

KETER GLOBAL INTELLIGENCE & SECURITY

SYSTEMATIC ELIMINATION OF IRANIAN & HEZBOLLAH LEADERSHIP ARCHITECTURE

Strategic Impact Assessment on Nuclear, Ballistic Missile,
and Internal Security Structures of the Islamic Republic

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This assessment presents a comprehensive accounting of the systematic elimination of Iranian and Hezbollah leadership across military, political, intelligence, nuclear, and ballistic missile domains from October 2023 through March 2026. The campaign, executed primarily by Israel with significant United States support, represents the most extensive decapitation operation against a state-level adversary in modern intelligence history.

The cumulative effect of three distinct operational phases -- the Lebanon campaign (October 2023 - October 2024), the Twelve-Day War / Operation Rising Lion (June 2025), and Operation Roaring Lion (February - March 2026) -- has fundamentally altered the strategic balance in the Middle East. Iran's nuclear weapons breakout timeline has been extended by an estimated five to seven years. Its ballistic missile capability has been reduced by approximately 60 percent. Its proxy architecture, anchored by Hezbollah, has been functionally dismantled at the command level. And the Islamic Republic's internal security apparatus has been degraded to the point where regime survival itself is in question.

KEY FINDINGS

- Over 80 Hezbollah commanders eliminated, including Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah, the entire Jihad Council, and the complete Radwan Force command layer.
- 50+ named Iranian officials killed across three waves, including Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, the IRGC Commander-in-Chief, the Armed Forces Chief of Staff, and the Ministers of Defense and Intelligence.
- 19 nuclear program personnel eliminated, including 11 senior weapons design scientists and two consecutive SPND chairmen -- effectively destroying institutional knowledge of nuclear weapons design.
- IRGC Aerospace Force commander killed twice in succession (Hajizadeh in June 2025, his replacement Qureishi in March 2026), collapsing ballistic missile program leadership continuity.
- Two-thirds of Iran's ballistic missile launchers destroyed, one-third to one-half of its 2,500-missile arsenal eliminated, and solid-fuel missile production paralyzed.
- Iran's deterrence architecture -- relying on the triad of nuclear ambiguity, ballistic missiles, and proxy forces -- has been degraded across all three pillars simultaneously.
- Despite comprehensive decapitation, large-scale regime change has not materialized. CIA assesses the regime is damaged but retains capacity for reconstitution, with more radical successors potentially emerging.

II. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This report draws upon open-source intelligence (OSINT), government statements, think tank analyses, satellite imagery assessments, and media reporting from credible international outlets. Sources include the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD), the Alma Center for Israel-related security research, the Wilson Center, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, and primary government communiques from Israeli, American, and Iranian officials.

The temporal scope covers October 7, 2023 -- the date of the Hamas attack on Israel that triggered the current conflict cycle -- through March 30, 2026. The geographic scope encompasses Lebanon, Iran, Syria, and areas of Israeli operational activity. For nuclear scientist assassinations, the historical baseline extends to 2007 to provide complete programmatic context.

Personnel listed as eliminated are confirmed killed based on official Israeli Defense Forces statements, Iranian government acknowledgments, or multiple independent media confirmations. Organizational charts reflect best available intelligence on current post-holders and vacancies as of the date of publication.

III. HEZBOLLAH LEADERSHIP ELIMINATION CAMPAIGN

Israel's campaign against Hezbollah leadership, conducted from January 2024 through October 2024, systematically dismantled the organization's command-and-control architecture from the top down. The campaign culminated in the killing of Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah on September 27, 2024 -- the most consequential targeted killing in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

A. Top Political and Military Leadership

Name	Position	Date Killed	Circumstances
Hassan Nasrallah	Secretary-General of Hezbollah; founding member	27 Sep 2024	Israeli airstrike on underground HQ, Dahiyeh, southern Beirut
Hashem Safieddine	Head of Executive Council; designated successor to Nasrallah	3 Oct 2024	Israeli strike; exact location classified
Fuad Shukr	Top military commander; Jihad Council member; advisor to Nasrallah; linked to 1983 USMC barracks bombing	30 Jul 2024	Israeli airstrike on residential building, Haret Hreik, Dahiyeh
Abbas Nilforoushan (IRGC)	IRGC Deputy Commander for Operations; killed alongside Nasrallah	27 Sep 2024	Same strike that killed Nasrallah at Hezbollah HQ, Beirut
Ali Karaki	Commander, Hezbollah Southern Front	27 Sep 2024	Killed alongside Nasrallah in same airstrike

B. Radwan Force Command Structure Eliminated

The Radwan Force, Hezbollah's premier special operations and commando unit responsible for cross-border operations into Israel, suffered catastrophic leadership losses. The September 20, 2024 strike on a Radwan commanders' meeting in southern Beirut killed the unit's overall commander, Ibrahim Aqil, along with approximately ten additional senior commanders -- effectively decapitating the entire unit leadership in a single operation.

Name	Position	Date
Ibrahim Aqil	Commander, Radwan Force; Jihad Council; \$7M US bounty	20 Sep 2024
~10 Radwan commanders	Senior Radwan unit commanders (killed in same strike)	20 Sep 2024
Wissam al-Tawil	Senior Radwan commander; weapons facilitator	8 Jan 2024
Ali Muhammad al-Debes	Senior Radwan commander	15 Feb 2024
Hassan Ibrahim Issa	Deputy to al-Debes, Radwan unit	15 Feb 2024
Ismail al-Zin	Senior anti-tank missile unit commander, Radwan	31 Mar 2024
Ali Ahmad Hassin	Radwan unit operative	8 Apr 2024
Ali Jamal al-Din Jawad	Radwan unit commander	5 Aug 2024
Hussein Ibrahim Kasab	Radwan unit commander	17 Aug 2024

C. Rocket and Missile Unit Commanders

Name	Position	Date
Qassem Saqlawi	Commander, rocket/missile array, Coastal Sector	21 Mar 2024
Ali Abed Akhsan Naim	Deputy commander, rocket/missiles unit	29 Mar 2024

M.H. Matzafa Shouri	Rocket/missile unit commander, Radwan	16 Apr 2024
Mustafa Hassan Salman	Operative, Rockets and Missiles Unit	8 Jul 2024
Hassan Fares Jeshe	Commander, anti-tank missile array	7 Aug 2024

D. Senior Field Commanders and Other Personnel

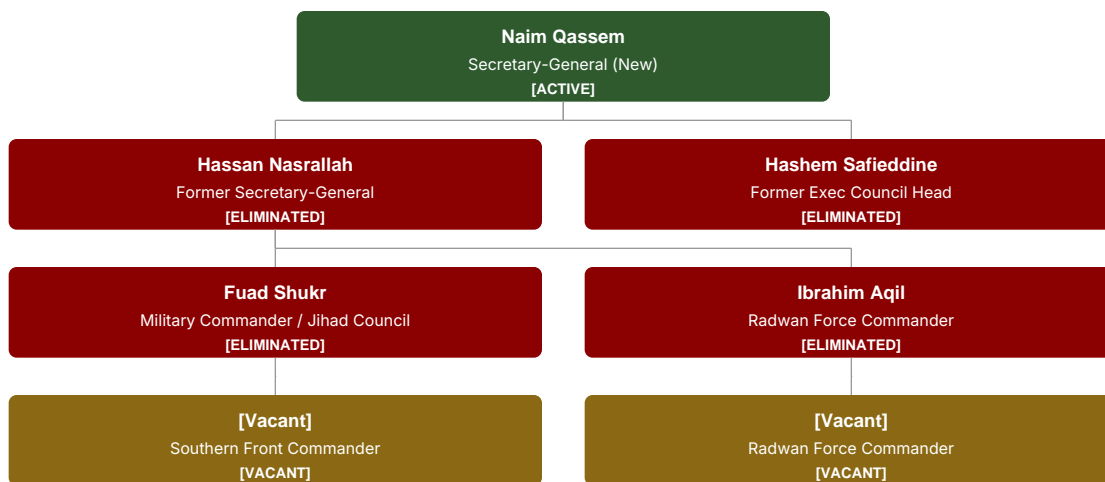
Name	Position	Date
Sami Taleb Abdullah	One of highest-ranking Hezbollah commanders in south Lebanon	12 Jun 2024
Mohammad Naameh Nasser	Head of Hezbollah Aziz unit	3 Jul 2024
Hussein Makki	Senior Southern Front commander; former coastal division chief	15 May 2024
Ali Hussein Burji	Aerial force commander, southern Lebanon	9 Jan 2024
Ismail Yusef Baz	Coastal commander	16 Apr 2024
Amin Badreddine	Nephew of late military commander Mustafa Badreddine	6 Aug 2024
Hussein Azkoul	Aerial defense engineer	23 Apr 2024
Yasser Nemr Qranbish	Former Nasrallah bodyguard; weapons facilitator	9 Jul 2024
Abbas Ibrahim Hamza Hamada	Field commander, southern Lebanon	20 Jun 2024
Ibrahim al-Ashi / Fadi Shihab	Southern Front field commanders (2 killed together)	13 Aug 2024
Ali Nazi Abd Ali	Senior Southern Front operative	3 Aug 2024

E. Electronic Warfare: Pager and Communication Device Attacks

On September 17-18, 2024, Israel executed one of the most innovative covert operations in modern intelligence history. Thousands of pagers and walkie-talkies distributed throughout Hezbollah's communication network were simultaneously detonated via embedded explosive charges. The operation killed over 30 Hezbollah operatives and wounded more than 3,000 -- including hundreds of mid-level commanders and field operatives. Beyond the immediate casualties, the attack devastated Hezbollah's command-and-control communications infrastructure, forced the organization to abandon electronic communications in favor of couriers, and created a pervasive atmosphere of paranoia that paralyzed operational planning in the critical days before the Israeli ground incursion.

F. Hezbollah Current Organizational Structure

The following chart illustrates the current state of Hezbollah's leadership hierarchy. Red indicates eliminated positions; green indicates active known successors; amber indicates vacancies.



Assessment: Hezbollah retains political organization under Naim Qassem but has lost virtually its entire military command layer. The Jihad Council has been effectively destroyed. Radwan Force leadership has been completely eliminated. The organization's ability to plan and execute complex military operations against Israel is severely degraded for the foreseeable future. Reconstitution of competent military leadership will require years.

IV. IRANIAN MILITARY AND IRGC LEADERSHIP ELIMINATION

The elimination of Iranian military and IRGC leadership occurred in three distinct waves, each escalating in scope and strategic significance. The cumulative effect has been the near-total destruction of Iran's senior military command echelon.

A. June 2025: Operation Rising Lion (Twelve-Day War)

On June 13, 2025, Israeli airstrikes targeting Iran's nuclear facilities, ballistic missile factories, and military command centers killed eight senior military commanders in a single day -- the most devastating single-day leadership loss in Iranian military history. The operation was concurrent with Operation Narnia, which targeted nuclear scientists in their residences.

Name	Rank / Position	Significance
Hossein Salami	Major General; Commander-in-Chief of the IRGC	Highest-ranking IRGC officer; UN/US sanctioned for ballistic missile program
Mohammad Bagheri	Major General; Chief of Staff of Armed Forces	2nd most powerful military figure after Supreme Leader
Gholam Ali Rashid	Major General; Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Armed Forces	Commander of Khatam-ol-Anbia Central HQ (highest operational unit)
Amir Ali Hajizadeh	Brigadier General; Commander, IRGC Aerospace Force	Key figure in missile/drone program; directed attacks on Israel; admitted to shooting down Flight 752
Mehdi Rabani	Brigadier General; Deputy Head of Operations, General Staff	Operational planning for armed forces
Gholamreza Mehrabi	Brigadier General; Deputy Director for Intelligence, General Staff	Military intelligence leadership
Davud Sheikhiyan	Brigadier General; Commander, Air Defense Division, IRGC Aerospace	Air defense architecture for missile/nuclear sites
Masud Shane'i	General; Chief of Staff to IRGC Commander Salami	Killed alongside Salami

Source: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, June 13, 2025.

B. February - March 2026: Operation Roaring Lion

The second and third waves of the decapitation campaign began on February 28, 2026 with strikes that killed Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei himself -- an event without precedent in Iranian or modern Middle Eastern history. Over the following four weeks, systematic strikes eliminated the Minister of Defense, the Minister of Intelligence, the Commander of the IRGC, the IRGC Navy Commander, the Basij commander, and dozens of additional senior military, intelligence, and security officials. The Wikipedia compilation lists approximately 50 named officials, with the actual total estimated at around 40-50 confirmed high-ranking personnel.

February 28, 2026 -- Opening Day Strikes

Name	Position
Ali Khamenei	Supreme Leader of Iran -- airstrike on compound in Tehran
Ali Shamkhani	Secretary of the Iranian Defence Council
Mohammad Pakpour	Major General; Commander of the IRGC
Abdollah Mousavi	Major General; Chief of General Staff, Armed Forces
Aziz Nasirzadeh	Brigadier General; Minister of Defence and Armed Forces Logistics
Hossein Jabal Amelian	Brigadier General; Chairman of SPND (nuclear weapons organization)
Reza Mozaffari Nia	Brigadier General; Former Chairman of SPND
Mohammad Baseri	Senior Intelligence Ministry official
Yahya Hosseini Panjaki	Deputy Minister of Intelligence for Israel affairs; Head of MOIS Internal Security

March 2-29, 2026 -- Continuing Strikes

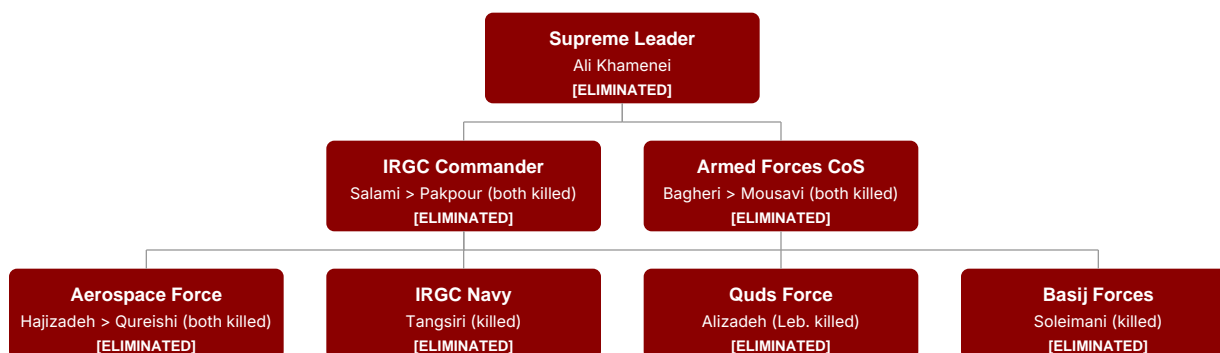
Date	Name	Position
2 Mar	Mohammad Shirazi	Head of Military Office of the Supreme Leader
2 Mar	Saleh Asadi	Deputy for Intelligence, Armed Forces General Staff
2 Mar	Mohsen Darrebaghi	Deputy for Logistics and Support, General Staff
2 Mar	Gholamreza Rezaian	Commander, Police Intelligence Organization
2 Mar	Bahram Hosseini Motlagh	Head of Planning and Operations, General Staff
2 Mar	Hassan-Ali Tajik	Head of Logistics, General Staff
2 Mar	Akbar Ebrahimzadeh	Deputy Head of Office of Commander-in-Chief
3 Mar	Mohsen Mahdavi Kalateh	Deputy Minister of Intelligence
10 Mar	Asadollah Badfar	Head of paramilitary Basij, General Staff
10 Mar	Esmail Dehghan	Senior Commander, IRGC Aerospace Force
12 Mar	Akbar Ghaffari	Deputy Minister of Intelligence
14 Mar	Abolqasem Babaeian	Chief of Staff, Khatam-al Anbiya Central HQ
17 Mar	Ali Larijani	Secretary, Supreme National Security Council
17 Mar	Gholamreza Soleimani	Head of Basij paramilitary forces
17 Mar	Esmail Ahmadi	Head of Intelligence for Basij
18 Mar	Esmail Khatib	Minister of Intelligence
20 Mar	Mehdi Qureishi	Commander, IRGC Aerospace Force (replaced Hajizadeh)
20 Mar	Ali Mohammad Naini	IRGC Spokesperson and Deputy for Public Relations
26 Mar	Alireza Tangsiri	Commander, IRGC Navy
26 Mar	Behnam Rezaei	Head, IRGC Navy Intelligence Directorate
29 Mar	Hassan Hassanzadeh	Senior IRGC Commander

Additional personnel killed in March 2026 include: Mohammadreza Saqafifar (Special Assistant to Khamenei), Ali Hashemi (IRGC Isfahan deputy), Naqi Mohaddesnia (IRGC Clergy Affairs), Abdullah Jalali-Nasab (Khatam al-Anbiya intelligence), Alireza Bayat (SNSC Internal Security deputy), Morteza Larijani (SNSC assistant, son of Ali Larijani), Ali Bateni (SNSC deputy secretary), Qassem Qoreishi and Azim Esmaili Khosrowabadi (Basij deputies), Afshin Naghshbandi (General Staff representative to Basij), Mehdi Rostami Shomastan (Intelligence Ministry commander), Ghadir Azarian (IRGC East Azerbaijan), and Ebrahim Mortazavi-Nasb (Basij Shiraz). An additional four unnamed Ministry of Intelligence officials are confirmed killed.

C. IRGC Quds Force Personnel Eliminated in Lebanon

Name	Position	Date	Location
Reza Khazaei	Quds Force official	3 Mar 2026	Lebanon
Majid Hosseinikandesar	Head of Finance, Quds Force Lebanon Corps	8 Mar 2026	Ramada Plaza Hotel, Beirut
Alireza Bi-Azar	Intelligence Officer, Quds Force Lebanon Corps	8 Mar 2026	Ramada Plaza Hotel, Beirut
Ahmad Rasouli	Intelligence Officer, Quds Force Palestine Corps	8 Mar 2026	Ramada Plaza Hotel, Beirut
Hossein Ahmadi	Israel Desk Officer, Quds Force	8 Mar 2026	Ramada Plaza Hotel, Beirut
Abuzar Mohammadi	IRGC Missile Operations Cmdr in Hezbollah's missile unit	12 Mar 2026	Lebanon
Davood Alizadeh	Commander, Quds Force Lebanon Corps	12 Mar 2026	Lebanon

D. IRGC Command Structure -- Current Status



Assessment: The IRGC command structure has been systematically destroyed through two rounds of decapitation. Replacements appointed after June 2025 were themselves eliminated in February-March 2026, demonstrating that Israel possesses both the intelligence penetration and operational reach to eliminate successors in near-real-time. The current IRGC Aerospace commander, Majid Mousavi, faces accusations of desertion and troop abandonment, indicating severe morale and command-authority crises within remaining leadership.

V. IRANIAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM DECAPITATION

The targeting of Iran's nuclear program personnel represents the longest-running component of the elimination campaign, spanning from 2007 to 2026. The campaign has effectively destroyed the institutional knowledge base required for nuclear weapons design, weaponization, and testing. A total of 19 nuclear program personnel have been confirmed killed -- including the architect of the program (Fakhrizadeh), two consecutive SPND chairmen, and nearly every senior weapons design scientist.

A. Nuclear Scientists Killed: 2007 - 2020 (Historical Baseline)

Name	Expertise	Date	Method
Ardeshir Hosseinpour	Professor; electromagnetism	15 Jan 2007	Gas/radiation poisoning, Shiraz
Masoud Ali-Mohammadi	Quantum field theory; particle physics	12 Jan 2010	Remote-control motorcycle bomb, Tehran
Majid Shahriari	Nuclear engineer; neutron transport	29 Nov 2010	Car bomb from motorcycle, Tehran
Darioush Rezaeinejad	Physicist; neutron transport	23 Jul 2011	Shot by motorcycle gunmen, Tehran
Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan	Polymer membranes for gaseous diffusion	11 Jan 2012	Car bomb from motorcycle, Tehran
Mohsen Fakhrizadeh	Head of nuclear weapons program; Project Amad leader ("father" of program)	27 Nov 2020	Remote-control satellite-operated machine gun, Absard

B. Operation Narnia: June 12-13, 2025

In a single night, Israeli intelligence located and simultaneously struck the residences of nine of Iran's most senior nuclear weapons scientists. The operation, designated "Narnia" by Israeli media, targeted individuals with irreplaceable expertise in nuclear weapons design, high-explosive lensing, detonation systems, and warhead engineering. Each scientist held deep institutional knowledge of the Amad Plan -- Iran's covert nuclear weapons development program -- and continued to contribute to SPND (Organization of Defensive Innovation and Research) activities.

Name	Nuclear Expertise / Role
M.M. Tehrani	PhD physics; supervised nuclear explosive testing (Amad Plan Project 3/30); high-explosive experiments with flash X-rays; head of Islamic Azad University; US sanctioned 2020
Sa'eed Borji	PhD materials engineering; leading expert on high explosives for nuclear weapons; close associate of Fakhrizadeh; led post-Amad weaponization activities; SPND procurement via front company; US sanctioned 2019
F. Abbasi-Davani	PhD nuclear engineering; former Head of AEOI (2011-2013); Amad program leader (neutron group, fabricated weapon core); survived 2010 assassination; UN sanctioned 2007, US sanctioned 2012
Akbar Motalebizadeh	Chemistry expert; head of SPND Shahid Karimi Group; nuclear explosive device components; close advisor to Fakhrizadeh; high-explosive work; US sanctioned 2019
Mansur Asgari	Head of SPND R&T; Department; Amad Plan manager (explosives, EBW detonators, enrichment); close advisor to Fakhrizadeh; US sanctioned 2019
S.A.H. Faghahi	PhD physics; senior nuclear physics expert; bomb yield calculations; deputy head of AEOI; head of Nuclear Science & Technology Research Institute; deep SPND organizational knowledge
A. Manouchehr	PhD nuclear engineering; reactor physics, bomb yield calculations, radiation calculations; dean of Nuclear Sciences at Shahid Beheshti University; consulted with SPND on weapon design and nuclear submarine propulsion
A.R. Zolfaghari	PhD nuclear engineering; expert in nuclear bomb yield calculations; professor at Shahid Beheshti University; led military nuclear submarine project

Ali Bakouei Katrimi	PhD nuclear physics; multipoint initiation systems (MPI) specialist -- critical for nuclear implosion; head of SPND explosives group (nuclear weapons design); also senior in ballistic missile systems
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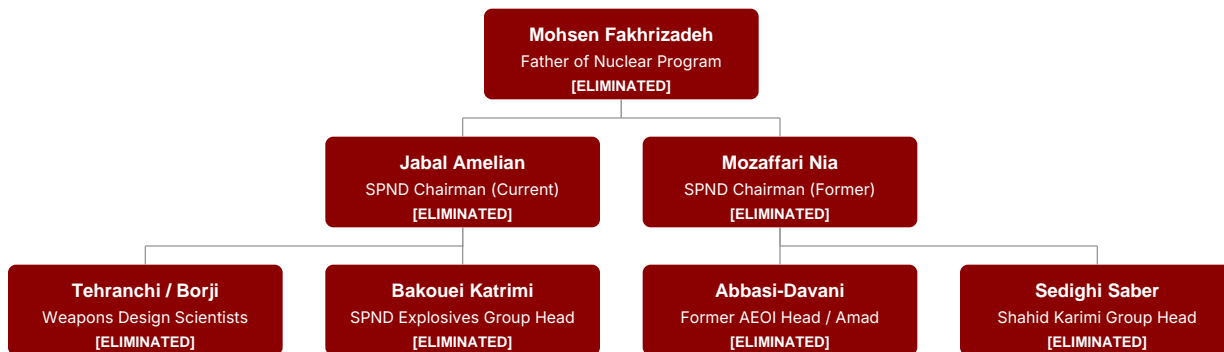
Source: Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD), June 14, 2025; Wikipedia, "Assassinations of Iranian nuclear scientists."

Two additional nuclear engineers were killed in subsequent strikes: Isar Tabatabai-Qamsheh (June 20, 2025) and Mohammad Reza Sedighi Saber, head of the SPND Shahid Karimi Group (June 24, 2025).

C. SPND Leadership Eliminated: February 2026

The opening strikes of Operation Roaring Lion on February 28, 2026 killed both the current and former chairmen of SPND -- Brigadier General Hossein Jabal Amelian and Brigadier General Reza Mozaffari Nia. SPND is the organization responsible for overseeing Iran's nuclear weapons-related research, including weaponization, warhead design, and integration with delivery systems. The elimination of both chairmen, combined with the June 2025 destruction of the scientific cadre, has left the organization effectively leaderless and bereft of institutional expertise.

D. Iranian Nuclear Program -- Organizational Chart



Assessment: The nuclear program's human capital has been devastated. Of the known senior scientists with weapons design expertise, none survive. The SPND leadership has been eliminated twice over. While Iran retains approximately 400 kg of 60% enriched uranium and physical infrastructure -- some of which is being reconstructed underground -- the scientific knowledge required to design, assemble, and test a nuclear device has been set back by an estimated five to seven years. This knowledge cannot be reconstituted through procurement or construction; it requires decades of scientific training and institutional continuity that no longer exists.

VI. BALLISTIC MISSILE PROGRAM DEGRADATION

A. Key Personnel Eliminated

Name	Position	Date	Status
Amir Ali Hajizadeh	Commander, IRGC Aerospace Force (ballistic missile command)	Jun 2025	KILLED
Davud Sheikhiyan	Commander, Air Defense Division, IRGC Aerospace	Jun 2025	KILLED
Mehdi Qureishi	Replacement IRGC Aerospace Commander (after Hajizadeh)	20 Mar 2026	KILLED
Esmail Dehghan	Senior IRGC Aerospace Commander	10 Mar 2026	KILLED
Ali Bakouei Katrimi	SPND explosives head; ballistic warhead design	Jun 2025	KILLED
Majid Mousavi	Current IRGC Aerospace Commander (replacement for Qureishi)	--	ALIVE -- accused of desertion

B. Infrastructure Damage Assessment

The Alma Center for Israel-related security research published a comprehensive assessment in February 2026 quantifying the damage to Iran's ballistic missile infrastructure:

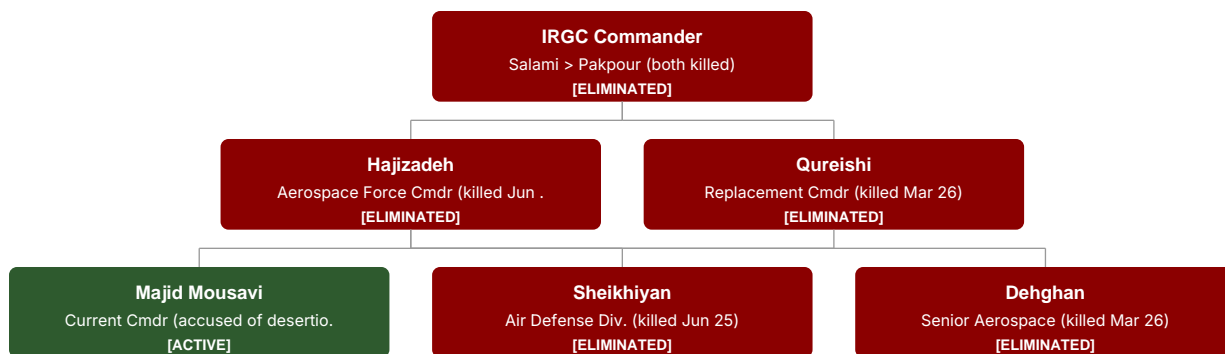
Pre-War Arsenal	Post-War Status	Reduction
~2,500 ballistic missiles	1,000-1,200 available	~50-60%
~480 launchers	~100 serviceable mobile	~79%
12-20 planetary mixers (solid fuel)	All destroyed (Oct 2024)	100%
25 major launch bases	19 directly attacked; above-ground unserviceable	76% attacked

Critical Findings:

- 293 active launchers were hit during the systematic "launcher hunt" campaign; 95 additional launchers were buried inside tunnel openings and shafts that were collapsed by bunker-buster munitions.
- The destruction of all 12-20 planetary mixers for solid-fuel production has paralyzed Iran's ability to produce modern solid-fuel ballistic missiles, forcing reliance on liquid-fuel variants with longer fueling times and greater vulnerability to preemptive strike.
- Iran fired approximately 550 missiles during the Twelve-Day War, expending a significant portion of ready-to-launch inventory.
- Underground tunnel infrastructure at missile bases largely survived, providing a foundation for reconstitution if raw materials can be sourced.
- Iran is importing components from China via shell companies and received a pre-war shipment of Sodium Perchlorate at Bandar Abbas sufficient for approximately 800 missiles.
- Iran's pre-war strategic goal was an arsenal of 8,000 ballistic missiles; it now aims to rebuild to 2,000 -- a reduction of 75% in strategic ambition.

Source: Alma Center, "Iran Situation Assessment," February 17, 2026.

C. Ballistic Missile Program -- Organizational Chart



VII. STRATEGIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT

A. Nuclear Program Deterrence Analysis

Iran's nuclear deterrence posture rested on the implicit threat of rapid breakout -- the ability to produce a deliverable nuclear weapon within a compressed timeline. This posture has been fundamentally undermined through the combined destruction of scientific expertise, physical infrastructure, and organizational leadership.

The elimination of 19 nuclear program personnel -- including virtually every scientist with weapons design knowledge from the original Amad Plan -- has created an institutional knowledge gap that cannot be closed through recruitment or procurement. Nuclear weapons design requires decades of accumulated tacit knowledge in areas such as implosion lens geometry, multipoint initiation sequencing, and explosive testing. This knowledge was concentrated in a small number of individuals, most of whom are now dead.

While Iran retains an estimated 400 kg of 60% enriched uranium and is reconstructing underground facilities (including the "Pickaxe Mountain" complex south of Natanz at 80-100 meters depth under granite), the path from enriched material to deliverable weapon has been dramatically lengthened. The IAEA has been unable to confirm the status or location of the enriched material since the June 2025 strikes. Conservative estimates place the nuclear breakout timeline at five to seven years from the date of this assessment, contingent on Iran's ability to recruit or develop replacement scientific talent.

B. Ballistic Missile Capability Assessment

The ballistic missile program, historically the backbone of Iran's conventional deterrence doctrine, has experienced catastrophic attrition. With approximately 60% of the missile arsenal destroyed, 79% of launchers eliminated, and solid-fuel production capability entirely neutralized, Iran's ability to conduct sustained ballistic missile barrages against Israel or regional adversaries has been reduced to a fraction of pre-war capacity.

The serial elimination of IRGC Aerospace Force commanders -- Hajizadeh (June 2025), Qureishi (March 2026), with current replacement Mousavi facing accusations of desertion -- has destroyed leadership continuity within the program. Recruitment of qualified commanders willing to assume a position with a demonstrated zero-percent survival rate presents an obvious strategic challenge for Tehran.

Iran's shift from a strategic target of 8,000 missiles to a reconstitution target of 2,000 reflects an implicit acknowledgment that the program's pre-war scale is unrecoverable. The forced reliance on liquid-fuel missiles, which require extended fueling operations that are visible to overhead surveillance and vulnerable to preemptive strike, further degrades operational utility.

C. Combined Arms Deterrence Degradation

Iran's deterrence architecture historically relied on a triad: (1) nuclear ambiguity, (2) ballistic missile capability, and (3) proxy forces -- principally Hezbollah as a "second-strike" retaliatory force capable of saturating Israel with rocket fire in the event of an Israeli attack on Iran. All three pillars have been simultaneously degraded:

- Nuclear pillar: Scientific leadership destroyed; breakout timeline extended by 5-7 years; underground reconstruction underway but years from operational capability.
- Ballistic missile pillar: 60% of arsenal destroyed; launcher inventory reduced by 79%; solid-fuel production paralyzed; command leadership killed twice in succession.

- Proxy force pillar: Hezbollah's military command layer wiped out; Radwan Force leadership entirely eliminated; Jihad Council destroyed; rocket and missile units decapitated. The Alma Center assesses that Hezbollah has "ceased functioning as a strategic offensive deterring force."

The simultaneous degradation of all three pillars represents a strategic inflection point. Iran's ability to deter Israeli or American military action has been reduced to its lowest level since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979. The operational focus has shifted by necessity to remaining proxy assets in Yemen (Houthis), Iraq, and Quds Force international terror networks.

VIII. REGIME CHANGE DYNAMICS AND INTERNAL DESTABILIZATION

A. Mossad Strategic Plan

Following the Twelve-Day War in June 2025, Mossad chief David Barnea reversed the agency's historical assessment that regime change in Iran was not achievable through external intervention. Barnea devised a plan predicated on the theory that comprehensive decapitation of the regime's leadership, security apparatus, and military command -- combined with sustained strikes on internal security forces -- would create conditions for a popular uprising to overthrow the Islamic Republic.

The plan was presented to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who adopted it, and subsequently to senior Trump administration officials in mid-January 2026. American officials expressed measured optimism but harbored reservations about the feasibility of engineering a post-regime transition. The February 28, 2026 strikes were timed, in part, to exploit ongoing protests that had begun in December 2025.

B. Support to Iranian Opposition Forces

On February 13, 2026, President Trump publicly declared support for regime change in Iran, indicating that "there are people" he wanted to see assume power. Following the February 28 strikes, Trump issued a direct appeal to the Iranian population: "When we are finished, take over your government. It will be yours to take. This will be probably your only chance for generations."

Operational support to opposition groups included contact with Iranian Kurdish opposition figures, specifically the Coalition of Political Forces of Iranian Kurdistan based in Iraqi Kurdistan, with the goal of arming them for a cross-border offensive into Iranian Kurdistan. Israeli jets have conducted strikes in northwestern Iran to pave the way for Kurdish forces, and Israeli officials expressed confidence that degrading Iranian military capacity in western Iran could "open up the way to Tehran." However, American officials have reportedly stepped back from plans to arm the Kurdish offensive, introducing a significant gap between Israeli ambitions and American commitment.

C. Strikes on Internal Security Apparatus

A distinctive feature of the February-March 2026 campaign has been the deliberate targeting of Iran's internal security forces -- the Basij paramilitary organization, the Ministry of Intelligence, and the police intelligence apparatus. These entities are the regime's instruments of domestic control, responsible for suppressing protests, monitoring dissent, and enforcing obedience. Their targeting represents a strategic logic aimed at enabling popular uprising by degrading the regime's coercive capacity against its own population.

- Gholamreza Soleimani, Head of Basij -- killed March 17, 2026
- Esmail Ahmadi, Head of Basij Intelligence -- killed March 17, 2026
- Asadollah Badfar, Head of Basij (General Staff level) -- killed March 10, 2026
- Qassem Qoreishi and Azim Esmaili Khosrowabadi, Basij Deputy Commanders -- killed March 17, 2026
- Esmail Khatib, Minister of Intelligence -- killed March 18, 2026
- Mohsen Mahdavi Kalateh, Akbar Ghaffari -- Deputy Ministers of Intelligence -- killed March 3 and 12, 2026
- Gholamreza Rezaian, Commander of Police Intelligence Organization -- killed March 2, 2026
- Yahya Hosseini Panjaki, Head of MOIS Internal Security -- killed February 28, 2026

D. Assessment of Regime Stability

Despite the unprecedented scope of the decapitation campaign, a large-scale popular uprising has not materialized as of the date of this assessment. Several factors account for this outcome:

- Iranian security forces issued shoot-to-kill orders against protesters, creating extreme personal risk for would-be demonstrators.
- The civilian population lacks organized access to weapons. President Trump acknowledged this constraint, noting that security forces are "machine-gunning people down if they want to protest."
- The decapitation strikes killed many potential moderate or pragmatic successors within the system, complicating the "Venezuela model" of installing a compliant figure from within the regime structure.
- Netanyahu acknowledged the limits of aerial power: "You can't do revolutions from the air. There has to be a ground component as well."
- U.S. officials have largely ceased speaking of regime change, with Secretary of Defense Hegseth downplaying the objective.

Keter Global assesses that the systematic elimination of leadership, combined with sustained strikes on internal security forces, has created the most favorable conditions for regime change in Iran since the 1979 revolution. However, the absence of organized, armed opposition on the ground represents the critical missing variable. The campaign has confirmed the hypothesis that Israel possesses the intelligence and military capacity to dismantle Iran's command structure; the question of whether this translates into regime collapse remains contingent on factors beyond Israeli or American control -- specifically, the willingness and ability of the Iranian population to exploit the security vacuum at extraordinary personal risk.

IX. CONCLUSIONS AND FORWARD OUTLOOK

The systematic elimination of Iranian and Hezbollah leadership from October 2023 through March 2026 constitutes the most comprehensive state-level decapitation campaign in modern history. Its effects are structural, not merely tactical -- the destruction of institutional knowledge, leadership continuity, and organizational capacity across military, intelligence, nuclear, and proxy domains has fundamentally altered Iran's strategic position for a generation.

Confirmed Hypotheses

Nuclear Deterrence Neutralized: The elimination of 19 nuclear program personnel and two successive SPND chairmen has extended Iran's nuclear breakout timeline by 5-7 years. The destruction of irreplaceable tacit knowledge in weapons design represents a setback that transcends physical infrastructure damage.

Ballistic Missile Capability Degraded: With 60% of missiles, 79% of launchers, and 100% of solid-fuel production capacity destroyed, Iran's conventional deterrent has been reduced to a fraction of pre-war levels. Serial elimination of Aerospace Force commanders has collapsed leadership continuity.

Proxy Architecture Dismantled: Hezbollah's military command layer has been entirely eliminated. The organization no longer functions as a credible second-strike deterrent against Israel. Iran's proxy network has shifted by necessity to secondary theaters (Yemen, Iraq).

Regime Vulnerability Maximized: The systematic targeting of internal security forces (Basij, Intelligence Ministry, Police) has degraded the regime's coercive capacity against its own population to historically low levels. The conditions for regime change are more favorable than at any point since 1979 -- though the outcome remains contingent on domestic variables.

Forward Outlook

- Iran will prioritize underground nuclear reconstitution, with the "Pickaxe Mountain" facility south of Natanz representing the most significant reconstruction effort. Monitoring of this facility should be a top intelligence priority.
- Ballistic missile reconstitution will depend on Chinese procurement channels. Interdiction of shell company logistics and Sodium Perchlorate imports presents a high-value enforcement opportunity.
- The IRGC's morale crisis, evidenced by the desertion accusations against current Aerospace commander Mousavi, will deepen as the demonstrated lethality of assuming senior positions continues to deter qualified candidates.
- Israel's continued ability to identify and eliminate successors in near-real-time indicates a level of intelligence penetration into the Iranian state apparatus that represents an enduring strategic advantage.
- The regime change variable remains the most consequential and least predictable element. Israel's strategy requires the Iranian population to accept extraordinary risk. Historical precedent suggests this is possible but not assured.

This assessment was prepared by Keter Global Intelligence & Security. The analysis represents the considered judgment of Keter Global analysts based on available open-source intelligence and is provided to senior government officials and intelligence community leadership for decision-support purposes.

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