

Spy in the Ranks: Relations Between Iran and Europe Deteriorate

LOST IN TRANSLATION



German Army troops patrol in Afghanistan

Intelligence 'War' With Iran Continues

Following a number of exposed Iranian intelligence operations, relations between Europe and Tehran have deteriorated sharply. And the recent arrest of a German armed forces translator on suspicion of spying has done little to ease the mounting tensions. A 'friendly' intelligence service, almost certainly MI6 or the CIA, warned Germany's Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV) and military command, that it had an "Iranian spy in its ranks." Thereafter a protracted search to identify the suspect ended on 15 January. A 50-year-old German

citizen of Afghan heritage, named in court papers as Abdul Hamid S, was arrested.

Hamid S, a military translator since the 2000s, was based at a barracks in the Rhineland region where he worked for an electronic warfare unit translating Taliban signals intercepted by German troops serving with Alliance forces in Afghanistan.* Authorities say he had been subject to high level security

clearance checks before he was allowed to work with the unit.

German investigators identified the suspect when they reviewed his travel patterns that included a series of trips to European cities which coincided with visits by a known Iranian intelligence operative. German military intelligence thereafter deliberately passed Hamid S bogus information; he promptly



Iran's Minister of Intelligence
Mahmoud Alavi



German Police and troops train their Afghan counterparts in Kabul



Embassy of Iran, Berlin



BfV President Thomas Haldenwang

arranged a meeting with his Iranian contact, and was allegedly caught handing over details of Alliance troop movements and bases in Afghanistan.

“Abdul Hamid S. is strongly suspected of having worked for a foreign intelligence service,” federal prosecutors said. “The accused was a translator and cultural advisor to the Bundeswehr. In this capacity, he is suspected of passing information to an Iranian intelligence service.” An Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman denied any knowledge of the translator and said the incident was “manufactured by the Mossad and CIA” in a further effort to damage relations between Iran and Europe.

IRANIAN SPY NETWORK?

A day after his arrest, police, acting on information provided for by the BfV, conducted a series of raids in Berlin as well as the states of Baden-Wuerttemberg, North Rhine-



Germany has banned Iran's Mahan Air

Westphalia and Bavaria in connection with investigations into 10 other suspected Iranian spies. All of those targeted are said to have “spied on institutions and individuals on behalf of an intelligence entity associated with Iran,” said federal prosecutor spokesperson Stefan Biehl. That ‘entity’ was the Ministry of



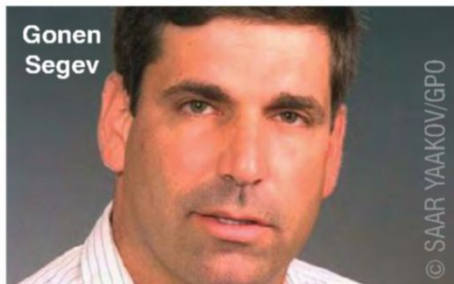
A US Army soldier speaks to an Afghan police officer through an interpreter



Iran's Ambassador to Germany Ali Majedi

STATE SECRETS

IRAN AGENT JAILED IN ISRAEL



Gonen Segev

© SAAR YAAKOV/GPO

Former Israeli diplomat Gonen Segev, 63, who served as infrastructure minister in the mid-1990s, has received an 11-year jail sentence after he admitted “serious espionage offences and reporting to the enemy.” Segev had been accused of acting as an agent of Iran’s MOIS. He was recruited by Iran in 2012 whilst working as a medical practitioner in Nigeria, this after his licence to operate in Israel was revoked.

Initially Segev denied the spy charges claiming, “I wanted to fool the Iranians and come back to Israel a hero.” Israel’s Shin Bet (domestic intelligence service) however, had monitored his movements and surveilled key encounters between Segev and known Iranian intelligence figures, thus his defence and reasons for his actions were soon dismantled. A MOIS contact gave him a computer programme which allowed him to send coded communications back to his spy handler. Thereafter he reportedly passed intimate details of Israeli security services, defence sites and key officials working in defence and political arenas.

Segev, who is known to have visited Iran on one occasion, was extradited from Equatorial Guinea in 2018. His lesser jail term came following a plea bargain which removed the serious charge of ‘*assisting an enemy during a time of war*’.



BfV headquarters, Berlin



Seal of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)

Intelligence and Security (MOIS) - Iran’s main spy service. Computers, cell phones and other materials were seized. Some of the operatives are also suspected

agents of the Quds Force, which acts as the foreign arm of Iran’s powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC).

Iran’s Ambassador to Germany Ali Majedi, was duly summoned and asked to explain the activities of the alleged spies.

Following the translator’s arrest and raids, the Iranian airline Mahan Air was banned from operating in Germany and has been accused of links to the Iranian government and for transporting Iranian personnel and equipment to Syria. The United States classified Mahan



Mustufa Haidar Syed-Naqvi

Air as a “material supporter of terrorism” in 2011 because of its links to the Quds force. In

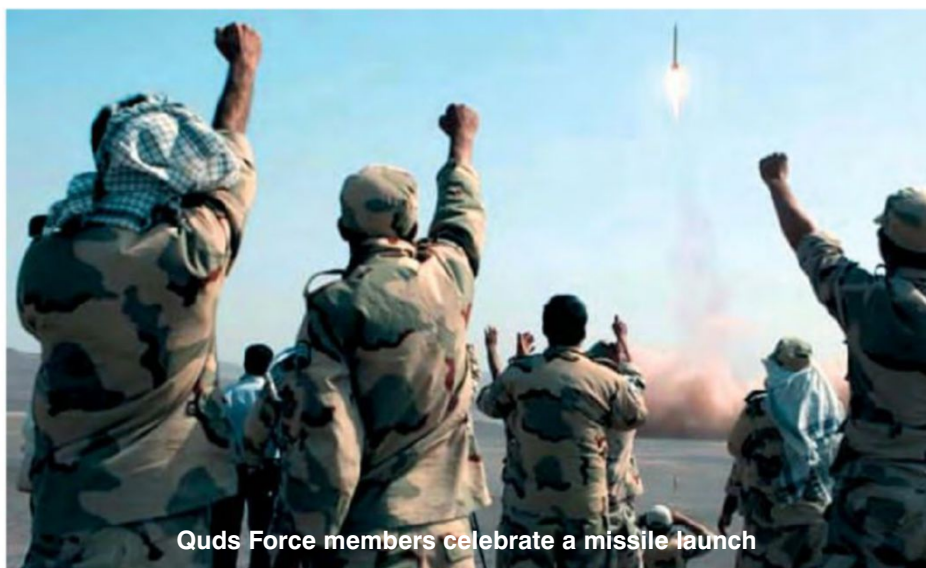
August 2018, British Airways said in a statement it had decided to suspend flights between London and Tehran. The European Union banned Iran’s Aseman Airlines from operating within the EU in 2016.

In recent months Iranian agents have been accused of involvement in plots to bomb an opposition rally in France; assassinate a political opponent in Denmark and for terrorist activities against opponents in Albania, Brussels, the United States and Norway. Asadollah Assadi, an Iranian diplomat, is currently awaiting trial in Belgium for masterminding the foiled terrorist attack planned for the annual gathering of the Iranian Resistance MeK in Paris last June. The Netherlands rightfully expelled two Iranian embassy staffers designating them persona non grata in June 2018. (See Eye Spy 118)

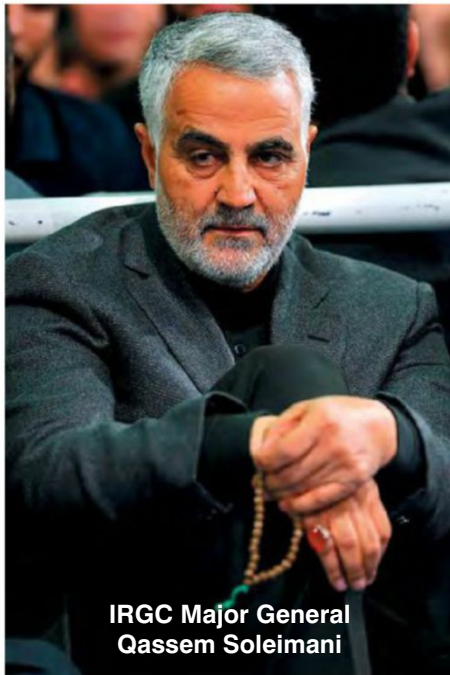
In December, Berlin protested to the Iranian ambassador in connection with the conviction of a Pakistani man who was serving as an Iranian agent. Germany’s Superior Court sentenced



Asadollah Assadi



Quds Force members celebrate a missile launch



IRGC Major General
Qassem Soleimani

31-year-old Mustufa Haidar Syed-Naqvi to four years and three months in prison on charges of “working for a foreign intelligence service.” That agency was MOIS.

The court ruled he “spied against Germany and France” on behalf of the Quds Force by compiling information about possible attack targets in Germany. The Quds Force is commanded by IRGC Major General Qassem Soleimani and reports directly to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

DESTABILISING IRAN

Intelligence analysts in the United States believe that widespread protests against the regime by Iranian citizens in 2018, have weakened its already tenuous grip on power; the United States withdrew from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, worsening an already calamitous economic climate within Iran and signalling a radical shift in the old Western policy of appeasement toward its leadership; and the European Union continued that shift by placing two senior regime MOIS agents on the EU terror blacklist, as well as imposing sanctions on the intelligence service itself.

Maryam Rajavi, President-elect of the Iranian opposition, tweeted this about the need to expel the regime’s diplomats: ‘I would like to



Maryam Rajavi

ALLIANCE INTERPRETERS

WAR, INTELLIGENCE THEATRE WORK, AND A MULTITUDE OF THREATS



A US trooper with his Afghan translator talk to a youngster at a checkpoint in Helmand Province. Hundreds of linguists have departed the country

It is estimated that Alliance forces currently contract about 5,000 translators in Afghanistan. Whilst pay varies dependent on the nature and location of their work, it is recognised as one of the most dangerous occupations in the country. Some find themselves working in what can only be described as intelligence offices.

However, most operatives often find themselves assisting fighting troops, patrol units and engaging with both ordinary civilians and others who oppose the foreign presence in their country, including captured terrorist figures. Throughout the troubles in Afghanistan, hundreds of interpreters have been killed in active service and their families often threatened. Many have since departed the country for fear of retribution by groups such as al-Qaida, ISIS and the Taliban.

In the United States, Washington created the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa programme

which has allowed many interpreters and civilians to leave Afghanistan. An estimated 50,000 Afghans have resettled in America between 2006 and 2018. Some 20,000 are believed to have operated as interpreters or field assistants.

In the UK, a 2018 Commons Defence Select Committee report titled *Lost in Translation? Afghan Interpreters and Other Locally Employed Civilians*, criticised the Ministry of Defence and Home Office for not securing properly the future of interpreters and other Afghanistan personnel who aided British forces. Its authors said the government “must abandon its policy of leaving former interpreters and other loyal personnel dangerously exposed.”

At the height of the conflict, British forces employed around 3,500 interpreters. Some 150 are seeking indefinite leave to remain in the UK.

once again reiterate - on behalf of a Resistance movement which has been seeking the oil and arms embargo of the mullahs theocracy since 1981 - the need for taking the following steps... [including recognition of the Iranian people's right to overthrow the Regime and expelling terrorist diplomats from other countries'].

In 2007, the US Treasury Department designated the Quds Force a supporter of terrorism for sending weapons and ammuni-

tion to the Taliban in Afghanistan, as well as weapons, funding and guidance to “other terrorist organisations” - including Lebanon’s Hezbollah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the general command of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

*The Alliance, (Resolute Support Mission) was formerly known as the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which was disbanded in 2014.