



Iranian Government Details Ahvaz Terrorist Incident

OE Watch Commentary: On 22 September 2018, gunmen attacked a military parade in the southwestern Iranian city of Ahvaz. It was the deadliest attack inside Iran since terrorists attacked a Shi'ite procession in the southern city of Chahbahar in 2010, killing more than 30. Ethnic tension is nothing new in Khuzestan, the Iranian province of which Ahvaz is the capital. Khuzestan is traditionally Arab, although in recent decades the migration of ethnic Persians to the region has decreased the overall proportion of Iranian Arabs resident there. At the same time, Khuzestan is historically the center of Iran's oil industry. Many local Arabs (and, for that matter, resident non-Arabs) feel that they do not receive true benefit from its resources.

There are a couple of things to note from the accompanying excerpted interview from *Raja News*, a hardline portal associated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. First, the uncorroborated allegation that Saudi Arabia was financing the attacks and offering the perpetrators refuge in any Arab country and, second, the insinuation that the United States was also involved with the terrorist cell. In the first instance, parliamentarian Abolfazl Hasanbeigi's suggestion that Riyadh offered the terrorist cell members refuge in any Arab country highlights the ethnic animus toward Arabs that infuses the Iranian leadership: To imply that Saudi Arabia had the support of every Arab country in rewarding anti-Iranian terrorism reinforces the notion that all Arabs are enemies of Iran, the pro-Iranian policies of Syria and Qatar notwithstanding. That the United States had allegedly had contact with individuals in the cell who were also involved in the Islamic State reinforces a common theme of Iranian propaganda, that the United States created the Islamic State.

Also of interest in the reference is the mention of tribalism in Khuzestan. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, tribal movements in Khuzestan centered around Muhamrah (today's Khorramshahr) threatened to secede from Iran to create their own Arab emirate. Reza Shah, the father of the shah ousted in 1979, crushed the tribal movements not only in Khuzestan, but also in predominantly Kurdish areas along the Iraqi border. Seldom do Iranian authorities acknowledge tribalism, except perhaps for the nomadic and more placid Qashqa'i and Bakhtiari. That the Iranian government openly acknowledges tribalism, even if simply to acknowledge that it tapped into tribal networks, suggests that tribal identity is again of importance in Khuzestan. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

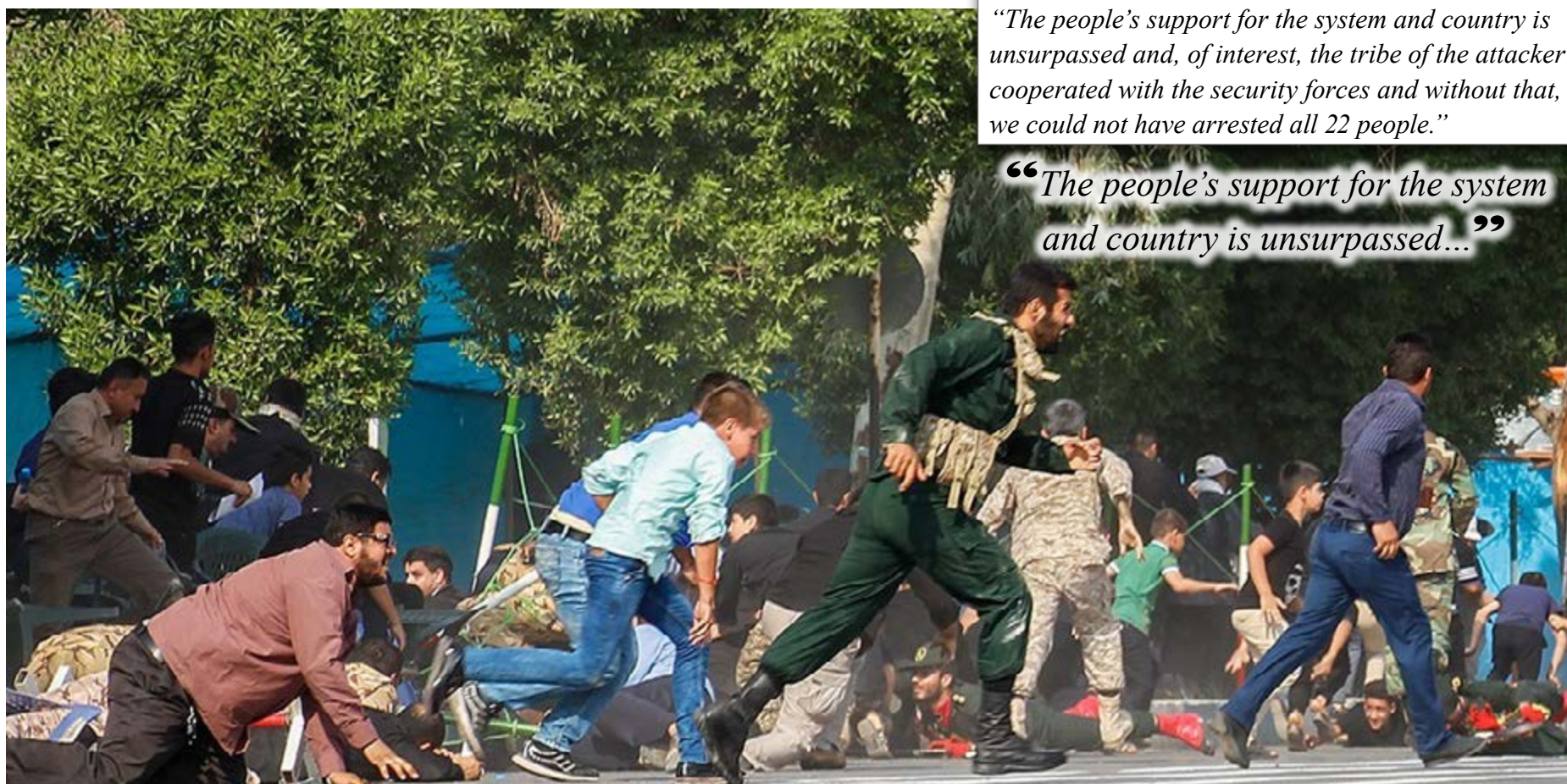
Source: "Jadidtarin Jozi'yat az Hadisah-e terrorist-e Ahvaz (The Latest Details on the Ahvaz terrorist incident)," *Raja News*, 26 September 2018. goo.gl/x16Fgg

Abolfazl Hasanbeigi said: "Saudi Arabia had promised the perpetrators of the Ahvaz incident that after the operation, they would be given \$5,000 and residency of any Arab country that they wished."

Abolfazl Hasanbeigi, a member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Majlis, speaking with [the news site] Dana.ir with regard the details of the Ahvaz incident, stated: "The group that carried out the terrorist attack in Ahvaz were members of the same family, and had, recently, been in Saudi Arabia where they converted their religion to the Wahhabism and Salafism" He added: "These individuals were trained by the Americans in the Deir ez-Zor region and one of their members also joined the Islamic State, but in one of the operations was killed...."

"Internally, there were 26 people involved, four of whom were killed, and 22 of whom were arrested by the soldiers of the Imam Zaman [Muhammad al-Mahdi, a Shi'ite messianic figure], but a few are outside the borders of the country in Denmark and England, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs must take action to extradite and arrest them." The member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Majlis explained, "Saudi Arabia had promised a 40-member team including the 26 in Iran \$5,000 and residency in an Arab country that they could choose." At the end, Hasanbeigi said, "The people's support for the system and country is unsurpassed and, of interest, the tribe of the attacker cooperated with the security forces and without that, we could not have arrested all 22 people."

"The people's support for the system and country is unsurpassed..."



2018 Ahvaz military parade attack.

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