



National Security Leaders Warn Against New IRGC Designation

National security leaders warn against designating Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps—Iran's elite military wing—as a terrorist organization, as called for in the [new Senate sanctions bill \(S. 722\)](#).

Senior Defense and Intelligence Officials, Speaking Anonymously

“Senior defense and intelligence officials have cautioned the White House that a proposal to designate Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps as a foreign terrorist organization **could endanger U.S. troops in Iraq and the overall fight against the Islamic State**, and would be an unprecedented use of a law that was not designed to sanction government institutions.”

--[Washington Post](#), February 8, 2017

But sanctioning the IRGC could backfire, this official warned. **It could strengthen the hardliners and undercut more moderate leaders such as Iranian President Hassan Rouhani**, and encourage Iranian-backed forces in Iraq and Syria to curtail any action against Islamic State in Syria and Iraq and perhaps even sponsor actions against U.S.-backed or even American forces battling Islamic State in Iraq.

--[Reuters](#), February 7, 2017

U.S. Military Leadership under the Bush Administration

“In 2007, the U.S. military reportedly opposed designating the IRGC or the Qods Force as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT). According to *The Twilight War* by David Crist, it was the position of the Joint Chiefs that foreign militaries or their officers should not be designated as “terrorists” for fear that **such designation could be reciprocated against the U.S. military**, particularly its Special Forces officers.”

--[NIAC](#), February 8, 2017

Former Deputy Secretary of State Anthony Blinken

The Bush and Obama administrations named Iran a state sponsor of terrorism and put sanctions on individual Revolutionary Guard commanders and two dozen Iranian firms to which the guard corps is connected. But they stopped short of designating the guards corps itself a terrorist organization because the potential blowback outweighed the benefits.

A direct challenge to the Revolutionary Guards Corps would likely cause its commanders to press for Iran's withdrawal from the nuclear deal. It would undermine the re-election prospects of the accord's main advocate, President Hassan Rouhani, who seeks to moderate Iran's international behavior. It could also prompt the guards corps to unleash Shiite militias against United States forces in Iraq — just when our shared, if uncoordinated, objective of defeating the Islamic State there is within reach — or to **go after American ships in the Gulf or shut down the Straits of Hormuz, through which 25 percent of the world's oil flows.**

--[New York Times](#), February 2017