

# Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Research and Analysis Project



## IRGC Command Network: Formal Structures and Informal Influence



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# The IRGC Command Network

*Understanding the IRGC is essential to understanding Iran. Whether it is Iran's nuclear program, conflict in Syria, international terrorism, or domestic security, the IRGC is a key decision maker.*

The Command Network is a group of IRGC commanders with links dating back to the 1980s. This network currently **dominates the upper echelons of Iran's military** and controls planning, operations, intelligence, covert and irregular warfare operations, and internal security. They are **positioned to influence the decision making and worldview of Iran's senior leadership**, including Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, and significantly impact Iranian policy on issues of critical importance to US national security.

# IRGC Command Network Assessment

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- A single group of individuals that has remained remarkably constant since the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) dominates almost all of the key command and staff positions within the IRGC. This group is referred to as the IRGC Command Network in this assessment.
- The IRGC Command Network has remained cohesive through several key points of potential conflict or crisis since the Iran-Iraq War. Their cohesion debunks the myth of a factionalized IRGC leadership.

# What does this video briefing assess?

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- The structure of the IRGC's key command and staff positions (Commanding Heights)
- The composition of the core informal influence network that has dominated, and continues to dominate, the IRGC's Commanding Heights (Command Network)
- The persistent cohesion of the Command Network through political and internal security crises where one could have expected to see conflict or personnel reshuffling
- The present-day positioning of the Command Network within the IRGC's Commanding Heights

# Why is the IRGC Command Network important to policy makers?

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- The Command Network influences many of Iran's key strategic military decisions and also wields significant influence in the political, economic, and foreign affairs of Iran.
- It is highly likely that the Command Network will continue to retain control of the IRGC in the face of persistent internal and external pressures, based on its demonstrated ability to remain cohesive during and after political and security crises.
- The Command Network has begun to appoint members of its extended network to key command and staff positions and will play the primary role in shaping the future generation of IRGC leadership.
- The Command Network will be a dominant voice in the regime's national security decision-making process for the foreseeable future.

# Four IRGC Command Network members



## Mohammad Ali Jafari

Major General (3-star), age 55

Currently: IRGC Commander

Previously: Head of IRGC Strategic Studies Center

- Appointed by Supreme Leader to establish and lead the IRGC Strategic Studies Center in 2005
- Designed and implemented IRGC/Basij restructuring after 2007 appointment to command IRGC



## Gholam Ali Rashid

Major General (3-star), age 59

Currently: Deputy Chief of Armed Forces General Staff (AFGS)

Previously: AFGS Intelligence and Operations Deputy

- Oversees military affairs of both IRGC and regular forces (Artesh)
- Referred to by Quds Force Commander Qassem Suleimani as “our professor” in 2006 address to IRGC commanders



## Ali Fadavi

Brigadier General (2-star), age 51

Currently: IRGC Navy Commander

Previously: IRGC Navy Deputy Commander

- Has threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz repeatedly since taking command of IRGC Navy
- Has held several senior positions in IRGC naval intelligence and ops, both during and after Iran-Iraq war



## Mohammad Bagheri

Major General (3-star), age ~53

Currently: AFGS Intelligence and Operations Deputy

Previously: AFGS Intelligence Deputy

- Oversees military intel & ops of both IRGC and regular forces (Artesh)
- Brother of Hassan Bagheri, who died in Iran-Iraq War and is credited with establishing IRGC Intelligence Unit

# What is the IRGC's role in Iran?

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- The IRGC is Iran's predominant military force and would respond to any attack on Iranian territory.
- The IRGC plays a critical role in Iran's ballistic missile and nuclear programs, including security, procurement networks, and research.
- The IRGC Quds Force facilitates terror operations abroad and implements the regime's support for its regional proxies.
- The IRGC significantly influences Iranian politics through its representation in key government institutions, including the president's cabinet, ministries, and parliament.
- The IRGC is involved in all facets of Iran's economy and actively evades sanctions to grow its economic interests.