

Iranian commander Qassem Soleimani's Instagram account suspended

Tue, 2019-04-16 17:18

JEDDAH: Instagram accounts believed to belong to three commanders from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps have been shut down a day after a US terrorist designation for the force took effect.

The suspended accounts include those of Major-General Qassem Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force, Maj. Gen. Mohammad Ali Jafari, commander-in-chief of the IRGC, and Brig. Gen. Mohammed Pakpour, commander of the IRGC Ground Forces.

The US announced last week that it would designate the IRGC a terrorist organization. Trump said the move "recognizes the reality that Iran is not only a State Sponsor of Terrorism, but that the IRGC actively participates in, finances, and promotes terrorism as a tool of statecraft."

An Instagram spokeswoman told Arab News that they were obligated to adhere to the US sanctions and may disable accounts associated with designated organizations.

"We operate under the constraints of US sanctions laws," the spokeswoman said. "We work with appropriate government authorities to ensure we meet our legal obligations, including those relating to the recent designation of the IRGC."

Soleimani's Instagram account reportedly had 900,000 followers. He once used it to taunt Trump after the US president posted an image warning that "Sanctions are coming" in the style of Game of Thrones.

Soleimani responded with a similarly styled image of himself with the words "We will stand against you."

Last year the account posted an image of Soleimani stood in front of an exploding White House.

On Tuesday, Iran's lawmakers approved a bill labeling US forces in the Middle East as terrorist.

The US terrorist designation for the IRGC took effect on Monday.

The IRGC are Iran's elite military force and are politically powerful domestically, oversee the country's ballistic missile program and control huge sections of the economy.

Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries accuse the group and its foreign wing, the Quds Force, of destabilizing the Middle East with its interventions in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen.



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[Qassem Soleimani](#)

[Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps](#)

[IRGC](#)

Turkey, Qatar criticize US designation of IRGC as terror group
Saudi Cabinet welcomes IRGC terrorist designation by US

[Bahrain jails 138 for plotting to form Iranian-linked 'terror' group](#)

Author:

AFP

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1555425183921232100

Tue, 2019-04-16 13:36

DUBAI: Bahrain jailed 138 people and revoked their citizenship on Tuesday for plotting to form a "terror" group with links to Iran's Revolutionary Guards, the public prosecutor said.

The court, whose rulings can be appealed, handed the men prison terms of three years to life for having tried to build a Bahrain Hezbollah, similar to the Shiite militia active in Lebanon, said prosecutor Ahmad Al-Hammadi. Some members had received military training in Lebanon, Iran and Iraq, he said in a statement.

Bahrain repeatedly claims that Iran trains and funds cells in order to topple the government – an accusation Tehran denies.

Another man was also jailed but his citizenship was not revoked, while 30 others were acquitted, said the statement posted on the prosecution Instagram account.

The source also said that 111 were already in custody while 58 were sentenced in absentia.

In Tuesday's court ruling, the prosecutor said 69 defendants were sentenced to life in jail, 39 to 10 years, 23 to seven years and the rest to between three and five years imprisonment.

Ninety-six of the defendants were also fined 100,000 Bahraini dinars (\$265,000) each.



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Bahrain foreign minister discusses regional security with Pakistani leaders
Pompeo urges Lebanon to move away from Iran and Hezbollah's 'dark ambitions'

Algeria military chief 'looking at all solutions' to solve crisis

Tue, 2019-04-16 16:40

ALGIERS: Algeria's army chief said Tuesday the military was considering all options to resolve the country's political crisis and warned that "time is running out", after weeks of anti-government protests.

Lt. Gen. Ahmed Gaed Salah's remarks were the strongest indication yet that the military, which has said it supports a transition period after the resignation of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, is losing patience.

In a speech broadcast on state television, Salah, who was speaking at a military base in the central town of Ouargla, urged protesters to avoid violence.

"All options are open in the pursuit of overcoming the different difficulties and finding a solution to the crisis as soon as possible, in a way that serves our nation's interests without regard to individual interests," he said.

Salah did not specify what options the army would pursue. But he said: "We have no ambition but to protect our nation."

Hours earlier, the chairman of Algeria's Constitutional Council, Tayib Belaiz, quit his post, state news agency APS said. That followed calls for his resignation by protesters who say he is part of a ruling elite they want abolished.

Bouteflika stepped down on April 2 after weeks of mass protests demanding an end to his 20-year rule. But his departure failed to placate many Algerians who want to topple the old guard and its associates.

Belaiz submitted his resignation to Interim President Abdelkader Bensalah, APS reported, citing a statement from the council.

Meanwhile thousands of demonstrators marched through the streets of Algiers and in cities across the country calling for political change in the eighth week of mass protests.

Belaiz's departure could herald that of other senior political figures who protesters want removed.

These include Bensalah, who was appointed interim president after Salah declared Bouteflika unfit for office and said the military would back a transition period leading to a presidential election on July 4.

Protesters are seeking radical change that would introduce sweeping political reforms in Algeria, an OPEC oil producer and major supplier of natural gas to Europe.



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Algerian rights lawyer Mustapha Bouchachi, a leading voice for changeAlgerian students announce a national strike in protest against the government

[Nearly 150 killed in battle for Tripoli: WHO](#)

Author:

Mon, 2019-04-15 21:07

TRIPOLI: At least 147 people have been killed and 614 wounded in the offensive launched on April 4 by Libyan military strongman Khalifa Haftar to take the capital Tripoli, the World Health Organization (WHO) said Monday.

The clashes have displaced more than 18,000 people, according to the latest figures from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Fighting broke out as Haftar's forces sought to take control of Tripoli from loyalists of the internationally backed Government of National Accord (GNA) which is based in the capital.

The rising number of casualties has prompted the WHO to deploy surgical teams "to support Tripoli-area hospitals as they cope with the influx of trauma cases," the UN agency wrote on Twitter.

At least eight ambulances have been hit during clashes in the southern outskirts of the capital, as both sides have defied international calls to halt the fighting.

WHO urged "all parties to exercise restraint and avoid causing collateral damage to hospitals, ambulances and health workers."

In addition to ground fighting, both pro-government forces and Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) carry out daily air raids and accuse each other of targeting civilians.

The resulting casualties have left health facilities in "critical need of assistance," according to the United Nations refugee agency.

"The situation on the ground continues deteriorating and number of casualties soaring," UNHCR tweeted.



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[Libyan National Army \(LNA\)](#)

121 killed, nearly 600 wounded in Libya fighting: WHOHaftar, El-Sisi hold talks as Libya death toll rises to 120

[Yemeni government and Houthi militants 'accept' Hodeidah troop redeployment plan](#)

Mon, 2019-04-15 17:11

LONDON: Both sides in the Yemen conflict have agreed to a new plan to redeploy their troops in the port of Hodeidah, the UN envoy to the country said on Monday.

The breakthrough comes months after a ceasefire deal for the port city was struck in Sweden between the Iran-backed Houthi militia and Yemeni government forces.

However, implementation of the deal in Hodeidah, which became the main focus of the conflict, has stalled with the Arab coalition supporting government troops accusing the Houthis of dozens of violations of the deal.

Martin Griffiths told a Security Council meeting that the breakthrough of the two sides agreeing to a new "detailed redeployment plan" for Hodeidah was "extremely welcome."

He said the redeployment "would be the first voluntary withdrawal of forces in this long conflict."

"We all need to see tangible progress in Hodeida before moving to focus on the political solution," Griffiths added.

The detailed plan on the pullback was negotiated by Danish General Michael Lollesgaard who heads a UN monitoring mission.

Following the deal on the first stage, Lollesgaard will now focus on the second phase and seek to resolve disputes over the deployment of local forces in areas from where there has been a pullback.

UN diplomats have said the Houthis refused to pull away from Hodeida ports as part of the first stage.

*With AFP



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Yemen's Houthi militia storing aircraft near neighborhoods in Sanaa: Arab coalition
End your crimes, Hadi tells Houthis as Yemen holds first
parliamentary session since coup