

Treasury Sanctions Iranian Intelligence Network Targeting Iranian-American Activist in the United States

September 3, 2021

WASHINGTON — Today, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) is designating four Iranian intelligence operatives who targeted a U.S. citizen in the United States and Iranian dissidents in other countries as part of a wide-ranging campaign to silence critics of the Iranian government. Senior intelligence official Alireza Shahvaroghi Farahani led a network that plotted the kidnapping of a U.S. journalist and human rights activist, a failed plot that led to the indictment of members of the network in late July. Consistent with the well-documented role of the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) in domestic repression, this operation demonstrates the pernicious role of Iran's intelligence apparatus in targeting Iranians abroad, to include brazen attempts to return dissidents to Iran.

“The Iranian government's kidnapping plot is another example of its continued attempt to silence critical voices, wherever they may be,” said Director of the Office of Foreign Assets Control, Andrea M. Gacki. “Targeting dissidents abroad demonstrates that the government's repression extends far beyond Iran's borders.”

The United States will continue to hold accountable authoritarian governments that resort to transnational repression, whether to target dissidents, journalists, or opposition leaders. These actions threaten the rules-based international order and undermine collective peace and security.

Today's action is being taken pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13553. MOIS was previously designated pursuant to E.O. 13553 in 2012 for being responsible for, or complicit in, the commission of serious human rights abuses against Iranian people since June 12, 2009. MOIS has played a key role in the Iranian government's brutal human rights abuses against Iranians. Iranian repression, often carried out at the hands of MOIS, has also stretched beyond Iran's borders, with a string of similar plots in Europe and elsewhere.

U.S. KIDNAPPING PLOT

Senior Iran-based intelligence official **Alireza Shahvaroghi Farahani** leads a network of intelligence operatives, including **Mahmoud Khazein**, **Kiya Sadeghi**, and **Omid Noori**, tasked with targeting Iranian dissidents in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United Arab Emirates. **Farahani**, **Khazein**, **Sadeghi**, and **Noori** planned the abduction of a New York City-based Iranian-American activist by utilizing the services of a private investigator to conduct surveillance on the victim and laundered money from Iran to the United States to pay for this surveillance. **Sadeghi** acted as the network's primary point of contact with the private investigator in the United States and researched options to abduct the victim via military-style speedboats out of New York City for transport to Venezuela. Noori facilitated payment to the investigator, while **Khazein** researched travel routes from the victim's residence to potential exfiltration points. Farahani, Khazein, Sadeghi, and Noori have been indicted in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York for conspiracy related to kidnapping, sanctions violations, bank and wire fraud, and money laundering.

Alireza Shahvaroghi Farahani, **Mahmoud Khazein**, **Kiya Sadeghi**, and **Omid Noori** are being designated today pursuant to E.O. 13553 for having acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, the MOIS.

SANCTIONS IMPLICATIONS

All property and interests in property of these designated persons that are in the United States or in the possession or control of U.S. persons must be blocked and reported to OFAC. OFAC's regulations generally prohibit all dealings by U.S. persons or within (or transiting) the United States that involve any property or interests in property of blocked or designated persons.

In addition, non-U.S. persons that engage in certain transactions with the persons designated today may themselves be exposed to designation. Furthermore, any foreign financial institution that knowingly conducts or facilitates a significant transaction for or on behalf of the persons designated today could be subject to U.S. correspondent or payable-through account sanctions.

[View identifying information on the individuals and entities designated today.](#)