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## Iran channels bases in Syria to spy on Israel



A report released by the Pentagon's counter-terrorist office showed Iran to have established intelligence bases in different parts of the Middle East including Syria. According to the report, the Iranian stations in Syria were funded by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and have been active since 2006. "One in the al-Jazirah region in northern Syria and the other in the Golan Heights," it said. The report, which was released last month, confirmed that the stations have been established by the IRGC with the help of the Syrian government. Additional spying stations to provide information to Hezbollah on Israel were also planned in the northern side of the country as Iran was recruiting Iranian-born Israelis, it added. Iran's support to the Syrian regime has been constant since the spill of the conflict, which led to using Iranians as a target by the Syrian opposition fighters. On Jan. 9, a group of 48 Iranians who were held as hostages in Syria since early August were released by opposition fighters in a Damascus hotel as a swap treaty with the Syrian regime, where 2,130 prisoners were released to return to their families. Iran insisted the 48 Iranians were all pilgrims visiting a Shiite shrine in southeast Damascus. It denied any of them were on active service in Syria. In August, Syrian opposition fighters announced that the 48 Iranians kidnapped were current and former members of the elite Iranian Revolutionary Guards and not pilgrims as Iran alleges, in footage aired exclusively by Al Arabiya TV. The fighters "captured 48 of the Shabiha (militiamen) of Iran who were on a reconnaissance mission in Damascus," said a man dressed as an officer of the Free Syrian Army, in the video aired by Al Arabiya. "During the investigation, we found that some of them were officers of the Revolutionary Guards," he said, showing ID documents taken from one of the men, who appeared in the background with a large Syrian independence flag held by two armed men behind them.