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TERROR IN IRAN: ON THE BLASTS IN IRAN'S KERMAN AND THE IMPACT

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January 05, 2024 12:10 am | Updated 12:10 am IST

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The [twin blasts in the southeastern Iranian city of Kerman](#) at a memorial for [Qassem Soleimani](#), the Quds Force commander whom the U.S. assassinated in Baghdad in January 2020, expose the security vulnerabilities of the Iranian regime at a time when conflicts are spreading in West Asia. At least 84 were killed in the worst terror attack in the Islamic Republic's history. Soleimani, the brain behind the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps' (IRGC) overseas operations, had enjoyed cult status when alive, and became a symbol of an embattled regime's resilience over the past four years. While Iran's leaders called it a terrorist attack but stopped short of blaming anyone, mid-rung officials said the responsibility for the attack "lies with the U.S. and the Zionist entity". However, on Thursday, the Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility. For the IS, Soleimani was a sworn enemy as he had mobilised Shia militias to fight the IS in Syria and Iraq. These groups played a role in the urban battles in Iraq during 2018-19 that saw the destruction of the physical structures of the IS Caliphate. The group lost its proto state but survived as a terrorist entity in parts of Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan.

For Iran, the attack has come at a precarious moment when tensions are rising in West Asia. The Kerman memorial event was bombed a day after a senior Hamas leader was killed in Beirut in a drone strike, for which Lebanese officials have blamed Israel. Hezbollah, which has been engaging Israeli troops in a limited way since October 7, has vowed retaliation. On December 25, an Israeli strike in Syria killed Seyyed Razi Mousavi, a senior IRGC adviser. Israel, whose ongoing attack on Gaza has already killed at least 22,000 people, seems ready to take more risks even at the cost of regional escalation, while in the Red Sea, Iran-backed Houthi rebels of Yemen have been repeatedly attacking commercial vessels since late November. Pro-Iran Shia militias have targeted U.S. troops in Iraq and Syria since October 7, and on Thursday, a U.S. strike in Iraq killed a Shia militia commander. The Israel-Hamas war is no longer about just Israel and Hamas. It has put the whole region in a ring of fire. As chaos spreads the IS seems to have found an opportunity to strike its old enemy which is under pressure. The attack should serve as a warning to Iran and its rivals. If chaos and instability spread it would be a boon for jihadists. This calls for a de-escalation of the current regional crisis. Iran, on the other side, should not walk into the web of provocations set by its rivals. It should show restraint and focus on strengthening internal security.

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SINGAPORE LOOKING TO RECRUIT AUXILIARY POLICE OFFICERS FROM INDIA, CHINA, PHILIPPINES, MYANMAR

Relevant for: Security Related Matters | Topic: Various Security Forces & Agencies and their mandate

Singapore is considering hiring auxiliary police officers (APOs) from India, China, the Philippines and Myanmar, Law and Home Affairs Minister K Shanmugam told parliament on Wednesday.

The city-state is looking to expand the jurisdictions from which it recruits APOs as the number from [Taiwan](#) has fallen in recent few years. As a result, the Home Affairs ministry has been considering expanding the jurisdictions where auxiliary police officers (APOs) can be recruited from. These potentially include Asian ones such as China, India, the Philippines and Myanmar, according to a *Channel News Asia* report.

“We need to allow the Auxiliary Police Forces to recruit foreign APOs, to meet the increasing demand for security services,” the Today newspaper also quoted the minister as saying. “(The Auxiliary Police Forces) face challenges in sustaining an adequate pool of APOs, given the shrinking local workforce, requirements such as physical fitness, and the job options Singaporeans have.”

He was responding to a parliamentary question from Sylvia Lim, a Member of Parliament and Chairman of the opposition Workers’ Party.

The minister was asked whether Singapore is still hiring APOs from Taiwan, having done so since 2017.

Shanmugam said that the Auxiliary Police Forces will continue to hire Taiwanese APOs even though their numbers have continued to fall despite the generally positive working experience with them. “It has been a challenge to recruit and keep them,” he added.

As of November 2023, Singaporean APOs made up about 68 per cent of the total population of these officers and the remaining 32 per cent are Malaysians and Taiwanese. This drop-off in Taiwanese APOs is attributed to the demanding nature of public-facing security work and improved job opportunities and prospects in Taiwan.

On the risk of letting non-Singaporeans carry firearms, Shanmugam said, “The misuse of firearms by APOs is extremely rare and is not more prevalent among non-Singaporeans.” The Ministry of Home Affairs manages this risk through security screening, training, and supervising APOs, he added. “We are also careful and more restrictive where we deploy non-Singaporean APOs.”

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