

## Short Briefing Paper on Designating the IRGC a Terrorist Organization

Designating the IRGC a terrorist organization would send a strong warning to cease actions against U.S. interests, but it could actually enhance the IRGC stature in Iran, put U.S. forces in danger, undermine the war against ISIS, and derail the JCPOA.

### Why list the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as terrorist organization?

The IRGC is an integrated elite conscript corps of the Iranian Armed forces with roughly 100,000 troops and has taken a more assertive role in virtually every aspect of Iranian society.

- **The IRGC has been a principal adversary of American armed forces**, including introducing IED's into Iraq and Afghanistan and providing technically capable penetration missiles in Iraq that have killed Americans in the early days of those conflicts.
- **The IRGC's global paramilitary arm, the Quds Force, is the IRGC's main vehicle** for supporting Assad, Hezbollah and other Shia proxy groups in the region and around the world – a role that is growing.
- **Listing the IRGC would send a strong symbolic warning to Iran's leaders and reinforce the existing designation of Iran as a major state sponsor of terrorism** which already makes Iran the subject of the most comprehensive sanctions the U.S. has against any nation.
- **Designating the IRGC as a terrorist organization would underscore to international corporations the risks they take** in doing business with the IRGC and its affiliates, and would encourage Iran's leaders to continue with reforms that get the IRGC out of its power position in the Iranian economy.

### Why would listing the IRGC be contrary to U.S. interests?

- **The IRGC would not be harmed but strengthened** in its push for greater influence politically and economically in Iran. The IRGC's greatest vulnerability is that it stands in the way of economic reform and anti-corruption in Iran.
- **It could endanger U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria.** The IRGC forces are providing support for the Iraqi army and the Shia militia in Iraq alongside U.S. military forces. Designating the IRGC could provide incentives to the IRGC to strike back against the U.S. presence in the region either directly or through surrogates.
- **It could undermine the war against ISIS.** The IRGC support for the Iraqi armed forces and Shia militia in the fight against ISIS has often been critical, such as in the fight to retake Mosul. The IRGC's speedy intervention saved the Kurdish capital Erbil from falling to ISIS last year.
- **It would provide incentives for the IRGC to sabotage the JCPOA** and to step up opposition to Rouhani's re-election in the May 2017. Rouhani is credited with concluding the JCPOA, which prevents an Iranian nuclear weapon and gives impetus to reforms designed to open up Iran's economy thereby threatening to reduce IRGC's strong economic position.
- **It would cut off opportunities for U.S. military command to have direct contact with IRGC** which may be necessary in the future to coordinate the war against ISIS and other terrorist groups or to avoid direct conflict. The IRGC played an important role in late 2001 in helping the U.S. remove the Taliban from governing Afghanistan.
- **Listing the IRGC would open the possibility that Iran and others would reciprocate** by listing all or some units of the U.S. Armed Forces as terrorist organizations, potentially introducing additional complications for American military status of forces agreements in some states.