



(U) Iran-Linked Lethal Operations in the United States

(U) SCOPE: This product provides first responders with information on the likely targets, tactics, and indicators of Iranian lethal operations in the United States. This product is not in response to a specific or ongoing plot in the Homeland; rather, it is a resource for law enforcement responsible for identifying and mitigating threats in their jurisdictions.

(U//FOUO) Engagement in the Community and with Federal Partners Helps Identify and Mitigate Lethal Plots: Iran's lethal operations plotting in the United States has historically involved targeted assassinations, rather than mass attacks on civilian populations. Collaboration between state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement and federal partners, including FBI, US Secret Service, or other US Government protective services to identify potential targets and tactics indicative of lethal plotting would help inform prevention responses. US federal partners can provide tailored briefings or finished intelligence to law enforcement officers about the threats to anti-regime activists or high-profile Iranian dissidents in their Area Of Responsibility (AOR), as well as the status of plots against US officials or anti-regime activists targeted by Iran who are residing in or visiting the AOR for publicized events. First responders should also conduct outreach with community partners to understand Jewish and Israeli presence and track and report threats to these groups from a broad spectrum of terrorist and other violent extremist actors in the AOR.

(U) Select Iranian Targets in the Homeland

 **(U) Current and Former US Government Officials:** to avenge the January 2020 death of IRGC-QF Commander Qasem Soleimani.

 **(U) Iranian Dissidents and Anti-Regime Activists:** who challenge or who are otherwise perceived as a threat to the Iranian regime.

 **(U) Select Jewish Persons and Interests:** as part of longstanding Iran-Israel tensions.

(U) DOJ Indictments Related to Iran's Lethal Operations in the United States Since 2022

 AUGUST 2022	 JANUARY 2024	 AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2024	 OCTOBER 2024	   NOVEMBER 2024
<p>(U) Shahram Poursafi (U) Nationality: Iranian (U) Surrogate: Poursafi allegedly directed a confidential source, who he believed was a hitman (U) Murder for hire: offered \$300k (U) Alleged Target: Former US National Security Advisor (U) Notes: Poursafi offered the confidential source \$1M for a second assassination</p>	<p>(U) Naji Sharifi Zindashti (U) Nationality: Iranian (U) Surrogates: Canadian Nationals Damion Patrick John Ryan, a member of an identified outlaw motorcycle gang with members that have previously been involved in criminal activity, and Adam Richard Pearson, undocumented immigrant residing in Minnesota (both in Canadian custody for unrelated offenses) (U) Murder for hire: agreed to \$350k (U) Alleged Target: Two Maryland residents who had fled Iran after one of them defected (U) Notes: Zindashti, an Iran-based narco-trafficker, and the criminal affiliates he used were sanctioned by the US Treasury Department Office of Foreign Assets Control</p>	<p>(U) Asif Merchant (U) Nationality: Pakistani (U) Surrogates: Merchant contacted two undercover law enforcement agents who he believed were hitmen (U) Murder for hire: offered \$100k (U) Alleged Target: US Government officials (U) Notes: Merchant (US custody) provided the undercover law enforcement officers a \$5k down payment to allegedly kill a US politician or US Government official</p>	<p>(U) Ruhollah Bazghandi (U) Nationality: Iranian (U) Surrogates: A network of surrogates, including Iran-based organized crime leader Rafat Amirov, Eastern European-based Polad Omarov, and New York-based Khalid Mehdiyev (US custody) (U) Murder for hire: offered \$500k (U) Alleged Target: Iranian-American Activist (U) Notes: Mehdiyev, a member of a European criminal organization, was arrested near the victim's residence in New York with a loaded assault rifle</p>	<p>(U) Farhad Shakeri (U) Nationality: Afghan (U) Surrogates: US-based Carlisle Rivera and Jonathan Loadholt (US custody) (U) Murder for hire: offered \$100k (U) Alleged Targets: Iranian-American Activist, Jewish persons, the President (U) Notes: Shakeri used criminal contacts he met during his time in the New York prison system from 1994 to 2008 to advance the plot</p>

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(U) Tactics Used in Iran's Lethal Operations in the United States



GAINING ACCESS TO THE US

(U//FOUO) Iran probably prefers to employ operatives with existing US legal status or US access, judging from disrupted plots. Operatives may use family visits or business activities as cover for travel. Operatives typically travel to and from the United States by air and generally do not rely on cross-border smuggling networks.



OPERATIVE RECRUITMENT & SURROGATES SELECTED TO HIDE IRAN-LINKS

(U//FOUO) Iran generally prefers to recruit lethal operations operatives and intermediaries whose nationalities obfuscate Iranian involvement in the plotting. Iran has recruited individuals from varied countries. Iran may look to recruit financially motivated members of violent criminal networks or other individuals with a criminal history or history of violence, such as outlaw motorcycle gang members and drug traffickers. At times, recruits are told their intended victims are being targeted for personal, financial, or ideological reasons, such as having defrauded or oppressed individuals overseas, probably to further obfuscate Tehran's role. Iran likely recruits operatives in person and online, through social media sites and encrypted messaging apps.



COLLECTING PATTERN OF LIFE INFORMATION ON TARGETS

(U//FOUO) Open-source and cyber collection supports attack plotting:

(U//FOUO) Monitoring social media sites, live streams, and publicity and map applications, to determine locations, schedules, travel, attendance at public events, and security posture, including security measures and personnel, of both the target and the facilities where the target resides or appears. Additionally, Iran has capable cyber actors who could collect targeting information.



(U//FOUO) Human surveillance further supports planning:

(U//FOUO) **Witting operatives:** verify open-source information, such as targets' schedule and location (public speaking engagements), and have been asked to attach GPS magnets to targets; vehicles and set up remotely enabled cameras near target residences. Iran may also conduct full-time monitoring of a target, lie-in-wait in cars, or loiter nearby to identify opportunities to carry out an attack.

(U//FOUO) **Unwitting assets:** such as private investigators, have been hired on false claims about the target.



FIREARMS DOMINATE METHODS OF ATTACK IN THE US

(U//FOUO) Most of Iran's attack plots in the US involve the potential use of firearms. Based on decades of reported attacks on regime opponents in and outside Iran, other Iranian assassination methods include stabbings, vehicle rammings, bombings, poisonings, strangling, suffocation, and arson. Iran has also attempted to lure victims to countries geographically close to Iran almost certainly for eventual execution.



PAYMENTS OFTEN REQUIRE PROOF OF SUCCESSFUL OPERATION

(U//FOUO) Iran most likely requires proof (news items, photos, videos) that an attack has been successfully completed prior to full payment. Iran has previously sent operatives photos of cash held in escrow to be paid upon satisfaction of its requirements. Iran has also used cryptocurrencies, virtual wallets, and other digital currency accounts to make payments or test transfer processes.

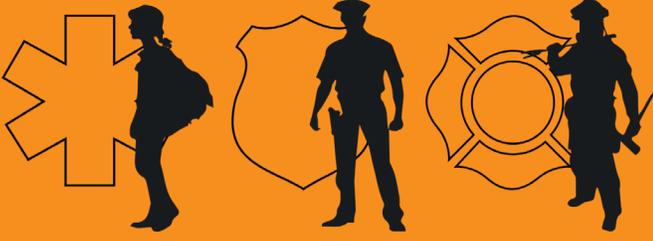


STRICT COMMUNICATIONS & OPERATIONAL SECURITY

(U) Iranian officials and Iran-directed lethal operatives engage in communications security protocols, such as:

- (U//FOUO) meeting in person
- (U//FOUO) leaving cellphones turned off during in-person conversations
- (U//FOUO) taking photos of an associate's communications
- (U//FOUO) using codewords
- (U//FOUO) using multiple burner phones
- (U//FOUO) wiping phones before entering the United States
- (U//FOUO) using messaging apps with end-to-end encryption
- (U//FOUO) sharing information, such as surveillance photos and videos, through cloud accounts
- (U//FOUO) removing license plates to evade tracking, conducting surveillance detection routes, and paying cash for transactions to avoid tracking.

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