIS called the Department of Disinformation that operates either as an independent directorate or under one of the following directorates (for more information, see Control of Media section, under Methods of Operation and Tactics, below).

<b>Table 1. MOIS Directorates and Subordinate Offices</b>	
<b>Name of Directorate</b>	<b>Name of Office(s)</b>
Security	Office of Security, Office of Operations, Office of Protection
Counterintelligence	Office of Counterintelligence
Foreign [Operations]	Office of Europe, Office of Africa, Office of the Americas, Office of the United States, Office of the Middle East, Office of Palestine and Israel, Office of Asia and the Pacific
Security Investigation	Office of Security Investigations, Office of Complaints
Technology	Office of New Technology, Office of Spying Technology
Politics	Office of Politics
Evaluation and Strategic Affairs	Office of Evaluation
Education	Office of Education
Research	Office of Research
Archives and Documents	Office of Archives and Documents
Manpower	Office of Manpower, Office of Welfare Service

<sup>36</sup> “The Islamic Republic of Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence and Security” [وزارت اطلاعات جمهوری اسلامی ایران], *Varzesh 11* [Iranian blog], August 22, 2011, <http://www.varzesh11.blogfa.com/cat-417.aspx> (accessed May 21, 2012). The reliability of this blog is questionable; however, the information in this report from this blog is widely distributed on other blogs as well.

<sup>37</sup> Ebrahimi, “Who is Saeed Emami?”; “The Islamic Republic of Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence and Security” [وزارت اطلاعات جمهوری اسلامی ایران], *Hokoomat Nezami* [Iranian blog], n.d., <http://gavras.wordpress.com/2008/05/10/%D8%B3%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%85%DB%8C-%DA%A9%D9%8A%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%9F-%D8%A7%D9%85%DB%8C%D8%B1-%D9%81%D8%B1%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D8%A8/> (accessed May 18, 2012); Daniel M. Zucker, “Disinformation Campaign in Overdrive: Iran’s VEVAK in High-Gear,” *Global Politician*, September 3, 2007, <http://www.globalpolitician.com/23386-vevak-iran> (accessed May 21, 2012).

<b>Name of Directorate</b>	<b>Name of Office(s)</b>
Administration and Finance	Office of Finance, Office of Administration
Legal-Parliamentary Relations	Office of Legal Relations, Office of Parliamentary Relations
Economy	Office of Economy, Office of Fighting Corruption
Cultural-Social	Cultural Office, Social Office

Source: <http://www.varzesh11.blogfa.com/cat-417.aspx>

## 8. PRINCIPAL LEADERS

According to a 1983 act of parliament, the minister of intelligence and security must have the following qualifications:<sup>38</sup>

- possess a religious school degree in “*ijtihad*,”<sup>39</sup>
- not be a member of any party or group;
- have a reputation of personal integrity and piety; and
- have a history of integrity in politics and management.

The first minister of intelligence and security of the Islamic Republic of Iran was Mohammad Reyshahri. He was one of the founders of this organization who sought to develop its policies and practices (see fig. 4, below).

When Ali-Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani became president in 1989, Ali Fallahian was appointed minister of intelligence and security, a position he held for eight years. Many terrorist attacks against the Islamic Republic's opponents took place after he became minister, including the 1992 attack on Iranian-Kurdish opposition leaders in Berlin, which is known as the “Mykonos Assassinations”; the bombing of an Israeli-Argentine community center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1994; and the attack on the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia in 1996. Fallahian is still being sought under an international warrant issued for his arrest in 1996 by a German court because of his role in the deaths of the Iranian-Kurdish leaders.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> “Intelligence and Law.”

<sup>39</sup> The term *ijtihad* means to draw and infer religious opinion about matters not mentioned in Islamic sources such as the Quran, the words of the Prophet, and religious leaders (imams). The opinion must elucidate Islamic faith and practice.

<sup>40</sup> “Masters of Disinformation,” *Iran Terror Database*; “Iran's Secretive Quds Force Has Terror Links,” *Soldier of Fortune*, October 12, 2011, <http://www.sofmag.com/iran%E2%80%99s-secretive-quds-force-has-terror-links> (accessed March 22, 2012); Saeed Bayani, “Vali Faqih and Terror at Mikonos Restaurant” [ولی فقیه و ترور در رستوران میکونوس], *Radio Zamaneh*, August 17, 2010, <http://www.radiozamaneh.com/politics/2011/08/17/6276> (accessed March 22, 2012). Radio Zamaneh was founded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs but in content is an independent broadcasting organization; however, the tone of the articles and news on this Web site is critical of the

After Mohammad Khatami became president in 1997, Ghorbanali Dorri Najafabadi succeeded Fallahian. When he was in charge of the ministry, “the Chain Murders of Iran” occurred. Because of the wide international publicity given to this event, he was forced to resign. Many Iranian analysts believe that Fallahian was actually behind all of the assassinations and that he plotted the terrorist attacks against dissident writers and intellectuals.<sup>41</sup>

The next minister, also during Khatami's presidency, was Ali Younesi. During his term, when the ministry became more involved in economic activities, he stopped the accumulation of power and wealth at the ministry in order to prevent corruption. He had many opponents among conservatives in Iran because of his more liberal views.<sup>42</sup>

After Ahmadinejad's election as president in 2005, he appointed Gholam-Hossein Mohseni Eje'i as minister of intelligence and security. However, because of a conflict between Eje'i and Ahmadinejad over presidential adviser Rahim Mashei, Eje'i resigned at the end of Ahmadinejad's first administration. Heydar Moslehi replaced Eje'i. Under Moslehi, the ministry captured Abdolmalek Rigi, the head of Jondollah, an opposition group active in southeast Iran, and arrested many operatives involved in espionage networks in Iran. His use of the media to publicize the success of the ministry made him popular among hard-liners in Iran.<sup>43</sup>

An examination of the backgrounds of the different ministers of intelligence and security leads to the following observations:

- Most graduated from the Qum-based Haghani School, a Shi'a school controlled by a group of hard-line right-wing clerics.
- All of them were educated in law, either in academic or religious schools.
- Many had served in posts (e.g., prosecutors, head of the Islamic Revolutionary Court, attorney general) in the judicial branch of the government.

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Iranian government; Sahimi, “The Chain Murders,” 2009; Sahimi, “The Chain Murders: Killing Dissidents and Intellectuals 1988–1998,” 2011.

<sup>41</sup> Jamshid Barzegar, “Akbar Ganji: The Chain Murders Was a Government Project” [اکبر گنجی: قتل های زنجیره ای پروژه] [ای حکومتی بود], *BBC Persian*, December 7, 2010, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2010/12/101207\\_ganji\\_serial\\_murders.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2010/12/101207_ganji_serial_murders.shtml) (accessed March 22, 2012).

<sup>42</sup> “If Applicable Law Does Not Prohibit Money Laundering, the Government Will Be Charged” [قانون منع پولشویی] [اجرا نشود، دولت متهم می شود], *Khabar Online* [Tehran], December 14, 2008, <http://www.khabaronline.ir/detail/755/> (accessed April 11, 2012). Khabar Online is a news Web site in Iran with a pro-Iranian government viewpoint.

<sup>43</sup> “Member of Parliament's Defense for Mohseni Eje'i” [دفاع نمایندگان مجلس از محسنی اژه ای], *Farda News* [Tehran], July 27, 2009, <http://www.fardanews.com/fa/news/87456/%D8%AF%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D9%86%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%AF%DA%AF%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%B3%D9%86%DB%8C-%D8%A7%DA%98%D9%87-%D8%A7%DB%8C> (accessed November 12, 2012).

- All had a conservative political and religious ideology.
- All were clerics (that is, they were required by law to possess a degree in *ijtihad* from a religious school.<sup>44</sup>

Moslehi, the current minister of intelligence and security, has stated on different occasions that most of the ministry's intelligence collection is based on information received from the public. The ministry has set up a three-digit number (113) for Iranians to call to report suspicious activities.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> "Milani and Ashkevari Speak About the Haghani School," *YouTube*, November 14, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oabDKk49BzI> (accessed April 11, 2012); on *ijtihad*, see footnote 39.

<sup>45</sup> "Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow—Heydar Moslehi, the Minister of Intelligence," *YouTube*, February 24, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y9wT3ljkf8> (accessed April 11, 2012); "Introduction to the Ministry of Intelligence Public Relations" [آشنایی با روابط عمومی وزارت اطلاعات], *Jame Jam Online* [Tehran], February 11, 2009, <http://www.jamejamonline.ir/papertext.aspx?newsnum=100898806386> (accessed April 11, 2012).



**Figure 4. Iran’s Ministers of Intelligence and Security in Successive Administrations, 1981–Present**

Source: Compiled from multiple sources used in the preparation of this report.



Saeed Hajjarian

Source: <http://www.rferl.org>

Many deputies have led the different directorates of MOIS since its establishment, but only a few were important figures in the organization. One of them was Saeed Hajjarian, one of the founders of the ministry. It is believed that he was the real brains of the Iranian intelligence system after the Revolution. He became the deputy of the first minister of intelligence and security (Reyshahri) after the ministry's establishment in 1984 and designed and organized the intelligence apparatus of the Islamic Republic. When Fallahian, the second minister, a hard-line cleric, came to office, Hajjarian left the ministry because he believed the new minister had a controversial reputation. Hajjarian and other leftist revolutionaries recognized that Iran needed a political opening; otherwise, the Islamic Republic would not last. Thus, he became the leading strategist for the reform movement in Iran. After Khatami's election as president in 1997, Khatami appointed Hajjarian as his adviser. In 2000 Hajjarian was assassinated by hard-liners.<sup>46</sup>

Saeed Emami (or Saeed Eslami) was the director of the Security Directorate and the most controversial MOIS deputy because he was in charge of the operation known as the "Chain Murders" that assassinated Iranian intellectuals in the 1990s. His scholarship to study in the United States in 1977 and his family's background (they were affiliated with the shah's regime) raised questions about his loyalty and suitability for employment by MOIS. Under Reyshahri's tenure, Emami held a key position in the Foreign Directorate. After Fallahian became minister of intelligence and security, Emami



Saeed Emami

Source: <http://www.iradj-shokri.blogspot.com/>

became director of the Security Directorate, the organization's main directorate. After a series of murders of Iranian intellectuals, which led President Khatami to conduct an investigation,

<sup>46</sup> Muhammad Sahimi, "Reformist Strategist: Saeed Hajjarian," *Tehran Bureau*, PBS, July 8, 2009, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2009/07/reformist-strategist-saeed-hajjarian.html> (accessed 17 May, 2012).

Emami's role in those murders was exposed, and he was arrested. The ministry announced later that Emami committed suicide in prison.<sup>47</sup>



Mostafa Poormohammadi

Source:

<http://ar.electionsmeter.com/>

Mostafa Poormohammadi was the attorney general of the Islamic Revolutionary Court—a special court in Iran that tries those who are suspected of threatening the Revolution and Islam—in Khoozestan and Khorasan provinces before he became director of the MOIS Counterintelligence Directorate in 1987. In 1991 he became the deputy head of MOIS. In 1997–98 he held the position of director of the Foreign Directorate of MOIS. In 2005, after President Ahmadinejad's first election, he was the main candidate for minister of intelligence and security. However, he ended up as minister of interior. He was

forced by Ahmadinejad to resign in 2008 because of serious disagreements with the president.<sup>48</sup>

At any given time, it is difficult to identify top personnel of MOIS other than the minister, but under the current administration, a man named Gerami seems to be the deputy head of the ministry, and another man named Ahangaran appears to run the Technology Directorate.<sup>49</sup>

## 9. HEADQUARTERS

MOIS headquarters appears to be in North Tehran<sup>50</sup> (see map and photos in Appendix).

<sup>47</sup> Ebrahimi, "Who is Saeed Emami?"

<sup>48</sup> "Mostafa Poormohammadi's Biography" [زندگینامه: مصطفی پورمحمدی], *Hamshahri Online* [Tehran], February 25, 2008, <http://hamshahronline.ir/news-45214.aspx> (accessed May 17, 2012); "Mostafa Poormohammadi: I Had No Role in the Chain Murders."

<sup>49</sup> "The Deputy of the Minister of Intelligence: Enemies' Aggression Is a Sign of Achievement by the Islamic Republic" [معاون وزیر اطلاعات: تهاجم دشمنان نشانه توفیقات بزرگ نظام اسلامی است], Islamic Republic News Agency [Tehran], September 5, 2011, <http://irna.ir/NewsShow.aspx?NID=30550101> (accessed May 17, 2012). The Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) is the official news agency in Iran that speaks for the government. "The Ministry of Intelligence Deputy: The Internet Network Is a Spy" [معاون وزارت اطلاعات: شبکه اینترنت جاسوس است], *Aftab News* [Tehran], April 5, 2012, <http://www.aftabnews.ir/vdcbg0b88rhba5p.uiur.html> (accessed May 17, 2012); "The Ministry of Intelligence Deputy: We Have Identified Two New Viruses" [معاون وزارت اطلاعات: دو ویروس رایانه ای جدید], *Aftab News* [Tehran], January 19, 2012, <http://aftabnews.ir/vdcdos0ffyt0os6.2a2y.html> (accessed May 17, 2012). The full name of the deputies as well as the names of other directors of MOIS could not be found.

<sup>50</sup> "Satellite Image of the Ministry of Intelligence Building" [عکس ماهواره ای از ساختمان اصلی وزارت اطلاعات], *Anti-Dictator* [Iranian blog], September 2009, [http://zobin-cost.blogspot.com/2009/09/blog-post\\_03.html](http://zobin-cost.blogspot.com/2009/09/blog-post_03.html) (accessed May 16, 2012). This is an Iranian blog, which posts pictures and articles from other Web sites criticizing the Iranian government.

## 10. COMMAND AND CONTROL

MOIS has a secret budget and is not accountable to other governmental organizations, including the cabinet or the Majles (parliament). It remains above the law, accountable only to the Supreme Leader, at present Ayatollah Khamenei.<sup>51</sup>

As discussed above, the Supreme Leader of Iran determines the national-security policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran (see Organization). The president must have the Supreme Leader's approval to select his minister of intelligence and security because the Supreme Leader receives the minister's counsel and works with the minister directly for implementation of his policies.<sup>52</sup> In terms of procedure, it appears that the Supreme Leader discusses and passes his general policies on to the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), and MOIS, as a member of the council, executes the policies with regard to intelligence activities. It also seems that the Supreme Leader may pass an order directly to the minister of intelligence and security for more secret and specific missions.

## 11. MEMBERSHIP SIZE

With more than 30,000 officers and support personnel, MOIS is ranked by experts as one of the largest and most active intelligence agencies in the Middle East.<sup>53</sup>

## 12. MEMBERSHIP AND RECRUITMENT

The Iranian constitution (article 12) prohibits MOIS agents from being members of any political group or party. MOIS agents go through an extremely stringent vetting process before they can become part of MOIS's missions and operations, which could implicate the highest government officials if exposed to the public.<sup>54</sup>

There are two ways to be recruited into MOIS. One way is to take the entrance examinations in specific majors requested by MOIS at Imam Mohammad Bagher University in Tehran. This university is associated with MOIS. MOIS accepts three times more candidates than it can accommodate and then puts them through physical, intelligence, and personality tests, as well as interviews and a background investigation. The physical examination at MOIS is less rigorous

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<sup>51</sup> Zucker, "Disinformation Campaign in Overdrive: Iran's VEVAK in High-Gear"; "Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security."

<sup>52</sup> "Five Major Duties of VAVAK Inside and Outside of the Country."

<sup>53</sup> Cyrus Maximus, "The Ministry of Intelligence and Security," *Iran Channel*, September 16, 2010, <http://iranchannel.org/archives/357> (accessed April 11, 2012).

<sup>54</sup> Zucker, "Disinformation Campaign in Overdrive: Iran's VEVAK in High-Gear"; "Intelligence and Law."

than at other governmental training facilities in the army or special forces. It is a requirement to be healthy, but the intelligence and personality tests are more important than the physical test. These tests are conducted at the Intelligence Bureau in Hamedan, a city in western Iran. Interviews take place in selection units within MOIS's provincial intelligence agencies.<sup>55</sup>

The Intelligence School of Imam Mohammad Bagher University in 2012 accepted students in the following majors for undergraduate degrees:<sup>56</sup>

Major Orientation	Orientation	Gender	Capacity
Political Science	Security Studies	Male	100
Social Science	Security Studies	Male	100
Management	Intelligence and Communications Management	Male	100

It also accepted students for master's degrees in the following majors:<sup>57</sup>

Group Major	Orientation	Gender	Capacity
Liberal Arts	Political Science	Male	38
Technology and Engineering	Electronic-Telecommunications Engineering	Male	19
Science	Forensic Science	Male	

Every year the ministry publicly announces opportunities for studies in various fields according to its needs.<sup>58</sup>

Another way to be recruited into MOIS is to obtain a recommendation from a MOIS employee. MOIS staff usually recommend their relatives and those with whom they have a close

<sup>55</sup> “How to Be Hired at the Islamic Republic of Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security” [چگونگی استخدام در وزارت] [Efshagari [Iranian blog], June 9, 2010, <http://efshagary.wordpress.com/2010/06/09/%DA%86%DA%AF%D9%88%D9%86%DA%AF%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D9%88%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%87%D9%88%D8%B1/> (accessed April 10, 2012).

<sup>56</sup> “Introduction to the School of Intelligence Is Online” [معرفی دانشکده اطلاعات بر روی سایت قرار گرفت], *Bargh Arshad* [Iranian blog] [Tehran], July 16, 2012, <http://bargharshad.blogfa.com/post/100> (accessed September 13, 2012).

<sup>57</sup> “Introduction to the School of Intelligence Is Online” [معرفی دانشکده اطلاعات بر روی سایت قرار گرفت].

relationship. The selection units send the candidates to the MOIS health centers in their home provinces. After confirmation of their health, the candidates go to Hamedan to take the intelligence and personality tests. If the candidates pass, MOIS officers interview them about Iranian cultural, economic, political, and social issues. The interviews and background investigations can take from nine months to more than two years. Successful candidates then enter Imam Mohammad Bagher University to receive intelligence training. After an assessment of their talents, the candidates will be assigned to one of the offices in their respective provinces of residence. The salary scale depends on the location and the office to which the candidate is assigned. Employees in the Directorate of Security and agents who are active in the counterterrorism and intelligence sections of MOIS most likely receive the highest salaries. MOIS staff receive an alias when they enter the organization.<sup>59</sup>

The terms and conditions for applicants are:

- belief in Islam;
- Iranian citizenship and belief in *velayat faqih* and the Islamic Republic;
- sound mental and physical health as checked by MOIS physicians;
- no commitment to other governmental organizations;
- minimum high school grade of 12 (out of 20) for Science and Mathematics and 14 (out of 20) for other majors; and
- maximum 22 years of age for undergraduate and 27 for graduate students.<sup>60</sup>

MOIS also recruits outside of Iran. From 1990–93, MOIS recruited former members of Mojahedin-e-Khalq (MEK)—also known as the People's Mujahedin of Iran (PMOI) or MKO—in Europe and used them to launch a disinformation campaign against MEK. MEK is an anti-Islamic Republic group that has a mixed philosophy of Islam and Marxism. It was formed in the 1960s and had a major role in Iran's Revolution. However, after the Revolution and because of ideological differences with the government, the Islamic Republic recognized MEK as a threat to the Revolution. Beginning in late 1980, Saddam Hussein and his Ba'ath regime in Iraq became

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<sup>58</sup> “Introduction to the School of Intelligence Is Online” [معرفی دانشکده اطلاعات بر روی سایت قرار گرفت].

<sup>59</sup> “How to Be Hired at the Islamic Republic of Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security”; “Five Major Duties of VAVAK Inside and Outside of the Country.”

<sup>60</sup> “Introduction to the School of Intelligence Is Online” [معرفی دانشکده اطلاعات بر روی سایت قرار گرفت].

major supporters of the group. MEK has made numerous terrorist attacks on Iranian interests inside and outside of Iran. The Iranian government and its intelligence apparatus consider MEK the most serious dissident organization with regard to the Revolution.

MEK's main base is Camp Ashraf in Iraq. With the fall of the Ba'ath regime in Iraq in 2003, the group lost this major support. After the 1991 Persian Gulf War against Iraq, MOIS made anti-MEK psychological warfare one of its main objectives, but MEK nonetheless has remained a viable organization. Aside from MEK, MOIS assassins also targeted opposition figures in cities abroad such as Baghdad, Berlin, Dubai, Geneva, Istanbul, Karachi, Oslo, Paris, Rome, and Stockholm.<sup>61</sup>

The recruitment of a British subject, Anne Singleton, and her Iranian husband, Masoud Khodabandeh, provides a relevant example of how MOIS coerces non-Iranians to cooperate. She worked with MEK in the late 1980s. Masoud Khodabandeh and his brother Ibrahim were both members of MEK at the time. In 1996 Masoud Khodabandeh decided to leave the organization. Later, he married Anne Singleton. Soon after their



Anne Singleton and Masoud Khodabandeh

Source: <http://www.mesconsult.com/>

marriage, MOIS forced them to cooperate by threatening to confiscate Khodabandeh's mother's extensive property in Tehran. Singleton and Khodabandeh then agreed to work for MOIS and spy on MEK. In 2002 Singleton met in Tehran with MOIS agents who were interested in her background. She agreed to cooperate with MOIS to save her brother-in-law's life—he was still a member of MEK at the time. During her stay in Tehran, she received training from MOIS. After her return to England, she launched the *iran-interlink.org* Web site in the winter of 2002. After she made many trips to Iran and Singapore—the country where the agency contacts its foreign agents—MEK became doubtful of Singleton and Khodabandeh's loyalty to the organization. In 2004 Singleton finally met her brother-in-law, Ibrahim, who was sent from Syria to Iran after the

<sup>61</sup> "Masters of Disinformation," *Iran Terror Database*, November 22, 2005, 2, [http://www.iranterror.com/index2.php?option=com\\_content&do\\_pdf=1&id=113](http://www.iranterror.com/index2.php?option=com_content&do_pdf=1&id=113) (accessed April 11, 2012); "Mujahedeen-e Khalq (MEK)," Federation of American Scientists, Intelligence Resource Program, July 13, 2004, <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/mek.htm> (accessed May 18, 2012).

Syrians arrested him (it appears that Syrians closely cooperate with MOIS). Eventually, MOIS forced him to cooperate as well.<sup>62</sup>

After Ahmadinejad became president, MOIS re-energized its Foreign Directorate for the recruitment of foreigners. Sizable budgets allow MOIS not only to recruit jihadists in Iraq and Afghanistan but also to hire spies and agents to conduct disinformation campaigns. The method of recruitment for foreigners is almost the same as for Iranians. MOIS agents identify potential candidates and then approach them. If the individuals respond positively, the Iranian embassy in their respective countries of residence contacts them and, before sending them to Iran, holds an informal interview under some pretext such as a visit or seminar. When candidates are in Iran, MOIS or the Quds Force examines their potential as agents. Candidates willing to cooperate are sent to bases around Tehran or to Qum for training. MOIS recruits its foreign agents mainly from Muslim countries, specifically Iraq and Lebanon, and then from other Shi'a countries. MOIS has centers of recruitment for foreigners in Persian Gulf countries, Yemen, Sudan, Lebanon, Palestine, Europe, East and South Asia, and North and South America (especially the Tri-border Area with its large population of Lebanese).<sup>63</sup>

### 13. TRAINING AND INDOCTRINATION

Selected candidates receive training in Tehran and Qum. The MOIS School of Intelligence, established in 1986 by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, is responsible for training MOIS agents. The selection units of MOIS choose candidates for training and then hire them (see Membership and Recruitment, above). The political science department offers training in strategic studies and security studies to male and female students, although MOIS does not always admit female students. To be selected for training, one must be at most 27 years of age and have faith and a commitment to Islam and to the concept of *velayat faqih* (Guardianship of the Islamic Jurists), a Shi'a theory developed by the Iranian government that gives the *faqih* custodianship over Muslims. (Since the Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini and currently Ayatollah Khamenei have both carried this title.) However, MOIS's recruitment of Christians, Sunnis, and,

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<sup>62</sup> Zucker, "Disinformation Campaign in Overdrive: Iran's VEVAK in High-Gear."

<sup>63</sup> "Five Major Duties of VAVAK Inside and Outside of the Country."

as previously mentioned, even Jews, shows that it is possible to hire agents who do not subscribe to *velayat faqih*.<sup>64</sup>

## 14. METHODS OF OPERATION AND TACTICS

### 14.1 Operations

The Ministry of Intelligence and Security operates through a variety of methods and tactics. Agents may operate undercover as diplomats in Iranian embassies or in other occupations in companies such as Iran Air, branches of Iranian banks, or even in private businesses. It is thought that many Iranians who are employed in foreign educational organizations such as universities also may work for MOIS; because they have to go back to Iran often—perhaps for immigration issues or scholarships given by the Iranian government or for other reasons—they may cooperate with MOIS. To transfer money for operations, MOIS usually uses state-controlled banks with branches in foreign countries.<sup>65</sup>

Lebanese Hezbollah and the Quds Force are also organizationally linked to MOIS (see fig. 1, above). Support for Hezbollah has been one of the main objectives of Iran's foreign policy. To counter threats from Israel, Iran provides Hezbollah with logistical and material support and uses Hezbollah as a proxy in Iran's intelligence operations. Such support is usually delivered under Iranian diplomatic auspices. An assessment of Iran's intelligence services in the 1990s stated: "The largest European Al-Qods [Quds] facility was in the Iranian embassy in Germany. The embassy's third floor had twenty Qods [Quds] employees coordinating terrorist activities in Europe... Recently, major operational centers were established in Bulgaria, and Al-Qods [Quds] has attempted to establish another operational facility in Milan."<sup>66</sup>

Most Iranian foreign officers and diplomats have worked with MOIS, the IRGC, or other security agencies. MOIS works in coordination with the Foreign Ministry in operations carried out abroad, using Iranian embassies for collecting intelligence. MOIS and Quds Force agents receive diplomatic passports through the embassies. Moreover, the Quds Force is believed to

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<sup>64</sup> "Q&A About Majoring in Schools with the Prospect of Employment at MOIS," *Afkar-e-Now* [Tehran], n.d., <http://www.afkarenow.com/barname/Etelaat.htm> (accessed 12 January, 2012); "Five Major Duties of VAVAK Inside and Outside of the Country."

<sup>65</sup> "Operations Ministry of Intelligence and Security [MOIS] Vezerat-e Ettela'at va Amniat-e Keshvar VEVAK," Federation of American Scientists, Intelligence Resource Program, August 11, 1997, <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/iran/vevak/org.htm> (accessed April 11, 2012).

<sup>66</sup> Jones, "Iran Insights—Iran's Intelligence and Security Apparatus," 6.

coordinate with the Ministry of Intelligence and Security through foreign embassies, charities, and cultural centers in targeted countries.<sup>67</sup>

The replacement of Iran's ambassador in Damascus in June 2011 provides a relevant example of the use of intelligence officers as diplomats. The new ambassador, Habib Taherian, is a former MOIS deputy. This move may have resulted from an increase in covert activities among the government's opposition in Syria and from Iran's determination to support Syria during a period of hardship. Taherian also used to be the ambassador of the Islamic Republic in Brazil, another area of interest for Iran. Iran's expansion of intelligence activities into Latin America, alongside its growing economic, political, and cultural involvement there, has concerned the United States.<sup>68</sup>

MOIS infiltrates Iranian communities outside of Iran using a variety of methods. For instance, a society called "Supporting Iranian Refugees" in Paris is used to recruit Iranian asylum seekers to spy on Iranians in France. MOIS also has agents who abduct individuals abroad, return them to Iran, and then imprison or kill them. MOIS's tactics of penetrating and sowing discord within the opposition abroad are discussed in an article on a Web site affiliated with the current Iranian government. The article ("How Do Iranian Intelligence Forces Operate Outside of the Country?") discusses how Iran uses different mechanisms to penetrate the foreign-based opposition. MOIS uses its former members and/or people willing to cooperate with the ministry. They are sent to prison temporarily and become known as activists opposed to the Islamic Republic. After some time, no one questions their previous political activities; being a political prisoner is enough to be acknowledged as an opposition figure. Activists abroad may help get such a prisoner out of the country with the assistance of an international organization, or MOIS may send the prisoner abroad, calling him/her an "escaped dissenter." This mechanism of releasing political prisoners to go abroad sows mistrust within the opposition in exile.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> "Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security," *Iran Focus*; U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, "Hezbollah in Latin America: Implications for U.S. Security," July 7, 2011, 6 (statement of Douglas Farah), <http://homeland.house.gov/sites/homeland.house.gov/files/Testimony%20Farah.pdf> (accessed April 11, 2012).

<sup>68</sup> "The Minister of Intelligence Deputy Became Iran's Ambassador in Syria" [معاون وزیر اطلاعات سفیر ایران در سوریه] شد, *Iran Briefing (Human Rights Violation by Iran's Revolutionary Guards)*, June 20, 2011, <http://farsi.iranbriefing.net/?p=12051> (accessed May 19, 2012).

<sup>69</sup> "How Do Iranian Intelligence Forces Operate Outside of the Country?" [کشور نیروهای نفوذی اطلاعاتی ایران در خارج از] [چگونه عمل می کند؟]. *Khabar Online* [Tehran], June 9, 2010, <http://www.khabaronline.ir/news-67593.aspx> (accessed April 4, 2012); Gholamali Bigdeli, "Condemnation of Two Ministry of Intelligence Agents at a Paris Court"

## 14.2 Control of Media

The ministry also engages in disinformation. The largest department within MOIS, the Department of Disinformation (Farsi: *nefaq*), uses psychological warfare and disinformation against the government's opponents. This department is also in charge of employing psychological warfare to manipulate the media and to mislead other intelligence agencies about Iran's intelligence and military capabilities. However, it is unclear exactly where this department is located in the ministry. As a matter of course, the department may spread news, which might be 80–90 percent reliable and 10–20 percent disinformation. Ali Younesi, the former minister of intelligence and security, reported on state television in October 2004 that the ministry's Department of Disinformation had hired thousands of agents, including some former MEK members, to boost the department's function.<sup>70</sup>

With respect to the Internet, for the past 10 years MOIS and two other governmental entities, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), have also sought to control Iranians' access to the Internet. This effort was intensified after the controversial presidential election in 2009. The government has imposed intelligence, technical, and cultural strategies to control access to the Internet. The head of the MOIS Counterintelligence Directorate has stated that "the Internet poses a danger to the world, and Iran is always on the lookout for spies."<sup>71</sup> These entities cooperate to block any sites that cause problems and to make sure that preferred sites continue to function.<sup>72</sup>

Control of the media and dealing with the opposition's internal and external media are additional MOIS responsibilities. The ministry targets television channels that advocate political and religious views antithetical to the Iranian government. MOIS also attempts to control domestic and foreign news and to pressure journalists in Iran. For instance, MOIS has requested

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[محرکیت دو تن از عوامل وزارت اطلاعات در دادگاه پاریس], *Radio Koocheh*, June 25, 2011, <http://radiokoocheh.com/article/113111> (accessed April 4, 2012). Radio Koocheh is an Iranian Radio station that seems to broadcast from outside of Iran. It has a critical view of Iranian social and political issues. The reliability of this Web site varies.

<sup>70</sup> Zucker, "Disinformation Campaign in Overdrive: Iran's VEVAK in High-Gear"; "Five Major Duties of VAVAK Inside and Outside of the Country."

<sup>71</sup> Open Source Center, "Regime Using Increasingly Sophisticated Measures to Control Cyberspace," July 28, 2010, [https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_0\\_200\\_203\\_0\\_43/content/Display/15438541/IAP20100728573001001.pdf](https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_200_203_0_43/content/Display/15438541/IAP20100728573001001.pdf) (accessed March 22, 2012).

<sup>72</sup> Open Source Center, "When Did Filtration of Sites and Blogs Begin?" May 10, 2010, [https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_0\\_200\\_203\\_121123\\_43/content/Display/IAP20100519338021#index=1&searchKey=7449847&rpp=10](https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_200_203_121123_43/content/Display/IAP20100519338021#index=1&searchKey=7449847&rpp=10) (accessed March 22, 2012); Omeed Agilee, "The Islamic Republic of Iran's Anti-Opposition Strategies in Social Media," June 16, 2011 (paper submitted in the English for Heritage Language Speakers (EHLS) Program, Georgetown University, August 2011).

that the government limit and control the presence of foreign journalists in Iran during future presidential elections. MOIS has warned the government not to repeat the same mistake it made in the previous controversial presidential election, which received broad coverage across the world.<sup>73</sup>

## 15. INTELLIGENCE CAPABILITIES

Iran's various intelligence activities, including signals intelligence, human intelligence, and counterintelligence, as well as other aspects of its intelligence apparatus, most likely operate under the auspices of MOIS. MOIS closely cooperates with the IRGC in this regard.

### 15.1 Signals and Cyber Intelligence

Iran appears to be trying to expand its intelligence capabilities in the Middle East and the Mediterranean. For instance, Iran seems to have developed a signals intelligence (SIGINT) capability. Two Iranian-Syrian SIGINT stations funded by the IRGC reportedly have been active since 2006, one in the al-Jazirah region in northern Syria and the other on the Golan Heights. Iranians reportedly planned to create two additional SIGINT stations in northern Syria, which were expected to be in operation by January 2007, but no information indicates that they are currently operating. The technology at the two established SIGINT stations indicates that Iran's capabilities are still limited, with little scope for high-level strategic intelligence gathering. The intelligence stations appear to concentrate on supplying information to Lebanese Hezbollah.<sup>74</sup>

In June 2010, the Stuxnet virus successfully targeted Iran's uranium-enrichment infrastructure. The success of this virus is an indication of the weakness of Iran's cyber development. In the summer of 2011, Iran created a "cyber command" in order to block incoming cyber attacks and to carry out cyber attacks in reprisal.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> "Intelligence Organizations Increase Their Control over Foreign Media in Iran" [سازمان های اطلاعاتی کنترل خود را] [بر رسانه های خارجی در ایران افزایش می دهند], *Gooya News*, May 15, 2012, <http://news.gooya.com/politics/archives/2012/05/140573.php> (accessed May 17, 2012).

<sup>74</sup> Jones, "Iran Insights - Iran's Intelligence and Security Apparatus," 7.

<sup>75</sup> "Factbox: What Is Stuxnet?" Reuters, September 24, 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/09/24/us-security-cyber-iran-fb-idUSTRE68N3PT20100924> (accessed April 4, 2012); Jones, "Iran Insights—Iran's Intelligence and Security Apparatus," 7.

Iran also has the capacity to collect intelligence through reconnaissance aircraft. This capability, however, is limited to small military operations that use only a few reconnaissance planes.<sup>76</sup>

## 15.2 Human Intelligence

Iran has been extremely active in the area of human intelligence (HUMIT). Iran's ability to collect information is highly organized and focused on neighboring countries. As already noted, Iran has used diplomatic channels to carry out intelligence operations. There are numerous instances in which Iranian diplomats have carried weapons into other countries in diplomatic pouches. However, Iran has been careless about providing cover for its agents. Consequently, on various occasions, security officers of other countries have been able to detect Iranian agents.<sup>77</sup>

Despite Iran's noted strength in human intelligence, its technical capabilities are underdeveloped. Its HUMINT operations have previously shown weaknesses in neighboring countries with sophisticated intelligence systems. For instance, the intelligence officers sent to Iraq after the invasion of American-led coalition forces in 2003 took advantage of the instability there in order to engage in covert operations, and at least some of them were exposed. Iran has deployed many agents to Iraq to influence Iraqi elected officials and to train Iraqi rebel groups. Iran also has intelligence networks in other Middle Eastern countries, chiefly in Shi'a-majority countries and in countries with unpopular Sunni rulers. For instance, in 2010 and 2011 two Iranian networks were exposed in Kuwait and Bahrain.<sup>78</sup>

Iran's expansion of intelligence activities to Latin America, alongside its growing economic, political, and cultural involvement there, has been a source of concern for the United States. Iran's HUMINT has been successful through cooperation with the Quds Force and Lebanese Hezbollah, which help gather intelligence from the Shi'a population living in Latin American countries.

## 15.3 Counterintelligence

The United States obtained intelligence information about Iran's nuclear-warhead designs in 2004. Likewise, Western intelligence agencies obtained similar information from IRGC

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<sup>76</sup> Jones, "Iran Insights - Iran's Intelligence and Security Apparatus," 7.

<sup>77</sup> Jones, "Iran Insights—Iran's Intelligence and Security Apparatus," 12.

<sup>78</sup> Jones, "Iran Insights—Iran's Intelligence and Security Apparatus," 8, 9.

officers who defected, such as General Ali Reza Asgari. Although there were many others as well, Asgari's defection was significant because he was deeply engaged in establishing Iranian links with Hezbollah. Asgari seems to have provided intelligence to the Israelis and may have been the source of the intelligence they used in Operation Orchard to strike Syria's nuclear reactor. Moreover, Western intelligence agencies managed to infiltrate Iran's intelligence networks with the help of the Kurds. Using the acquired intelligence, the United States managed to successfully damage Iran's uranium-enrichment program by intentionally providing defective tools, machines, and blueprints in 2000 and 2003.<sup>79</sup>

Following these developments, Tehran established a new intelligence force called "Oghab 2" (Eagle 2) in 2005. It most likely operates under MOIS's Counterintelligence Directorate. This force is a counterintelligence bureau exclusively responsible for protecting all relevant information about Iran's nuclear program, nuclear facilities, and the scientists working in nuclear facilities against threats, including threats from domestic opposition groups and foreign intelligence agencies. The creation of Oghab 2 goes back to the exposure of two secret nuclear facilities, Parshin and Lavizan, and the arrest of two spies who collected information about the nuclear facilities, in 2005. In a larger sense, however, the main reason for the establishment of this force was to counter covert activities of all kinds by foreign intelligence agents against the Islamic Republic.<sup>80</sup>

Following the discovery of various alleged spying networks in mid-April 2007, the commander of Oghab 2, General Gholam Reza Moghrabi, was replaced by Ahmad Vahidi, who was a former IRGC Quds Force commander and is the current minister of defense. Under his leadership and that of his deputies, General Akbar Dianatfar and General Ali Naghdi, Oghab 2 was enlarged by recruiting up to 10,000 agents. However, it is worth adding that Oghab 2 is still incapable of preventing major sabotage and assassinations. For instance, since 2007 several Iranian nuclear scientists have allegedly been assassinated by Israel's Mossad.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Jones, "Iran Insights—Iran's Intelligence and Security Apparatus," 10.

<sup>80</sup> Jones, "Iran Insights—Iran's Intelligence and Security Apparatus," 11.

<sup>81</sup> "Espionage in Iran" [جانوسسی در ایران], *Edalat* [Tehran], September 19, 2011, <http://hoghoghszt.blogfa.com/post-2.aspx> (accessed April 11, 2012); Mirjavedanfar, "Iran, Loser of the Intelligence War" [ایران، بازنده نبرد اطلاعاتی], *Rooz Online*, January 13, 2010, <http://www.roozonline.com/persian/archive/overallarchive/news/archive/2010/january/13/article/-bc64c2c377.html> (accessed May 21, 2012); Ed Blanche, "Iran-Israel Covert War: The Mossad Is Said to Wage a Clandestine Campaign of Assassination and Sabotage Against Iran's Nuclear Programme, But This Could Backfire on President Obama's Efforts to Negotiate with Tehran," *The Middle East*, July 1, 2009, [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m2742/is\\_402/ai\\_n32150834/pg\\_2/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2742/is_402/ai_n32150834/pg_2/) (accessed April 11, 2012); Jones, "Iran Insights—Iran's Intelligence and Security Apparatus," 11.

Nonetheless, MOIS has accomplished several remarkably successful operations. In 2007 the Iranian intelligence service became suspicious about possible espionage and seized 15 British sailors in the Persian Gulf. The seizure took place after a British television program on the nature of the Royal Navy's activities, which to some extent aimed at collecting intelligence on Iran, attracted Iranian attention. In 2011 the *Los Angeles Times* reported that the Iranians dismantled a 30-member network of individuals allegedly recruited by U.S. embassies in the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, and Malaysia to conduct espionage and sabotage against Iran.<sup>82</sup>

Iranian intelligence has also infiltrated foreign-based opposition groups. For instance, MEK's espionage activities against the Iranian government and its nuclear program declined in 2007 because of Iran's counterintelligence operations. MEK had revealed the existence of two nuclear facilities in Iran (Natanz and Arak) in 2002, and MEK has reportedly provided the United States with other intelligence on Iran's nuclear program. In 2007 *Le Figaro*, a French newspaper, stated: "Intelligence specialists are unanimous on one point: it is very difficult to infiltrate Iran. Foreign services traditionally have very few high level contacts in Iran."<sup>83</sup>

Further, on May 21, 2011, Iran broke up a spy network allegedly linked to the CIA, arresting 30 people in an operation inside Iran. This network was intended to obtain military and nuclear intelligence. MOIS announced that it was able to prove the connection of all operatives with the CIA. Likewise, MOIS announced in May 2011 that it had identified 42 more spies in various countries linked to the CIA. MOIS agents had reportedly monitored and videotaped meetings with those arrested spies over the course of a year. In a program broadcast by national TV, the minister of intelligence and security said: "It is inevitable that intelligence agencies get infiltrated. One of the good things we did was that we can identify the infiltrators and make use of them in the future. The enemy may eradicate them, but there are definitely other infiltrators whom we can use as well."<sup>84</sup> Later, MOIS announced that the network was operating under various guises, including job-finding centers. According to Iran, the CIA has created fake Web

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<sup>82</sup> Jones, "Iran Insights—Iran's Intelligence and Security Apparatus," 11.

<sup>83</sup> Nile Bowie, "CYBER TERRORISM: US-Supported Terrorist Group MEK Plants Stuxnet Virus Malware to Disable Iran's Nuclear Facilities," *Global Research* [Montreal], April 16, 2012, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?aid=30353&context=va> (accessed June 15, 2012); Georges Malbrunot, "Comment les États-Unis espionnent l'Iran" [How the U.S. Spies on Iran], *Le Figaro* [Paris], December 5, 2007, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2007/12/06/01003-20071206ARTFIG00006-comment-les-etats-unis-espionnent-liran.php> (accessed June 15, 2012).

<sup>84</sup> "30 US spies arrested in Iran," *YouTube*, June 22, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uOCHnRyUUgQ> (accessed April 11, 2012).

sites to offer jobs to Iranians and then has attempted to recruit them to collect intelligence on military and nuclear-energy industries.<sup>85</sup>

On November 24, 2011, MOIS arrested 12 other alleged CIA spies who were collecting information about Iran's nuclear plans. Iran has further claimed that Hezbollah has discovered a CIA espionage network and that the lives of those CIA agents are in danger.<sup>86</sup>

On April 10, 2012, MOIS announced the discovery of an Israeli network in central Iran that was allegedly trying to collect information about Iran's nuclear activities. Commenting on this issue, the Iranian government noted that MOIS has been capable of breaking up CIA and Mossad spy networks in the so-called "intelligence war." Consequently, MOIS has been working especially hard to identify and discover foreign intelligence networks.<sup>87</sup>

On June 15, 2012, MOIS announced that its agents had succeeded in identifying and arresting the assassins of two Iranian scientists. MOIS claimed that Israel plotted the assassinations and that it would find every "Zionist" operative that was involved in these assassinations.<sup>88</sup>

Iran has become more sensitive about U.S or foreign espionage, ostensibly because of its nuclear program. Acting on these sensibilities, Iran intercepted two unmanned U.S. spy planes operating outside Iranian airspace in January 2011. Furthermore, Iranians claim that they penetrated Mossad while they were looking for the assassins of Iran's nuclear scientists. These allegations may be unfounded.<sup>89</sup>

## 16. MOTIVATION AND PERFORMANCE

MOIS is devoted to extending the Iranian revolutionary idea throughout the world. This revolutionary enthusiasm, however, is tempered by pragmatism. At the time of its establishment,

<sup>85</sup> "30 US spies arrested in Iran."

<sup>86</sup> "Iran Arrests 12 'CIA Spies' for Targeting Nuclear Plans," *BBC*, November 24, 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15879086> (accessed April 5, 2012).

<sup>87</sup> "The Minister of Intelligence Announced: The Arrest of A Zionist Terrorist Network" [ وزارت اطلاعات خبر داد: [دستگیری اعضای یک شبکه تروریستی رژیم صهیونیستی], Iranian Student's News Agency [ISNA; Tehran], April 10, 2012, <http://isna.ir/fa/news/91012206786/>, وزارت اطلاعات-خبر داد-دستگیری-اعضای-یک-شبکه (accessed April 11, 2012). The Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA) is a news organization run by Iranian university students. It is considered to be one of the most independent and moderate media organizations in Iran.

<sup>88</sup> "The Ministry of Intelligence: The Assassins of the Nuclear Scientists Are Arrested" [ اطلاعیه وزارت اطلاعات: عوامل ] Iranian Students' News Agency [ISNA; Tehran], June 15, 2012, <http://isna.ir/fa/news/91032514645/%D8%A7%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B9%D9%8A%D9%87-%D9%88%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%84-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B4%D9%85%D9%86%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86> (accessed June 15, 2012).

as well as prior to the formation of MOIS, the task of Iranian intelligence was to look for antirevolutionary groups and individuals inside and outside of the country in order to protect the Islamic Revolution. In the early years of the Revolution, many people who formerly supported the regime turned against it. It was the duty of SAVAMA (the intelligence service of Iran at the time) to identify those defectors. However, after the establishment of MOIS and the ascent of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as the Supreme Leader, the ministry became more involved in implementing the Supreme Leader's policies, both internally and externally. The goal of Iranian foreign policy is to expand Iran's influence in the Middle East and throughout the world. In pursuit of this goal, Iranian leaders, conscious that Iranians are part of the Shi'a minority in the Muslim world, focus on anti-imperialism and on combating American hegemony as ways to influence not only Muslims, but also other people of different faiths. These principles motivate the Islamic Republic to operate outside of Iran through MOIS and even more so through its sister agency, the IRGC Quds Force.<sup>90</sup>

MOIS's performance has been steady and unswerving since its establishment after the Revolution. MOIS is focused on internal affairs and concentrates on protecting the current Islamic system. This goal has been implemented through covert operations inside and outside of the country.<sup>91</sup>

## 17. PRINCIPAL AREAS OF OPERATION

MOIS is active wherever the Iranian government has interests. MOIS operates in Iran and cooperates with the Quds Force in the Middle East (Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait, and Lebanon), Central Asia, Africa, Europe (Austria, Azerbaijan, Croatia, France, Georgia, Germany, Turkey, the United Kingdom), and the Americas, including the United States. MOIS provides financial, material, technological, or other support services to Hamas, Hezbollah, and al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), all designated terrorist organizations under U.S. Executive Order 13224.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Jones, "Iran Insights—Iran's Intelligence and Security Apparatus," 11.

<sup>90</sup> Jones, "Iran Insights—Iran's Intelligence and Security Apparatus," 12.

<sup>91</sup> Jones, "Iran Insights—Iran's Intelligence and Security Apparatus," 12.

<sup>92</sup> "Treasury Accuses Iran of Hacking," *Emptywheel*, February 16, 2012, <http://www.emptywheel.net/tag/quds-force/> (accessed April 5, 2012); Ladan Firoozbakht, "The Capital City of Austria, A Nest for Tehran's Regime," *Radio France International [France]*, February 21, 2010, <http://www.persian.rfi.fr/%D9%BE%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D8%B7%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%B4-%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%87-%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%B1%DA%98%DB%8C%D9%85-%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-20100221/%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%88%D9%85%DB%8C> (accessed September 6, 2012). MOIS has facilitated the movement of al-Qaeda operatives in Iran and has provided

Latin America is an area of major interest for the Iranians. The existence of Iranian intelligence activities in countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, and Venezuela, where Iran has political and economic interests, is also part of Iran's strategy of establishing a presence in the backyard of the United States for purposes of expanding Shi'a and revolutionary ideology, establishing networks for intelligence and covert operations, and waging asymmetrical warfare against the United States. In Latin America, Iran's intelligence agencies— MOIS but mostly the Quds Force—use Hezbollah to achieve their goals.<sup>93</sup>

In the Middle East, Iran uses Hezbollah to pressure Israel and to threaten the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan by backing insurgent groups. The current uprising in Syria has significant implications for Iran's intelligence. Iranians are present in the form of the Quds Force in Syria to support President Bashar al-Assad's suppression of opposition protests. Iran's success in suppressing its own opposition after the disputed 2009 presidential election offers a useful model to the Syrian government. Iran specifically targets Bahrain and other countries with a majority Shi'a population, using MOIS to carry out operations in line with Iran's foreign policy.<sup>94</sup>

In Europe, MOIS maintains a significant network in Germany. In January 2011, Hans-Peter Friedrich, Germany's interior minister, and Heinz Fromm, head of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (the German equivalent of the FBI), reported that the main responsibility of MOIS is "monitoring the opposition groups in and out of Iran and fighting against them." According to their report, MOIS also has been collecting information on politics, economy, and science in Germany, and it adds, "Most intelligence activities against Germany are carried out by this ministry [MOIS]." The report also notes: "The Iranian Ministry of Intelligence

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them with documents, identification cards, and passports. MOIS has also negotiated prisoner releases of AQI operatives.

<sup>93</sup> "Iran Increases Its Political and Economic Presence in Latin America..." Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Israeli Intelligence and Heritage Commemoration Center, April 19, 2009, <http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/18291> (accessed March 7, 2012). This Israeli Web site provides reports on terrorist actions of anti-Israeli groups such as Hezbollah, the Quds Force, the Muslim Brotherhood, etc. The reports are detailed and informative. Readers interested in Iran's activities in Latin America may wish to consult a parallel study by the Federal Research Division for the Combating Terrorism Technical Support Office entitled "The Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps: A Profile" (2012), available on the Open Source Center's Web site.

<sup>94</sup> "Evidence Grows Iran Aiding Syria's Assad," UPI, June 2, 2011, [http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/Special/2011/06/02/Evidence-grows-Iran-aiding-Syrias-Assad/UPI-72061307024479/](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2011/06/02/Evidence-grows-Iran-aiding-Syrias-Assad/UPI-72061307024479/) (accessed March 13, 2012).

is seeking to attract German citizens to cooperate with the ministry. This applies to citizens who often travel to Iran for visiting their families or for business.”<sup>95</sup>

Vienna, the capital city of Austria is allegedly full of MOIS agents. It is because of the continuous good relationship between Iran and Austria since the Revolution—after the U.S. hostage crisis, which resulted in condemnation of the Islamic Republic by many countries and secluded Iran in many ways, Austria was one of the few countries that was not concerned. It appears that Iran takes advantage of this relationship by deploying its intelligence officers in Austria. It has been reported that MOIS agents identify anti-Islamic Republic political activists and threaten to silence them.<sup>96</sup>

The historical backgrounds of Georgia and Azerbaijan, both previously part of Iran, make these two countries likely targets of the Iranian intelligence services. In Azerbaijan, 95 percent of the population is Muslim, and 85 percent of Muslims are Shi'a. This makes Azerbaijan one of the few countries with a majority Shi'a population. In addition, cultural similarities between Iranians and Azeris, along with a shared language between Iranian-Azeris and Azerbaijanis, bring the people of both countries closer and enable the Iranian government to exercise influence over Azerbaijan. However, a secret relationship between Azerbaijan and Israel has developed during the past decade. In effect, Azerbaijan has become a strategic ally of Israel because it has allegedly given Israel access to its air bases near Iran's border. Such an allegation carries serious implications because one of the main constraints on Israel's capability to strike Iran has been the issue of distance. This development also provides Israel with a possible platform for covert activities in Iran and induces Iran to engage in covert activities in Azerbaijan.<sup>97</sup>

The exposure of 11 alleged Iranian spies in Turkey in late August 2012 indicates the presence of MOIS in this country. A police investigation turned up documents and records of phone conversations that the operatives had had with Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militants. Turkey's diplomatic relations with Iran have been strained for some time due in part to differing

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<sup>95</sup> “Germany's Security Report on Iran's Intelligence Activities in Germany” [گزارش امنیتی آلمان از فعالیت های اطلاعاتی] [جمهوری اسلامی در آلمان], *Deutsche Welle* [Germany], January 7, 2011, <http://www.dw.de/dw/article/0,,15204059,00.html> (accessed May 30, 2012).

<sup>96</sup> Firoozbakht, “The Capital City of Austria, a Nst for Tehran's Regime.”

<sup>97</sup> “Religion,” *Azerbaijan Presidential Library*, August 20, 1992, 2, [http://files.preslib.az/projects/remz/pdf\\_en/atrdin.pdf](http://files.preslib.az/projects/remz/pdf_en/atrdin.pdf) (accessed September 5, 2012); “Azerbaijani-Israeli Relations and the Iranian Threat,” *Daily Motion*, March 30, 2012, [http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xps339\\_azerbaijani-israeli-relations-and-the-iranian-threat\\_news](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xps339_azerbaijani-israeli-relations-and-the-iranian-threat_news) (accessed September 10, 2012).

stances on the current Syrian crisis. The covert activities of the Iranian agents could be the cause of increased PKK military action against the Turkish government.<sup>98</sup>

## 18. FINANCES AND FUND-RAISING

MOIS is a governmental organization. Therefore, its budget is provided by the Islamic Republic of Iran's government and is highly secretive. No public or reliable information is available about funding for MOIS.

## 19. FOREIGN AFFILIATIONS AND SUPPORT

It is believed that MOIS cooperates with other intelligence agencies. One of these agencies is the Russian SVR, the KGB's replacement. Despite the two agencies' dissimilar doctrines and the complicated relationship between Iran and Russia in the past, they managed to cooperate in the 1990s, based not only on their intention of limiting U.S. political clout in Central Asia but also on their mutual efforts to stifle prospective ethnic turbulence. The SVR trained not only hundreds of Iranian agents but also numerous Russian agents inside Iran to equip Iranian intelligence with signals equipment in their headquarters compound. It is unclear whether this relationship is ongoing and whether the two intelligence agencies continue to cooperate.<sup>99</sup>

Besides the above-mentioned links, Iran has been cooperating with al-Qaeda as well, although the ideological differences between Iran and al-Qaeda limit their cooperation and make it potentially unstable. Cooperation between Iran and al-Qaeda is based on their shared opposition to U.S. hegemony in the region—Iraq and Afghanistan, chiefly—and dates to the 1990s. This relationship continued after 9/11, on the basis of which Iran allowed a number of al-Qaeda members to cross the border from Afghanistan into Iran. The fact that al-Qaeda operates in many countries helps Iran achieve its goal of diverting U.S. attention away from Iran's immediate neighborhood. In return, al-Qaeda uses Iran as a place where its facilitators connect al-Qaeda's senior leadership with regional affiliates. In 1995 and again in 1996, Osama Bin

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<sup>98</sup> "Iranian Spy Ring Exposed in Turkey, Dealing Blow to Ties Between Neighbors," *Today's Zaman* [Turkey], August 29, 2012, <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-290814-iranian-spy-ring-exposed-in-turkey-dealing-blow-to-ties-between-neighbors.html> (accessed September 10, 2012); "Escalation of the Conflicts Between PKK and Turkish Military in South-Eastern Turkey," [تشديد درگيري ميان پ کا کا با نظاميان در جنوب شرقی ترکیه], *Euro News (Persian)*, August 14, 2012, <http://persian.euronews.com/2012/08/14/upsurge-in-pkk-violence-as-anniversary-nears/> (accessed September 10, 2012).

<sup>99</sup> Wege, "Iranian Intelligence Organizations," 288; "Brief on Iran," *Iran-e-Azad*, September 12, 1995, <http://www.iran-e-azad.org/english/boi/02500912.95> (accessed April 11, 2012). This Web site is affiliated with the



Seif al-Adl

Source:

<http://www.nctc.gov/>

Laden approached MOIS and asked it to join forces against the United States. Bin Laden's phone records, obtained by U.S. investigators working on the U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, show that 10 percent of phone calls made by Bin Laden and his lieutenants were to Iran. Seif al-Adl, one of al-Qaeda's top-ranking leaders at the time, was the liaison between Iranians and al-Qaeda; he coordinated meetings with the IRGC's leaders and MOIS officials.<sup>100</sup> Since Bin Laden's death in May 2011, al-Qaeda's new leadership has refrained from clarifying its position on cooperation with the Iranian government.

## 20. USE OF COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA

The Iranian government uses the media for domestic consumption and for dissemination of its propaganda. Given that MOIS operates covertly, it does not share information or discuss its missions with the public unless the regime seeks to publicize its efforts through the media to gain the public's support.

One way the Iranian government does this is through its Web site *Iran Didban* (Iran Watch) ([www.irandidban.com](http://www.irandidban.com)). This Web site provides news in three languages—English, Farsi, and French. Another Web site allegedly affiliated with MOIS is *Habilian Foundation* ([www.habilian.ir](http://www.habilian.ir)). This Web site presents its pro-Iranian government news in three languages, Arabic, English, and Farsi.<sup>101</sup>

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MEK group. "Evidence of Intelligence Collaboration between KGB and Iranian Regime," *YouTube*, September 24, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eS3XbJ-rx1o> (accessed May 29, 2012).

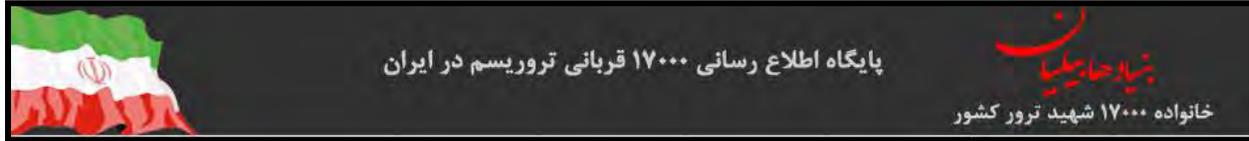
<sup>100</sup> Jones, "Iran Insights—Iran's Intelligence and Security Apparatus," 12; Matthew Levitt, "New Arenas for Iranian-Sponsored Terrorism: The Arab-Israeli Heartland," *The Washington Institute*, February 22, 2002, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/new-arenas-for-iranian-sponsored-terrorism-the-arab-israeli-heartland> (accessed June 13, 2012); "The Al-Qa'ida-Qods Force Nexus," *Kronos Advisory*, April 29, 2011, 11 and 18, [http://thomaspmbarnett.squarespace.com/storage/Kronos\\_AQ.QF.Nexus.globlogization.pdf](http://thomaspmbarnett.squarespace.com/storage/Kronos_AQ.QF.Nexus.globlogization.pdf) (accessed June 13, 2012).

<sup>101</sup> "Hadi Ameri, the Leader of the Badr Brigade, Announced that the Mojahedin Must Get out of Iraq" [هادی عامری] *People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran*, November 21, 2007, <http://www.mojahedin.org/pages/detailsNews.aspx?newsid=2231> (accessed September 10, 2012).



*Iran Didban*, the Web site of the Ministry of Intelligence and Security

Source: <http://www.irandidban.com/>



*Habilian Foundation*, a Web site allegedly affiliated with the Ministry of Intelligence and Security.

Source: <http://www.habilian.ir/fa/>

MOIS cooperates with the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) organization for its disinformation campaigns and for dissemination of its propaganda. The IRIB is a state-controlled television and radio organization whose head is appointed by the Supreme Leader of Iran. MOIS, through IRIB, produces and broadcasts documentary films of successful operations that MOIS then broadcasts on national television. For instance, after the capture of Abdolmalek Rigi, MOIS's coverage of the operation was unprecedented. The minister of intelligence and security appeared on national television to explain the effort undertaken by the ministry. He tied Rigi to the CIA by showing a picture of Rigi, allegedly at an American base in Afghanistan.<sup>102</sup>

An example of the use of the media by MOIS in a psychological operation for domestic consumption is a 2011 documentary film called "A Diamond for Deception."<sup>103</sup> This documentary is about an IRGC officer, Mohammad-Reza Madhi, who infiltrated the opposition outside Iran on behalf of MOIS and offered help to overthrow the government of Iran by using



Photo taken by MOIS of Rigi, allegedly at a U.S. military installation before capture.

Source: <http://www.uskowioniran.com>

<sup>102</sup> "The Jundullah Leader Abdolmalek Rigui [Rigi] Arrested by Iranian Authorities," *YouTube*, February 23, 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThPMpM96mgQ&feature=related> (accessed June 11, 2012).

<sup>103</sup> To see the full version of A Diamond for Deception, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4zsURpx0p-I&feature=related>.



Mohammad-Reza Madhi

Source: <http://www.rajanews.com/>

former IRGC officers in Iran who had defected. As shown in the documentary, Madhi went back to Iran, and MOIS later publicly revealed the plan as a successful effect to infiltrate Iran's enemies.

The government took enormous advantage of this documentary to show how the United States and Israel conspired with Iranian dissidents abroad to oppose the Revolution. The documentary

indicated that the MOIS agent met with U.S. Vice President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Hillary

Clinton, as well as with Denis Ross, a special adviser for the Persian Gulf and Southwest Asia (including Iran). Iranian media claimed that the infiltration by MOIS proves Iran's intelligence superiority and demonstrates the failed attempts made by Western intelligence services to rally the Iranian opposition against the Islamic Republic. Broadcast on the eve of the second anniversary of Iran's 2009 presidential election, the "exposure" was used to portray the reformist opposition as being in league with the U.S. administration and Western intelligence services.<sup>104</sup>

Iran also arrested an alleged U.S. spy in December 2011. National television broadcast the confession of the U.S. agent, a Marine of Iranian ancestry. MOIS asserted that "this CIA agent with Iranian nationality began his mission after receiving training in weapons use." MOIS claims that the agent was supposed to start his mission from Bagram, an American military base in Afghanistan, but that Iranian intelligence agents tricked him into entering Iran and later arrested him. An Iranian court convicted him of spying and sentenced him to death. He is currently imprisoned in Iran.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>104</sup> "Iran's Ministry of Intelligence: U.S.-Led Exile Government Plot Foiled," Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Israeli Intelligence and Heritage Commemoration Center, June 16, 2011, <http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/17889> (accessed May 29, 2012). This Israeli Web site provides reports in regards to terrorist actions of anti-Israeli groups such as Hezbollah, the Quds Force, Hamas, etc.

<sup>105</sup> Hashem Kalantari and Robin Pomeroy, "Iran Says Arrests Another CIA Spy," Reuters, December 17, 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/12/17/us-iran-usa-spy-idUSTRE7BG0CL20111217> (accessed April 11, 2012); "America's Special Effort for the Release of a Captured Spy" [تلاش های ویژه آمریکا برای آزادی جاسوس زندانی] *Ghatreh* [Tehran], August 31, 2012, <http://www.ghatreh.com/news/nn10885851/%D8%AA%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B4-%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D9%88%DB%8C%DA%98%D9%87-%D8%A2%D9%85%D8%B1%DB%8C%DA%A9%D8%A7-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%A2%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%AF%DB%8C-%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B3-%D8%B2%D9%86%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C> (accessed September 6, 2012); "Amir Mirzaei Hekmati Is Sentenced to Death" [امیر میرزایی حکمتی به اعدام محکوم شد] *Ghatreh* [Tehran], January 10, 2012, <http://www.ghatreh.com>

In yet another instance of efforts in the media, on August 5, 2012, IRIB broadcasted a program provided by MOIS on national television about the alleged Israeli operatives who had assassinated Iranian nuclear scientists. The program attempted to demonstrate the savagery of the operatives who were executing Moussad's plots. However, the identities of the operatives who confessed on national television is still questionable. By resorting to such a presentation, MOIS tries to deceive public opinion and to make the Islamic Republic look innocent in the eyes of the Iranian people and the world.<sup>106</sup>

The Iranian government's intention in using the media, as noted in the cases above, is most likely to gain public support, to create a sense of national unity among Iranians, and to rally them against the Western countries that are concerned about Iran's nuclear program and acts of terrorism.

It appears that MOIS does not have an official Web site. MOIS publicizes itself mostly on national television and on the radio or through press releases and news Web sites.

## 21. TERRORIST THREAT ASSESSMENT

Iranians engage in two types of terrorist attacks. One type includes sabotage, espionage, and bombing of target locations, while the other involves the assassination of dissidents of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Both are perpetrated inside and outside of Iran.

Since the creation of the Quds Force in 1990, MOIS has mostly concentrated on monitoring and assassinating Iranian dissidents inside and outside of the country. The "Chain Murders" in Iran and the assassination of Iranian dissidents in the Mykonos incident in 1992, along with other assassinations, support this view. The Quds Force is in charge of covert military and paramilitary actions outside of Iran's territory, including the assassination of foreign individuals, such as Israeli officials, as well as training of militant groups and gathering of information in regions of interest to Iran.

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com/news/nm9037978/%D8%A7%D9%85%DB%8C%D8%B1-%D9%85%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%B2%D8%A7%DB%8C%DB%8C-%D8%AD%DA%A9%D9%85%D8%AA%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%85%D8%AD%DA%A9%D9%88%D9%85 (accessed September 6, 2012). To see the full version of the confession on Iranian national television, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8IOiSj2QTt8&feature=related>.

<sup>106</sup> Iraj Mesdaghi, "Pay Attention to the Innocent Suspects of the 'Nuclear Experts' Assassination" [به فریاد متهمان] بیگناه ترور «متخصصان هسته‌ای» پرسید, Gooya News, August 21, 2012, <http://news.gooya.com/politics/archives/2012/08/145756.php> (accessed September 12, 2012).

The responsibilities of MOIS and the Quds Force clearly overlap. Therefore, it is necessary for the two organizations to collaborate closely. For instance, the Quds Force is responsible for collecting intelligence in foreign countries. It is assumed that the Quds Force reports its intelligence-gathering activities and their results to MOIS.

It appears that the number of assassinations of dissidents has been reduced after exposure of the “Chain Murders” for which MOIS publicly took responsibility. Furthermore, the authorities strictly control disclosure of sensitive information about MOIS operations because any information about them might compromise the entire leadership of the Islamic Republic. Even so, MOIS can be expected to continue to target dissidents for assassination if it decides they constitute a real threat to the Islamic Republic.

## 22. INFORMATION GAPS (IN SOURCES)

Because MOIS does not have an official Web site, collecting data about its organizational structure, its personnel and their duties, and how it operates is difficult. There is no information about some of the current high officials and directors of the various MOIS directorates in open-source materials, and it is not clear who issues directions to MOIS or how those directions are carried out.

Another important question about MOIS that is not well answered in open-source material is the ministry's relationship with the IRGC and how they interact. Observers speculate that MOIS and the IRGC have disagreements. If this allegation is true, available information does not clearly indicate the source or the degree of the disagreement.

## 23. KEY HISTORICAL EVENTS AND SETBACKS

—**July 1980**: The discovery of a coup (Nojeh Coup) in 1980 by SAVAMA, the predecessor of MOIS, is considered one of the main operations of Iranian intelligence after the Revolution. Even though the intelligence structure of Iran was young at the time, agents had discovered that a number of air force officers were plotting to overthrow the Islamic government. SAVAMA, the intelligence service of Iran at that time, identified the officers involved and arrested them.<sup>107</sup>

—**September 1994**: A bombing at the Israeli-Argentine Mutual Association (Asociación Mutual Israelita-Argentina—AMIA) community center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, killed 85

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<sup>107</sup> Amin Asadi, “The Nojeh Coup” [کودتای نوژه], *Day News* [Tehran], March 25, 2012, <http://daynews.ir/news/24991> (accessed April 11, 2012); “Untold [Incidents] About the Ministry of Intelligence,” [ناگفته هایی از وزارت اطلاعات].

and wounded 300. The attack was the deadliest terrorist attack in Argentine history. Responsibility for the attack was attributed to Iran. At the time, the Quds Force did not exist as an organized group. However, the involvement of the IRGC in this incident is undeniable, as the Argentine investigation showed. MOIS most likely was part of the operation.<sup>108</sup>



AMIA Bombing in Buenos Aires  
Source: <http://www.jpost.com>



Mykonos Incident in Berlin  
Source: <http://www.radiozamaneh.com>

—**March 1996:** After the investigation of the Mykonos incident in Berlin in September 1992, the German federal prosecutor issued an arrest warrant for Ali Fallahian, the Iranian minister of intelligence and security, because of his order to assassinate Iranian Kurdish dissidents. Later, in November 1996, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, President Ali-Akbar Hashemi

Rafsanjani, Fallahian, and Ali Akbar Velayati, Iran's foreign minister, were also charged. In April 1997, the German court issued its verdict and condemned the Iranian officials.<sup>109</sup>

—**1997–1998:** A series of murders of Iranian intellectuals who were opposed to or critical of the Islamic Republic shocked the Iranian public. The assassination of Dariush Forouhar, leader of Hezb-e-Mellat-e-Iran (Nation of Iran Party), and his wife along with two authors received significant attention and led the Iranian Association of Writers to ask the government to find and prosecute the perpetrators of the crime. After an investigation, then Deputy Minister of Intelligence and Security Saeed Emami was arrested and imprisoned along with a number of MOIS agents on charges of involvement in the assassinations. He reportedly committed suicide in prison. The ministry was forced to issue a statement admitting its own agents' involvement in

<sup>108</sup> "Investigation Finds Iranian, Hezbollah and Syrian Involvement in 1994 Bombing of Argentine Jewish Community Center," The Anti-Defamation League, October 2003, [http://www.adl.org/Terror/terror\\_buenos\\_aries\\_attack.asp](http://www.adl.org/Terror/terror_buenos_aries_attack.asp) (accessed June 11, 2012).

<sup>109</sup> "Masters of Disinformation."

these cases— the first time that the Iranian security apparatus took responsibility for its actions.<sup>110</sup>

The ministry's statement ran partly as follows: "The despicable and abhorrent recent murders in Tehran are sign[s] of a chronic conspiracy and a threat to the national security. . . . Unfortunately, a small number of irresponsible, misguided, headstrong, and obstinate staff within the Ministry of Intelligence [and Security], who are no doubt under the influence of rogue undercover agents and acting towards the objectives of foreign and estranged sources, committed these criminal acts."<sup>111</sup>



Abdolmalek Rigi

Source:

<http://tribune.com.pk/>

—**February 2010:** One of the most successful operations by MOIS, which received widespread coverage inside and outside of Iran, was the capture of Abdolmalek Rigi, the leader of the Baluchi Jundollah, an Islamist Sunni militant organization, in February 2010. For years Rigi had masterfully eluded capture, staying for the most part in the lawless regions of western Pakistan. His brutal murders of local people in southeast Iran made him the Iranian government's most-wanted person. After killing one of the preeminent commanders of the IRGC, the Islamic Republic seriously undertook to capture him. MOIS tracked him and kept him under

surveillance, and when he was on a flight from Dubai to Kyrgyzstan, flying over Iranian soil, MOIS agents forced the plane to land inside Iran and arrested Rigi. He confessed in a program broadcast on national television that he was cooperating with the CIA and Mossad and was subsequently executed.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Sahimi, "The Chain Murders: Killing Dissidents and Intellectuals 1988–1998," 2011.

<sup>111</sup> Sahimi, "The Chain Murders: Killing Dissidents and Intellectuals 1988–1998," 2011; Sahimi, "The Chain Murders," 2009.

<sup>112</sup> "Abdolmalek Rigi Is Killed in a Daring Intelligence Operation" [عبدالملك ريگي در يك عمليات جسورانه اطلاعاتي دستگير شد], Raja News [Tehran], February 23, 2010, <http://www.rajanews.com/detail.asp?id=45150> (accessed April 11, 2012); "Iran Arrests Jundallah Ringleader, Rigi," *Press TV* [Tehran], February 23, 2010, <http://edition.presstv.ir/detail/119269.html> (accessed April 11, 2012).

## 24. CHRONOLOGY OF SIGNIFICANT TERRORIST ATTACKS

MOIS has been involved in a considerable number of assassinations. Only the most significant ones are included in the following tables. It appears that the number of assassinations declined in the 2000s.<sup>113</sup>

**Table 2. Assassinations Outside Iran**

Date	Name of Target	Location	Target's Background
December 1979	Shahryar Shafiq	Paris, France	He was the shah's nephew.
July 1980	Ali Tabatabaei	Bethesda, MD, U.S.	He was the press attaché in Iran's embassy in the United States under the shah.
February 1984	Gholam-Ali Oveissi	Paris, France	He was a hard-line army commander and military governor of Tehran under the shah. He was assassinated with his brother Gholam-Hussein.
January 1987	Ali Akbar Mohammadi	Hamburg, Germany	He was a former pilot for Ali-Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.
May 1987	Hamidreza Chitgar	Vienna, Austria	He was first secretary of Hezb Kaar (Labor Party).
July 1989	Abdulahman Ghassemlou	Vienna, Austria	He was the leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI). He was assassinated with three of his aides when he traveled to Vienna to meet with Iranian government representatives for negotiations.
August 1989	Gholam Keshavarz	Cyprus	He was a communist and an opponent of the Islamic Republic.
April 1990	Kazem Rajavi	Geneva, Switzerland	He was the brother of Massoud Rajavi, the leader of Mojahedin-e Khalgh Organization (MEK).
July 1990	Ali Kashefpoor	Turkey	He was a member of the Central Committee of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI).

<sup>113</sup> Sahimi, "The Chain Murders," 2009.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Name of Target</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Target's Background</b>
September 1990	Effat Qazi	Sweden	She was a daughter of Gazi Mohammed, the Kurdish leader and president of the Mahabad Republic (a short-lived Kurdish movement that sought Kurdish independence within the bounds of the Iranian state).
October 1990	Cyrus Elahi	Paris, France	He was a member of the opposition monarchist group Derafsh-e Kaviani (Flag of Freedom).
April 1991	Abdolrahman Boroumand	Paris, France	He was a member of the Executive Committee of the National Resistance Movement of Iran that Dr. Shapour Bakhtiar had founded in France.
August 1991	Shapour Bakhtiar	Paris, France	He was the last prime minister under the shah.
September 1991	Saeed Yazdanpanah	Iraq	He was a member of the Revolutionary Union of Kurdish People. He was stabbed to death along with his secretary, Cyrus Katibeh.
August 1992	Fereydoun Farrokhzad,	Bonn, Germany	He was a popular Iranian singer and showman who openly criticized the Islamic Republic.
September 1992	Sadeq Sharafkandi	Berlin, Germany	He was the leader of the KDPI, murdered along with three Kurdish aides, Homayoun Ardalan, Fattah Abdollahi, and Nouri Dehkordi (the Mykonos Incident).
March 1993	Heybatollah Narou'i	Karachi, Pakistan	He and Delaviz Narou'i were two chiefs of the Narou'i tribe in Baluchistan Province.
May 1996	Reza Mazlouman	Paris, France	He was a criminology professor at the University of Tehran before the 1979 Revolution and was deputy minister of education under the shah.

Many writers, activists, and intellectuals who had been missing were later found dead. The table below contains information about some of these victims who are believed to have been killed by MOIS.

**Table 3. Assassinations Inside Iran**

Date	Name of Target	Target's Background
November 1988	Kazem Sami	He was an Islamic nationalist and physician who had founded, before the Revolution, Jonbesh-e Enghelabi Mardom Iran (Revolutionary Movement of the Iranian People).
Fall of 1990	Sayyed Khosro Besharati	He was a religious intellectual who was critical of certain Shi'a beliefs.
June 1994	Father Mehdi Dibadj	He was a Muslim who had converted to Christianity before the 1979 Revolution.
Early 1994	Father T. Mikaelian	An explosion in July 1994 in the Shrine of Imam Reza (the 8th Shi'a Imam) was blamed on three MEK members. They were arrested and confessed on national TV that they murdered Father Mikaelian, who was the head of the Protestant Church in Iran. Many Iranians found those confessions hard to believe.
August 1994	Shamseddin Amir-Alaei	He was a nationalist figure and opposition member. He died in a car accident, which is believed to have been intentional.
May 1994	Zohreh Izadi	She was a political activist.
November 1994	Ali Akbar Saidi Sirjani	He was a famous poet, writer, and journalist.
1995	Abdolaziz Bajd	He was a professor at Zahedan University (in the province of Sistan and Baluchistan), where he delivered a speech critical of the TV series "Imam Ali."
January 1995	Hossein Barazandeh	He was an engineer and a close aide of Dr. Ali Shariati, the distinguished sociologist and Islamic scholar.
February 1995	Molla Farough Farsad	He was a Sunni cleric in Sanandaj (capital of Kurdistan province). First he was exiled to Ardebil, and later his body was found showing signs of torture.
March 1995	Ahmad Khomeini	He was the son of Ayatollah Khomeini. After the death of his father, Ahmad Khomeini had started criticizing the government. It is reported that Mohammad Niazi, the military prosecutor who handled Saeed Emami's case in 1999, told Hassan Khomeini, Ahmad's son, that Emami had killed his father. <sup>114</sup>
October 1995	Ahmad Mir Alaei	He was a writer, translator, intellectual, and signatory of the writers' open letter. <sup>115</sup>
May 1996	Ghazaleh Alizadeh	She was a novelist.

<sup>114</sup> امامی: فلاحیان به من دستور حذف سید [ "Emami: Fallahian Gave Me the Order to Eliminate Seyyed Ahmad Khomeini" ], *Rah-e-Sabz (Jaras)* [U.S.], May 1, 2012, <http://www.rahesabz.net/story/52633/> (accessed September 4, 2012). Jaras is the news Web site of the Iranian supporters of the Green Movement.

<sup>115</sup> On October 15, 1994, 134 writers published an open letter in the form of an article entitled "We Are the Writers." In it they demanded that the government end censorship and called for an autonomous writers' association.

Date	Name of Target	Target's Background
November 1996	Molla Mohammad Rabiei	He was Kermanshah's Friday prayer leader who reportedly died of a heart attack. However, it turned out a few years later that he was injected with air, which caused him to have a heart attack. <sup>116</sup>
November 1996	Siamak Sanjari	He was murdered on his wedding night. He had claimed that he was well-informed about former Minister of Intelligence and Security Ali Fallahian's alleged crimes.
November 1996	Abdolaziz Kazemi	He was a Ph.D. student, a lecturer at the University of Sistan and Baluchestan, and a Sunni cleric who advocated for the rights of ethnic and religious minorities.
March 1997	Ebrahim Zalzadeh	He was editor of the monthly literary magazine <i>Me'yaar</i> (Criterion). He was arrested by agents of MOIS and taken to a "safe house." His family was ordered not to reveal his arrest or he would be killed. His body was found half-buried outside Tehran.
August 1998	Pirouz Davani	He was a writer and political activist who went missing. His body was never found.
November 1998	Dariush and Parvaneh Forouhar	Dariush Forouhar was the leader of Mellat (Nation) Party, a small party that was part of the National Front, the political group of Dr. Mohammad Mosaddegh.
November 1998	Majid Sharif	He was a writer and translator of books.
December 1998	Mohammad Mokhtari	He was a writer, mythologist, journalist, and member of the organizing committee of the Iranian Writers' Association.
December 1998	Mohammad Jafar Pouyandeh	He was a writer and translator.

<sup>116</sup> Edris Amiri, "Azar 12, Anniversary of the Martyrdom of Allameh Mohammad Rabiei" [ ۱۲ آذر ماه سالگرد شهادت ] [ علامه محمد ربیعی رحمة الله علیه ], *Sistan & Baluchistan* 88[i.e., 1388, *Persian calendar*] *Economic Students* [Iranian blog], December 3, 2010 <http://economic88usb.blogfa.com/post-61.aspx> (accessed September 5, 2012).

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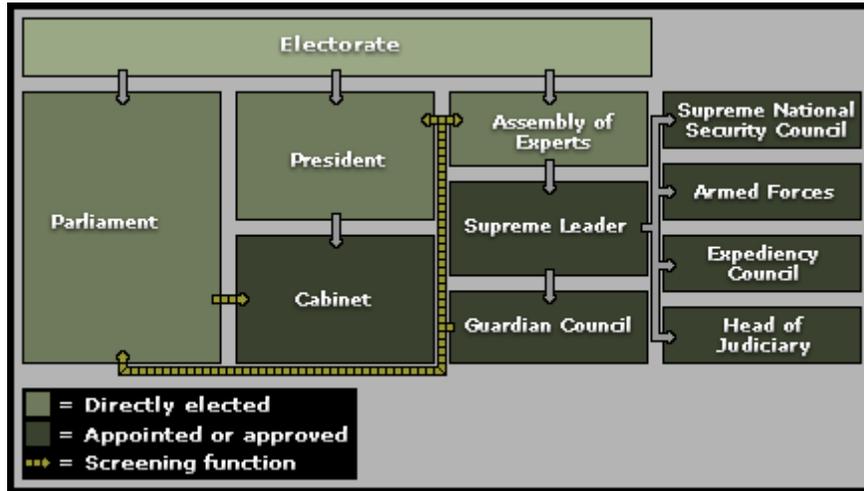
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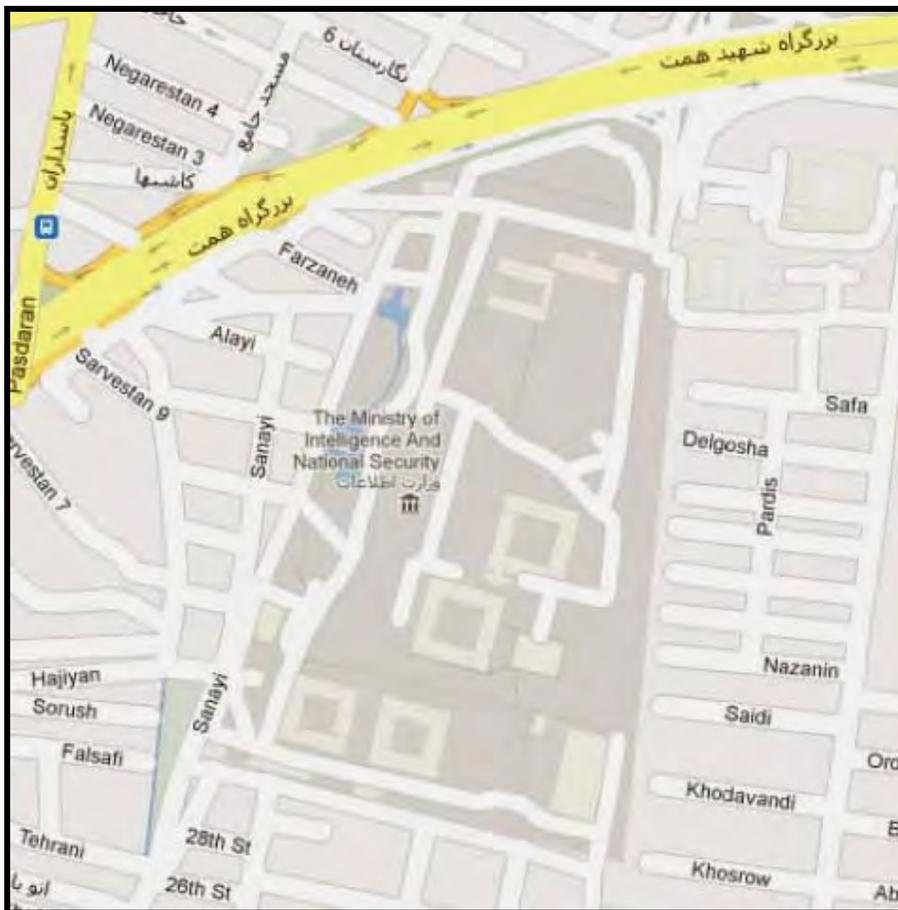
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26. APPENDIX. Charts, Maps, and Photos



**Figure 4. Government of Iran**  
 Source: <http://www.iranchamber.com>

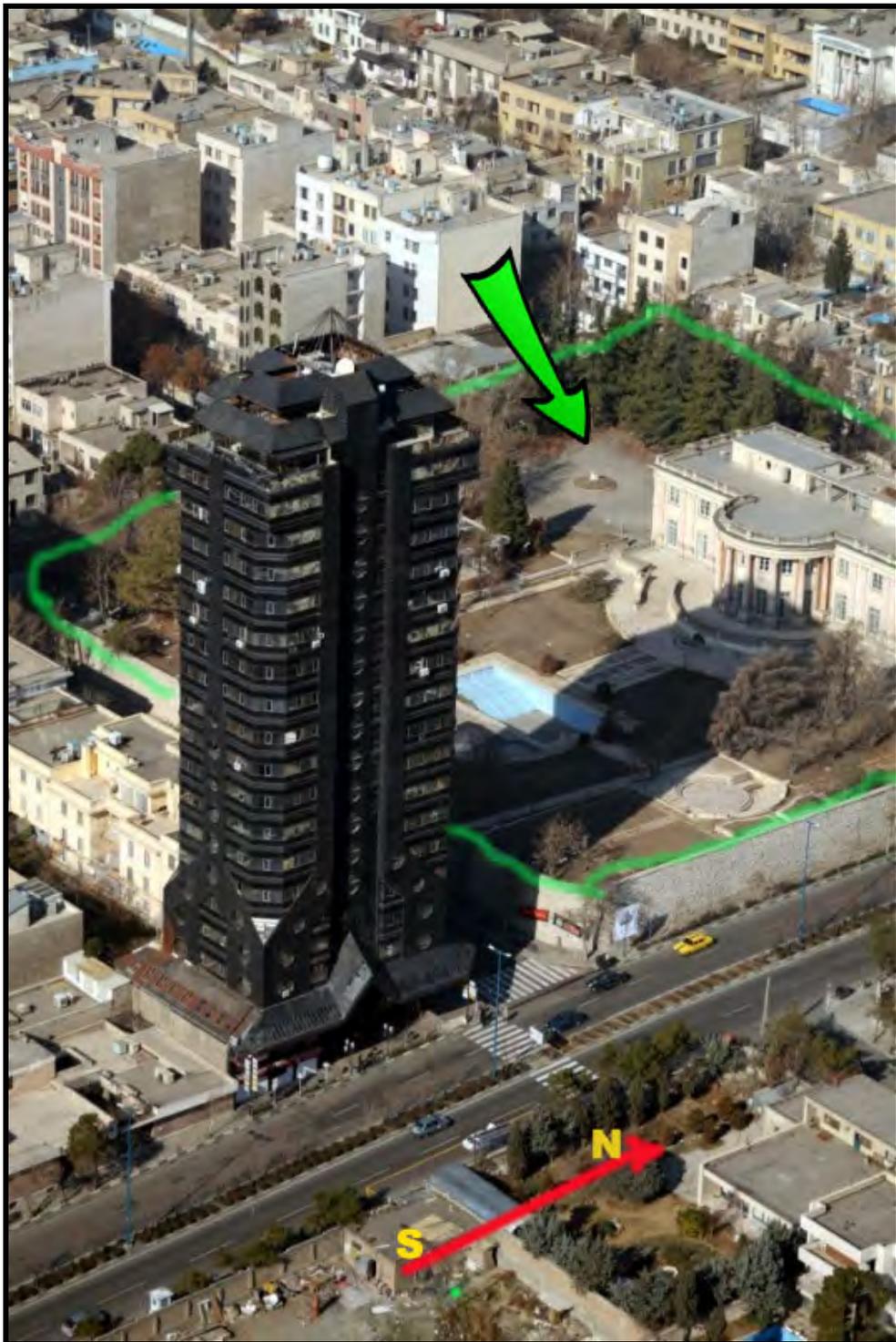


Location of the Ministry of Intelligence and Security Headquarters  
 in Central Tehran

Source: <http://maps.google.com>



Satellite Photo of the Ministry of Intelligence and Security Headquarters  
Source: <http://www.zobin-cost.blogspot.com>



One of the Ministry of Intelligence and Security’s Buildings in Tehran  
Source: [http://www.zobin-cost.blogspot.com/2009/09/blog-post\\_10.html](http://www.zobin-cost.blogspot.com/2009/09/blog-post_10.html)