

## Treasury Designates Iranian Regime Operatives Involved in Assassination Plots in the United States and Abroad

June 1, 2023

WASHINGTON — Today, the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) is designating members and affiliates of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and its external operations arm, the IRGC-Qods Force (IRGC-QF), who have participated in a series of terrorist plots including assassination plots targeting former United States government officials, dual U.S. and Iranian nationals, and Iranian dissidents. This action targets three Iran- and Türkiye-based individuals and a company affiliated with the IRGC-QF, along with two senior officials of the IRGC’s Intelligence Organization (IRGC-IO), who have been involved in plotting external lethal operations against civilians including journalists and activists.

“The United States remains focused on disrupting plots by the IRGC and its Qods Force, both of which have engaged in numerous assassination attempts and other acts of violence and intimidation against those they deem enemies of the Iranian regime,” said Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Brian E. Nelson. “We will continue to expose and disrupt these terrorist activities and efforts to silence opposing voices, particularly those who advocate for respect for the universal human rights and freedoms of the Iranian people.”

Today’s actions are being taken pursuant to the counterterrorism sanctions authority Executive Order (E.O.) 13224, as amended. Treasury has consistently acted to address external terrorist plotting by the IRGC-QF and Iran’s intelligence service, notably: the October 2011 designation of senior IRGC-QF officials involved in an [Iranian plot](#) to assassinate the Saudi Arabian Ambassador to the United States; the December 2020 designation of an individual involved in the IRGC-QF’s efforts to plan and [execute operations in the Middle East and the United States](#); and the September 2021 [designation of 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.

### IRGC-QF OPERATIVES

IRGC-QF official **Mohammad Reza Ansari (Ansari)**, a longtime member of the group, has supported the IRGC-QF’s operations in Syria. Ansari is a member of an IRGC-QF external operations

unit tasked with undertaking covert operations abroad, including planning and conducting intelligence and lethal operations against Iranian dissidents and other non-Iranian nationals in the United States, the Middle East, Europe, and Africa. Ansari, with the support of **Shahram Poursafi (Poursafi)**, an Iranian national, planned and attempted to assassinate two former U.S. government officials. The [Department of Justice indicted Poursafi](#) on August 10, 2022, for providing and attempting to provide material support to a transnational murder plot. Poursafi has also been involved in IRGC-QF operational planning and surveillance operations in the Caucasus region.

Mohammad Reza Ansari and Shahram Poursafi are being designated pursuant to E.O. 13224, as amended, for having acted for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, the IRGC-QF.

**Hossein Hafez Amini (Amini)**, a dual Iranian and Turkish national based in Türkiye, is an associate of the IRGC-QF operating as part of a network in Türkiye. Amini uses his connections in the aviation industry and his Türkiye-based airline, **Rey Havacilik Ithalat Ihracat Sanayi Ve Ticaret Anonim Sirketi (Rey Airlines)**, to assist the IRGC-QF's covert operations, including kidnapping and assassination plots targeting Iranian regime dissidents in Türkiye. Additionally, Amini has leveraged his Türkiye-based network to support the IRGC-QF through aircraft charters and smuggling operations. Amini and Rey Airlines also previously transferred aircraft to Iran's [Pouya Air](#), an IRGC-affiliated Iranian airline designated since March 2012 pursuant to E.O. 13224 for acting for or on behalf of the IRGC-QF.

Hossein Hafez Amini is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13224, as amended, for having materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of, the IRGC-QF. Rey Airlines is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13224, as amended, for being owned, controlled, or directed by, directly or indirectly, Hossein Hafez Amini.

## **IRGC'S INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION**

Since its inception in 2009, the IRGC-IO has established itself as a domestic and international unit focused on targeting journalists, activists, dual Iranian nationals, and others who oppose the abuses and human rights violations perpetrated by the Iranian regime. Former IRGC-IO Counterespionage Department Chief **Rouhollah Bazghandi (Bazghandi)** has been involved in planning and overseeing IRGC-IO operations in Iraq and Syria as well as lethal operations against Israeli nationals. Bazghandi has also been involved in plots to assassinate journalists and Israeli nationals in Istanbul.

The IRGC-IO Foreign Intelligence Chief **Reza Seraj (Seraj)** has been involved in failed IRGC-IO operations in Asia and in intelligence operations targeting U.S. citizens. Seraj previously led the

IRGC-IO Special Operations Division, which is focused on special activity against Israel, where he was responsible for a series of failed operations targeting Israeli nationals.

Rouhallah Bazghandi and Reza Seraj are being designated pursuant to E.O. 13224, as amended, for having acted for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, the IRGC.

[The IRGC-IO and Bazghandi were also designated](#) on April 27, 2023, pursuant to [E.O. 14078](#), “Bolstering Efforts to Bring Hostages and Wrongfully Detained U.S. Nationals Home,” marking the first use of this authority, which reaffirms the fundamental commitment of the U.S. Government to bring home those U.S. nationals held hostage and wrongfully detained abroad.

## **SANCTIONS IMPLICATIONS**

As a result of today’s action, all property and interests in property of the individuals and entities named above, and of any entities that are owned, directly or indirectly, 50 percent or more by them, individually, or with other blocked persons, that are in the United States or in the possession or control of U.S. persons, must be blocked and reported to OFAC. Unless authorized by a general or specific license issued by OFAC or otherwise exempt, OFAC’s regulations generally prohibit all transactions by U.S. persons or within the United States (including transactions transiting the United States) that involve any property or interests in property of designated or otherwise blocked persons. The prohibitions include the making or receiving of any contribution of funds, goods, or services to or for the benefit of those persons.

Furthermore, engaging in certain transactions with the individuals and entities designated today entails risk of secondary sanctions pursuant to certain authorities, including E.O. 13224, as amended. Pursuant to E.O. 13224, OFAC can prohibit or impose strict conditions on the opening or maintaining in the United States of a correspondent account or a payable-through account of a foreign financial institution that has knowingly conducted or facilitated any significant transaction on behalf of a Specially Designated Global Terrorist.

The power and integrity of OFAC sanctions derive not only from their ability to designate and add persons to the Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons (SDN) List, but also from OFAC’s willingness to remove persons from the SDN List consistent with U.S. law. The ultimate goal of sanctions is not to punish, but to bring about a positive change in behavior. For information concerning the process for seeking removal from an OFAC list, including the SDN List, please refer to [OFAC’s Frequently Asked Question 897](#), here. [For detailed information on the process to submit a request for removal from an OFAC sanctions list, please see this link.](#)

[Click here for identifying information on the individuals and entity designated today.](#)

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