

# Iran's Nefarious Plans for the Gulf

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Qatar-based Muslim Brotherhood leader Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi recently set off a hot controversy. The influential Sunni cleric, a regular on Al-Jazeera, stated that "Shiites are heretics and their danger comes from their attempts to invade Sunni society." Interestingly enough this is far from just a religious debate, because it actually encompasses the fear that Sunni Gulf states feel regarding Shiite Iran's expansion.

In the context of a very tensed geopolitical situation in the Gulf, Qaradawi warned: "We should protect Sunni society from the Shiite invasion&hellip;. I am only trying to preempt the threat before it gets worse. If we let Shiites penetrate Sunni societies, the outcome won't be praiseworthy. The presence of Shiites in Iraq and Lebanon is the best evidence of instability."

This declaration is clearly aimed at Iran's threat to the region. While numerous examples of Iran's strategy of penetration of Gulf societies have surfaced in the past few years, new reports are quite worrisome.

Just two weeks ago, Adel al-Assadi, the former Iranian ambassador to the UAE told Gulf News that since 1979 Iran has assembled a force of infiltrators and collaborators who are ready to destabilize the region when needed.

Assadi specifically pointed out the danger represented by elements trained by Iranian Revolutionary Guards, who are in a sleeper mode until they are activated by Tehran.

Assadi also confirmed that Iran has an undercover presence in the six Gulf Cooperation Council countries and has enough manpower to destabilize them.

But more than these sleeper cells, one should be worried by the presence of Hezbollah operatives in the area. In fact, the Kuwaiti daily Al-Seyassah reported that hundreds of Lebanese Hezbollah fighters, who received military training in Iran, have infiltrated the Gulf since January, to "militarize" the Shiite community in these countries. These include Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

Their mission is to organize the destabilization of these monarchies and target vital national interests (economic and strategic) and Westerners (embassies and businesses), if the United States and/or Israel decide to conduct a military operation against Iran.

Also British sources warned that European intelligence services have located at least 450 Lebanese Shiite fighters who have already visited the Gulf between January and July 2008, often using false passports. Others were able to move directly from Iraq to Kuwait and the eastern province of Saudi Arabia, which is predominantly Shiite.

Lebanese immigrants in these countries allegedly confirmed the presence of these agents, and have reported them to the authorities.

This information confirms the suspicions of mainly Bahrain regarding the presence of training camps on its territory, funded by Iran's Revolutionary Guards. These camps are preparing young Shiite Bahrainis in guerrilla warfare in order to destabilize the small Gulf monarchy.

These latest reports reinforce what many analysts have feared all along; that the Iranian regime has made no secret over what its reply to a strike against its nuclear facilities by Israel or the United States is likely to entail.

First, by attacking Qatari oil facilities and using its proxy Hezbollah to perpetrate terror attacks around the world. But also, Gulf monarchies worry about guerilla operations at sea using suicide boats that could smash into ships. Backing up these fears are recent reports of beefed up activity of Iranian Revolutionary Guards in international waters.

Assadi, the former Iranian ambassador, commenting about Iran's plans said: "The good news is that Arab governments and people have become more alert about Iranian plots against the region after they were exposed in Iraq."

Being aware of a threat and being able to confront it are two very different realities. With its well trained Revolutionary Guards, the GCC countries would be no match for Iran.

A war in the region would have dramatic human and geopolitical implications. But due to its importance in the energy sector, the economic and financial consequences on an already very shaky world economy would be devastating.

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