

Phares - Designating Pasdaran, 'Terrorists'

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Walid Phares checks in today with Tank-exclusive analysis on the U.S. designation of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps as a "terrorist organization."

According to Phares:

In terms of strategic psychology, placing the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (Pasdaran) on the official U.S. terror list is not unlike what it would have been to so-target the SS, and by association the Nazi regime and the German war machine during World War II.

To name the 125,000-strong Pasradan a "terrorist organization" [the first state military branch to be so designated] was a master stroke of effective symbolism. We can already see the uncomfortable, worldwide reaction as exhibited by the spokespersons of the Khomeinist elite, including the Arab-speaking apologists for Tehran. Speaking on Al Jazeera and other Arab media, pro-Iranian commentators reacting to the news boasted about the omnipresence of the Pasdaran across Iran and asked, "How will the U.S. make a distinction between the Guards and the people."

In fact, such comments betray the fear Iranian leaders have had at this point. Clearly, they are embarrassed in front of their masses; embarrassed that a global power officially considers the most-powerful organization within the regime to be nothing more than "terrorists." The impact of this decision has barely begun, and will snowball in terms of the psychological impact it will surely have on the ordinary Iranian citizen.

Iranian youth, already opposed to the regime, have begun — on the Internet — referring to the Pasdaran as "terrorists." And businesses with financial ties to the Guards may rethink their relationship with the organization. This will not necessarily crumble the Pasdaran. But it will push undecided financiers away, and gradually convince the public to distance themselves from the hardest-core of the regime. More importantly, it will unnerve the rank-and-file Guardsmen. And this nervousness may well lend itself to mistakes made within the leadership of the organization.

Keep in mind, the single most-powerful organization in Iran is the Revolutionary Guard. Additionally, the Pasdaran is responsible for the training of current and future Khomeinist militias within Iraq; and it [the Pasdaran] is the backbone of Hezbollah. Designating this network as a terrorist entity is an appropriate strategic response to Iran's terror campaigns in Iraq and Lebanon. It is a decision with strategic consequences in our favor, as long as Washington continues to stay the course in the global war on terror.

Phares' previous analysis.