



Quds Force Commander and Candidate: Gholamreza Baghbani

By Ali Alfoneh and Will Fulton

This is the sixth Middle Eastern Outlook in a series about the IRGC Quds Force.¹

The US Department of the Treasury (USDOT) has designated Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Quds Force (IRGC QF) Brigadier General Gholamreza Baghbani, current chief of the IRGC QF office in Zahedan, a narcotics trafficker. The USDOT does not provide evidence proving this designation, nor does a survey of the Persian language open-source material on Baghbani. A review of Baghbani's career, however, can provide insight into the ongoing generational change within the QF—as the older generation of IRGC QF field operatives is retiring from operational positions, they are actively attempting to infiltrate politics, exemplified by Baghbani's candidacy for Iran's ninth parliamentary election.

On March 7, 2012, the US Department of the Treasury (USDOT) designated Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Quds Force (IRGC QF) Brigadier General Gholamreza Baghbani, “current chief of the IRGC QF office in Zahedan,” as “a Specially Designated Narcotics Trafficker.”² The USDOT elaborates:

Baghbani allowed Afghan narcotics traffickers to smuggle opiates through Iran in return for assistance. . . . For example, Afghan narcotics traffickers moved weapons to the Taliban on behalf of Baghbani. In return, General Baghbani has helped facilitate the smuggling of heroin precursor chemicals through the Iranian border. He also helped facilitate shipments of opium to Iran.³

The USDOT's designation was overshadowed by events before it was released to the public. By

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this point, Baghbani had already chosen to run for parliament, and had likely resigned from his position in the IRGC QF, which makes the timing of the designation curious.⁴ It is also unclear why the USDOT chose to designate

Key points in this *Outlook*:

- Brigadier General Gholamreza Baghbani's failed 2011 attempt to secure a position in Iran's parliament exemplifies the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Quds Force's (IRGC QF) desire to penetrate Iran's political sphere.
- The US Department of the Treasury recently designated Baghbani a narcotics trafficker, but the entire Quds Force should be implicated.
- As they retire, older IRGC QF field operatives are pursuing high-level political and advisory positions, signifying a pattern of generational change.

Baghbani alone as a narcotics trafficker and not the IRGC QF as a whole. If the USDOT believes that Baghbani engaged in narcotics trafficking while serving as an IRGC QF commander (as Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David S. Cohen's statements in the designation's press release indicate⁵), then the implication is that the IRGC QF must have been complicit with or at the very least aware of Baghbani's narcotics trafficking.

This designation is nonetheless significant in that it provokes a number of important questions about this senior IRGC QF commander: Who is Baghbani and what is his network? What is his career pattern? Why was he appointed a senior IRGC QF commander, and why has he left his military career to pursue a career in politics? Answers to many of these questions not only provide insight into this particular commander, but also enlighten us to career trajectories and generational change within the IRGC QF in general.

The Making of an IRGC QF Chief

According to the US government, Baghbani was born sometime in 1961 in Zabol County, a sparsely populated region in Sistan va Balouchestan Province, approximately twenty miles from the Afghanistan border.⁶ In addition to the data provided by the USDOT, a campaign website Baghbani published during his unsuccessful bid in the March 2012 parliamentary elections is a source of more extensive personal background information. The website, which is no longer accessible, confirmed that he was born on January 5, 1961, in Zabol County.⁷ With the exception of a reference to Mohammadreza Baghbani, allegedly Gholamreza Baghbani's brother,⁸ the open source does not provide any information about Gholamreza's family history or close relatives.⁹

According to Baghbani's official biography on the now defunct campaign website, he attended the Pahlavi and Solouki Primary Schools and continued his education at Ferdowsi and Azadi High Schools in Zabol. He claims to have been arrested and interrogated by the prerevolutionary security service (SAVAK) in 1976 at the age of fifteen after criticizing the distribution of a Pahlavi propaganda book titled *Azemat-e Bazayafteh* [Rediscovered Glory]¹⁰ at his high school. Baghbani also claims to have been injured in 1978 while participating in demonstrations in his hometown.¹¹ Though none of the aforementioned information can be corroborated, it is unlikely that Baghbani's claims are

completely false, as his campaign propaganda was surely subjected to close scrutiny by his rivals in Sistan va Balouchestan Province.

Just as former Base Ramezan operational deputy Iraj Masjedi transitioned out of operations into an advisory position within the IRGC QF, Baghbani appears to have left behind his Ansar Base career to pursue politics.

Centrality of the Ansar Base in the 1980s

In 1979, at the age of eighteen, Baghbani joined his local branch of the IRGC in Zabol. He was soon promoted to the Zabol IRGC Command Council and was among the first group of IRGC volunteers from Sistan va Balouchestan deployed to the front in Abadan, Iran, in 1980.¹² Throughout the course of the Iran-Iraq War, Baghbani participated in several operations against Iraq,¹³ but returned to his home province at the end of the war in 1988 to hold various operational positions within the local IRGC, culminating in his post as commander of the Ansar Base.

The IRGC established Ansar Base as part of an effort to suppress tribal unrest in southeastern Iran in the immediate aftermath of the revolution.¹⁴ The regional unrest was aggravated as millions of Afghan Shi'a fled to Iran during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.¹⁵ The Islamic Republic, hoping to increase its leverage over Afghanistan and to turn the potentially destabilizing presence of Afghan refugees into an advantage, channeled its efforts into uniting Afghan Shi'a political movements in order to prepare for the post-occupation era in Afghanistan.¹⁶ The most serious effort to unite the Afghan refugee population was the establishment of the Islamic Republic-sponsored *Showra-ye E'telaf-e Eslami-ye Afghanistan* [Allied Islamic Council of Afghanistan], composed of eight Shi'ite jihadi groups.¹⁷

The IRGC used Ansar Base to train the Afghan Shi'a, and to direct intelligence operations on Afghan soil. As early as 1982, Eshaq Ranjvari Moqaddam was appointed Ansar Base deputy and was tasked with orchestrating Afghan operations.¹⁸ There is also evidence of Ansar Base commanders monitoring events in Afghanistan and reporting to the IRGC Command Council as early as October 2, 1984.¹⁹ Throughout the

1980s, the Kabul government accused Iran of providing arms to the Afghan insurgents,²⁰ but the Iranian logistical support seems to have been very limited and did not affect the generally positive Iran-Soviet relations.

Baghbani's public record as a member of the IRGC QF was not well established before the March 2012 USDOT designation.²¹ This is not unusual, however, as the Iranian government and its media affiliates very rarely reveal the identities of Quds Force members. A Zabol-based blogger referred to Baghbani as "a former Quds Force commander" in a report announcing Baghbani's intention to run in the ninth parliamentary elections, but this appears to be the only open-source reference to Baghbani's role in the Quds Force published before his USDOT designation.²²

The sum total of Baghbani's career and personal history demonstrates his links to current IRGC QF leaders and a deep connection to Sistan va Balouchestan Province and its local IRGC units.

Elements of Baghbani's history also hint at his involvement in the IRGC's operations outside of Iran, a role traditionally reserved for the Quds Force. For example, Baghbani's biography explicitly refers to his participation in several extraterritorial operations in which his life was in danger.²³ His lengthy tenure as IRGC Ansar Base commander, however, is the primary indication that he was involved in external operations.

Although little is known about Baghbani's tenure at Ansar Base, the biography of his contemporary, the late Ansar Base commander Alireza Rezaeipour (also known as Morteza Kazemi), may shed light on Baghbani's role at the base.²⁴ Rezaeipour, like Baghbani, was a native of Zabol,²⁵ and, similar to current IRGC Quds Force commander Major General Qassem Suleimani, was deployed to suppress the ethnic uprisings in Iran's Kurdistan Province in the immediate aftermath of the revolution.²⁶ Rezaeipour was deployed to Afghanistan in 1983 to engage in "jihad, alongside the Afghan warriors."²⁷

Due to Rezaeipour's friendship with the late Qassem Mir-Hosseini, Forty-First Sarallah Division deputy, Rezaeipour was allowed to temporarily abandon his duties in eastern Iran to participate in a few non-IRGC QF operations against Iraq. According to his official biography, Rezaeipour completed several twelve-month

deployments and was on active duty when his commanders ordered him to continue his military training in Tehran in 1990. Soon after leaving active military duty, he was killed, possibly in a road accident.²⁸ Rezaeipour's career trajectory is of use in that it may very well mirror Baghbani's stint at Ansar Base.

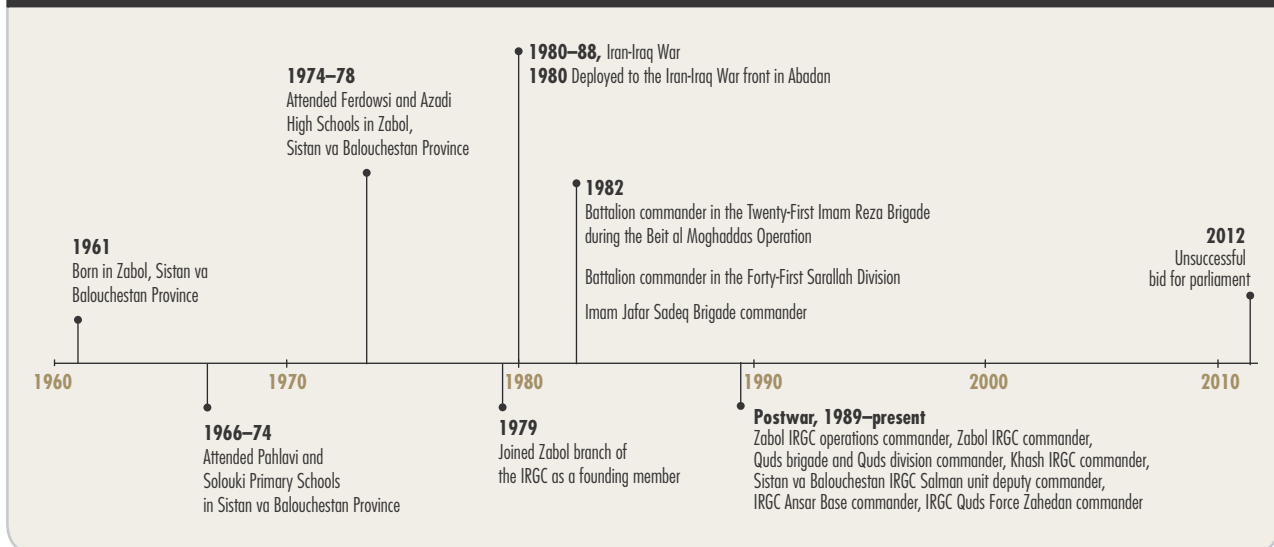
Baghbani's Transition from Commander to Candidate

Baghbani's biography presents an overview of his positions within the IRGC but does not provide dates. Based on the seniority and command responsibilities associated with each position, however, we can establish an approximate timeline of Baghbani's promotions following the Iran-Iraq War: Zabol IRGC operations commander, Zabol IRGC commander, Quds brigade and division commander, Khash IRGC commander, Sistan va Balouchestan Salman IRGC unit deputy, and IRGC Ansar Base commander.

The most recent reference to Baghbani as Ansar Base commander is from June 2011—nonetheless, it is unclear whether he currently maintains this or any other position at the base. Iranian electoral law stipulates that individuals seeking public office must resign from military positions six months prior to declaring their candidacy.²⁹ Therefore, it is possible that Baghbani renounced his formal, public role in the IRGC to participate in the ninth parliamentary elections, but it is unclear as to whether he has resumed his military career following electoral defeat.

Baghbani had an extensive career as an operational commander in the IRGC prior to his decision to run for parliament. What, then, compelled the commander to transition to candidate? Baghbani did not provide any reasoning for his career change during his campaign; however, his decision could point to an emerging generational shift within the IRGC QF, in which aging Quds Force commanders are leaving the field to take on advisory or political positions. Just as former Base Ramezan operational deputy Iraj Masjedi transitioned out of operations into an advisory position within the IRGC QF, Baghbani appears to have left behind his Ansar Base career to pursue politics.³⁰ It is unknown whether senior IRGC commanders or other major political figures influenced Baghbani's decision to run for parliament. An overview of Baghbani's limited network, though, suggests that any influence on his decision is likely to have come from IRGC QF leadership.

Brigadier General Gholamreza Baghbani at a Glance, 1961–Present



There is insufficient open-source data to fully establish Baghbani’s network within the IRGC, but his relationships with current IRGC QF leadership can be inferred by assessing his positions throughout the Iran-Iraq War. Because Baghbani served as a battalion commander in the Forty-First Sarallah Division during the war, one can safely assume that he established an early relationship with Suleimani, who commanded the Sarallah Division from 1980 to 1997.³¹ Baghbani also served as a battalion commander in the Twenty-First Imam Reza Brigade during the war, led at that time by current IRGC QF deputy commander Brigadier General Esmail Qaani.

Baghbani’s ties to Suleimani can be further established by considering his postwar career. First, his biography makes reference to his participation in the fight against “bandits and highwaymen” in Sistan va Balouchestan Province. This may indicate that he continued his service in the Forty-First Sarallah Division, which, under Suleimani’s command, was tasked with fighting Afghan drug smugglers near the border between Iran and Afghanistan after the Iran-Iraq War.³² Baghbani’s role in these critical internal security operations may also indicate that Suleimani has promoted veterans who served under his command during the war to sensitive positions.

Baghbani’s biography also notes that he “consulted and cooperated closely” in providing security to Sistan va Balouchestan with former IRGC Ground Forces

deputy commander and Quds Base commander Nour-Ali Shoushtari and IRGC Salman unit commander Rajab-Ali Mohammadzadeh, both senior commanders in the province who perished in the 2009 Zahedan mosque suicide bombing.³³ The close relationship between Baghbani, Shoushtari, and Mohammadzadeh indicates that Baghbani’s personal network overlaps in part with that of Suleimani. Suleimani considers Shoushtari his mentor, and has spoken publicly about his friendship with Mohammadzadeh.³⁴

Any actors who influenced Baghbani’s decision to transition from operational commander to parliamentarian are likely to have served in the IRGC QF. No open-source evidence exists to suggest that Baghbani has personal relationships with members of the IRGC’s national leadership or major political figures, outside of the two senior QF commanders. Moreover, there have been no reports of Baghbani attending events with IRGC national commanders after the end of Iran’s war with Iraq—each of the eleven public events Baghbani is reported to have participated in took place in Sistan va Balouchestan, mostly in Zabol or Zahedan. Baghbani’s role as IRGC QF Zahedan commander necessarily implies that he reports to QF central command as opposed to IRGC national command. The sum total of Baghbani’s career and personal history demonstrates his links to current senior IRGC QF leaders, and a deep connection to Sistan va Balouchestan Province and its local IRGC units. Any outside influence on his political

ambition, therefore, is likely to have derived from QF officers rather than political powers outside of his home province.

A Losing Bid

The first rumor about Baghbani's parliamentary candidacy surfaced on December 28, 2011.³⁵ According to a Zabol-based blogger, local Guardian Council (GC) representatives—the GC being a constitutional body which, among other duties, is tasked with vetting the candidates—rejected Baghbani's request for candidacy after deeming him unqualified to run.³⁶ The source insinuated that the local GC members supported Hossein-Ali Shahriari, a representative of Zahedan in Iran's seventh and eighth parliament and a senior professor of medical sciences at Tehran University, over Baghbani.³⁷ Another local source states that Baghbani's brother Mohammadreza was disqualified, after which Gholamreza declared his candidacy³⁸ (though this seems an unlikely scenario as it would violate Iran's electoral regulations).³⁹

For unknown reasons, the GC eventually revised its ruling and qualified Baghbani to participate. He made fighting against poverty the main thrust of his campaign,⁴⁰ and ran with the slogan: "The discourse of the Imam [Rouhollah Khomeini] and the revolution and the decrees of the Leader [Ali Khamenei] lead to security, unity, and tranquility."⁴¹ His candidacy was endorsed by the Islamic Steadfastness Front,⁴² led by former IRGC Commander Mohsen Rezaei, as well as the Abadgaran-e Jihadi faction, led by Mohammad Nabi Roudaki, another senior IRGC commander.⁴³

Baghbani ran against eleven candidates for one of Zahedan's two parliamentary seats and came in sixth place with 33,609 votes. Zahedan's eventual winners, the aforementioned Hossein-Ali Shahriari and Nasser Kashani, received over 100,000 and 80,000 votes,⁴⁴ respectively.⁴⁵ Though his showing at the polls suggests otherwise, Baghbani led a fairly popular election campaign. He regularly addressed the local IRGC audience⁴⁶—including war veterans—as part of his campaign,⁴⁷ and a group of veterans calling themselves "warriors from the Sacred Defense" (a reference to the war with Iraq) recommended the public vote for Baghbani, though the names of the individual veterans were not disclosed.⁴⁸

According to his own website, Baghbani managed to rally three thousand supporters for a campaign event on February 29, 2012. More importantly, he managed to

mobilize the support of ninety local clans. However, according to one of Baghbani's fan sites, he was subjected to negative attacks and unspecified rumor campaigns,⁴⁹ which may have included allegations surrounding his involvement in narcotics trafficking. Sistan va Balouchestan News goes so far as to accuse Baghbani's political rivals of having misinformed the United States in order to reduce the IRGC QF commander's chances of being elected.⁵⁰ Though he failed to achieve enough votes, Baghbani thanked the public, his supporters, and his rival victors.⁵¹

Conclusion

The chance timing of Baghbani's USDOT designation and the publication of his campaign propaganda have provided a unique opportunity to analyze the personal background and career trajectory of a senior Quds Force operational commander. While the open-source material—as expected—does not provide any proof of Baghbani's involvement in narcotics trafficking, the revelation of Baghbani's role in the Quds Force compounded with his attempt to gain a seat in Iran's ninth parliament provides a model for understanding the generational change underway in the IRGC QF.

Baghbani's foray into Iranian politics suggests that the Quds Force's cadre of aging leaders do not intend to fade into obscurity after retiring from their operational posts. On the contrary, Baghbani's political bid is likely a harbinger of future penetrations by the Quds Force into the Islamic Republic's multifarious institutions of power. Baghbani's ultimate defeat in the elections was probably due to his inexperience in the realm of Iranian electoral politics and provincial power rivalries; nonetheless, it is unlikely that his defeat will dissuade the IRGC QF from future attempts at delivering its leaders to the Islamic Republic's cadre of elected officials.

Notes

1. For the previous *Outlooks* in this series see Ali Alfoneh, "Brigadier General Qassem Suleimani: A Biography," AEI *Middle Eastern Outlook* (January 2011), www.aei.org/outlook/foreign-and-defense-policy/regional/middle-east-and-north-africa/brigadier-general-qassem-suleimani-a-biography/; Ali Alfoneh, "Iran's Secret Network: Major General Qassem Suleimani's Inner Circle," AEI *Middle Eastern Outlook* (March 2011), [www.aei.org/out-](http://www.aei.org/outlook/foreign-and-defense-policy/regional/middle-east-and-north-)

africa/irans-secret-network/; Ali Alfoneh, "Iran's Most Dangerous General," *AEI Middle Eastern Outlook* (July 2011), www.aei.org/outlook/foreign-and-defense-policy/regional/middle-east-and-north-africa/irans-most-dangerous-general/; Ali Alfoneh, "Esmail Qaani: The Next Revolutionary Guards Quds Force Commander?" *AEI Middle Eastern Outlook* (January 2012), www.aei.org/outlook/foreign-and-defense-policy/regional/middle-east-and-north-africa/esmail-qaani-the-next-revolutionary-guards-quds-force-commander/; Ali Alfoneh, "Generational Change in the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps Quds Force: Brigadier General Iraj Masjedi," *AEI Middle Eastern Outlook* (March 2012), www.aei.org/outlook/foreign-and-defense-policy/regional/middle-east-and-north-africa/generational-change-in-the-iranian-revolutionary-guards-corps-quds-force-brigadier-general-iraj-masjedi/.

2. US Department of the Treasury, "Treasury Designates Iranian Qods Force General Overseeing Afghan Heroin Trafficking Through Iran," March 7, 2012, www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg1444.aspx (accessed March 13, 2012).

3. Ibid.

4. "143 Davtalah-e Nemayandegani-ye Majlis Nohom dar Ostan Nam Nevisi Kardand" [One Hundred and Forty-Three Ninth Election Parliamentary Candidates Registered in the Province], *Nikshahr News* (Sistan va Baluchestan), December 31, 2011, www.nikshahr.com/post/943 (accessed April 3, 2012).

5. In the press release, Under Secretary Cohen stated: "Today's action exposes IRGC-QF involvement in trafficking narcotics, made doubly reprehensible here because it is done as part of a broader scheme to support terrorism." See "Treasury Designates Iranian Qods Force General Overseeing Afghan Heroin Trafficking Through Iran," US Department of the Treasury, March 7, 2012, www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg1444.aspx (accessed April 10, 2012).

6. In the original USDOT designation of Baghbani, his date of birth was listed as 1947, but the year was then changed to 1961 a few days later. See "Kingpin Act Designation: Specially Designated Nationals Update," US Department of the Treasury, March 7, 2012, www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20120307.aspx (accessed March 23, 2012).

7. Web-Sayt-e Sardar Baghbani (Sistan va Baluchestan), n.d., http://sardarbaghbani.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2&Itemid=60 (accessed March 7, 2012). (The website has since been deactivated.)

8. "Sartip Gholamreza Baghbani, Namzad-e Entesabat-e Majlis, Farmandeh-ye Niru-ye Quds, Ghachghai Mavvad-e Mochader, Hamkar-e Taleban" [Brigadier General Gholamreza Baghbani: Parliament Candidate, Quds Force Commander, Drug-Smuggler, Taliban Collaborator], *A Breath of Free Air* (Sistan va Baluchestan), March 9, 2012, http://nafas1388.blogspot.com/2012/03/blog_post_09.html (accessed March 9, 2012).

9. The martyr and IRGC Zarrinshahr cofounder Mohammad Baghbani does not seem to be related to Gholamreza Baghbani. See "Negahi be Zendigi-ye Sardar Shahid Eslam Hajj Mohammad Baghbani" [A Look at the Life of Martyred Commander Hajj Mohammad Baghbani], *Basij News Agency* (Tehran), January 18, 2012, www.basijnews.ir/?q=node/1380 (accessed March 7, 2012).

10. *Azemat-e Bazayafteh* [Rediscovered Glory], a propaganda comic book produced by the Shah of Iran in 1958, is available for download at <http://iranpoliticsclub.net/library/persian-library/MRPahlavi-RecapturedGloryComicBook.pdf>.

11. Web-Sayt-e Sardar Baghbani.

12. Ibid.

13. Baghbani participated in several operations during the Iran-Iraq War: Ramezan (1980), Beit al Moghaddas (1982), Valfajr VIII (1986), and Karbala V (1987). He commanded the Twenty-First Imam Reza Brigade during the Beit al Moghaddas operation and later led the Imam Jafar-e Sadeq Brigade in its operations in southwestern Iran. Baghbani also commanded Forty-First Sarallah Division Imam Reza and Imam Hossein battalions during the war with Iraq.

14. There are conflicting reports on the location of Ansar Base. Some agencies, such as Fars News, an IRGC affiliate news agency, report its location as being in Zahedan while others report it as being in Zabol. See "Sarbolandi-ye Enghelab dar Amalkard-e Basij Motajalli Shod East" [The Heights of the Revolution Have Been Revealed in the Action of the Basij], *Fars News* (Tehran), November 10, 2010, www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8909070120 (accessed March 23, 2012).

15. Ahmad Majidiyar and Ali Alfoneh, "Iranian Influence in Afghanistan: Refugees as Political Instruments," *AEI Middle Eastern Outlook* (November 2010), www.aei.org/files/2010/11/08/2010-11-MEO-g.pdf.

16. "Ravabet-e Siasi-ye Iran va Afghanistan Az Kudeta-ye Saur ta Payan-e Gharn-e Bistom" [Iran-Afghanistan Political Relations from the Saur Coup to the End of the Twentieth Century], *Akhbar-e Mohajerin* (Kabul), November 25, 2010, <http://mohajerinnewz.mihanblog.com/post/442> (accessed March 23, 2012).

17. "Naghsh-e Shia'an dar Sakthrar-e Siasi-ye Hokumat ha-ye Afghanistan" [The Role of the Shi'a in the Political Construction of Afghanistan's Governments], *Kavsar* (Kabul), December 4, 2009, http://kavsar.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=101&Itemid=12 (accessed March 23, 2012).

18. "Ranjavari Moqaddam, Eshagh," *Rasekhood* (Tehran), April 10, 2011, <http://rasekhood.net/Mashahir/show-901285.aspx> (accessed March 8, 2012).

19. "Dahom Mah-e Mehr dar Dafa-e Moghaddas" [The Tenth Month of Mehr in the Sacred Defense], *Sajed* (Tehran), September 29, 2008, www.sajed.ir/new/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=10840&catid=827:mehr&Itemid=558%20%20

28brief%20mention%20of%20Ansar%20in%20Afghanistan%29 (accessed March 23, 2012).

20. See "Iranian Support for 'Afghan Counter-Revolutionary Forces,'" BBC Monitoring (London), November 16, 1984; "Iran's Officials Co-operating with US Imperialists against Afghanistan," BBC Monitoring (London), January 16, 1984; and "Bani-Sadr Urges End to Disunity among Iranians," Associated Press (New York), June 16, 1980.

21. "Kingpin Act Designation: Specially Designated . . ."

22. "Bakhshi az Nameh-ye Isargaran-e Ostan be Maraje' Nizarati" [Some of the Names of the Province's Sacrificers (Sent to) the Supervisory Authorities], Zabol Press (Zabol), December 24, 2011, <http://zabolpress.blogfa.com/post/60/%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%B4%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B2%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%87-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AB%D8%A7%D8%B1%DA%AF%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%B9-%D9%86%D8%B8%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AA%DB%8C> (accessed March 7, 2012).

23. Web-Sayt-e Sardar Baghbani.

24. "Zendeginame-ye Ali Reza Rezaeipour" [Biography of Ali Reza Rezaeipour], Ensani.ir (Tehran), 2007, <http://ensani.ir/fa/content/82835/default.aspx> (accessed March 7, 2012).

25. "Zendeginame-ye Ali Reza Rezaeipour" and US Department of the Treasury, "Treasury Designates Iranian Narcotics Trafficker with Ties to Afghan Drug Trade," April 28, 2011, www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg1150.aspx (accessed April 4, 2012).

26. "Zendeginame-ye Ali Reza Rezaeipour" and Alfoneh, "Brigadier General Qassem Suleimani . . ."

27. "Zendeginame-ye Ali Reza Rezaeipour" and "Treasury Designates Iranian Narcotics Trafficker . . ."

28. "Zendeginame-ye Ali Reza Rezaeipour."

29. "Nokhostoin Ettelaiyeh-ye Setad-e Entekhabat-e Keshvar Montasher Shod" [The First Announcement of the Election Headquarters of the Country Is Published], *Hamshahri* (Tehran), May 24, 2011, www.hamshahronline.ir/news-135907.aspx (accessed April 10, 2012).

30. Alfoneh, "Generational Change in the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps . . ."

31. Alfoneh, "Brigadier General Qassem Suleimani . . ."

32. "Taghdir-e Farmandeh-ye Sepah Az Amaliat-e Lashgar-e Tharallah Dar Moghabeleh Ba Ashrar" [The Guard's Chief Thanks the Tharallah Division for Their Operation against the Highwaymen], news release, November 23, 1994, www.rezaee.ir/vdcfjdeiwdtctgiaw.html (accessed March 23, 2012).

33. Bill Roggio, "Jundallah Claims Suicide Attack at Iranian Mosque," *The Long War Journal*, December 15, 2011,

www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/12/jundallah_claims_sui.php (accessed March 23, 2012).

34. Alfoneh, "Iran's Secret Network: Major General . . ." and "Shahid Shoushtari Fardi Bud Ke Magham-e Khod Ra Dar Jang Bedast Avard-e Bud" [Martyr Shoushtari Was an Individual Who Earned His Rank in the War], IRNA (Tehran), October 25, 2011, <http://irna.ir/News/30629048/%D8%B4%D9%87%D9%8A%D8%AF%20%D8%B4%D9%88%D8%B4%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%8A%20%D9%81%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%8A%20%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%AF%20%D9%83%D9%87%20%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%85%20%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%AF%20%D8%B1%D8%A7%20%D8%AF%D8%B1%20%D8%AC%D9%86%DA%AF%20%D8%A8%D8%AF%D8%B3%D8%AA%20%D8%A7%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%87%20%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%AF/%D9%81%D8%B1%D9%87%D9%86%DA%AF%DB%8C/> (accessed March 23, 2012).

35. "Sabt-e Nam Sardar Baghbani va Doktor Dahmardeh baraye Entekhabat-e Zahedan" [Commander Baghbani and Dr. Dahmardeh Register for the Zahedan Election], *Zahedan Press* (Sistan va Balouchestan), December 28, 2011, <http://zahedanpress.com/content/view/8589/9> (March 7, 2012).

36. "Bakhshi az Nameh-ye Isargaran-e . . ."

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The Islamic Steadfastness Front endorsed only one other parliamentary candidate in Zahedan: Fada Hossein Maleki. Maleki is the current Iranian ambassador to Afghanistan, former head of Iran's Drug Campaign Headquarters, and a reported Quds Force member. See "List-e Nahaei-ye Jebhe-ye Istadegi dar Sarasar-e Keshvar" [Final List of the Steadfastness Front across the Country], Istadegy.com (Tehran), February 24, 2012, <http://istadegy.com/view-201.html> (accessed March 7, 2012).

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