



# Iraqi Official Tied to Iran Guard Corps at White House Meeting

Published December 13, 2011

An official tied to Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps was part of the Iraqi delegation that visited the [White House](#) Monday for a meeting with [President Obama](#), alarming some who say Iraq's growing ties to Iran are among the most worrisome aspect of a U.S. pullout.

Hadi Farhan al-Amiri, Iraq's current transportation minister, accompanied Iraqi Prime Minister [Nouri al-Maliki](#) and several other top [Baghdad](#) advisers on the high-profile visit to Washington timed with the official wind-down of U.S. military involvement in [Iraq](#).

But during the rule of Iraqi dictator [Saddam Hussein](#), Amiri served as a commander of the Badr Corps -- a group backed at the time by the IRGC, which has been linked to several attacks on western targets.

The inclusion of Amiri, first noted by The Washington Times, comes amid questions over whether Maliki's government will drift toward Tehran and away from Washington as U.S. troops leave the country.

The White House, though, downplayed Amiri's inclusion, pointing out that even the Bush administration reached out to Iraqis who were close to the Iranian government during Saddam's rule. In the context of the [Iraq war](#), people like Amiri shared a common enemy with America -- Saddam -- despite their ties to the Iranian military group.

Asked about Amiri's presence at the meeting Monday, a White House official forwarded to FoxNews.com a photo of former President [George W. Bush](#) meeting with Sayyed [Abdul Aziz al-Hakim](#) in late 2006, who at the time was head of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, which was part and parcel of the Badr force.

The Badr Corps used to be the military wing of the Supreme Council of Iraq. Like Amiri, the late Hakim aligned with the Iranians against Saddam's regime dating back to the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s.

But for both leaders, that contact apparently did not stop after they were brought into the new government following Saddam's ouster.

According to a Congressional Research Service report, U.S. forces in 2006 arrested two senior officials with the [Quds Force](#) -- the IRGC's special operations unit -- at Hakim's compound, "where they were allegedly meeting with" Amiri. According to the report, [Iraqi government](#) pressure later led to the officials' release.

A group representing Iranian dissidents living in an encampment in Iraq also say Amiri continued to work under the command of the Quds force after Saddam's ouster, repeatedly traveling to Iran and maintaining contact with Ghassem Soleimani, commander of the Quds force, and other military commanders.

"He has played a vital role in establishing Iran's Pasdaran Army and Qods force's control over Iraqi security, military and administrative apparatus," wrote Shahriar Kia, a representative of Camp Ashraf, Iraq, where the dissidents live.

"Hadi al-Amiri founded an organ named central apparatus in the Iraqi Ministry of Interior during the years 2005 and 2006 which engages in physical liquidation of those opposing Iranian regime's dominance over Iraq," he added in an email statement. Ashraf members fear their protected status will be undone if the camp is dissolved.

The Obama administration has taken a tough stance against the IRGC. The White House official on Tuesday noted, as an example of the administration "cracking down" on the IRGC, that the Treasury Department just slapped sanctions on two Iranian military officials, one the deputy commander of the IRGC.

Obama stressed Monday that the U.S. and Iraq expect to cultivate a "comprehensive partnership," involving trade and "scientific exchanges" and joint military exercises.

Obama voiced his confidence in Maliki's resistance to outside influence. Responding to a question on why the Iraqi government had not called on Syria's [Bashar al-Assad](#) to step down, Obama said he had "no doubt" Maliki was basing his decisions on what is best for Iraq, and not "based on considerations of what Iran would like to see."

"Prime Minister Maliki has been explicit here in the [United States](#), he's been explicit back in Iraq in his writings and his commentary that his interest is maintaining Iraqi sovereignty and preventing meddling by anybody inside of Iraq," Obama said. "And I believe him. And he has shown himself to be willing to make very tough decisions in the interests of Iraqi nationalism, even if they cause problems with his neighbor."

Christopher Preble, a foreign policy analyst with the Cato Institute, suggested it is inevitable that officials with Iranian ties -- including Maliki himself -- are in power today, considering Iran's past opposition to Saddam.

"There is an argument to be made, be careful what you wish for," he said.

But Preble added that while the U.S. should be "cognizant" of those officials' continuing ties with Iran, the U.S. has "quite limited leverage" over whom Iraqi officials keep contact with.

"The fact that Maliki has in his government people who have ties to the Badr Corps ... does that imply that his government is going to be heavily influenced by ... the Iranians?" he said. "The answer is -- it depends, and not necessarily."

But the presence in Washington of someone with IRGC ties would seem to clash with the administration's attempts to crack down on the group.

Obama, as a U.S. senator, co-sponsored a bill calling for the designation of the Guard Corps as a terror organization -- though he was later criticized during the 2008 presidential campaign for not signing onto a similar bill.

Before the sanctions announced Tuesday, members of the IRGC were also linked to an alleged plot to assassinate the Saudi ambassador to the U.S. One of the defendants charged is a member of the Quds Force. Other Quds members were subsequently sanctioned by the Treasury Department.

The IRGC was also believed to be involved in the bombing of the Khobar Towers in [Saudi Arabia](#) in 1996. That attack killed 19 members of the U.S. military. The U.S. later brought charges against members of the Saudi [Hezbollah](#) organization, but not against Iranians.