

## FIRSTRESPONDERSTOOLBOX

**(U//FOUO) Past Iranian Homeland Operations Yield Indicators for Detecting and Disrupting Future Plotting**

**(U//FOUO) Case Study:** Two operatives, acting on the Iranian Government's behalf, conducted surveillance and collected intelligence on potential targets in the United States in 2017 and 2018. Ahmadrza Mohammadi Doostdar's<sup>USPER</sup> and Majid Ghorbani's<sup>USPER</sup> tradecraft and tactics were broadly consistent with those of other Iran-linked operatives, yielding indicators to enable the identification and disruption of future IRGC-QF or Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) surveillance or Iran's development of lethal capabilities in the Homeland.

○ **(U) US Citizens or Permanent Residents With Ties to Iran**

(U) Iran probably prefers to use operatives with preexisting access to the United States for Homeland operations. Ghorbani was born and raised in Iran, came to the United States when he was 36, and became a US permanent resident at 56. Doostdar was born in the United States but left when he was two years old and has resided abroad since then.

○ **(U) Pre-Travel Research**

(U) Several months before traveling to the United States, Doostdar researched locations associated with his travel and upcoming events in the Los Angeles area, including counter-Iranian regime protests and meetings of student groups opposed to the Iranian regime. He also researched areas of operational interest, including the payphone he later used to contact Ghorbani and the restaurant where Ghorbani worked.

○ **(U) Pre-Meeting Surveillance**

(U//FOUO) Iranian operatives often demonstrate security consciousness and an awareness of potential CI risks. Doostdar regularly visited locations before choosing them to hold meetings, probably to evaluate their suitability and identify any potential security concerns.

○ **(U) In-Person Operational Meetings in the United States**

(U) Doostdar limited his telephonic communications while in the United States and, instead, conducted operational meetings in person—primarily in public spaces—including museums and restaurants.

○ **(U) Surveillance Detection Tradecraft**

(U//FOUO) Doostdar took circuitous routes to and from his meetings with Ghorbani and when they traveled together, probably to detect surveillance. He also regularly stopped to look in store windows and parked cars, probably for the same purpose.

○ **(U) Travel to Iran**

(U//FOUO) Ghorbani and Doostdar each traveled repeatedly back to Iran, probably to meet with Iranian officials and provide updates on their operations, including surveillance reports. During these trips, they brought financial receipts and physical media devices, such as USBs, CDs, and print photographs related to operational activity.



**(U) Payphones Hide Communication:** Doostdar used a public phone outside a department store to contact Ghorbani rather than using his personal cell phone.



**(U) Surveillance of Jewish Centers:** Since at least 2012, Iran has focused on building source and operative networks capable of acting against Iranian dissidents and Israeli or Jewish targets in the United States, according to a body of FBI and DOJ reporting. Doostdar and Ghorbani surveilled Jewish centers and rallies by Mujahedin-e Khalq<sup>USPER</sup>, an Iranian opposition group, according to DOJ.



**(U) Operational Meetings in Public Locations:** Doostdar and Ghorbani met at an outdoor restaurant and conducted rolling meetings in Doostdar's vehicle to discuss operational activity and exchange funds and media.



**(U) Brush Pass in Public Location:** Doostdar conducted a brief in-person meeting in a Chicago museum with an unidentified woman, whom FBI officers observed folding up a piece of paper when they later entered the room.



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## FIRSTRESPONDERSTOOLBOX

**(U//FOUO) Past Iranian Homeland Operations Yield Indicators for Detecting and Disrupting Future Plotting (continued)****(U) INDICATORS OF SURVEILLANCE DETECTION ACTIVITY:**

(U//FOUO) Iran probably trains its sources and operatives to use operational security techniques, including for surveillance detection, when driving or walking between locations. Indicators of such activity (absent a reasonable alternative explanation) include:

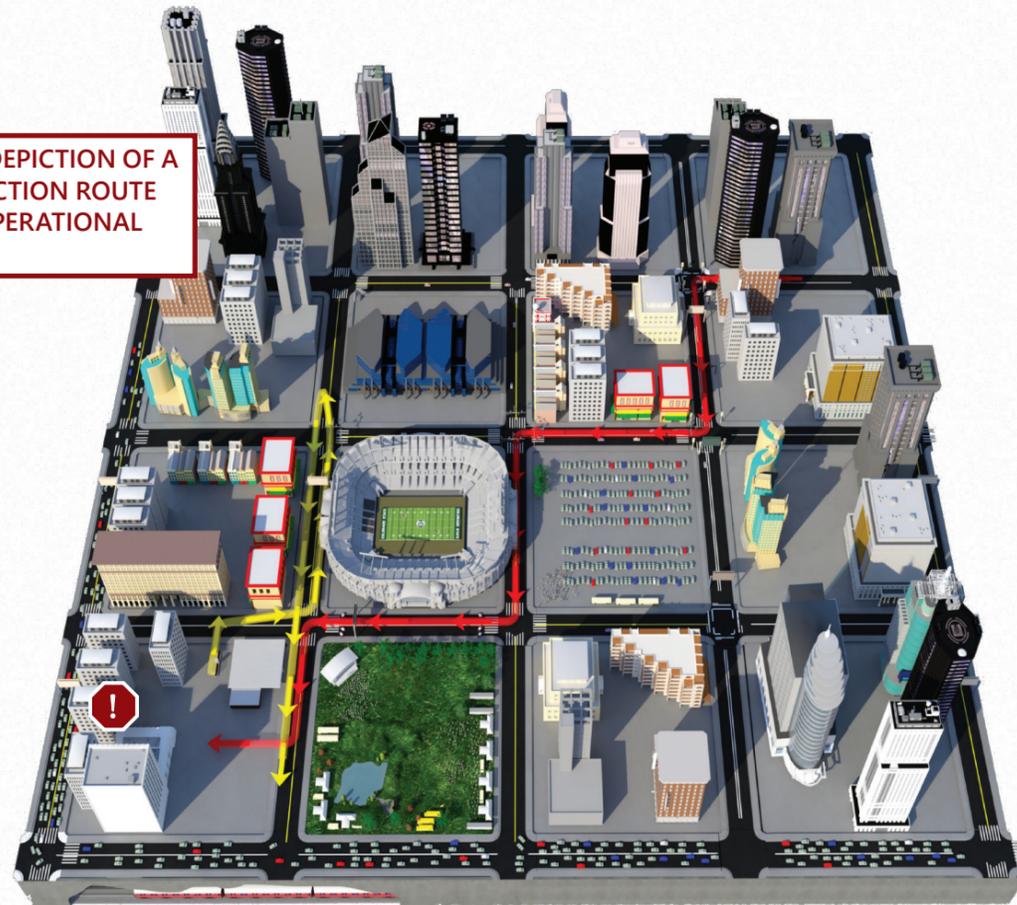
- (U) visiting locations before meetings and examining surroundings;
- (U) driving or walking circuitously to destinations rather than taking the most direct route;
- (U) conducting repeated U-turns.

**(U) INDICATORS OF SURVEILLANCE:**

(U//FOUO) Iranian operational teams conducting physical surveillance of people or buildings for future attacks would probably use similar tradecraft to previous operatives and may carry materials relevant to that activity on their person. Relevant indicators (absent a reasonable alternative explanation) include:

- (U) returning repeatedly to the same location to take pictures;
- (U) taking or possessing images of a building or location from multiple angles;
- (U) taking or possessing images of people or crowds;
- (U) taking or possessing images of security or surveillance devices;
- (U) taking or possessing images of Iranian dissidents, Israeli or Jewish individuals or affiliated locations, or individuals or locations associated with Saudi Arabia.

**(U//FOUO) NOMINAL DEPICTION OF A SURVEILLANCE DETECTION ROUTE TO AND FROM AN OPERATIONAL MEETING LOCATION**

**(U) OVERVIEW OF IRANIAN LETHAL PLOTTING**

(U//FOUO) We assess that Iran regularly plots operations against US interests, Israeli and other Western targets, Persian Gulf countries, and Iranian dissidents, including in the United States. Since January 2020, Iran has also sought to target US officials to retaliate for the death of IRGC-QF Commander Qasem Soleimani. Iran has previously displayed patience in planning attacks and often spends years preparing such operations, judging from US diplomatic and US and Israeli press reporting.

- (U) The IRGC-QF took more than a year to position operatives and develop attacks against Israeli officials in retaliation for the assassinations of Iranian scientists, which occurred from 2010 to 2012. The IRGC-QF then attempted three near-simultaneous attacks in Georgia, India, and Thailand against Israeli officials in 2012, injuring one Israeli diplomat, according to US and Israeli press reporting.

(U//FOUO) The IRGC-QF and MOIS are Iran's primary organizations responsible for conducting covert lethal activities, including asymmetric and terrorist operations. IRGC-QF and MOIS attacks targeting US officials would most likely require the approval of Iran's senior leaders.

- (U) The IRGC-QF provides guidance, training, and weapons to Iran's Shia militant proxies (including in Iraq and Gulf countries), and it conducts covert operations worldwide (including in Western countries) against Iranian dissident groups and Israeli, Gulf countries', and Western interests, according to think tank reporting and US and international press reporting.
- (U//FOUO) The MOIS—Iran's primary civilian intelligence organization—conducts lethal operations primarily against dissidents, Sunni extremists, and other CI or CT targets. The MOIS is probably willing and able to conduct assassinations in Western countries harboring individuals Iran views as threats to the regime, judging from DOJ reporting about past operations targeting Iranian dissidents in Europe and the United States.

(U) Since at least 2016, Iran has sought to increase its operational capability in the Homeland and has used at least four operatives to conduct surveillance, primarily of Iranian dissident, Jewish, and Israeli targets, according to DOJ reporting. Iran uses both Iranian and non-Iranian operatives to surveil targets and probably prefers to use deniable, non-Iranian operatives—including criminals—to carry out attacks, judging from DOJ, and US press reporting about past operations.

- (U) In July 2021, US federal prosecutors charged an MOIS official and four others, including a California-based individual, with conspiring to kidnap a US-based journalist (who was also an antiregime activist) and forcibly return her to Iran.
- (U) In 2011, US law enforcement officers arrested dual US-Iranian citizen Manssor Arbabsiar for plotting to kill the Saudi Ambassador to the United States on behalf of the IRGC-QF, including trying to hire a US DEA source posing as an associate of a drug cartel. Arbabsiar pleaded guilty to charges of murder-for-hire and conspiracy and was sentenced to 25 years in prison in 2013.

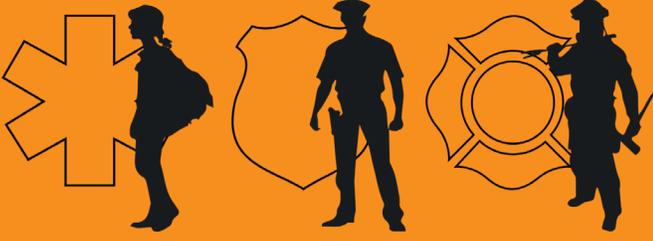


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JOINT COUNTERTERRORISM ASSESSMENT TEAM

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