

# Mohammad Hejazi: Former Deputy Commander of the IRGC's Quds Force

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Following the death of [Qassem Soleimani](#) in a U.S. airstrike, his deputy [Esmail Qaani](#) was appointed to command [Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps'](#) Quds Force (IRGC-QF). Two weeks later, Brigadier General Mohammad [Hejazi](#) - a shadowy officer with a storied career in the IRGC - became Qaani's vice-commander. Following his appointment, sources [claimed](#) that Hejazi would assume much of the Quds Force field command responsibilities.

### **Youth and Early Revolutionary Days**

Mohammad Hosseinzadeh [Hejazi](#) was born in 1956 in the Iranian city of Isfahan. He was [born](#) into a devout family, which likely influenced his decision to support Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's religio-political Wilayat al-Faqih ideology.

Hejazi holds a Masters in Governmental Management from the University of Tehran. Hejazi also obtained a Ph.D. in Strategic Management from the Supreme National Defense University, which is overseen by the General Staff of Iran's Armed Forces. While obtaining his doctorate, he joined the IRGC-affiliated Imam Hussein University as a faculty member.

Hejazi was an early adherent of Khomeini's 1979 revolution and joined the IRGC soon after. Hezbollah's *Alahed* newspaper [described](#) him as "one of the most prominent veteran commanders of the IRGC, which joined its ranks at its formation."

During this period, Hejazi [confronted](#) and quelled armed rebellions against the new regime, most notably by Iran's ethnic Kurdish population. Hejazi also played a critical role in Iran's efforts during its war with Iraq, helping recruit and mobilize Basij forces in the western and southwestern battlefronts. During this time, he served as deputy IRGC commander for the Second District. He also subsequently served in three successive deputy commander positions: in District 4 of the Salman Base, and the Quds Force Base.

### **Rise in the IRGC and in Khamenei's Orbit**

During the 1990s Hejazi also [served](#) as the IRGC's Lebanon official, and is suspected of being involved in planning the July 18, 1994 bombing of the AMIA Jewish community center in Buenos Aires. Hejazi – acting as Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's intelligence and security adviser – was a [key participant](#) in the August 1993 meeting chaired by Khamenei where the decision to bomb the AMIA center was approved. President Rafsanjani, Intelligence Minister Ali Fallahian, and Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati were also present.

Hejazi had risen through the ranks of the Basij during the Iran-Iraq War. He was commissioned as an IRGC officer and soon after assumed the role of the paramilitary force's deputy coordinator. In [March 1998](#), he was appointed commander of the Basij Mobilization Forces, a post which he held for around a decade. During this time, Hejazi drew on that anti-riot experience in quelling the student protests that erupted in 1999. A known hardliner, Hejazi is [alleged](#) to have played an important role in Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's victory in the 2005 presidential election.

After his term as commander of the Basij, Hejazi was elevated to the position of [chairman](#) of the Joint Staff of the Revolutionary Guards, where he served from 2007-2008. He then served for a short stint as the [IRGC's](#) deputy commander-in-chief from 2008-2009 and simultaneously the [deputy IRGC commander](#) at the Tharollah barracks in Tehran.

While holding this position, Hejazi played a decisive role in using the Basij and other forces under his command to crack down on the so-called “Green Revolution” – the 2009 popular uprising which erupted after President Ahmadinejad’s disputed reelection. For his actions, the European Union (EU) [sanctioned](#) Hejazi on October 10, 2011, accusing his “Sarollah [Tharollah] Corps [of playing] a central role in the post-election crackdown.” The EU also [accused](#) Hejazi of being “the author of a letter sent to the Ministry of Health on 26 June 2009 forbidding the disclosure of documents or medical records of anyone injured or hospitalized during post-elections events, implying a cover up.”

### **Hejazi’s Later Career**

In 2009, Hejazi became the deputy chief of the General Staff of Iran’s Armed Forces for Readiness, Logistics, and Industrial Research, a position he seems to have held until 2014. Pro-regime [outlets state](#) that [during](#) the six year gap from 2014 until his current appointment as deputy Quds Force commander [Hejazi](#), “was given battlefield responsibilities on one of the Resistance Axis fronts.”

It is likely that this “Resistance Axis front” [was Lebanon](#). On [August 29, 2019](#), the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) purported to expose “the identities of three senior officers in Iran’s [IRGC] involved in Hezbollah’s attempt to develop and acquire precision guided missiles in Lebanon.” The IDF specifically named “Muhammad Hussein-Zada Hejazi” as one of those IRGC officers, describing him as the “commander of Iran’s precision guided missile project in Lebanon,” and stating that he “directly commands Iranian personnel stationed in Lebanon.”

However, it’s unclear how much progress the regime has made on its precision guided missile (PGM) project. As late as [March 1, 2020](#) IDF International Spokesperson Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus said that, “while Hezbollah possesses a massive arsenal of regular rockets...it has yet to achieve the capability to mass produce these PGMs.” While Conricus alleged that Hezbollah is “close” to achieving that goal, in August 2019, he also [stated](#) that “according to our assessments, Hezbollah does not yet have an industrial capability to manufacture precision-guided munitions — not for lack of trying,” noting that the group did *not* possess “significant amounts” of PGMs in its arsenal.

Conricus’ statements echoed an earlier assessment by Maj. Gen. Tamir Hyman, the Chief of the IDF’s Military Intelligence Directorate (*Aman*). On December 11, 2018 Maj. Gen. Hyman [told](#) a [session](#) of the Knesset’s Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that despite Hezbollah developing its missile capabilities it did not “possess the industrial capability to convert and produce precision weapons.”

In April 2021, the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency [assessed](#) that Soleimani’s death “degraded Iran’s relations with its array of partners and proxies in the region because he was the primary interlocutor with many regional groups.” It also predicted that Qaani would be more likely than Soleimani “to delegate responsibilities, including to his deputy Mohammad Hejazi.” This assessment was likely made due to Hejazi’s seniority and formidable stature in the Iranian system.

But that same month, Hejazi died under mysterious circumstances at 65 years of age. There were conflicting [explanations](#) in Iranian media as to his demise—some stated he passed away from a heart condition. Other publications suggested his passing was due to chemical injuries from the Iran-Iraq War. Some Iranian officials labeled Hejazi as a martyr, but others, like Iran’s supreme leader, did not call him a martyr. Adding to the intrigue, a former Iranian official Amir Moghadam [claimed](#) after Hejazi’s death that he traveled to Yemen and Venezuela, that “he specifically led projects that targeted Saudi Arabia

and the United Arab Emirates,” and that there was a “direct link” between his demise and recent events, specifically an explosion at the Natanz nuclear facility and an incident aboard the Iranian vessel named the Saviz in the Red Sea. After his death, Mohammad Reza Fallahzadeh replaced Hejazi as deputy commander of the Quds Force. Fallahzadeh is a more junior officer than Hejazi, previously serving as deputy coordinator of the Quds Force. He also had battlefield experience in Syria.

### **Conclusion**

Mohammad Hejazi’s life and military career demonstrated that he was well-equipped to handle the daily command of the Quds Force. His extensive experience on several battlefronts—both domestic and foreign—uniquely positioned him to handle the tasks of the IRGC’s foreign operations arm, including recruitment for Tehran’s proxies, improving their armed capabilities, and training them in the counterinsurgency roles that proved vital to Iran’s victories in Syria and Iraq. In addition, Hejazi’s stature within the Iranian regime—his experience working directly with Khamenei and his multiple roles within the top brass of the IRGC—made him a potential successor to Qaani. For these reasons, Hejazi’s passing, combined with Soleimani’s demise, represented the loss of institutional memory and skill for the Quds Force.