



## Iran: Armed Forces Ready to Take Over National Intranet Project



General Mohammed Bagheri, speaking to military elites at the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Ground Forces Martyr Modarres Primary Combat Training School.

Source: Fars News Agency, [https://media.farsnews.com/Uploaded/Files/Images/1398/04/24/13980424000739\\_Test\\_PhotoN.jpg](https://media.farsnews.com/Uploaded/Files/Images/1398/04/24/13980424000739_Test_PhotoN.jpg)

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Islamic Republic launched plans to build a national intranet in 2005, driven by the Iranian leadership's belief that the Islamic Republic is engaged in a cultural war against the West and that unfettered communications pose a threat to the Islamic Republic's internal security. Almost 15 years later and more than five years after the project was supposed to be completed, efforts to build a national intranet continue (See: "Iran: Progress on National Intranet," *OE Watch*, July 2018; "Comprehensive Legal System for the Country's Internet and Cyberspace," *OE Watch*, October 2017).

In the excerpted article from the *Fars News Agency*, an outlet close to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Major General Mohammad Bagheri, chief-of-staff of the Armed Forces, suggests that Iran's military—presumably the IRGC from whose ranks Bagheri arose—could take charge of the project. His comments likely reflect frustration on the part of the IRGC and other hardline ideologues that the project to cut the Islamic Republic off from the World Wide Web remains delayed with no end date in sight. To advocate for such a position, he argues that foreign "control" of Iranian bandwidth is a danger to Iran, saying, "Foreigners control seventy per cent of the bandwidth in our country and we have just left the door open for them to come and influence public opinion and the youth here."

Beyond the excerpts provided here, Bagheri's speech was wide-ranging. He addressed the state of the revolution, youth, and issues of culture, declaring "the military is one of the most crucial parts of the lives of our country's children." As the article's title suggests, he argued that, after the 20 June 2019 Iranian shoot-down of an American RQ-4A Global Hawk BAMS-D surveillance drone, the American President's stated decision not to retaliate was driven less by his stated desire to save Iranian lives and more because Iran's deterrent ability was so great that the US military advised him that they could not attack. This conforms to a common theme in Iranian military rhetoric that exaggerates Iran's deterrent ability and depicts adversaries as paper tigers. Bagheri also repeated the Iranian spin that it alone enabled Iraq to turn the tide against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), downplaying US contributions to the anti-ISIS coalition. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

*"Foreigners control 70 percent of our bandwidth."*

**Source:** "Sarlashgar Bagheri: Artesh-e Amrika Trump ra Baraye Jalugari az Hamleh beh Iran Tawjeyeh Kard (General Bagheri: The U.S. military stopped Trump's attack on Iran)," *Fars News Agency*, 4 September 2019. <https://www.farsnews.com/news/13980613000253>

### *The Armed Forces Can Set Up National Internet*

*Responding to a question about the possibility of the armed forces involving itself in the network infrastructure field, he [Maj.-Gen. Mohammad Bagheri, chief-of-staff of the Armed Forces], said, "The armed forces have no direct responsibility in this field, but given the knowledge that we have, we are certainly capable of setting up the national Internet and completing the National Information Network project. Foreigners control seventy per cent of the bandwidth in our country and we have just left the door open for them to come and influence public opinion and the youth here."*