

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

August 23, 2017

The Honorable Steven Mnuchin  
United States Secretary of the Treasury  
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Secretary Mnuchin:

We are writing to bring your attention to newly published, open-source photos of Iran's flagship carrier, Iran Air, evidently transporting militants to Syria on commercial aircraft. These newly released photos, enclosed with this letter, provide evidence Iran Air has engaged in Iran's illicit transport of military goods and personnel to Syria since implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Iran's use of commercial aircraft for military purposes violates international agreements as well as Iranian commitments under the JCPOA. We believe these photos mandate a thorough investigation of these practices and a comprehensive review of Iran's illicit use of commercial aircraft. During this investigation, the United States should suspend current and future licenses for aircraft sales to Iran.

In previous correspondence, the Department of Treasury agreed to consider any new evidence of illicit Iranian use of commercial aircraft, and confirmed the U.S. retains the ability to re-designate Iranian airlines guilty of such activities. In a June 22, 2017 letter, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Legislative Affairs at the Department of Treasury Matt Kellogg wrote in reference to monitoring Iran's military use of commercial aircraft, "...We continue to carefully review license applications and monitor Iranian activity. We will also carefully consider any evidence that calls into question the commercial passenger nature of any end user activity."<sup>1</sup> In an earlier letter from November 23, 2016, Treasury department official Thomas Patrick Maloney stated the U.S. maintains the ability to designate or re-designate any Iranian airline that engages in sanctionable activity.<sup>2</sup>

In light of these assurances to both investigate evidence of Iranian wrongdoing and to re-designate Iranian airlines engaging in sanctionable activity, we strongly urge you to investigate the enclosed photos. If as a result of your investigation, you find Iran Air guilty of conducting military transports with commercial aircraft, it should be re-designated. These photos, reportedly taken in both 2016 and 2017, appear to document militants of the Fatemiyoun Brigade, an Afghan Shiite militia, aboard an Iran Air aircraft headed to Syria. These photos seem to display militiamen sitting on seats clearly labeled with the Iran Air logo. These individuals are not Afghani civilians; they are believed to be members of an Iranian-backed militia, trained and funded by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC),

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<sup>1</sup> Kellogg, Matt. "Re: Iran Aviation Licensing" Received by Rep. Peter Roskam, 22 June 2017.



<sup>2</sup> Maloney, Thomas Patrick. "Re: Iran Air" Received by Rep. Peter Roskam, 23 November 2016.

actively fighting for the Assad regime in the Syria. We have enclosed additional photos of these same militiamen aboard Iran Air airliners on Syrian battlefields posing with weapons and ammunition. These photos indicate, Iran Air, a commercial airliner, is facilitating the ongoing atrocities committed against the Syrian people by the Assad regime and its allies. The U.S. must take steps to punish any and all entities supporting such activity.

These photos offer strong evidence of Iran Air's noncommercial and illicit use of commercial aircraft to materially support the IRGC and the Assad Regime. The U.S. maintains authority under Executive Order 13224 to sanction Iran Air for providing financial support, and/or material support to the IRGC, as well as authority under Executive Order 13572 to sanction those supporting human rights abuses against the Syrian people. We strongly urge you to swiftly investigate and conduct a comprehensive review of Iran Air's role in supporting Iran and the Assad regime militarily, and hold accountable those found guilty of such activity.

For your consideration, we have enclosed additional materials supporting our concerns that Iran Air is conducting illicit activity, including numerous photos of militants aboard Iran Air aircraft and on the ground in Syria. We look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

  
PETER J. ROSKAM  
Member of Congress  
ANDY BARR  
Member of Congress  
LEE ZELDIN  
Member of Congress  
DAVE REICHERT  
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Daniel Coats, Director of National Intelligence

Encl.:

1. Foundation For Defense of Democracies Fact Sheet (1): "IRGC Fighters Fly Iran Air to Join Fight in Syria"<sup>3</sup>
2. Foundation For Defense of Democracies Fact Sheet (2) "IRGC Fighters Fly Iran Air to Join Fight in Syria"<sup>4</sup>
3. Photo Set #1: Militiamen aboard Iran Air aircraft and in Syria (Jan 2017)<sup>5</sup>
4. Photo Set #2: Militiamen aboard Iran Air aircraft in Syria (August 2016)<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> "Evidence of Iran Air Plane Flying Fighters to Syria." Foundation For Defense Of Democracy, 9 Aug. 2017. Web. 10 Aug. 2017. <http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/IranAirFlight.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> "Evidence of Iran Air Plane Flying Fighters to Syria 2." Foundation For Defense Of Democracy, 9 Aug. 2017. Web. 10 Aug. 2017. <http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/IranAirFlight2.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> *Afghans of IRGC's Fatemiyoun Brigade on Board the Iran Air Tehran-Damascus; Next in Tadmur, Syria.* 2017. *War Reports.* Web. 10 Aug. 2017. [https://warreports.org/2017/08/07/1448549682068931\\_1971147463142481/](https://warreports.org/2017/08/07/1448549682068931_1971147463142481/)

<sup>6</sup> *Afghans of IRGC's Fatemiyoun Brigade on Board the Iran Air Tehran-Damascus; Next in Tadmur, Syria.* 2017. *War Reports.* Web. 10 Aug. 2017.

<https://www.facebook.com/persian.war.news/photos/pcb.1967608353496392/1967607420163152/?type=3&theater>

# IRGC fighters fly Iran Air to join fight in Syria

## Foundation for Defense of Democracy Fact Sheet (1):



On August 7, the twitter account @warreports posted a batch of photographs showing IRGC Fatemiyoun brigade Afghan fighters being deployed to Syria on an Iran Air airliner.

According to @warreports, "as usual [the IRGC] uses civilian (not military) airlines to transfer militiamen and combat equipment to Syrian soil."

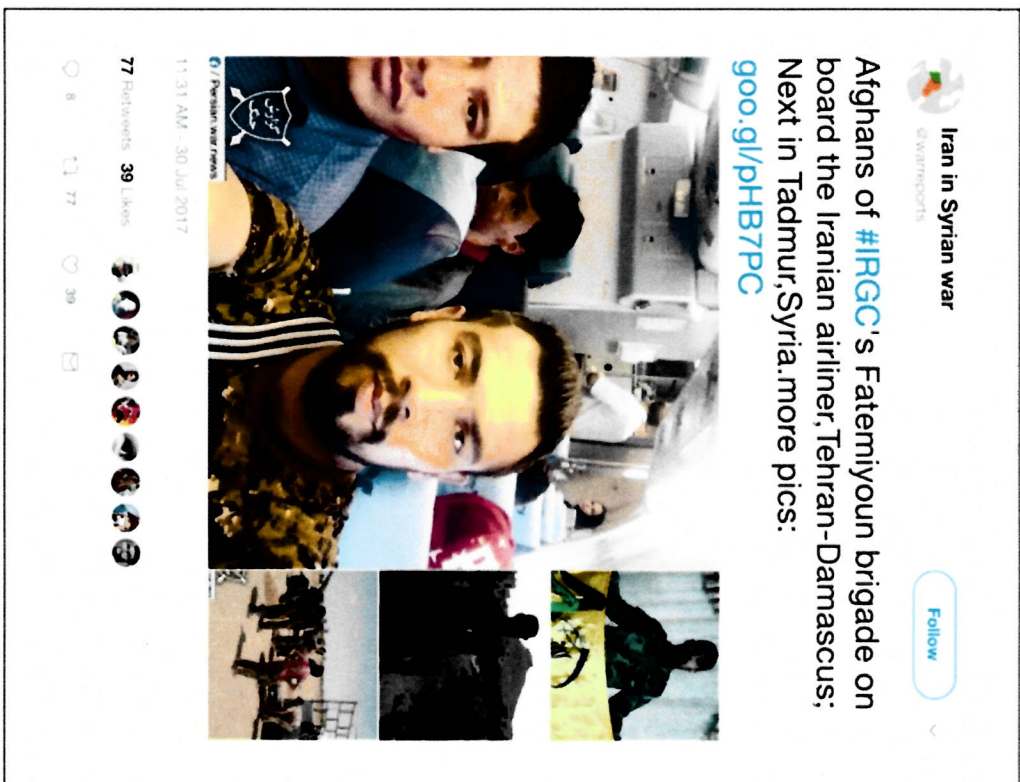
One photo shows the logo and full name of Iran Air on a headrest inside a plane.

This photo, which according to @warreports is dated January 3, 2017, offers further proof of Iran Air's material support to the IRGC and the Guards' military airlift to the regime of Bashar al-Assad.

According to @warreports, other pictures show "Afghans of the Guard Corps' Fatemiyoun Brigade [Division] in the Tehran-Damascus flight and then their presence in the field of combat in eastern Homs province."



## Evidence of Iran Air plane flying fighters to Syria



On July 30, 2017, the twitter account [@warreports](#) published four photos. One showed a member of the IRGC-trained Fatemiyoun brigade on board an Iranian airline heading to Syria. Other photos showed the same individual in Syria participating in military operations.

@warreports is a twitter account associated with anonymous Iranian anti-regime activists posting material about Iran's participation in conflict both in Syria and Iraq.

The account administrator informed FDD that the photo was taken on August 4, 2016.

The photo is important chiefly because it clearly captures, behind the militiaman's shoulder, the logo of Iran Air as it appears on the seat's headrest.

The photo thus offers compelling evidence of Iran Air's participation in the IRGC-run airlift to Syria and demonstrates that Iran Air has violated the terms of the JCPOA by engaging in material support for sanctionable activities.

**Photoset #1 Courtesy of War Reports<sup>7</sup>**



<sup>7</sup> Afghans of IRGC's Fatemiyoun Brigade on Board the Iran Air Tehran-Damascus; Next in Tadmur, Syria. 2017. War Reports. Web. 10 Aug. 2017. [https://warreports.org/2017/08/07/1448549682068931\\_1971147463142481/](https://warreports.org/2017/08/07/1448549682068931_1971147463142481/)



Official Iran Air logo courtesy of iranair.it















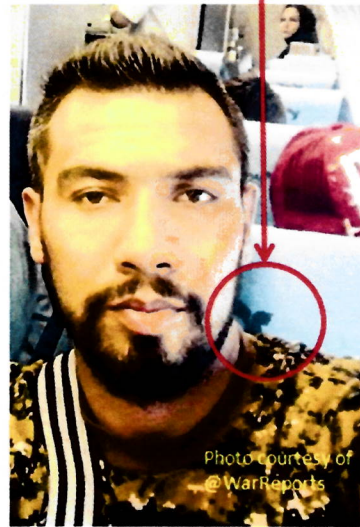


**Photoset #2 Courtesy of War Reports<sup>8</sup>**

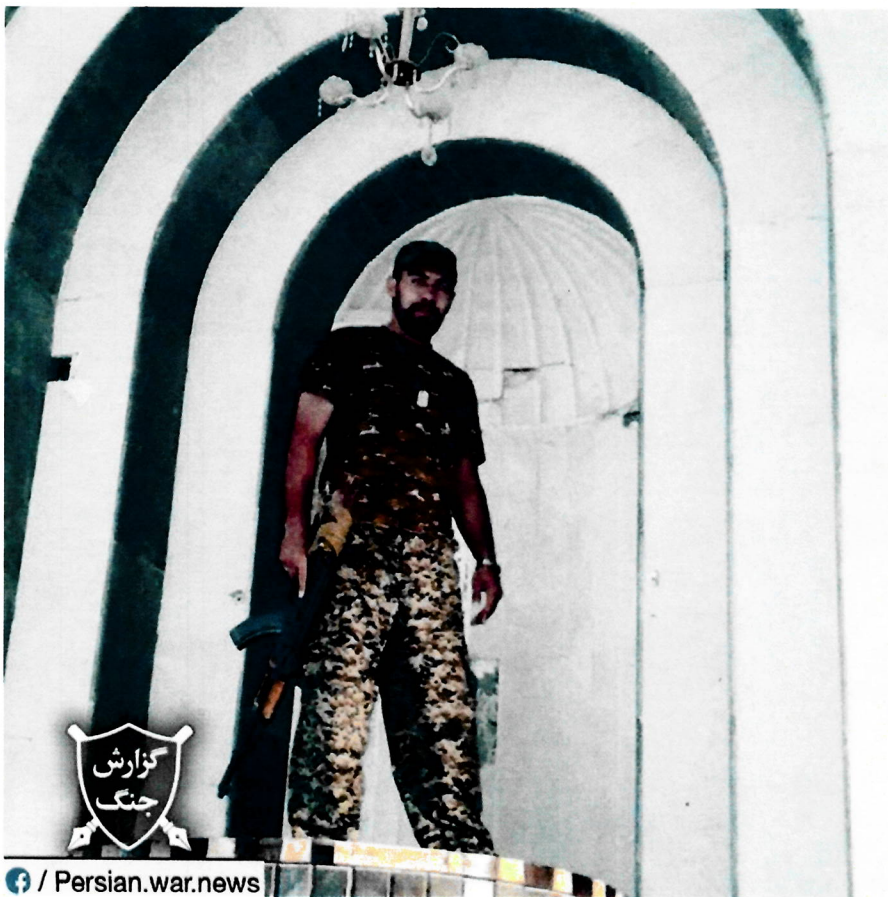


<sup>8</sup> *Afghans of IRGC's Fatemiyoun Brigade on Board the Iran Air Tehran-Damascus; Next in Tadmur, Syria.* 2017. *War Reports*. Web. 10 Aug. 2017.  
<https://www.facebook.com/persian.war.news/photos/pcb.1967608353496392/1967607420163152/?type=3&theater>

Official Iran Air logo courtesy of iranair.it











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