

MEMMO

June 9, 2016

State Department: Iran Remains the “Foremost State Sponsor of Terrorism”

Released on June 2, the State Department’s annual [Country Reports on Terrorism](#) declared Iran remained the “foremost state sponsor of terrorism” in 2015. In spite of the Iran deal reached last summer, Tehran has stepped up its efforts to dominate and destabilize the region through “support for Hizballah, Palestinian terrorist groups in Gaza, and various groups in Iraq and throughout the Middle East.” America must continue to vigorously oppose Iran’s malign activities and strictly enforce sanctions that target Iran’s support for terrorism.

The report states Iran is the primary driver of regional instability:

- **Middle East:** “Iran used the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force (IRGC-QF) to implement foreign policy goals, provide cover for intelligence operations, and create instability in the Middle East. The IRGC-QF is Iran’s primary mechanism for cultivating and supporting terrorists abroad.”
- **Syria:** “In addition to its ongoing support for Hizballah in Syria, Iran continued to provide arms, financing, training, and the facilitation of primarily Iraqi, Afghan, and Pakistani Shia fighters to support the Assad regime’s brutal crackdown that has resulted in the deaths of more than 250,000 people in Syria.”
- **Hizballah:** “Since the end of the 2006 Israeli-Hizballah conflict in 2006, Iran has also assisted in rearming Hizballah, in direct violation of UNSCR 1701. Iran has provided hundreds of millions of dollars in support of Hizballah in Lebanon and has trained thousands of its fighters at camps in Iran. These trained fighters have used these skills in direct support of the Asad regime in Syria and, to a lesser extent, in support of operations against ISIL in Iraq. They have also carried out isolated attacks along the Lebanese border with Israel.”
- **Iraq:** “Iran also increased its arming and funding of Iraqi Shia terrorist groups ... Many of these groups ... have exacerbated sectarian tensions in Iraq and have committed serious human rights abuses against primarily Sunni civilians.”
- **Bahrain:** “Iran has also provided weapons, funding, and training to Shia militants in Bahrain. In 2015, the Government of Bahrain raided, interdicted, and rounded up numerous Iran-sponsored weapons caches, arms transfers, and militants. This includes the Bahraini government’s discovery of a bomb-making facility with 1.5 tons of high-grade explosives in September.”



Iran continued to provide arms, funds, and training to the terrorist group Hizballah in 2015.

- **Palestinian Territories**: “Although Hamas’s ties to Tehran have been strained due to the Syrian civil war, both sides took steps in 2015 to repair relations. Iran continued to declare its vocal support for Palestinian terrorist groups and its hostility to Israel in 2015.”
- **Global**: “Iran and Hizballah reportedly continued to prepare for attacks against Israeli targets outside the country. In late November, Kenyan security agencies announced that they had arrested two Iranian citizens, allegedly sent by the Iranian IRGC/Quds force to execute a terrorist attack against Israeli targets in Nairobi. In May, Cypriot police arrested a Lebanese-Canadian national, Hussain Abdallah, who later admitted he was working for Hizballah’s External Security Organization.”

Iran rebuffed the report, denied its links to terrorism and blamed America.

- On June 5, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hossein Jaber Ansari rebuffed the report, stating “The legitimate struggle of nations which are occupied ... are not examples of terrorism, and such charges in the American report are rejected.” Ansari also condemned, “U.S. military interferences and destructive support for terrorist groups in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya and Yemen.”
- On June 3, Iran’s Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei declared, “It’s the U.S., the evil Britain, and the damned and cancerous Zionist regime. These are the main enemies.”

The United States must hold Iran accountable for its support of terrorism.

- The United States must vigorously enforce terrorism-related sanctions against Iran, so that Tehran understands that support for terrorism will lead to negative consequences.
- Congress should continue to challenge any effort to provide additional benefits to Iran beyond those explicitly enumerated by the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.
- The United States should continue warning international banks about the dangers of conducting business with Iran, including the dominant role of the IRGC in Iran’s economy. The IRGC remains under U.S. sanctions and any bank doing business with the group risks losing access to the U.S. financial system.
- Hamas and Hizballah remain designated foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs), and America should continue to warn international banks of Iran’s continued close ties with these organizations.
- The United States should work in concert with Israel and its Gulf allies to repel Iran’s regional aggression and continued malign activities.