

The performance of the Ministry of Intelligence of the Islamic Republic of Iran (2021-2023)

Sharp-eyed VAJA

10 Principal Axes of VAJA's Actions

The Ministry of Intelligence is vital for ensuring national security in the country. It plays a unique role in safeguarding national interests against both domestic and foreign threats while also contributing to economic growth and political influence. This article explores the actions and renewed approaches of this security institution as it approaches the second anniversary of the thirteenth government's inception. The Ministry's responsibilities include economic security, countering smuggling, espionage prevention, and conducting informational warfare against foreign entities, among others.

1 Counteracting Economic Offenses:

Economic threats represent a fundamental impediment to economic growth and advancement. They are frequently utilized as instruments by adversarial governments and foreign services. Interestingly, one of the strategic objectives of the Ministry of Intelligence is to safeguard economic security. In the face of a broad spectrum of threats and a multitude of operations, this aspect has, to a large extent, remained overshadowed. Instances such as smuggling, currency disruptions, money laundering, hoarding, the misuse of cryptocurrencies, unauthorized exchange offices, pyramid schemes, antiquities smuggling, disruptions in the markets for essential commodities like food and medicine, land-grabbing, fraud, forgery of official titles and documents, and more, constitute a collection of offenses that the Ministry of Intelligence has confronted over the course of these two years.

One of the challenges that has compounded the complexity of the fight against economic crimes is the entanglement of economic threats with the counterespionage domain and the infiltration of foreign services into the arena of economic disruption. In the subsequent discussion, we will delve into certain key aspects of this challenge. Actions undertaken include the dismantling of the highly organized network involved in pyramid schemes known as "Unique Finance" in 19 provinces, dealing a blow to the network engaged in cryptocurrency scams known as "Money King," dismantling multiple gangs and networks engaged in land-grabbing and the forgery of official documents and titles for economic motives. Other actions include the blocking of 9,219 unauthorized accounts, the discovery of 7 trillion tomans worth of strategic smuggled goods, the crippling of 23 networks involved in currency disruption, identifying and dismantling 15 organized smuggling groups dealing in tobacco products across 10 provinces of the country, and the arrest of a family network involved in pharmaceutical dis-

ruptions.

However, the most critical action by this ministry pertains to the discovery and neutralization of the second phase of riots in 2022, which is the economic phase. This phase encompasses complex financial maneuvers, exploitation of cryptocurrencies, and the involvement of unauthorized currency exchange offices. These actions were elucidated in a joint statement by the Ministry of Intelligence and the Intelligence Organization of the IRGC. A segment of the statement reads as follows: "The transfer and distribution of funds from foreign entities among internal actors responsible for subversive projects are carried out using various and diverse methods. Various methods have been discovered, and numerous individuals have been detained thus far. For instance, a recently uncovered network was found to exploit 'barter' techniques with Iranian individuals traveling abroad, such as students and construction industry activists. In this method, the principal agent or facilitator would identify individuals in need of foreign currency in the destination country, determine the required amount along with the cooperation commission, and instruct them to deposit the funds into a designated account (an account in the United States) upon their return to the country. In another method, some of the profits from investments made in venues such as small workshops, networks related to domestic network marketing, cryptocurrency misuse, unauthorized currency exchange offices, etc., would be injected into American projects inside the country. These methods effectively concealed the origins and destinations of funds for subversive projects, making their identification challenging. Nevertheless, despite the CIA's efforts to complicate the dimensions of fund transfer to the interior, multi-layered financial and informational transactions related to these networks were tracked and identified. Ultimately, financial and informational exchanges of these networks were apprehended."

2 Striking Against Terrorist Groups

Governments and affiliated services have long invested in armed groups hostile to the Islamic Republic since the outset of the Islamic Revolution. In the past two years, this support reached its peak, spanning from unprecedented financial and armament assistance to endeavors aimed at connecting anti-revolutionary groups and providing them political support on international platforms. These anti-revolutionary armed groups can be categorized into three main types: transnational, border-based, and central. Transnational groups like ISIS enter the country from abroad and hold foreign affiliations. Border-based groups, such as separatist groups like Komala and Jaysh al-Adl, primarily operate in border regions. Central groups, like the MEK (Mujahedin-e Khalq) and urban thugs, are active in central cities.

The Ministry of Intelligence, over the course of the past two years, has taken robust measures against all three categories of terrorist groups, effectively thwarting their objectives despite the unprecedented influx of arms into the country. This has been achieved both from an intelligence and operational standpoint.

Actions include the dismantling of two terrorist teams linked to foreign services in Baluchistan in February 2022, the apprehension of members of a separatist terrorist team in the northwest of the country in June 2022, the arrest of 10 individuals affiliated with a terrorist Takfiri group during Muharram of the same year, the capture of individuals involved in a terrorist attack on the Shah Cheragh shrine in November 2022, the identification and elimination of operational nuclei of the MEK in multiple phases, the arrest of individuals involved in the assassination attempt on Mullah Abdul Wahid Rigi, security exchanges with European intelligence organizations, which led to the Albanian police's strike against the MEK in Ashraf 3 camp, and the arrest of the key terrorist element related to the second Shah Cheragh incident. These actions, in addition to the elimination and apprehension of 196 Takfiri terrorists between the two attacks on the shrine of Ahmad ibn Musa, constitute some of the most significant counter-terrorism measures undertaken during these two years. A comprehensive report on the dimensions of each of these operations can delve deeper into the subject.

3 Combatting Criminal Cults

The Ministry of Intelligence also shoulders the responsibility of countering the influence and deviation caused by organized cults and the threats associated with these misguided groups. The actions of these cults and pseudo-religious movements cannot be solely attributed to ideological matters. Rather, they must be observed from the perspective of national security threats and their relations with foreign governments and organizations. The Ministry of Intelligence is actively engaged in efforts to counteract groups promoting deviant beliefs, demon-worship, and false mysticism that, under the guise of spirituality, seek to recruit and manipulate individuals for the cult's objectives. As an example, the arrest of the core members of the deviant Baha'i cult aimed at promoting immodesty in August 2022, just a month before the riots of 2022, can be cited.

4 Fighting Drug Trafficking

The production, smuggling, and distribution of narcotics in Iran are part of the anti-Iranian strategy of the American mafia regime, which has seen a significant surge following the occupation of Afghanistan. The Ministry of Intelligence, like other security entities, has a commendable track record in this field, acting as a deterrent to the enemies' objectives. In one of its announcements, the Ministry reported the discovery of 110 tons of various traditional and industrial narcotics. Ministry of Information officials succeeded in uncovering a shipment containing 25 tons of various narcotics in Zahedan during a single operation.

5 Countering Arms Smuggling

Another strategy employed by the enemy to destabilize Iran is the smuggling of firearms into the country through border crossings. In just the first three months of the autumn riots of 2022, according to the announcement of the police command, over 10,000 firearms, including light and semi-heavy weapons, were reportedly smuggled into the country. The Ministry of Intelligence, in collaboration with other responsible entities such as regional army bases, security bases, the Intelligence Organization of the IRGC, border control, and extraterritorial intelligence, combats arms smuggling into the country. The dismantling of 78 arms smuggling networks in represents one of the significant achievements of the Ministry of Information officials. The discussion on the discovery of weapons by VAJA should not be limited to direct operations against arms smuggling networks. Instead, it can also be observed that the discovery of weapons and explosive materials by this security entity plays a vital role in countering terrorist groups and anti-spy operations.



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Rival and hostile governments have always sought to exploit the potential of Iran's elites. These efforts range from stealing Iran's historical, scientific, and cultural heritage to luring and deceiving academic and industrial elites by regional and extraregional intelligence services. This recent phenomenon, often referred to as "brain drain" and "migration of elites," has been frequently portrayed with aims beyond psychological objectives such as implying that Iran is uninhabitable for elites. Strategic objectives also include depleting the country of elite human resources,