

# USADI Dispatch

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## USADI Commentary

### The Rising Prominence of Iran's Revolutionary Guards

There are growing indications of the increasing role of Iran's Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) in government agencies and other centers of power in recent months. Iran's rulers have been alarmed by rising anti-government sentiments across the country in the past several months and a downward spiral in the economic fortunes of Iranians.

The most recent sign of the IRGC's prominence came earlier this week when the head of the state television and radio network (IRIB), Ali Larijani, was replaced by his deputy Ezatollah Zarghami, a former IRGC Brig. Gen. with a long record of involvement in crackdown at home and terrorism abroad, dating back to the early 1980s.

Zarghami's appointment follows last February's sham parliamentary election in which dozens of IRGC commanders won seats. In fact, the Guards Corps played a major role in getting the IRGC personnel and their families out to vote. It also helped bus in thousands of people from Tehran's surrounding villages to the capital's main voting poles to showcase a high turnout in an election millions of Iranians shunned.

With Zarghami at the helm, the IRIB will no doubt step up its disinformation campaign against Iran's democracy movement and its fundamentalist propaganda beamed into Iraq. There are already a dozen radio and TV broadcasts jointly controlled by the IRIB and IRGC, broadcasting venomous propaganda into Iraq to wreak greater instability by spreading extremist views.

That's not all. Late last month, *Reuters* reported, "Iran's Revolutionary Guards are overseeing some 400 nuclear experts in order to prevent further leaks of sensitive information about Tehran's atomic facilities." And a US official expressed "explicit concerns" that the Iranian military was controlling the nuclear weapons programs.

On May 20, the Eurasia Insight wrote, "The Revolutionary Guards reportedly dominate Iran's embassy in Iraq, and have garnered praise in Tehran for running effective intelligence and diplomatic operations" there.

The growing influence of the IRGC in Iran's centers of power is sanctioned by the mullahs' Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. Fearing the explosive potential of popular discontent as summer approaches, the ruling clique has to rely on the IRGC's iron fist to clampdown further on Iran's democracy movement and political dissidents.

Equally significant, the rise of the IRGC reflects Tehran's determination to intensify its meddling in Iraq and vigorously pursue its nuclear weapons program.

Washington needs to be very vigilant about these developments and warn Iran's rulers that suppressing Iranian dissidents, interfering in Iraq and pursuing nuclear weapons will not be tolerated. More importantly, the United States should embrace democratic opposition forces that are working to unseat the ruling mullahs. This is imperative because only a regime change in Tehran would ultimately rid Iran and the region of the ayatollahs' menace.

### Iran Expels British Journalist

LONDON - Iranian authorities have ordered the only U.K. journalist based in Tehran to leave the country because he reported on the aftermath of the Bam earthquake without permission, his British newspaper said.

The Guardian said correspondent Dan de Luce, 38, would return to London on Thursday after authorities declined to renew his visa and accreditation. He would be permitted to reapply in three months time, authorities said.

De Luce had published a dispatch last month critical of the reconstruction effort in Bam following last year's earthquake which killed more than 20,000 people.

He had traveled to the city as an aid volunteer, after being denied a permit to make the trip as a journalist.

De Luce told the Guardian he was "disappointed to be leaving. I was just trying to do my job. I wrote the story from Bam because I thought it was important to document the situation there, what the survivors and the aid agencies were saying."

Guardian editor Alan Rusbridger said the expulsion "can only set back our attempts to understand the fast-changing nature of Iranian society," adding he hoped Iran would reconsider.

The British Foreign Office said it was for Iran to decide who could enter the country, but de Luce's expulsion "sends the wrong messages about freedom of the press, about Iran's willingness to engage sensibly with the international community."

De Luce's predecessor for the Guardian, Genevieve Abdo, left Tehran in 2001, expressing fear she might be punished after authorities criticized her interview with a political prisoner.

*Reuters, May 19, 2004*

The US Alliance for Democratic Iran (USADI), is an independent, non-profit organization, which aims to advance a US policy on Iran that will benefit America's interests, through supporting Iranian people's aspirations for a democratic, secular, and peaceful government, free of tyranny, fundamentalism, weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism. The USADI is not affiliated with any government agencies, political groups or parties.

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## Eurasia Insight May 20, 2004

### Iran's Revolutionary Guards Making a Bid for Increased Power

Iran's Revolutionary Guards, the military force that has served as the main pillar of support for the Islamic republic, is seeking to play an independent role in the country's domestic political life. The entry of the Revolutionary Guards into the political fray can have many unintended consequences, including the rearrangement of Iran's policy-making process.

... Conservative clerics became increasingly reliant on the country's security forces as they went about re-establishing their firm grip on power.

On the domestic front, hard-liners relied heavily on the Revolutionary Guards to manage get-out-the-vote and other activities that helped secure a conservative landslide victory in the controversial February parliamentary elections.

At the same time, the Revolutionary Guards domestic prestige has been significantly enhanced by the fact of its management of Iran's nuclear program. The program, under intense international scrutiny because of its arms-making potential, is a source of tremendous national pride in Iran.

On the security front, the US-led war on terrorism -- specifically the presence of US troops in two neighboring countries, Afghanistan and Iraq -- has enhanced the Revolutionary Guards' clout in defending Iran's national interests. Indeed, the Revolutionary Guards reportedly dominate Iran's embassy in Iraq, and have garnered praise in Tehran for running effective intelligence and diplomatic operations that stifled Bush administration talk of promoting regime change in Iran.

Prior to taking on a higher political profile, the Revolutionary Guards established itself as an economic force in the country, launching a vast array of financial and economic enterprises. In large part, the businesses were seen as needed to finance Revolutionary Guard security programs. At the same time, the ventures were intended to build the guards' independence...

Signs of the growing political clout of the Revolutionary Guards are abundant. For instance, on May 18, a former Guards commander, Ezatullah Zarghami, was named to the key post of national television and radio chief.

In addition, in apparent exchange for its help during the parliamentary elections, the Revolutionary Guards were permitted to field its own slate of candidates. Thus, when the new parliament convenes later in May, about one dozen legislators will be under the effective control of the Revolutionary Guards. Political observers note that this is the first time in the Islamic republic's 25-year history that the guards have had such a parliamentary presence....

## Agence France Presse May 18, 2004

### UN Watchdog Unable To Complete Iran Nuclear Probe by June

VIENNA - The UN atomic agency will not be able to complete an investigation into Iran's alleged secret nuclear weapons program by mid-June due to delays by Tehran in allowing international inspections and disclosing its nuclear activities, diplomats said.

"This is ironic since the Iranians are the ones who want the file on them to be closed," a diplomat close to the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and who asked not to be named told AFP Tuesday.

During a visit by IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei to Tehran in April, Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi had said Tehran expected the IAEA investigation to be completed in June ahead of a meeting of the IAEA board.

But an earlier delay to a crucial round on inspections in March "threw us out of sequence," an official close to the IAEA said, adding key results would not now be available for the board of governors meeting in Vienna June 14.

"It takes a long time to get analysis of environmental samples (swipes to find traces of radioactive particles) so there is no way to get results in June in order to wrap this thing up," a Western diplomat said.

The Iranians have "succeeded in slowing down the (investigation) machine," a second Western diplomat said.

ElBaradei has said he hopes the IAEA can finish its investigation by the end of the year, but he warned in a CNN interview Saturday that Iran's cooperation so far had been insufficient.

"The jury is still out," he said about whether Iran's nuclear program is peaceful as Tehran has insisted.

Iran delayed inspections after the IAEA board in March condemned the country for failing to report key activities, particularly its acquiring of blueprints for sophisticated centrifuges to enrich uranium, which can be used in both civilian reactors and to make atomic bombs. IAEA inspectors now say they can see a pattern of radiation contamination in Iran which could indicate attempts to enrich uranium to bomb-grade level, diplomats said.

IAEA inspectors have so far reported two concentrations of particles of highly enriched uranium -- at a Kalaye Electric Company workshop in Tehran and at the Natanz pilot fuel enrichment plant 150 miles south of the capital.

Diplomats have confirmed other sites have been found, although details have not been made available.