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Special Report



# After Nisman

How the death  
of a prosecutor  
revealed Iran's  
growing influence  
in the Americas

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by **Joseph M. Humire**





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# Acknowledgements

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# Executive Summary

For the Islamic Republic of Iran 2016 is a landmark year. In January, it completed the necessary first steps mandated by the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). An estimated \$150 billion of Iranian assets were unfrozen and international economic sanctions were lifted. Several countries in Europe, Asia, and Latin America lined up to welcome Iran back into the global economy. Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei set a target of 8 percent annual growth for the next five years, while other economic analysts forecast that within a decade Iran's GDP might surpass that of Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Beyond a financial shot in the arm, Iran's greatest achievement from this controversial nuclear deal is its newfound legitimacy that it is beginning to capitalize on in Latin America.

The late Alberto Nisman, special prosecutor for the 1994 bombing of the AMIA Jewish cultural center in Argentina, spent well over a decade investigating Iran's support of terrorist networks throughout Latin America. The findings in Nisman's investigations were a stark reminder of Iran's troubled history with international terrorism. His tragic death on January 18, 2015, arguably most benefitted Iran since it resented Nisman for presenting an obstacle in Tehran's pursuit of international legitimacy.

Nisman's most recent case presented on January 14, 2015, a week before his death, accused members of Argentina's former government of engaging in a criminal plot with Iranian officials to cover up Tehran's role in the 1994 AMIA bombing. This case, however, was only a partial revelation of Argentina's realignment with Iran. Nisman's murder was most likely the result of his enemies fearing further revelations.

This special report reveals further findings from extensive research and analysis of thousands of documents and numerous declassified intelligence reports related to the AMIA case, as well as a partial review of the close to 40,000 wiretaps between Iranian officials and Argentine interlocutors, made public in 2015. Among other things, these findings demonstrate Iran's control over specific segments of marginalized populations throughout Latin America serving as surrogates for its larger strategic objectives in the region. These objectives include increasing Iran's longstanding commercial cover to expand its military and intelligence footprint in Latin America through an array of front companies exploiting the beef industry in Argentina and Brazil, among other countries. Iran's expanded presence provides logistical support for its regional terror network that almost resulted in another AMIA-type terrorist attack in Peru in December 2014.

This report aims to explain how the death of Alberto Nisman paved the way for Iran to move into a new phase of its information and intelligence operations in Latin America. A phase involving capitalizing on its increased legitimacy to expand commercial activity as plausible deniability for possible attendant acts of terror. What began in Argentina is rapidly moving north as Iran diminishes its geographic disadvantage within the Western Hemisphere. Often considered a foreign policy backwater for the United States, Latin America has become a top foreign policy priority for the Islamic Republic of Iran.

# 1. #YoSoyNisman

From the national congress to the Plaza de Mayo, on February 18, 2015, almost half a million Argentines walked in silence through the streets of Buenos Aires.<sup>1</sup> Exactly one month prior, the special prosecutor for the second largest Islamic terrorist attack in the Americas, Alberto Nisman, was found dead in his high-rise apartment in the Puerto Madero neighborhood of Argentina's capital.<sup>2</sup> In the pouring rain, protestors waved placards reading "Truth" and "Justice" while others held posters saying #YoSoyNisman (I am Nisman).<sup>3</sup>

On that day, the people of Argentina understood one thing the world has yet to recognize: the murder of Mr. Alberto Nisman is the most important political assassination in Latin America of the 21st century.

Declared a homicide by an Argentine Prosecutor on February 25, 2016,<sup>4</sup> the murder of Alberto Nisman has become the biggest mystery in a country filled with conspiracy theories and unsolved crimes. Argentina, like many Latin American nations, has a long record of political assassinations, suffering from one of the region's most brutal military dictatorships between the 1970s into the 1980s.<sup>5</sup> Several politicians and prosecutors were killed or disappeared during this time for challenging the status quo. Nisman's murder, however, has broader implications because it represents a global geopolitical struggle between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the West.

Alberto Nisman dedicated the better part of a decade to prosecuting the 1994 suicide bombing of the *Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina* (AMIA), which killed 85 people and injured over three hundred. In a 675-page indictment released in 2006, Nisman publicly accused eight

former Iranian officials (including the former president and foreign minister) and one Lebanese militant of perpetrating the attack.<sup>6</sup> In 2007, Nisman appeared at the Interpol headquarters in Lyon, France to defend the Argentine investigating judge's request for the issuance of Red Notices authorizing the arrest of these accused Iranians. Interpol granted the request for some of the accused and Nisman became Iran's enemy number one in Argentina.<sup>8</sup>

Nisman's death did not occur in a vacuum. A few days before he was killed, on January 14, 2015, the prosecutor filed his most recent case, a 289-page judicial complaint against his own President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and several others in her administration, accusing them of attempting to whitewash Iran's involvement in the AMIA attack in exchange for political and economic favors.<sup>9</sup> The fact that Nisman was killed a day before he was to present his findings before the Argentine Congress furthered speculation that he was likely killed by someone from the Fernández de Kirchner regime if not from an order by the former president herself.

Whether or not former President Fernández de Kirchner was involved in Nisman's murder will likely remain one of Argentina's state secrets. Nevertheless, what we do know is that Nisman's findings in his 2015 judicial complaint were only a partial revelation of Argentina's realignment with Iran; his murder was most likely a result of his enemies fearing further revelations.

The majority of Argentina does not believe we will ever know who killed Alberto Nisman, and justice for the AMIA victims seems more distant than ever.<sup>10</sup> Yet, while many mourn Nisman's tragic and untimely death, the important question is not only who killed the prosecutor; but also who benefited from his death?

## 2. Cui Bono?

In her last speech to the Argentine Congress on March 1, 2015, the former President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner responded to an outcry of public accusations against her presidency for the death of Alberto Nisman. In her three-hour speech she made reference to the AMIA case stating that *“the case has become part of a chess game playing out in Argentina and abroad”* and emphasized how geopolitics has infected Argentina. Fernández de Kirchner even cited this author’s interview with the Clarín newspaper, reading an excerpt from the interview: *“I don’t believe Nisman wanted to attack the president [Fernández de Kirchner], this wasn’t his goal. I believe he was using Cristina Kirchner as a vehicle to take the AMIA case to an international level, to global courts, to the United Nations.”*<sup>13</sup>

Months after Nisman was found dead, Argentine investigators retrieved various documents signed by the prosecutor in a safety deposit box. One of the documents, dated December 2014 (a month before the prosecutor was killed) called on the United Nations to activate Chapter VII of the UN Charter to intervene in the AMIA case and demand that Iran extradite its accused.<sup>14</sup> Nisman further argued that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) could issue a resolution over the AMIA case, since both Argentina and Iran are member nations. Iran’s refusal to extradite its accused, according to Nisman, placed it in non-compliance with its international obligations to support a legal case of international terrorism with another UN member. Nisman cited Sudan and Libya as precedent for UN intervention when state sponsorship of terrorism obstructs justice on

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and international  
community.**

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an international terrorism case.<sup>16</sup>

In her March 2015 address before the Argentine Congress, then-President Fernández de Kirchner used this document to distract the public and defend her position that Nisman acted in “bipolar” fashion, i.e. highlighting the inconsistency of accusing her of granting impunity to Iran in his most recent judicial complaint (January 2015), but applauding her previous efforts to resolve the AMIA case in the other document (December 2014). In reality, what this December 2014 document reveals is Nisman’s strategy to break the legal impasse Argentina has with Iran over the AMIA case. This document is abundantly clear that the prosecutor’s 2015 judicial complaint was just an initial step in a larger strategy to present the AMIA case before the international community.

Nisman’s strategy to take the AMIA case to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) took place at a time when Iran was in intense nuclear negotiations with the five permanent members of the UNSC plus Germany, often referred to as the P5+1.<sup>17</sup> These nuclear negotiations, which began in secret

in 2012 and became public in 2013, ran parallel to the controversial Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by Iran and Argentina. The MOU was the basis for Nisman’s allegations of criminal conspiracy because, according to the prosecutor, it was negotiated secretly to offer impunity to Iran. This parallel two-track backdoor

diplomacy with the P5+1 and Argentina served one fundamental goal for the Islamic Republic of Iran: political legitimacy.

For Iran to gain political legitimacy in the eyes of the international community it had to accomplish two things: (1) remove or alleviate the sanctions pressure that cut Iran out of the global financial system; and (2) distance itself from its decades-long history of

supporting international terrorism. The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and subsequent lifting of nuclear-related sanctions on Iran, accomplished one of these goals.<sup>18</sup> The death of Alberto Nisman advanced the other.

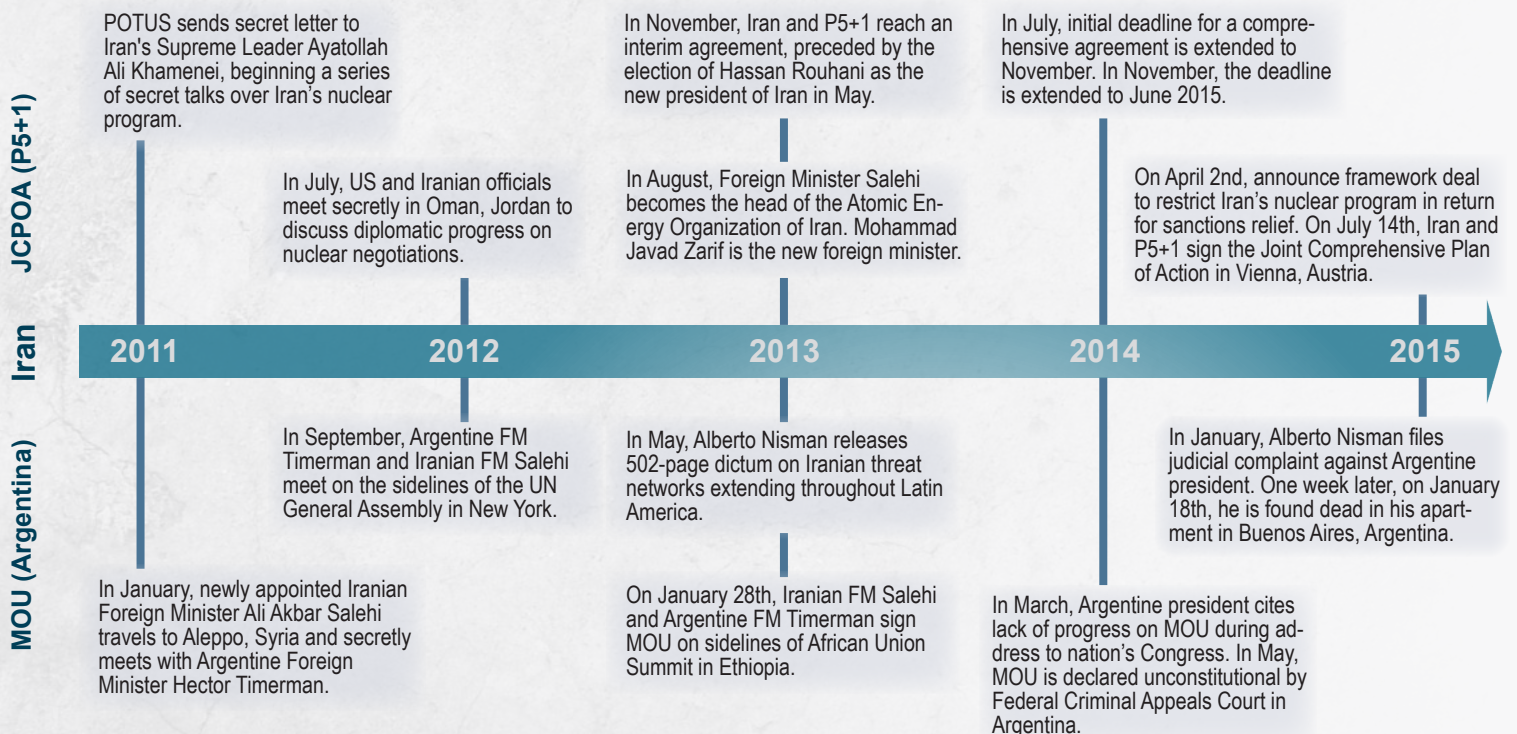
The 1994 AMIA bombing was a stark reminder to the international community of Iran’s troubled history with international terrorism. Alberto Nisman’s decade-long work, from the 2006 indictment to his most recent 2015 judicial complaint, ensured remembrance of this fact. His equally important 2013 dictum on Iran’s extending networks of terror in Latin America served to remind us that the threat from Iran is not confined just to the Middle East, it is clear and present throughout our hemisphere. Further revelations about Iran’s support for terrorism would complicate its reintegration into the international community.

Had Nisman succeeded in taking the

AMIA case with additional fresh evidence to the United Nations he would have brought a level of international scrutiny and embarrassment to Iran that could have jeopardized the negotiation over its controversial nuclear program. At the minimum, it would have placed additional pressure on Iran to respond to the Argentine judiciary’s accusations. Nisman’s strategy of escalation came at a very inconvenient time for the Iranian regime. Nisman knew this, and acted accordingly.

Up to his final days, Nisman was focused on finding a way to convict the former Iranian officials and bring justice to the victims of the AMIA attack. Fernández de Kirchner claimed the same, adding that the AMIA case had become part of a “global chess game.” What she failed to understand, however, is that the Persians (today’s Iranians) invented chess.<sup>19</sup> We may never know precisely who killed the prosecutor, but we know who benefitted from his death.

## IRAN TWO-TRACK DIPLOMACY WITH P5+1 & ARGENTINA





### 3. Modus Operandi?

Since the dawn of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the Islamic Republic has targeted Latin America as a priority for its international operations. After more than thirty years of engagement, Iran has an astute understanding of the political patterns and socio-economic trends in the region. Today, at a time when U.S. influence has diminished in the region, Latin America is arguably Iran's top foreign policy priority outside the Middle East. Iran's prolonged presence in Latin America provides analysts with sufficient empirical evidence to understand its *modus operandi*, however, this requires careful analysis so that lessons from the past serve as a guide for the future.

Nisman's work detailing Iran's activities leading to the AMIA attack are critical to this analysis. His over 1,500 pages of open source reporting on Iran and Hezbollah is often referenced, but

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**Declassifying  
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rarely read in detail. Moreover, there are an additional 1,500 pages of classified material on the AMIA attack that have yet to be made public.<sup>20</sup> This classified report was disseminated in 2003 under then-Secretary of Intelligence in Argentina, Miguel Ángel Toma, who shared this

report with parallel agencies around the world. The information contained in the report is based on more than fifty high-level confidential sources, hundreds of eyewitness testimonies, and thousands of legally-authorized wiretaps.<sup>21</sup>

The 2001 reform of the National Intelligence Law in Argentina provided the legal basis for the human and electronic intelligence operations resulting in perhaps the most professional counterterrorism investigation in Latin America.<sup>22</sup> Former director of U.S. Central Intelligence, George Tenet, was so impressed with this work that, in 2002, he offered Argentina full technological and intelligence support to the AMIA case.<sup>23</sup> There have been calls in Argentina to declassify the 2003 report regarding the AMIA case.<sup>24</sup> Doing so, would provide the Argentine public the knowledge necessary to grasp the seriousness and longevity of Iran's influence in their country.

#### Why Argentina?

Before the 1992 bombing of the Israeli embassy in Argentina, Hezbollah's operations were largely confined to the Middle East. Prior to the 1994 AMIA attack in Buenos Aires, Iran and Hezbollah had never targeted a Latin American country. What changed? According to Nisman, Iran targeted Argentina in large part due to the latter's realignment with the United States. He specifically cited the early 1990s cancelling of military and nuclear cooperation between Iran and Argentina as the motive behind the AMIA attack.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, the question remains why did Iran begin this profound presence and cooperation with Argentina in the first place?

One of the key witnesses to the AMIA case was Iranian defector Abolghasem Mesbahi, a former senior official in Iran's

security and intelligence service now living in asylum in Germany.<sup>26</sup> Meshabi has been a key witness in several high-profile terrorism cases, including the 1992 Mykonos murders in Germany, the 1988 Lockerbie bombing in Scotland, as well as the September 11, 2001 attack in the United States. His declaration to Argentine intelligence services provided the situational awareness necessary to understand Iran's strategic goals in Argentina, which, according to Meshabi, are twofold:

**1. Neutralize Israel's influence.**

Argentina is viewed by the Ayatollahs as a "second Israel" with a large and influential Jewish community exerting its influence throughout the rest of Latin America.

**2. Propagate the first Islamic state in Latin America.**

The high density of the Lebanese and Syrian diaspora in the Tri-Border Area (TBA), at the crossroads of Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina, provides fertile conditions for Iran to expand, empower, and radicalize the Islamic communities within Argentina to gain political prominence and capture the state.

Argentina presents both a challenge and opportunity to Iran, with several factors providing incentives to engage the country. Its lax visa process, for instance, was viewed as optimal for easy, undetected entry and exit by Iranian operatives. Moreover, increased economic relations between Iran and Argentina throughout the 1980s provided a commercial cover to conceal Iran's nefarious activities. In all, Argentina was seen as a permissive environment to establish an intelligence base in the Americas that would grow over time due to lesser known, but highly capable, covert operatives.

## The Terrorist Professor

Of the eight Iranians implicated in the AMIA attack, Mohsen Rabbani, was identified by Nisman as the "mastermind" behind the bombing.<sup>27</sup> A high-level Iranian intelligence operative, Rabbani had multiple covers in Argentina, ranging from a Shi'a cleric to a meat inspector to the cultural attaché at the Iranian embassy in Buenos Aires. His work in Argentina prior to the 1994 AMIA attack was key to creating the conditions so that Iran could act with impunity. Like a mob boss, Rabbani penetrated Argentine society, setting up a network of terrorists spreading throughout the Americas.

Most accounts point to Mohsen Rabbani as the first Iranian operative to touch ground in Buenos Aires on August 27, 1983.<sup>28</sup> According to Mesbahi, however, Iran began sending covert operatives to Argentina in 1982, the year prior.<sup>29</sup> Throughout that year, these operatives consistently sent intelligence reports to the Islamic Republic's embassy in Spain, where Iran coordinated its Latin America activities. Rabbani would receive and study these reports, passing them to the ayatollahs in

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**Like a mob boss, Mohsen Rabbani penetrated Argentine society with a terrorist network spreading throughout the Americas. He is Argentina's Osama Bin Laden.**

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Iran. Once in Argentina, Rabbani confirmed this reporting and positioned himself to capitalize on the multiple opportunities in the country.

Aside from Nisman's reports, very little is publicly available on Mohsen

Rabbani, who remains a shadowy figure within the hierarchy of the Islamic Republic. Born in 1952 in the small town of Torbat-e Herdariah, Iran, Rabbani spent his early

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years studying in Mashhad, birthplace of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.<sup>30</sup> He would pursue advanced studies in the Shi'a holy city of Qom prior to joining the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.<sup>31</sup> According to European intelligence officials, Rabbani belonged to the Supreme Leader's special intelligence bureau and worked in Germany prior to arriving in Argentina.<sup>32</sup> Meshabi testified that he met Rabbani, with his brother-in-law Mohammad Reza Moghaddam, while staying at the Islamic Center in Hamburg.

Once in Argentina, coordinating with Iranian embassies in Spain, Germany, Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Chile, Uruguay, Cuba, and Mexico, Rabbani immediately began creating a comprehensive cover platform to insert additional Iranian operatives into the Southern Cone region. This three-prong cover for Iran's covert operations in Latin America consisted of:

- Commercial cover as meat inspectors for livestock exported to Iran.
- Cultural cover as clerics of local mosques created to proselytize indigenous communities.
- Diplomatic cover as "cultural attaches,"

providing the immunity necessary to evade local authorities.

Combined, this multi-faceted cover provided Rabbani the freedom of movement and money to penetrate Argentine society, coordinating the activities of three Iranian ministries: Ministry of Agriculture Jihad (*commercial*), Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (*cultural*), and the Ministry of Foreign Relations (*diplomatic*). The coordination is ultimately managed by Iran's heavily-funded intelligence services, the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) in conjunction with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). According to Nisman, the Iranian embassy in Buenos Aires had a heavy presence of MOIS and IRGC officials under official cover who reported to Hamid Naghashan, a senior official in the MOIS.<sup>33</sup>

Argentine security services deciphered an intelligence structure to the Iranian embassy in Buenos Aires that is useful for analysts today.<sup>34</sup> According to their analysis, the Iranian embassies in Latin America operate on four levels (see diagram on page 12).

Rabbani operated on all levels within this intelligence structure in Argentina and coordinated across embassies throughout Latin America and Europe. In Europe, his primary nexus was with Spain, where he coordinated his activities with the Iranian embassy in Madrid. This embassy played an important role in setting up the network in Latin America.

In South America, Rabbani's main contacts were in Brazil and Colombia, where he coordinated with Hezbollah operatives in each country. It is important to note that the Iranian embassies in these two countries served as logistical support to the AMIA attack.<sup>35</sup> Rabbani's presence throughout the 1980s into the 1990s in Brazil and Colombia was so frequent that the local Islamic communities in each country called him

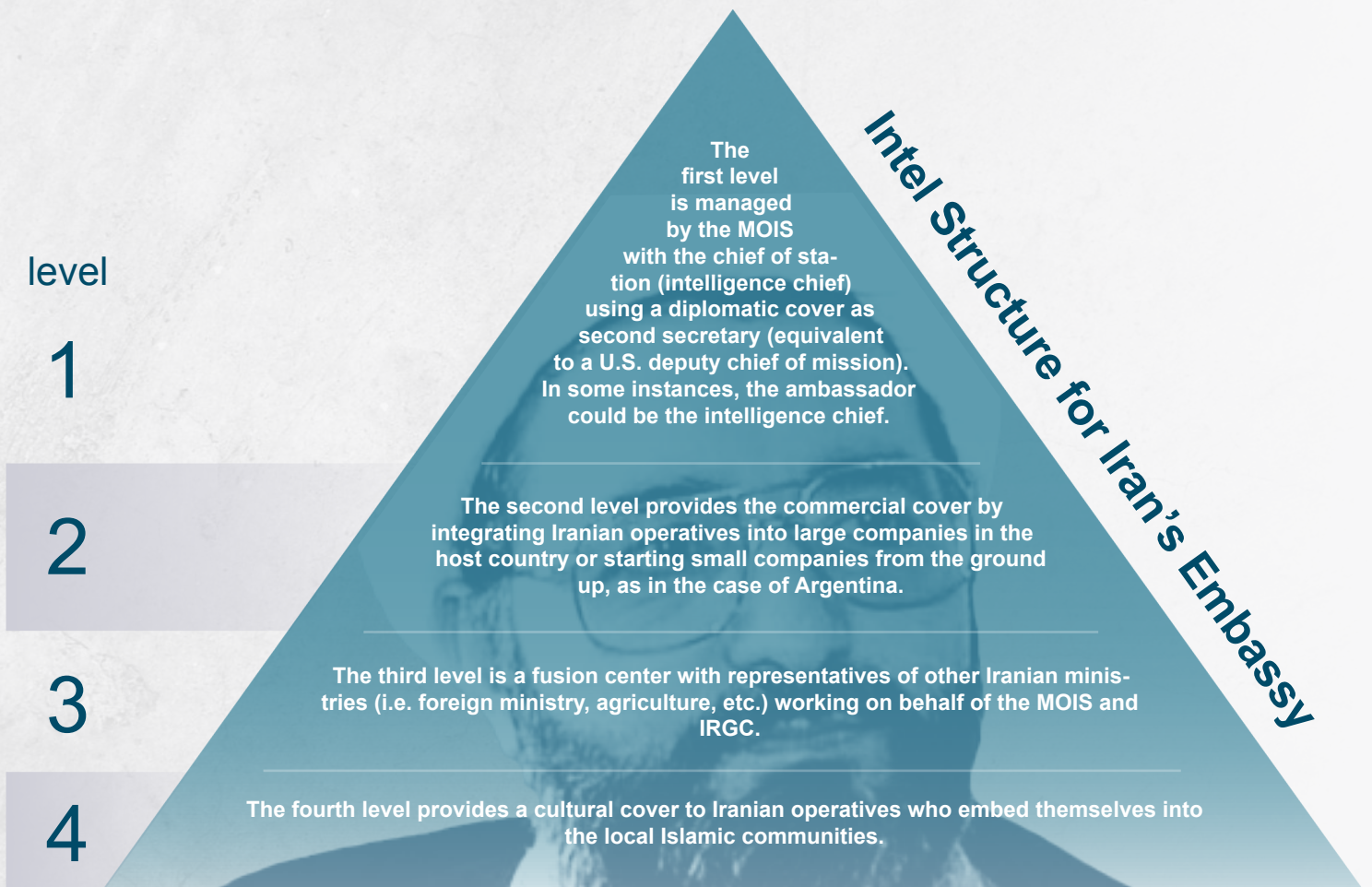
“maestro” (professor). Rabbani is indeed a professor, however; what he teaches are the ways and means of the Iranian Revolution and their attendant acts of terror. In Argentina, his students were among the local Islamic community.

### The Five Families

Nisman’s reports mention various surnames belonging to prominent Lebanese families throughout South America. The role of specific members of these families in the AMIA attack was never properly understood by the public or press. Their significance, however, is what provided Rabbani the political capital to embed himself as a leader of the Islamic community in Argentina, and elsewhere, establishing mosques,

Islamic centers and front companies to co-opt this community on behalf of Iran. His ability to operationalize members of these families was critical to the success of Iran’s infiltration prior to and after the AMIA attack. Like a Middle Eastern mafia, these family members operate in a clan structure engaging in a range of licit and illicit commercial and cultural activities providing plausible deniability for Iran and Hezbollah’s presence in South America.

There are approximately 700 families within the Syrian and Lebanese community of Argentina, but the most relevant to Iran and Hezbollah are the following five clans: (1) Hamze; (2) Sain; (3) Salomon (4) Saleh; and (5) the Assad family.<sup>36</sup> Rabbani understood that Iran’s success was incumbent on his ability to



Mohsen Rabbani operated on all levels and coordinated across Iranian embassies throughout Latin America and Europe.

approach, recruit and radicalize prominent members of these five families to the ways of the Iranian Revolution. Arguably, the Assad clan provided the most support because of its connections with the local real estate market in Argentina. Buying property was a critical first step for Rabbani who, shortly after arriving in Argentina, settled in the *Floresta* neighborhood of Buenos Aires. *Floresta*, spread throughout ten blocks to the west of Buenos Aires, is ground zero for Iran and Hezbollah's presence in Argentina.

One of the first properties Rabbani purchased in *Floresta* was a house on 674 *San Nicolás* street, establishing the first of three mosques in Argentina serving as "antennas" of the Iranian Revolution.<sup>37</sup> According to the AMIA investigation, these mosques served as annexes to the Iranian embassy in Buenos Aires and provided intelligence to the Islamic Republic. The property manager for many of these mosques was one of Rabbani's closest partners, Claudia Bibiana Assad, a fierce critic of Israel who led many lectures and prayers at the At-Tauhid Mosque.<sup>38</sup> A native of Lebanon, Claudia Assad became a staple within the Muslim community of *Floresta* and, along with her immediate family, appears to be the primary axis of influence for Iran's political strategy in Latin America.<sup>39</sup>

Claudia's sister, Roxana Elizabeth "Masuma" Assad is the wife of Rabbani's first Muslim convert in Argentina, Santiago Paz Bullrich, better known by his Muslim name Abdul Karim Paz. Her brother, Edgardo Ruben "Suhail" Assad, is Rabbani's top disciple and the spiritual guide to the Shi'a community throughout Latin America. Claudia is married to Zouhair Mohamad Hassan Saleh, who represents another

Shi'a clan in Argentina, and their son Wasim Zouhair Saleh is believed to be an active member of Hezbollah in South America. At one time the Assad family was implicated in the AMIA attack because of their ties to Nidal Bazoun, an alleged Hezbollah operative.<sup>41</sup>

The family tree extends beyond Argentina, further north into Colombia, where Zouhair Mohamad Hassan Saleh's cousin, Samuel Salman El Reda El Reda, was a key operative behind the 1994 AMIA attack. Born in San Andrés, Samuel Salman El Reda was identified by Nisman

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**The Assad Clan, once implicated in the AMIA attack, appears to be the primary axis of influence for Iran's strategy in Latin America.**

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as Rabbani's confidant in Colombia and the primary logistical link bringing members of Hezbollah's operational cell to Argentina to carry out the AMIA attack. El Reda is wanted for murder in Colombia, counterfeiting dollars in Brazil, and is implicated in organized crime in

Paraguay. According to *Semana*, a prominent news outlet in Colombia, a week before his death, Nisman was working with Colombian authorities to add El Reda to the list of red notices from Interpol for his role in the AMIA bombing.<sup>42</sup>

Samuel Salman El Reda El Reda and his brother married into the five families of Argentina through two sisters: Silvana Gabriel Sain from Colombia and Karina Sain from Argentina. The Sain sisters, along with their significant others, were integral to the Colombia-Argentina commercial connection providing cover for Iran and Hezbollah's covert activities in advance of the AMIA attack.<sup>43</sup> The MOIS official establishing some of this commercial cover in Latin America, Seyed Reza Mohammad Makki, was part of a global financial network that blended legitimate business with illicit and intelligence activity of the MOIS and IRGC.<sup>44</sup>

## The Perfect Commercial Cover

In the early 1990s, a small group of IRGC combat veterans from the 1980s Iran-Iraq war began arriving in Argentina prior to and after the AMIA attack. Their cover was a series of front companies established by Mohsen Rabbani exploiting one of Argentina's historically important industries and Iran's primary commercial link with South America: bovine beef.

In Argentina, beef has been a staple export for over a century. Its vast grassland *Pampas* hosts most of the country's cattle, where free-range, high-grade cattle raising became a prominent sector of the Argentine economy. Refrigeration plants, known as *frigoríficos*, were introduced in the early 20th century, permitting the meat to be exported. By the 1930s, Argentina was the world's top exporter of beef, and into the 1980s remained among the top five.<sup>45</sup> Rabbani quickly moved into the Argentine meat market and by 1989 approximately 80 percent of Iran's beef imports came from Argentina.<sup>46</sup> In terms of intelligence tradecraft, once the legitimate link was established, the illicit front companies began to operate.

At the onset, the most notable was the Government Trading Corporation (G.T.C.), an Iranian state-owned enterprise, which provided Rabbani his initial commercial cover as an inspector of the beef being exported from Argentina to Iran.<sup>47</sup> Additional commercial companies, outside of the beef industry, were also established in Argentina, including IMANCO and the Industrial Fishing Company of Iran (IFCO), which, according to Argentine intelligence, were front companies for arms sales to Iran.<sup>48</sup> The infamous Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL), which until recently was under international sanctions for its support of Iran's

nuclear and ballistic missile program, also opened an office in Buenos Aires in the early 1990s. According to the Argentine intelligence report on the AMIA attack, IRISL was used to transport, from Iran to Argentina and Brazil, the explosives used in the bombing of the AMIA cultural center.<sup>49</sup>

According to Nisman's reporting, an important sign that Iran's activities in Argentina intensified prior to the AMIA attack was the increased movement of diplomatic personnel and traffic from the embassy of the Islamic Republic. Nisman specifically notes the shift from electronic communication to couriers and the cross-border movement of operatives to and from Brazil.<sup>50</sup> To handle this increased activity, the Iranian embassy needed to boost personnel. Its

commercial cover provided a limited number of business attachés who organized three-month visas for "businessman" to come from Iran. This was insufficient, making it necessary for the embassy to use cultural exchange as a front for bringing a range of clerics, cultural attachés, and other religious authorities, thus helping Iran grow its personnel from three to over sixty officials at their embassy in Buenos Aires leading up to the AMIA attack.<sup>51</sup>

The Islamic Republic of Iran buys and consumes meat certified as *halal*. All meat imported goes through the G.T.C., with no private importing allowed. A State Livestock Affairs agency known as SLAL is responsible for all meat inspection and ultimately all permissions to allow imports.<sup>52</sup> According to the Quran (verse 6:118), Muslims must follow a strict diet in accordance with Islamic law, known as the *halal* (permissible) process.<sup>53</sup> This is the Islamic form of processing meat, from the raising through the killing of the cattle that has specific customs and norms adhered to and supervised by religious authorities.<sup>54</sup> Given that Iran mixes

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**Iran's cover includes front companies exploiting Argentina's important industry and Iran's primary commercial link in South America: bovine beef.**

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religion with politics, the *halal* certification in Argentina was introduced by a close contact of Rabbani's: Gustavo Khalil Kabalan.<sup>55</sup>

In 1995, after the AMIA bombing, the G.T.C. office in Argentina closed down under pressure from authorities. Two years later, on February 10, 1997 a new Iranian state-sponsored enterprise was established in Buenos Aires called South Beef.<sup>56</sup> In 1998, Rabbani permanently left Argentina to reside in Qom, Iran. South Beef helped transfer a large sum of the *halal* beef export business in Argentina over to Brazil and Uruguay, the latter becoming the new Iranian intelligence base in the Southern Cone. South Beef has subsequently been investigated by the former judge of the AMIA case, José Juan Galeano, for potentially helping finance the bombing in Buenos Aires to the tune of \$4 million via the Republic National Bank of New York.<sup>57</sup>

At the turn of the century, following the Argentine government's increased efforts to bring the conspirators behind the AMIA attack to justice, Iran's commercial ties to Argentina

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deteriorated.<sup>58</sup> Many Iranian operations moved underground to avoid increased scrutiny of their activity. According to phone intercepts for Nisman's 2015 judicial complaint, in order to resume commercial relations with Argentina, namely in the beef industry, an official declaration must be made by the Argentine government disavowing any Iranian implication in the AMIA bombing. They would get their chance in December 2007, when Cristina Fernández de Kirchner was elected president of Argentina.

## 4. The Nisman Tapes

Months after the death of Alberto Nisman, a shocking revelation was made by the highly respected Brazilian weekly VEJA magazine reporting that the former Argentine President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner received Iranian financial support for her presidential campaign in 2007.<sup>59</sup> In August 2007, a suitcase with \$800,000 cash carried by a Venezuelan businessman, Guido Antonini Wilson, was caught by Argentine authorities trying to enter the country. After his arrest, Wilson claimed the money was part of an illegal operation to finance the campaign of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. Known as the "*maletinazo*" in Argentina, this highly publicized case was widely reported to be part of the political corruption by the late Hugo Chávez who demonstrated an inordinate amount of influence in Argentina. In an interview with VEJA, however, Venezuelan defectors from Chávez inner-circle confirmed this suitcase was one of many payments sent by Iran to finance the Fernández de Kirchner campaign.<sup>60</sup>

This was not Iran's first attempt to gain influence over an Argentine president. According to Alberto Fernández, the cabinet chief of former Argentine President Néstor Kirchner, Tehran made several attempts to persuade the former president to grant impunity to Iran over the AMIA attack.<sup>61</sup> The radical shift between the late Néstor Kirchner and his wife and successor Cristina Fernández de Kirchner with regard to Iran can be explained by the intervention of Venezuela. Under Chávez's influence, Fernández de Kirchner and Iran bridged the gap caused by the 1994 AMIA attack to create a new, seemingly symbiotic relationship. The lion's share of the benefits from this newfound relationship are reaped by Iran, because an alliance with Argentina

increased opportunities to re-establish its intelligence base in the Southern Cone.

Nisman’s 2015 complaint exposed how this radical shift in Argentina’s posture toward Iran took place. The special prosecutor alleged that the previous Fernández de Kirchner regime engaged in a “criminal plan” to exonerate the Iranians accused from their role in the 1994 AMIA bombing.<sup>62</sup> According to Nisman, the energy and economic crisis in Argentina placed the country in a vulnerable position open to subversion from Iran and Venezuela.<sup>63</sup> Hugo Chávez capitalized on this vulnerability by buying Argentine debt to the tune of approximately \$8 billion by the end of 2008.<sup>64</sup> This maneuver coincided with an increase in trade between Iran and Argentina.

Following the Argentine government’s efforts to bring the conspirators behind the AMIA bombing to justice, Iran’s commercial ties to Argentina deteriorated, only to resume at the start of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner’s presidential term in 2007, with a tripling of trade as shown in the graph below. Between 2004 and 2006, trade between the two nations was null, hitting rock bottom in 2006 when Nisman filed the AMIA indictment against Iran. Since 2007, Argentine exports

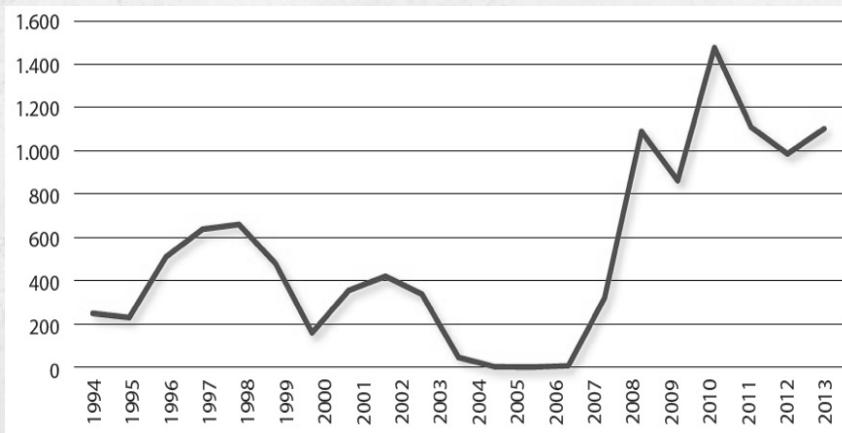
to Iran increased to a high of \$1.5 billion in 2010, rising to become Iran’s second largest trade partner in Latin America.

Through the turn of the century, Iran’s efforts to establish a commercial cover for its intelligence activities in Argentina was limited due to the lack of legitimate trade. The election of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner to the presidency of Argentina in 2007 changed that. As Iran’s second largest trading partner in Latin America, Argentina saw its trade with the Islamic Republic grow prior to the secret negotiations between the two nations resulting in a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2013. The focus, however, should rest less on the magnitude of trade, which is not large, but on Iran’s concentration in key industries and the opportunities this affords the MOIS and IRGC to introduce Iranian front companies and operatives into the Southern Cone, as it did prior to the AMIA attack.

In his 2015 complaint, Nisman alleged that the Fernández de Kirchner regime engaged in secret negotiations with Iran, in advance of the official MOU. The basis for his allegation was a collection of court-ordered wiretaps, which included conversations between Iranian and Argentine interlocutors predating the start of the official negotiation.

Close to 40,000 of these wiretaps were made public on March 1, 2015 by *Infobae*, an Argentine media outlet.<sup>65</sup> Nisman knew that these wiretaps demonstrated only a part of the criminal plot and was the “tip of the iceberg” of a sophisticated operation. Nevertheless, listening to these publicly available phone intercepts provides several keys to understanding Iran’s

**Total Argentina-Iran Trade (1994-2013)**



Data expressed in millions. Source: UNCOMTRADE



axis of influence over Argentina.

Much like its presence prior to the AMIA bombing, Iran sought to re-establish Argentina as its intelligence base for the Southern Cone. To accomplish this, it created backdoor channels of communication with the Fernández de Kirchner government. These backdoor channels were connected through critical nodes of a broader network, illustrated in a diagram on pages 34 and 35, which included several of the same fixers, facilitators, and financiers that operated on behalf of Iran in Argentina prior to and after the AMIA attack.

### Fixers, Facilitator's and FEARAB

Counterterrorism professionals around the world are starting to focus on the convergence of international terrorism and transnational organized crime. Within this nexus exists a gray area comprised of cells whose primary function is not to move the money, traffic the drugs, or bomb the buildings. Rather, these cells operate on another important level of crime-terror: the logistics.

Noted security scholar Douglas Farah refers to these cells as part of the “fixer” chain, including “local fixers” who know the terrain and have access to local markets or communities.<sup>66</sup> These “local fixers” are limited to a particular city or country and are complemented by “super fixers” who move across countries and regions. The final link in the “fixer” chain is the “shadow facilitators,” who, according to Farah, are responsible for the actual movement of illicit products. In the context of asymmetric warfare, however, “shadow facilitators” can serve a broader function in establishing legitimacy for the presence of illicit actors and activities.

Within this framework, Mohsen

Rabbani can be considered the primary “shadow facilitator” between Iran and Argentina, a role he established over thirty years ago. Nisman pointed to Rabbani’s role as a facilitator when documenting his conversations with several “local fixers” in Argentina secretly negotiating with government officials prior to the official MOU.<sup>67</sup>

As explained in the previous section, Rabbani is integral to various Iranian information and intelligence operations in Latin America. A true revolutionary, Rabbani understands that, in an asymmetric war, the blend between “war” and “politics” is essential for victory. German-Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz emphasized this when writing, “War is simply the continuation of politics by other means.”<sup>68</sup> Conversely, Vladimir Lenin understood that the inverse also holds true, when he wrote, “Politics is but war by other means.”<sup>69</sup> Rabbani employs these concepts of asymmetric war, as evidenced by a telling statement during a conversation with one of his Argentine disciples on September 19, 2012, when

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**“We will win all  
the battles, the  
economic ones,  
as well as the  
political ones”  
- Mohsen  
Rabbani,  
Sep. 19, 2012**

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he declared: *“we will win all the battles, the economic ones, as well as the political ones.”*<sup>70</sup>

Rabbani’s role as a “shadow facilitator” working behind-the-scenes is evident when communicating with Jorge Alejandro “Yussuf” Khalil, hereafter referred to as Yussuf Khalil, the protagonist of Nisman’s 2015 complaint and primary “local fixer” for Iran’s proxy network in Argentina. Publicly, Yussuf Khalil is the General Secretary of the At-Tauhid Mosque in the *Floresta* neighborhood of Buenos Aires, the same mosque formerly directed by Rabbani. Informally, according to Nisman, Yussuf is the “local link” for the Islamic Republic in Argentina and often has more

influence than the official Iranian diplomats in Buenos Aires.<sup>71</sup> For instance, Nisman's 2015 complaint cites Yussuf's own statements that he chose the current Iranian chargé d'affaires in Argentina, Ali Pakdaman:<sup>72</sup>

"He is an ambassador whom I've chosen. When they asked me, Tom, Dick or Harry? I said Tom, and I said to this ambassador, do you know that I am the one who recommended you? He said yes, yes, yes, I want to thank you for speaking on my behalf, and so forth and so on. Because his boss, he was a close friend of mine, is a close friend of mine, and the truth is that he is the one who is carrying on negotiations with Argentina."

In a transcribed conversation on February 27, 2013, a month after the MOU signing and the day the Argentine congress voted to ratify the agreement, Yussuf demonstrates his loyalty to Rabbani, when declaring: *"we will defend you [Rabbani] in Congress, inside the jail, on the outside, everywhere, God willing, because we are the same, you and this community, it's all the same..."*<sup>73</sup> Earlier in the conversation, however, there is additional evidence of Rabbani's role as a key "shadow facilitator" as he tries to move Argentine operatives in and out of Iran using a variety of visas.



**YUSSUF KHALIL to MOHSEN RABBANI on February 27, 2013<sup>74</sup>**

**Yussuf:** This man definitely doesn't want to give him the visa, because he said that he [Ahmad – visa petitioner] submitted [the visa application] as a reporter. So, I told him that the Sheik [Rabbani] told me to tell you [Iranian embassy] that he [Ahmad – visa petitioner] needs the visa...

**Rabbani:** No, if this man [Ahmad – visa petitioner] was going to travel, why did he say he was a reporter. He should

not have said that.

**Yussuf:** Of course he should not have said that. Now this man [at Iranian embassy] is not going to give [the visa] to him even if he would travel as a tourist.

Nisman identified other "local fixers" and accused them of working behind-the-scenes to develop a criminal cover-up. Among the most notable of the "local fixers" is Luis D'Elía, a political activist who served in the government of Néstor Kirchner and later in the cabinet of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. A longtime ally of Iran, D'Elía traveled to Qom on multiple occasions to meet with Mohsen Rabbani.<sup>75</sup> Nisman also named Andres "El Cuervo" Larroque as a critical node in Iran's network. Larroque is the central leader of *La Campora*, a pro-Fernandez de Kirchner youth movement that has grown in size and power in Argentina.<sup>76</sup> Both D'Ela and Larroque serve important "local fixer" functions as each has access to various elements of

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**Yussuf Khalil is the "local link" for Iran in Argentina and has more influence than official Iranian diplomats in the country.**

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the Argentine government; D'Ela within the cabinet of Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner and Larroque within her political party, *Frente para La Victoria*, of which he is a congressional member.

Besides Yussuf, the other fundamental "local fixer" in Nisman's 2015 complaint is Fernando Esteche, the leader of the Revolutionary Patriotic Movement—*Quebracho*. Esteche is arguably the most important node within the covert network as

he maintains direct lines of communication to both governments (Iran and Argentina) and is connected to other nations within the Bolivarian Alliance of the Americas (ALBA). Prosecuted and jailed on charges stemming from political violence to attempted murder,

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**Iran has gained influence over the three most powerful militant movements in Argentina.**

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Esteche has a long history of corruption and, according to Nisman, was the mastermind behind the MOU signed by Iran and Argentina in 2013.<sup>77</sup> Today, Esteche and D'Elía are engaging once again in gaining political prominence by launching a new political party with the former governor of Buenos Aires, Gabriel Mariotto.<sup>78</sup>


It is notable that through D'Elía, Larroque, and Esteche, Iran has gained influence over three of the most powerful militant movements in Argentina: *Piqueteros*, *La Cámpora* and *Quebracho*. In the context of unconventional warfare, these groups could well be organized and equipped as a surrogate force to serve Iran's strategic objectives in Argentina.

The link between these "local fixers" and the Iranian networks throughout South America rests on "super fixers" who have contacts in several countries, including Iran. In his 2015 complaint, Nisman identifies Santiago Paz Bullrich, otherwise known as Sheik Abdul Karim Paz, as the primary point of contact for Yussuf and Esteche in Iran. Nisman calls Karim Paz the "right hand" of Mohsen Rabbani and his successor at the At-Tauhid mosque in Buenos Aires.<sup>79</sup>

Coming from an aristocratic lineage in Argentina, Karim Paz married into the Assad clan through his wife, Roxana

"Masuma" Assad, making him the brother-in-law of another "super fixer" and prominent member of the Assad clan: Sheik Edgardo Ruben "Suhail" Assad, hereafter referred to as Suhail Assad. Together, these Rabbani disciples serve as Iran's "informal ambassadors" in Latin America and travel throughout the region unifying and radicalizing Islamic communities to join the Iranian Revolution.

Nisman's complaint focuses on the relationship between Yussuf Khalil and Abdul Karim Paz, rather than Suhail Assad. Upon review of the wiretaps, however, it is evident that Yussuf has a closer relationship to his cousin Suhail, made clear in a conversation between the two on June 4, 2013 in reaction to an article on the Argentine news portal *Infobae América* citing congressional testimony by the former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Amb. Roger Noriega.<sup>80</sup> This article named Suhail Assad as a prominent point man for Iran and Hezbollah in Latin America.<sup>81</sup>

 **YUSSUF KHALIL to SUHAIL ASSAD on June 4, 2013<sup>82</sup>**

**Yussuf:** Listen. I had a fight with Abdul Karim [Paz]... Let me be clear, because they sent me an email wanting to halt everything... So I sent them to hell, or close to hell... They started questioning me as to why the association came out to defend you, and so I responded by saying that their theory is that by responding we drive more press to the issue, which affects you... That is his [Abdul Karim Paz] theory and of your sister [Roxana "Masuma" Assad]. Now I'll send you the email they sent... But he [Karim Paz] didn't stop there, he went to speak with [Mohsen] Baharvand... and according to your brother-in-law [Karim Paz] Baharvand says it's not worth doing what Labake says.

**Suhail:** The truth is *Haj*, I'm not sure what to do. Roxana also sent me an email saying the same thing and I thought you were all in agreement when you said you wanted to speak with the community. I thought you were already in touch with Iran... I don't know what to do.

**Yussuf:** I don't care about the community. I don't care about Iran.

**Suhail:** That's fine, but I'm being sincere *Haj*, the truth is I don't have much experience with all these [accusations], I have no idea how to manage it. I'm not sure what is worth doing and what is not. Roxana tells me that since it's a matter that the higher-ups [in Iran] are dealing with, then let them deal with it. She tells me this is not the time to mess around since this is a historic moment for Argentina-Iran relations.

**Yussuf:** Yes, but that's just it, Suhail. Labake is close friends with the [Iranian] embassy and represents the embassy in lots of matters... He told me in confidence that Iran could care less about this community.

The close relationship between Suhail Assad and Yussuf Khalil is evident in the above conversation, as are Suhail Assad's connections to the Iranian government. The mention of Juan Gabriel Labake is interesting, in that he is a staunch defender of Iran and vocal critic of Nisman, alleging that the "CIA must have killed him."<sup>83</sup> Given that Labake is described as a "close friend" of Iran it appears he serves more as a surrogate for the Islamic Republic than an impartial attorney involved in the AMIA case. As "super fixers" both Abdul Karim Paz and Suhail Assad maintain a close relationship with Mohsen Rabbani and are also connected to other facilitators and members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

Aside from Rabbani, the other

important Iranian "shadow facilitator" working behind-the-scenes with the governments of Argentina and the Islamic Republic is Heshmatollah Rahnema, referenced only once in Nisman's 2015 complaint as an Iranian businessman.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, Argentine intelligence identified Heshmatollah Rahnema, or Heshmat for short, during the AMIA investigation as a possible member of the IRGC.<sup>85</sup> Heshmat arrived in Buenos Aires in 1989 as a combat veteran of the Iran-Iraq war. He was initially sent to Rosario to spy on the local Bahai community, using commercial cover as a supervisor for quality control of exports leaving Rosario for Iran. In Rosario, he lived with other alleged IRGC operatives, such as Ghorbani Kian, Khalil Ghathea, Ali Reza Halvaei, all becoming medical students in Argentina. The latter two, Ghathea and Halvaei, worked at South Beef and coordinated with Heshmat


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**According to the  
AMIA investigation,  
Heshmatollah  
Rahnema is a  
possible IRGC  
operative in  
Argentina.**

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at his apartment in Buenos Aires and at the At-Tauhid Mosque.

Working undercover as a "shadow facilitator" for Iran in Argentina for over twenty years, Heshmat managed to fly under the radar of most Argentine authorities. In the wiretaps, however, it is clear that Heshmat is the handler of both Yussuf Khalil and Fernando Esteche providing instructions and guidance on who to contact and how to communicate with officials in Argentina and Iran. In one conversation with Yussuf on May 14, 2013, for example, Heshmat instructs Yussuf on how to contact the Argentine Foreign Ministry.

 **HESHMATOLLAH RAHNEMA to YUSSUF KHALIL on May 14, 2013<sup>86</sup>**

**Heshmat:** Listen to me. I need a person in the [Argentine] Foreign Ministry through D'Elia or someone, because I want to call the Argentine embassy in Tehran... It is because the Chamber of Commerce in Tehran wants to have a meeting with private industry [in Argentina] ... [voices overlap].

**Yussuf:** The people in charge of the Chamber of Commerce want to contact the [Argentine] Ambassador [in Iran] now?

**Heshmat:** Right, the Chamber of Commerce in Tehran. I actually wanted to go directly to [the Argentine Foreign Ministry) and ask to invite the Argentine business attaché [to a meeting] in Tehran. Are you following me? I wanted to take him [Argentine business attaché] to talk to the Chamber of Commerce [in Tehran] who is very interested in [Argentine] private companies... [inaudible] ...should be on the way to start business again with Argentina. Check this out, either through D'Elia, through Persíco, or through Fernando [Esteche], if they could connect [me] to the Foreign Ministry... Try to do that as soon as possible.


**Yussuf:** I'll do it right now.

The conversation makes clear that Heshmat has connections to Iranian industry, and given his background with the Revolutionary Guards, it is probable he wants to set up the meeting between the Argentine business attaché and the Chamber of Commerce in Tehran to re-establish the commercial cover that Iran once enjoyed in Argentina. The urgency of his request suggests the matter is time sensitive; thus, Yussuf called Heshmat back the same day.

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**Given Heshmat's ties to the IRGC, it is likely he wants to re-establish the commercial cover that Iran once enjoyed in Argentina.**

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 **YUSSUF KHALIL to HESHMATOLLAH RAHNEMA on May 14, 2013<sup>87</sup>**

**Yussuf:** We spoke with D'Elia yesterday... and told him about all the offers and what you told me about the [Argentine] Foreign Ministry so he spoke to Cuervo Larroque.

**Heshmat:** He spoke with whom? Who's that?

**Yussuf:** Cuervo Larroque, the one from *La Cámpora*, the leader.

**Heshmat:** Ah, yes, yes...

**Yussuf:** And they are going to talk to Cristina [Fernández de Kirchner].

**Heshmat:** But we're talking about private companies. I already talked to the people at the Chamber of Commerce in Tehran and told them to call the Argentine Embassy [in Iran] in order to talk to the business attaché in Tehran... Now what I want is for you to tell D'Elia or someone, or Persíco, or tell Fernando [Esteche] to send Persíco, in order to contact the [Argentine] Foreign Ministry to tell the Argentine embassy in Iran that these people [in Iran] want to invite them to the Chamber of Commerce in Tehran... to talk about commerce in about two months, at most three months, when we will open [inaudible]... to cover the demand for grains, such as wheat, soy or whatever.

**Yussuf:** That's fine, okay.

**Heshmat:** This is about private companies, but about the other [inaudible]... it would be better to talk to Cristina after and do it from the same Chamber [of Commerce in Tehran]. We'll do the negotiations between governments.

**Yussuf:** All set, all set. Listen, you did not send me your... I need your [inaudible]. You need to send that. [voices overlap].

**Heshmat:** I'll send that via email. I swear I'm so busy these days with that thing. I'll send it to you tomorrow. But don't stop calling me because it's very difficult to connect from here [most likely Iran].

The quality and timing of the call suggest that Heshmat was in Iran when this conversation took place. More interesting, however, is his insistence on the use of "private companies." It appears that Yussuf did not understand Heshmat at first, but later figured out what he meant by "private companies." The mention of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner suggests Heshmat was using the "local fixers" in Argentina to pass clandestine messages from Iran to the former Argentine president.

Individuals such as Heshmat, Yussuf, Esteche, etc. are critical nodes in a covert network intended to establish backchannels and conduits between official governments. These individuals, however, must be complemented by establishing or capturing institutions allowing their activities to have legitimacy and plausible deniability. In Latin America, one of these institutions appears to be the Federation

of Arab Entities (*Federación de Entidades Arabes*—FEARAB). Founded in 1972, FEARAB is a regional organization representing all Arab communities, Muslim and Christian, throughout the Americas, particularly those of Syrian or Lebanese origin.<sup>88</sup> Various leaders of FEARAB country chapters maintain strong relations with government officials in their host country, providing direct access to those that can implement their political and cultural agenda.

In Argentina, FEARAB's ties to the government are underscored by the former Argentine Ambassador to Syria, Roberto Ahuad, who is also a prominent member of FEARAB. It was during Amb. Ahuad's tenure, in 2011, that then-Foreign Minister Hector Timerman traveled to Aleppo, Syria to officially meet with President Bashar Al-Assad and unofficially begin the negotiations with his Iranian counterpart, Ali Akhbar Salehi. Some accounts point to Ahuad as the individual who set up the meeting between Timerman and Salehi in

Syria.<sup>89</sup> At the time, Ahuad was an influential member of the Islamic community in Argentina and through his relationship with the former Secretary for Religious Affairs, Guillermo Olivieri, had direct access to Hector Timerman.

FEARAB's importance to Iran is highlighted in several wiretaps throughout

2012 involving internal turmoil over the future leadership of the association. Yussuf Khalil, Abdul Karim Paz, and other important members of Iran's proxy network in Argentina, mobilized to position Adalberto Hussain Assad to become president of FEARAB Argentina in 2012. An important and historic "local fixer" for Iran in Argentina, Adalberto Assad, has

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**Individuals,  
such as  
Heshmat,  
Yussuf, and  
Esteche, are  
critical nodes in  
a covert network  
between Iran  
and Argentina.**

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familial ties to both the Assad and Sain Lebanese clans in Argentina. In 2012, Adalberto Assad became the president of FEARAB Argentina but not without controversy. Allegations by other FEARAB Argentina members, including the former president, Hamid Dib, circulated that Adalberto, Yussuf, and others responded

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**Iran's control  
of FEARAB  
provides an  
additional  
backchannel to  
the Argentine  
government.**

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only to the political interests of Iran and did not authentically represent the Arab community in Argentina.

To dissuade Hamid Dib away from his bid to remain president of FEARAB Argentina, Yussuf and Karim Paz offered him the presidency of another organization, the Lebanese World League (*Liga Mundial Libanesa*) in Argentina. Dib rejected the offer and resumed his candidacy to become FEARAB president, only to lose to Adalberto Assad on September 28, 2012, further increasing the perception within the Arab community in Argentina that FEARAB was controlled by Iran. This perception is corroborated during a background conversation on November 16, 2012 between Adalberto Assad and Yussuf Khalil where the latter admits that “*they think FEARAB Buenos Aires is controlled by the Iranians.*” Furthermore, Iran’s alleged control of FEARAB would serve the purpose of providing a backchannel to the Argentine government, as indicated in a conversation between Yussuf Khalil and Adalberto Assad on September 11, 2012, prior to the FEARAB elections in Argentina.



**YUSSUF KHALIL to ADALBERTO ASSAD on September 11, 2012<sup>90</sup>**

**Yussuf:** What is the title of the article?

**Adalberto:** The article is as follows: “The president travels...”

**Yussuf:** AMIA? “For the first time Cristina travels to the United Nations without the Jewish community.”

**Adalberto:** Yes. This [article] is basically making our [Iran and Argentina] relations official, which hasn’t been official until now.

**Yussuf:** But I don’t understand. What does this have to do with what you asked me?

**Adalberto:** Well, it’s relevant because of the following: First, because our community, our institution [FEARAB], is relevant. Second, that article is important because it makes things official.

Here Adalberto Assad asserts the relevance of FEARAB and its influence over the former Argentine president. After being elected president of FEARAB Argentina, Assad further emphasized his connections to Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and demonstrates some inside knowledge of the inner workings within her cabinet.



**ADALBERTO ASSAD to YUSSUF KHALIL on December 26, 2012<sup>91</sup>**

**Adalberto:** No not Juan Carlos. He is angry because we are going to see Cristina [Fernández de Kirchner]. We’ll see if we can see her [CFK] before her trip. It would be great. And Juan Carlos offered me the house again, on Sarmiento, but I told him we need to check the budget.

**Yussuf:** The same house?

**Adalberto:** He owns it, it’s in his hands. They gave it back to him. [Adalberto goes on to say he does not want to be burned again, most likely referring to

previous experiences working within the mosque.]

**Adalberto:** We got burnt once. I don't know, he told me that the thing with Cristina [Fernández de Kirchner] could come out before she travels. The thing is the Foreign Minister [Timerman] might delay the trip. They're not sure if the Foreign Minister [Timerman] will travel or not, they are discussing it. You understand? There are many internal fights within the government [of Argentina] and they tell me that the one who is winning these internal fights is Julio de Vido.

**Yussuf:** Ah, is that right?

**Adalberto:** Yes, Julio de Vido is gaining weight within the government [of Argentina] ... and he has Abdallah Medina, and [Guillermo] Moreno...

Julio de Vido, the former National Minister of Federal Planning, Public Investment and Services, is a relevant mention given his role in the secret negotiation increased when the official Iran-Argentina MOU became public. Assad's reference to the "thing" is most likely the MOU, demonstrating prior knowledge of this memorandum before it was made public. Adalberto Assad's role as a "local fixer" for Iran is enhanced when he is elected president of FEARAB Argentina, a few months before the official signing of the MOU. Iran and its proxies in Argentina, however, established another backchannel of communication through an old conduit; the beef industry.

### Where's the Beef?

Iran's strategic focus on beef exports from Argentina raises some serious questions given its own economic aims and ambition. According to the Financial Tribune, described as the first Iranian English economic daily, dated February 16, 2016:<sup>92</sup>

Iran has a long-term plan to achieve self-sufficiency in beef production, by promoting genetic engineering and increasing efficiency in the livestock sector, according to deputy agriculture minister, Hassan Rokni.

About 60,000 tons of red meat were imported in the last Iranian year (ending March 20, 2015), indicating a decline of 30,000 tons compared to the previous year.<sup>93</sup> Rokni said the decline in imports is expected to continue as production rises. Iran's per capita meat consumption is 11 kilograms per year, ISNA reported. Similarly, a 2016 report by the Italian Trade Agency, indicated that in order to meet consumption demand Iran imports beef and veal from nearby Pakistan and India while the government is working to achieve self-sufficiency in beef production and has allocated approximately \$735 million for livestock to reach its goal of becoming a net exporter.<sup>94</sup>

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### **Julio de Vido, the former Minister of Planning, had an important role in the secret negotiation between Iran and Argentina.**

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Only three years earlier (in 2013) the Agricultural Council of the Majlis (or parliament) issued a draft program which *"...aims to increase the volume of meat production in the country by approximately 200,000t over the next few years."*<sup>95</sup> *Additionally, the investment will create the conditions for further development of Iran's meat industry after 2016, so the country could potentially become an active meat exporter in the future."*<sup>96</sup>

From a purely commercial



perspective, this raises the critically important question: why does a country that meets its consumption gaps with imports from the near abroad, and invests in domestic beef production with a view of self-sufficiency and becoming a net exporter, continue to focus on beef imports from half a world away?

The answer could be contained in several phone intercepts in 2012, where Iran's "local fixers" in Argentina scramble to recreate the commercial cover once enjoyed by the Islamic Republic prior to the AMIA attack. As explained in the previous section, the Argentine beef industry provided a perfect pretext to insert Iranian operatives into the Southern Cone. This commercial cover was managed by a series of IRGC front companies that, until now, have been largely absent in Argentina after the AMIA attack.

A key component of this local beef industry is the Salomon clan, whom Yussuf engaged in 2012 to create commercial opportunities that could be exploited by Iran. As discussed earlier, the Salomon clan is one of the five families identified by Argentine intelligence as under the influence of Mohsen Rabbani. In September 2012, Yussuf's cousin Marcelo Salomon seized an opportunity to move into the beef business after learning that Emilio Persico, the cabinet chief for the Buenos Aires province, was buying hundreds of kilos of *milanesa* [breaded flank steak] for the provincial government. Persico, a political activist and Peronist who once belonged to the militant *Montoneros* movement, is the co-founder of the Movement for Displaced Workers (*Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados*—MTD Evita), and a close confidant of both Kirchner administrations.<sup>97</sup> Persico held several official positions before being named the Undersecretary of Agriculture and then held an important position within Buenos Aires with purview over commercial activity in the province.

Persico is openly sympathetic to Iran, and was recorded as saying: "*this is to help your countryman [in Iran]... we are going to give them a hand, it doesn't matter who I buy the meat from.*"<sup>98</sup> Persico's privileged position provided a window of opportunity

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### Why does Iran, who heavily invests in domestic beef production, continue to focus on beef imports from half a world away?

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that Marcelo Salomon swiftly engaged with Yussuf Khalil.



**YUSSUF KHALIL to MARCELO SALOMON on September 6, 2012<sup>99</sup>**

**Marcelo:** Listen to me, boludo. Pésico is buying from the one [possibly José Zebala] who taught the *milanesa* [beef] business to *Revolución*. He [Pésico] is not even answering the phone now...

**Yussuf:** Okay. Alright.

**Marcelo:** And you know what he [possibly José Zebala] is doing? He [Pésico] gives him [possibly José Zebala] 300 kilos of subsidized meat... and then [Zebala] returns 300 kilos of *milanesa*. He [Pésico] should do the same with us.

In this call, Marcelo references "Revolución," a nickname for his cousin Alejandro Salomon who learned the beef business from Pedro José Zebala, believed to be a former employee of South Beef, the IRGC-controlled front company created after the AMIA attack. With Alejandro's


knowledge of the industry and Marcelo's ties to capital, the two opened a new *frigorífico* (refrigeration plant) in Buenos

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**Iran's proxies  
seek to position  
the Salomon clan  
at the head of the  
beef business  
between Iran and  
Argentina.**

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Aires. Throughout the month of September, Marcelo and Alejandro coordinated with Yussuf to arrange an important dinner with Emilio Persíco.

 **YUSSUF KHALIL to ALEJANDRO SALOMON on September 16, 2012<sup>100</sup>**

**Yussuf:** Hello...

**Alejandro:** Cousin, how are you doing?

**Yussuf:** Fine, thank God. Hey, so has it been confirmed [referring to dinner]? We have to confirm it for the restaurant, *boludo*.

**Alejandro:** I'm with you and I understand *habibi*, but the guy [Persíco] said he was going to confirm yesterday and he hasn't called me back...

**Yussuf:** So, what do we do? Do we go ahead with tomorrow?

**Alejandro:** No! He's not going to attend if it's tomorrow, he [Persíco] asked to please do it on Wednesday. The man is interested.

**Yussuf:** Then we're all set for Wednesday. You're driving me crazy!


**Alejandro:** Yes, but what I don't have is the number of persons. I know that Rusconi, Diputado Rusconi has confirmed.

**Yussuf:** Rusconi [inaudible] confirmed, yeah.

**Alejandro:** Yes, Rusconi confirmed and since Persíco asked for Wednesday I suppose it's because he will attend...

The dinner was set for September 19, 2012 at the *Alhambra* restaurant in Palermo, an affluent neighborhood in Buenos Aires. Aside from Persíco, Yussuf invited Fernando Esteche, Abdul Karim Paz, and Heshmat to the dinner. Heshmat's presence, in particular, suggests this dinner had less to do with legitimate business and more with Iran's interests. Due to internal conflicts between the Salomon cousins the dinner was canceled, but it did not stop Yussuf and the Salomon's from pursuing their ambition.

Yussuf continued consolidating efforts in the beef business by pursuing an alternative path to preferential deals through Guillermo Moreno, then Undersecretary for Domestic Trade. In order to make contact with Moreno, Yussuf turned to an unknown associate named Aníbal. It is not clear who Aníbal is, but he appears to have important connections within the Argentine government. In one conversation on September 20, 2012, Yussuf and Aníbal discussed their efforts to co-opt Moreno's office.

 **YUSSUF KHALIL to ANÍBAL on September 20, 2012<sup>101</sup>**

**Aníbal:** To summarize, the meeting went well. What we have to do now is tell Karim [Paz] to no longer make any requests, let's leave it with this one, who is the right-hand of [Guillermo] Moreno.

**Yussuf:** I got it, but tell me how the meeting went?

**Aníbal:** The meeting was spectacular. The guy knows the place, even though he's never been there. But the first step is to know who he is. He is the one under [Guillermo] Moreno, and

beyond that, is involved with everything related to the resolution...

**Yussuf:** Now I know who it is. If it's the person we talked about that day in my office, who we called on the phone.

**Aníbal:** Yes, the same person. Everything that has to do with beef, Cristina [Fernández de Kirchner] and the rest, he will decide. He's the one that decides...

**Yussuf:** Something concrete... everything you say is great, but were you able to reach a concrete deal?

[They continue talking about the possibilities of a deal.]

**Aníbal:** ...we told them about Iran. What I told Salomon is that, more than Iran, there are possibilities for other markets...

**Yussuf:** Wait, excuse me... Salomon brought up Iran?

**Aníbal:** No, no, no... but we did talk about opening up the Shiite market, which is closed for now, but we can open this market. You understand? I told him not to mention Iran. To say Kazakhstan or, who knows, any other country. Because if you say Iran, the only thing they will remember is Iran... But the important thing is that we have a direct vehicle... the door is open, this is the guy who decides everything related to beef.

This call makes clear that Iran's proxies are seeking to position the Salomon clan at the head of the beef business in Argentina. However, when Iran is brought up, Yussuf immediately becomes defensive. Nevertheless, as month's passed by Yussuf moved toward coopting Guillermo Moreno's office from within.



**YUSSUF KHALIL to RUBEN [REMEDI] on November 6, 2012**

**Yussuf:** Do you remember the

woman I told you about? The one from... the imports? Her name is Silvina Ratti.

**Rubén:** Where is she?

**Yussuf:** She is [Guillermo] Moreno's secretary now, and she is one of ours. I swear... So my friend is coming from Comodoro Rivadavia. Cristina [Fernández de Kirchner] sent him to do something and he told me, "Yussuf, this woman [Silvina Ratti] is ready for whatever we want her to do."

Ruben Remedi is a friend of Yussuf's and a meat inspector for local Argentine authorities, who used to work for another refrigeration plant called *Frigorífico Gorina S.A.*<sup>102</sup> in Buenos Aires. Remedi represents an endemic problem in


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**Several local government entities in Argentina have been coopted by Iran, most notably within the beef business.**

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Argentina in that several local government entities have been coopted by agents of Iran, most notably within the quality control industry of the beef business, which has become a family affair for the pro-Iranian Khalil clan.

Yussuf's relative, Gustavo Khalil Kaban, originally worked with Mohsen Rabbani in the 1980s to establish the *halal* certification process in Argentina. Rabbani's initial cover upon arriving in Argentina was as a *halal* meat inspector. Anticipating the opening of the beef trade between Iran and Argentina, Yussuf contacted Gustavo Khalil to discuss how to re-establish this commercial cover.

 **YUSSUF KHALIL to GUSTAVO KHALIL KABALAN on November 11, 2012<sup>103</sup>**

**Gustavo:** Listen to me. There's something.

**Yussuf:** Yeah.

**Gustavo:** To open commercial relations with Iran is in the [Argentine] government's agenda. We can't miss this one. We have to jump on it.

**Yussuf:** Let me finish *boludo!* I have already talked to the [Iranian] Ambassador and told him that this week you're going to sit with him.

**Gustavo:** I should not sit with him [alone], we should go together...

**Yussuf:** Okay, listen to me... He's [Iranian Ambassador] afraid of not complying with the order, if they [Iran] order a large quantity.

**Gustavo:** Well, that's fine, but I'm going to work with several *frigorificos* and with real quantities.

**Yussuf:** Exactly, one will have to sit [with the Iranian Ambassador] and let him know the real quantity [of beef] we would offer him. Listen, cousin, it's just that we are not going to sign a contract for 500 tons [of meat] per week and not be able to comply.

**Gustavo:** Thank God. Listen I work in Argentina, I work in Uruguay and I work in Chile. You know that. I don't talk about it but... [voices overlap] ...I work intensively in these three countries. Well, then, we have chances with all those countries and can even go to Paraguay to make arrangements with [unintelligible] from there [Paraguay] and that's how we get ours.

It is telling that Yussuf mentions the "real quantity of beef" suggesting that there may be a discrepancy between what what they promise and what they


can deliver. Since Gustavo worked with Rabbani it is likely he understands that in order for an effective commercial

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**Gustavo Khalil Kabalan worked with Rabbani to establish the *halal* certification process in Argentina.**

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cover to be established trade must appear legitimate. This means using real quantities and real figures. Yussuf immediately communicated this to Ali Pakdaman, the Iranian Chargé d'affaires in Buenos Aires.

 **YUSSUF KHALIL to ALI PAKDAMAN, Iran Chargé d'affaires on November 11, 2012<sup>104</sup>**

**Yussuf:** I want to tell you something important.

**Pakdaman:** Tell me.

**Yussuf:** The person that certifies Halal in Argentina for the Muslim world and who sells a lot of it [beef] is Gustavo Khalil Kabalan and he's been certifying it [halal beef] for the *Centro Islámico* for more than 20 years. He [Gustavo] called me to let me know that there is a huge possibility that the beef trade with the Islamic Republic will open up soon.

**Pakdaman:** If you agree, let's talk on the phone tomorrow... and set up a meeting with him [Gustavo].

**Yussuf:** I think it is very important. I believe he's a serious person and besides if you ask around, about who is Gustavo Khalil? They will tell you he is the person who sold and certified the beef to all the countries in the Middle East throughout the years and [Gustavo's company]

was the only company certifying [*halal*] here in Argentina. His father started the business.

**Pakdaman:** Very well. Don't worry, tomorrow we'll talk about it and set up a meeting with him [Gustavo].

In this conversation, Yussuf confirmed Gustavo's important and historic role within the beef business and confirms that the Khalil clan has been involved in the *halal* certification process within Argentina for decades, prior to and after the AMIA attack. On the surface, this seems to be normal commercial activity, however, given the precedent of front companies used in the AMIA attack, along with Iran's reduction in beef imports, it is safe to assume that Iran

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**Iran looked to re-establish itself within the Argentine beef business as a commercial cover to enhance its intelligence operations.**

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is looking to re-establish itself within the beef business in Argentina as a commercial cover to enhance its intelligence capabilities in the Southern Cone. This becomes partially evident in late November 2012 when Yussuf Khalil talks to Fernando Esteche, leader of the anti-US Quebracho movement, about unknown Iranian "engineers" arriving in Argentina.



**YUSSUF KHALIL to FERNANDO ESTECHE on November 23, 2012<sup>105</sup>**

**Yussuf:** A tremendous surprise, this guy has connections with an Iranian [engineer] who is handling the nexus with

the government. He [Iranian engineer] came many years ago. Remember that I talked to you about an engineer?

**Esteche:** Hmm?

**Yussuf:** An Iranian engineer, this guy [Iranian] has a meat company. Are you following me? Everything is connected *boludo!* It's the same guy you talked to me about... Do you understand what I'm trying to tell you?

**Esteche:** Is this really the same guy I mentioned to you?

**Yussuf:** And he [the person Yussuf met] gave me the last name today [referring to the Iranian]. It's not the same last name, but he [person Yussuf met] doesn't remember well. This guy [person Yussuf met] is just a minion, but he told me... I have to talk to you about this in person. Where are you? Are you coming to the capital?

The fact he rushed to talk with Esteche in person implies the subject matter was too sensitive to discuss over the phone. The nature of this conversation also suggests that while Yussuf is a "local fixer" for Iran he is not privy to all the sensitive intelligence activities Iran is working in Argentina. For instance, in a later conversation with Abdul Karim Paz, it is evident Yussuf did not know that the Iranian-controlled front company, South Beef, was back in business in Argentina. In this conversation, Yussuf begins to realize that Iran has a broader strategy for engaging the beef business with Argentina, but it remains a strategy unknown to Yussuf himself.



**YUSSUF KHALIL to ABDUL KARIM PAZ on November 30, 2012<sup>106</sup>**

**Yussuf:** Listen to me, the name I gave you the other day about the meat [company]... the company is settled here.

Did you know that? I think it's terrible that you don't know these things and that the Sheik [Rabbani] does not know about these things.

**Karim Paz:** Yes, let me tell him, because this is important.

**Yussuf:** Tell him "you should know that, *boludo*" But give me the name [of the company] and don't worry, because it's in the official bulletin.

**Karim Paz:** Josero... Josero... [phonetics]

**Yussuf:** No, no, that's not the name. It's **SOUTH BEEF**.

**Karim Paz:** South... South... That's his [Josero] company. It was installed before and got raided a while back and they took the machines and it was [unintelligible].

**Yussuf:** Okay, well it is installed again.

**Karim Paz:** Is Heshmat involved?

**Yussuf:** No, no, Heshmat isn't, he says he isn't... but I don't know who to believe anymore. I'm not going to lie to you, I just don't know who to believe...

## Beyond the Beef Business

Throughout the wiretaps it is clear that the Argentine and Iranian proxies were aware of the significance and impact of the MOU, both for their respective governments but also for themselves. Most "local fixers" rely on various sources of income to maintain their lifestyle, networks, and access. Yussuf is no different. As the public announcement of the MOU approached, Yussuf began working with several associates to capitalize on potential opportunities in various other industries outside beef, most notably the oil industry.

In his 2015 complaint, Nisman asserted that the desire for Iranian oil was a major driver for the Argentine government to negotiate with the Islamic Republic. He

specifically cited Luis D'Elia when quoting a conversation with Yussuf on May 20, 2013:

*"...I spoke with Julio [de Vido] over there... there's a real energy crisis here... they're prepared to send YPF people to negotiate over there [Iran]... he's [Julio de Vido] very interested in exchanging their stuff for grain and meat..."*<sup>107</sup>

Later that day, Yussuf passes this information to Rabbani informing him that "everything, hamdullah, is going well. We had a meeting with the Minister of Planning [Julio de Vido] ... and he's ready to send a top delegation from YPF to make arrangements with the Islamic Republic and the transaction could involve grains and other things."<sup>108</sup>

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### The cryptic nature of the conversations in the wiretaps hide their true meaning.

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Rabbani responded by asking Yussuf to "send me [Rabbani] the details so I can evaluate them," and having done so, he added, "operations are safe, right?" Continuing to say, "there are some government sectors here who told me that they're ready to sell oil to Argentina... and also buy weapons..."<sup>109</sup>

Nisman cited this conversation as evidence that Rabbani was involved in the secret negotiation parallel to the official MOU, and based on the wiretaps it is evident that he was passing information to the former Planning Minister, Julio de Vido. The cryptic nature of these conversations hide their true meaning, but Rabbani's question if "operations are safe" suggests there is a level of risk to what Argentina and Iran were secretly negotiating. Suddenly, out of nowhere, Rabbani mentioned buying "weapons." Not only would weapons

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**Yussuf understood that certain conversations were best kept off the phone and would often meet his associates in person.**

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sales most likely be illegal, considering most of Iran's weapons programs were prohibited by international sanctions, but nowhere else in the conversation are weapons mentioned as part of any official or unofficial deal.

As far back as 2011, the Washington DC-based American Enterprise Institute (AEI) published a report titled "Argentina's Secret Deal with Iran?" Citing a classified document from the Venezuelan government that was leaked to the press, AEI scholar Roger Noriega revealed a conversation between Julio de Vido and then-Venezuelan Vice President Elias Jaua where the subject of nuclear cooperation was raised.<sup>110</sup> This was followed, according to Noriega, by several suspicious payments approximating \$240 million to Argentina for a "number of economic development projects carried out in collaboration with Iran."<sup>111</sup> In testimony before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Douglas Farah affirmed that Venezuela and Argentina developed "opaque mechanisms for transferring millions of dollars between the two nations."<sup>112</sup> Farah cites a Venezuela-Argentina joint public works program called 200 Fábricas Socialistas (200 Socialist Factories) as one of those opaque programs existing on paper but very little in practice.

For his part, Yussuf clearly understood that certain aspects of these conversations were best conducted off the phone. On several occasions, with various associates, he suggests speaking in person

and in some instances, when a conversation is heading toward a sensitive subject, Yussuf openly instructed his associate to get off the phone.



**LUIS D'ELIA to YUSSUF KHALIL on February 12, 2013<sup>113</sup>**

**D'Elia:** Infobae is reporting that [Ahmad] Vahidi's request was rejected. Do you know anything about this?

**Yussuf:** No, no... I don't know anything, Luis.

**D'Elia:** But this is happening a day before the debate in congress. Is this dirty?

**Yussuf:** Yes, it's dirty. We'll talk about it later and I'll tell you the whole story. But I cannot tell it to you over the phone. Support is coming, but... it's within expectations, Luis.

**D'Elia:** Oh, okay, okay. Was this previously arranged?

**Yussuf:** Of course *boludo*, but this [superlative] phone is tapped and yours twice as much!

**D'Elia:** Okay, okay, but let's get together somewhere to talk...

**Yussuf:** Where are you?

**D'Elia:** Should I see you at your office? I'm in Cañuelas right now.

**Yussuf:** Let's meet tomorrow, and I'll explain everything to you.

**D'Elia:** So this was known beforehand? It was not a surprise?

**Yussuf:** No. Both sides knew it. This is even deeper; I need to explain it to you.

**D'Elia:** Okay, I want to see you tomorrow, just let me know where?

**Yussuf:** Do you want to come to Palermo, to Bonpland...

**D'Elia:** Yes, Bonpland... what's the address, 1008...?

**Yussuf:** 1828 [Bonpland]

**D'Elia:** I'll be there at noon.

**Yussuf:** Don't say anything about

what I told you, eh! Don't be a *boludo*, please!

Ahmad Vahidi was the Iranian Defense Minister at that time and one of the individuals implicated in the AMIA attack with an active Interpol Red Notice and arrest order from Argentina. The mere mention of Vahidi, caused Yussuf to react immediately and to move the conversation off the phone. D'Elia was less careful, but followed Yussuf's instructions and agreed to meet him in person the following day to carry on the conversation. The address where they agreed to meet, Bonpland 1828 in Buenos Aires, was later identified by Argentine journalists as a possible safe house for Iran and Hezbollah.<sup>114</sup>

After the scandal over another *Infobae* article, mentioned earlier in this report, Suhail Assad summoned *Infobae* reporters to meet him at this same address on June 10, 2013 to supposedly "clean his good name."<sup>115</sup> *Infobae* reported that the address belonged to a small grocery store with an apartment upstairs. The reporters noticed several computers and

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**The secretive nature of the activities of the Iranian and Argentine proxies suggest they worked with local intelligence.**

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electronic equipment behind the grocery store, but did not access the apartment. In follow-on interviews, neighbors described "turcos" with limited Spanish living at this residence for months at a time.<sup>116</sup> The aforementioned conversation bears out that this residence was used by Iran's proxies as a safe house for sensitive

discussions.

The secretive nature of the activities of the Iranian and Argentine "local fixers" and "super fixers" suggests they also worked with local intelligence agents who provided insight concerning the secret negotiation between the two governments. Nisman identified one intelligence agent as Ramon "Allan" Héctor Bogado, an unregistered agent purposely kept off the books by Argentina's intelligence services to maintain complete plausible deniability towards his actions.<sup>117</sup> Bogado met Yussuf in late 2012 and their relationship progressed throughout 2013 to the point where Yussuf frequently turned to Bogado to understand the inner workings of the Argentine government, as evident in the following conversation:

 **YUSSUF KHALIL to RAMON HÉCTOR "ALLAN" BOGADO on June 2, 2013<sup>118</sup>**

**Yussuf:** Two things... well, one! How do you see the change in the government? The departure of the woman [Nilda Garre]?

**Bogado:** There were no changes.

**Yussuf:** Really? Didn't they remove... the ministers?

**Bogado:** There was a change in names, but not in status.

**Yussuf:** Sure, but the name change, especially the woman's [Nilda Garre], what do you think of that?

**Bogado:** For us, on the inside... where I work, it's complicated. For them, where they are, it's the same, the one who was working was *El Loco* [alluding to Sergio Berni] ...

**Yussuf:** Ah ok... tomorrow I want to chat with you at some point.

**Bogado:** Yeah, yeah. I'll give it to you straight, our Director of Interior [Fernando Pocino] was in place



because he's the boyfriend of the daughter of the lady [Nilda Garre] that left.

**Yussuf:** Yes, but do you think they kicked her out?

**Bogado:** Because now we're talking about an internal matter, and she [Garre] was with her friend Milani, from the Army, who has a parallel intelligence agency...

**Bogado:** We are fine but we have to work. We have to build for the next ten years, you understand, because between a year and a year and a half from now we will have the good news... But until then we have to work for the long-term... You understand, on the international level we are perfectly fine.

The manner in which Bogado ended this conversation suggests he comprehended the strategic goal of the secret negotiation between Iran and Argentina at a higher level than Yussuf. Bogado's mention of "good news" within the next year and a half, as well as his emphasis on the "long-term" and the importance of the "international level," could all be interpreted as a veiled reference to Iran's nuclear negotiations with the P5+1, which had already been made public the previous January 2013. Bogado's understanding of the inner workings of the cabinet of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner proved useful for Yussuf, who reported his conversations to Iran.



**YUSSUF KHALIL to RUBÉN PASCOLINI on May 20, 2013<sup>119</sup>**

**Yussuf:** Hi Ruben, a quick comment.

**Rubén:** Sure.

**Yussuf:** I spoke to [Mohsen] Baharvand... Tell this to Luis [D'Elia]

because I want to get in touch with him but I can't because he's meeting with [Julio] de Vido. What I want to tell him [D'Elia] is that the president [of Iran] approves the memorandum, and in one of the points in the memorandum that was signed here in Argentina, it's clear that the president [of Iran] has the authority to do so.

**Rubén:** Yes.

**Yussuf:** It's not that he doesn't have any weight... quite the opposite, it is completely legitimate through Ahmadinejad. As such, whomever comes next does not have the possibility to move backwards, and besides, as I explained to you over lunch, the order comes from above. Since it comes from the higher ups, I'm told everything is ok... and [Mohsen] Baharvand tells me that they are interested, to select a date and send a delegation to wherever is convenient...

**Rubén:** Yes.

**Yussuf:** I was thinking we could start this process and send them to Caracas... send some [Argentine] government officials so they can start the dialogue, because the one who would travel [on behalf of Iran] is Baha [Baharvand], you follow?

**Rubén:** He [Baharvand] is going to go?

**Yussuf:** Of course, they [Iran] won't just send anyone... He [Baharvand] is the one handling the negotiations, they [Iran] are putting the pressure on him.

**Rubén:** Ok, all good.

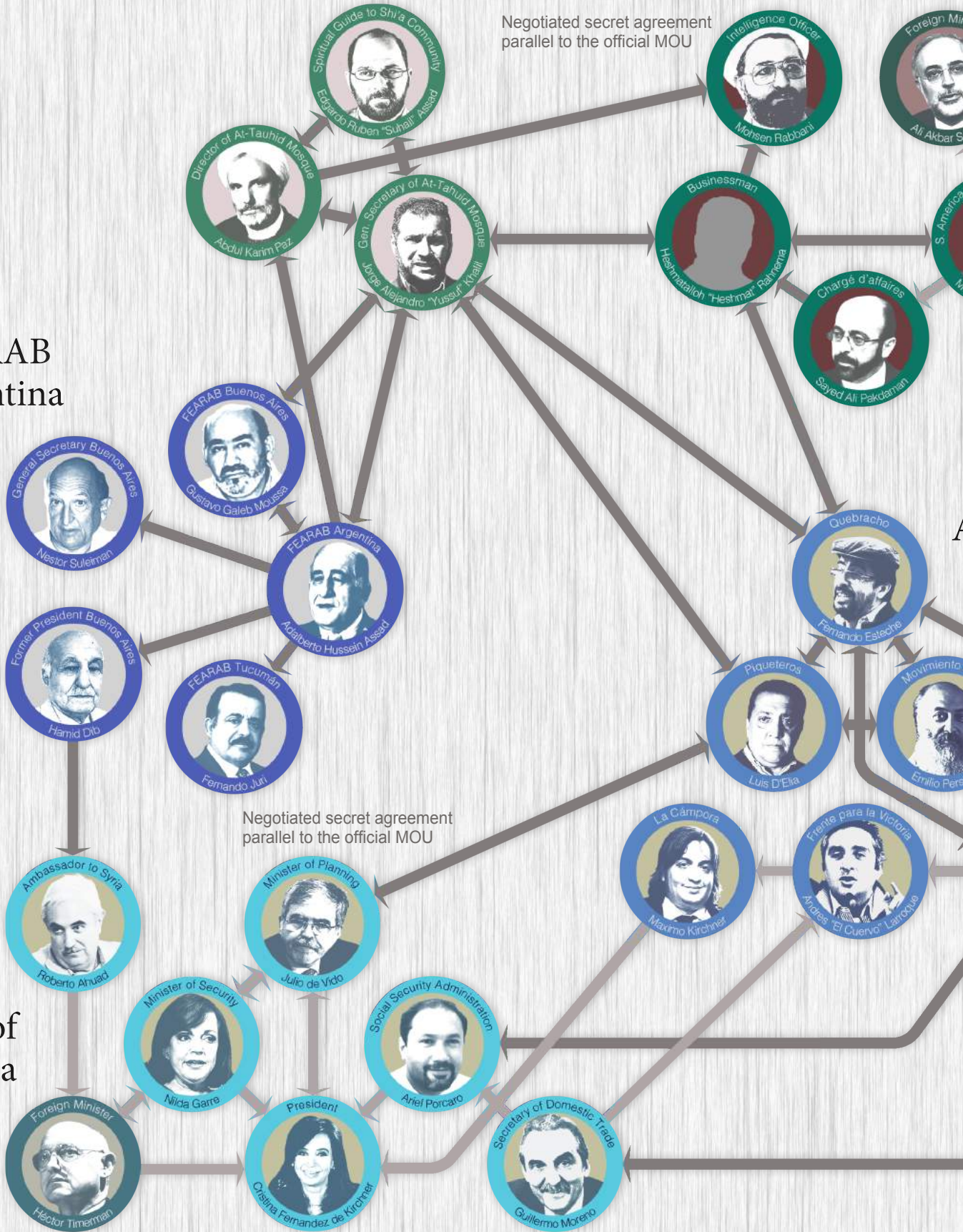
**Yussuf:** Yes, it's all good... Don't worry about a thing, Ahmadinejad has the necessary authorities and it's signed in the memorandum.

In the above conversation, Yussuf's mention of Mohsen Baharvand, who was the former Iranian Chargé d'affaires in

# Iran Proxies

# Islamic Republic of Iran

## FEARAB Argentina



Signatory of official Iran-Argentina Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

# 2012 Iran-Argentina Axis of Influence

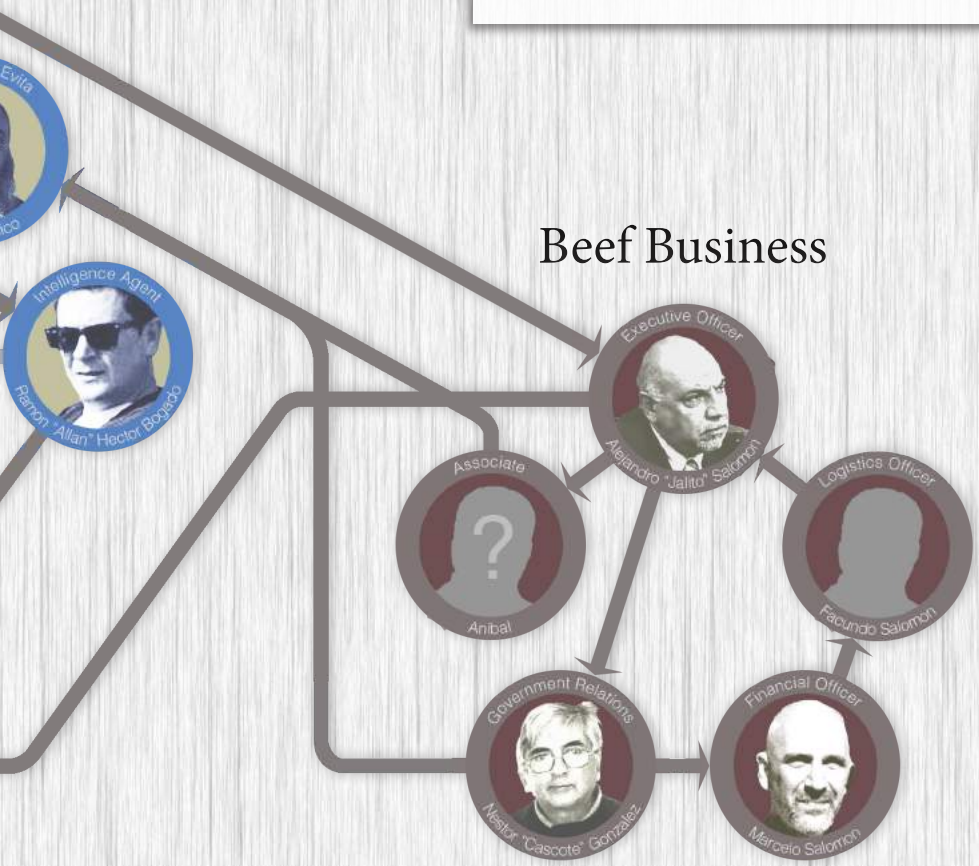


Signatory of official Iran-Argentina Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

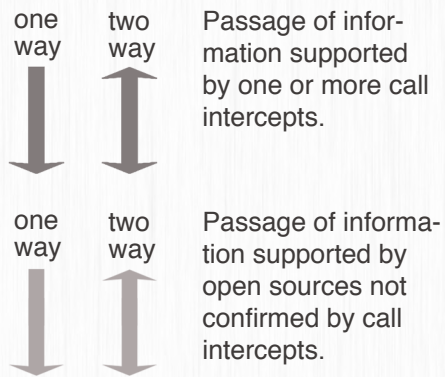


Negotiated secret agreement parallel to the official MOU

## Argentine Proxies



Arrows depict the passage of information between parties. Bidirectional arrows mean that information is passed back and forth.



The judicial complaint by Alberto Nisman filed before an Argentine Federal Criminal Court on January 14, 2015 accused members of the Argentine government of establishing a covert backchannel with the Iranian government, passing information and relaying messages in advance of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between both countries two years earlier. This network diagram depicts a sample of this backchannel operating in 2012 through clusters of individuals serving as proxies between the governments of Argentina and Iran. These proxies passed information between each government, developing a secret agreement parallel to the official MOU.

The Islamic association, *Federación de Entidades Arabes (FEARAB)*, provided a cultural connection between Iranian proxies and the Argentine government lobbying in favor of Iran's interests, while exploitation of the beef business provided a commercial cover for Iran's intelligence activity in Argentina. These two clusters worked in tandem with Iranian and Argentine proxies to establish plausible deniability for Iran's secret negotiations with Argentina while providing legitimacy toward its presence. As Nisman reported, this network developed the lines of impunity that would be negotiated and eventually offered to Iran by the Argentine government causing controversy throughout the nation.

Buenos Aires, and subsequently held a high level position within Iran's Foreign Ministry, suggests he was the primary negotiator behind this secret agreement. The planning of a future trip to Caracas further underscores the importance that Venezuela had in facilitating a Tehran-Caracas-Buenos Aires nexus.

It has been widely reported that Alberto Nisman was supposed to present this 2015 complaint later in the year, however, due to mitigating circumstances driven by the former Argentine President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, he was forced to rush his final report. When reviewing his 2015 complaint juxtaposed with several wiretaps in his possession, it is clear Nisman exposed only a partial revelation of Iran and Argentina's secret negotiations and did not fully report all the information or analysis at his disposal. This could be because Nisman's 2015 complaint was one step in a larger strategy to advance his investigations at the international level. Meeting with Congress would have been a key second

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**Former Iranian  
chargé d'affaires,  
Mohsen  
Baharvand, likely  
negotiated the  
secret agreement  
between Iran and  
Argentina.**

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step as it could have provided the political support needed to make this international maneuver.

Nisman's strategy of escalation came at a very inopportune time for Iran since it was negotiating its controversial nuclear program with international powers, but was also increasingly feeling the pressure of sanctions that had taken

their toll on the Islamic Republic. The window of opportunity for Nisman to apply international pressure was rapidly closing as Iran advanced toward a nuclear deal.

Argentina's rapprochement with Iran through a controversial MOU in 2013 cannot be properly analyzed without the international context of the ongoing nuclear negotiations that resulted in Iran's controversial nuclear deal, referred to as the JCPOA. While not privy to these higher-level negotiations, Iran and Argentina's "local fixers" understood that what transpired in Argentina from 2011 to 2015 was a consequence of higher-level negotiations having less to do with establishing commercial relations, and more to do with building Iran's international legitimacy.



**FERNANDO ESTECHE to  
YUSSUF KHALIL on December  
18, 2012<sup>120</sup>**

**Esteché:** In regards to re-establishing relations between the two states [Iran and Argentina], where commerce, in reality, is **secondary**... Not that it's not important, but it's secondary, because they [Iran] are looking elsewhere, **global alliances**, the topic of **uranium**.

Iran's axis of influence in Argentina is illustrated on the previous pages (pg. 34 and 35) through a diagram depicting several clusters of local fixers, super fixers, shadow facilitators and government officials that negotiated the secret agreement Nisman alleged in his latest case. This diagram is part of a much larger network that was mobilized in 2012 in advance of the official memorandum between Iran and Argentina, and symbolizes just a sample of Iran's strategic penetration of the Argentine government and society.

## 5. Sanctions in Santiago

**E**conomic sanctions have cost Iran an estimated \$120 billion since 2012, primarily in lost oil and gas revenues.<sup>121</sup> That amounts to about 30 percent of the economy of the second-largest country in the Middle East after Saudi Arabia. Iran has been subject to sanctions for more than three decades, which have been in place, in one form or another, since the fall of the Shah in 1979. A progressive tightening of the noose since 2010, however, sent the economy into near freefall. The collapse in trade shrank GDP by nearly 7 percent in 2012.<sup>122</sup> At the same time, isolation from the international banking system resulted in Iran's currency, the rial, losing about two-thirds of its value, while inflation skyrocketed to 40 percent.

Sanctions pressure was largely credited for driving Iran to the bargaining table to negotiate its controversial nuclear program. More than money, Iran needed to free the flow of financial resources and lift restrictions cutting the Islamic Republic

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**More than money, Iran needed to free the flow of financial resources and lift restrictions cutting the Islamic Republic out of the global financial system.**

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out of the global financial system. In Latin America, Iran engaged in a variety of sanctions busting schemes in collaboration with the governments of Venezuela and Ecuador.<sup>123</sup> On net, however, international sanctions had an adverse impact on Iran's global strategy, particularly in Argentina.

As it was negotiating with Argentina

to regain breathing room in the region, Iran was feeling the effect of cuts in its financial flows. During a conversation with an associate on October 5, 2012, Yussuf Khalil complained about the effect of sanctions in Argentina, declaring:<sup>124</sup>

“... the problem is the pressure the United States put against Iran ... by pressuring the financial flows, movement of money, the economic sanctions are now working. They [Iran] were able to endure [the sanctions] for a certain time, and it's not that they [Iran] don't have money, they have plenty of money—they just can't move it, or transfer it. It's complicated and I'm the first one to be affected by it [in Argentina].”

Resource constraints in Iran forced a recalculation of strategic imperatives. One of the recalculations was a shift in strategy in the region as the state-sponsored mosques and Islamic cultural centers were underfunded. A conversation in 2012 between Mohsen Rabbani and an Argentine cleric, Mohsen Ali, underlines the problem:

 **MOHSEN ALI to MOHSEN RABBANI on September 19, 2012<sup>125</sup>**

**Ali:** Sheik, we are good. [words in Farsi]. Honestly, I'm worried. I'm calling because of the money. It's not enough.

**Rabbani:** [words in Farsi] ... You all don't budget what we send. We have many problems here [in Iran].

**Ali:** I know there are problems, but inflation here [in Argentina] ate up the budget. The money you sent last year is gone, it's been used up...

[Go on to talk about translation of a book]

**Ali:** Nevertheless, Sheik, we still need a bigger budget. Not even in terms of salary, the current budget doesn't cover anything.

**Rabbani:** You guys don't budget what we send, that is all I can say. I can't talk much more, because of the problems we are having. Unfortunately, this is just one more problem...

[Small talk about the Ali's family]

**Rabbani:** The issues in Syria and Iran is problematic, I mean it is a lot what they are doing. We will win all the battles, the economic ones, as well as the political ones.

**Ali:** Yes, we are working hard. When you come, you will see that we are working hard on all this. I hope there is a congress or something there [in Iran], so I can go and talk with you directly, in person.

**Rabbani:** I am working on some projects where I can invite you [to Iran].

From Rabbani's perspective, the problems caused by international sanctions were difficult but not insurmountable, the key was to focus on long-term strategic objectives. Rabbani and his disciples always planned for a potential shutout in Argentina by increasing its activities in neighboring countries.

### Almost Closed for Business

After the AMIA attack, Rabbani spent his remaining four years in Argentina transferring much of Iran's intelligence personnel and activity to neighboring countries. Uruguay became the new Iranian intelligence hub in the Southern Cone; however, the Islamic Republic closed their embassy in Santiago, Chile in the mid 1990s fearing further blowback from the AMIA attack. In 2007, Iran reopened its embassy in Santiago with a new Ambassador, Kambiz Jalali, who quickly worked to regain lost ground for Iran in Chile.<sup>126</sup> Jalali's priorities focused on Chile's mining sector and its universities. The former was particularly difficult considering Chilean

banks didn't want to risk violating sanctions by opening accounts related to suspicious mining activity. Iranian attempts to infiltrate universities, however, had some success due to Iran's ability to merge its two largest seminaries for foreign clerics into one major university in the holy city of Qom.

The same year (2007) the Islamic Republic reopened its embassy in Chile, Iran created the Al Mustafa International University in Qom, Iran as the major vehicle for strengthening its global network of Shi'a clerics and to further export its revolution abroad. To date, nearly 30,000 clerics have graduated from Al Mustafa branches sent to over 80 countries around the world

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**The same year (2007) the Islamic Republic reopened its embassy in Chile, Iran created the Al Mustafa International University in Qom, as the major vehicle to export its revolution abroad.**

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establishing global grassroots support for the Iranian revolution.<sup>127</sup> In Chile, Iran's "informal ambassadors" from Argentina, Sheik Suhail Assad and Abdul Karim Paz, recruited a legion of disciples to train under Rabbani at Al Mustafa International University to later open spaces for the Islamic Republic in Santiago, the capital of Chile, as well as the southern city of Puerto Montt.<sup>128</sup>

These Iranian proxy networks in Chile worked actively alongside the official embassy to gain ground with important communist networks in the country. Heading this effort was a Shi'a convert, Javier Alejandro Oyarzún Vega, who studied under Rabbani at Al Mustafa International University and was a disciple of Sheik Mahmoud Aid, the Imam of the Iranian-controlled El Martir Mosque in Tucuman, Argentina.<sup>129</sup> Oyarzún Vega initially

opened his own Shi'a Islamic center in Puerto Montt recruiting several leaders of the Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front (*Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez*—FPMR), a Marxist-Leninist paramilitary organization in Chile. According to former Chilean intelligence officials, the FPMR and the Communist Party in Chile worked with Oyarzún Vega to establish connections in various universities, namely within outside provinces in Chile, and with student movements that have become increasingly active and influential in the country.<sup>131</sup>

Simultaneously, as Oyarzún Vega opened academic spaces in southern provinces, the Iranian embassy tried to strengthen ties to academic circles in Santiago and expand its presence in the south. In 2008, Ambassador Jalili invited a delegation from the University Tehran to Santiago meet with various universities in an attempt to establish academic and cultural exchange programs. That same year the ambassador visited Puerto Montt and Punto Arenas in southern Chile accompanied by Abdul Karim Paz facilitate various agreements between local officials and Ramsar, Iran.<sup>132</sup>

These attempts to integrate Iran into Chilean society saw some success, but the pressure of sanctions and the vigilance Chilean authorities created more challenges than opportunities. Between 2010 and 2014, under a new ambassador, Iran tried repeatedly to capitalize on their renewed presence in Chile supplement its embassy with more intelligence and IRGC

officials. Chilean authorities, however, were aware of this effort and repeatedly denied visas and closed channels of communication from Iran to the point that in 2014, the Islamic Republic seriously considered shutting down its official mission in Chile and closing its embassy in Santiago.<sup>133</sup>

## Back in Business

The combination of the new Michelle Bachelet socialist government in 2014, along with Iran's nuclear deal in 2015 created the



catalyst necessary for Iran to maintain its official presence in Chile. In September 2014, six months after Michelle Bachelet assumed the presidency, her foreign minister, Heraldo Muñoz, and his Iranian counterpart, Mohammad Zarif, met during the UN General Assembly to discuss strengthening ties.<sup>134</sup> Two months earlier in Iran, President Hassan Rouhani met with Chile's Permanent Representative to the United Nations who handed over his credentials as a non-resident ambassador in order to facilitate reopening Chile's embassy in Tehran, after 35 years of closure.<sup>135</sup>

Since 2015, Iran has increased its presence in Chile through additional official representatives at its embassy in Santiago along with an increased number of Iranians

studying in Chilean universities. These are largely post-doctoral students who began arriving during the height of international sanctions against Iran, and are studying a range of scientific disciplines from mathematics and physics to mining and engineering.<sup>136</sup> The idea of using scholarships, academic appointments, and research grants has a long history for extra-regional actors in Latin America and by no means is original to Iran. It's an old strategy used to promote a new pro-Iran academic network in support of its strategic objectives. In Chile, these objectives include aggressively using the university network to pursue access to the Chilean mining sector. The Iranian students and scholars working in Chilean universities interestingly enough do not interact with the Shi'a communities or







Iranian cleric Seyed Javad Ebrahimi lecturing Chilean youth on the Iranian Revolution at the Imam Mahdi Islamic Center in 2015.

other Iranian proxy networks in the country, suggesting a level of compartmentalization among pro-Iran networks in Chile.

In the event Iran ceased its diplomatic presence in Chile, it always planned to enhance its proxy network, led by Oyarzún Vega, by creating the *Imam Mahdi Islamic Center* in Santiago established in 2012. As in Buenos Aires, Iran began buying properties as a first step to strengthen its proxy networks in Santiago. In 2012, Oyarzún Vega invited Iranian cleric Seyed Javad Ebrahimi to inaugurate the new Islamic center and become its spiritual guide.<sup>137</sup> Since 2013, the *Imam Mahdi Islamic Center* has received increased support from the *Fundación Cultural Oriente*, an Iranian foundation in Qom created by Mohsen Rabbani, now directed by his son-in-law Mohsen Mojtah Zadehdel, known as Sheik Qomi. Sheik Qomi has visited Chile on repeated occasions in recent years.

In his 2013 dictum, Nisman named Chile and seven other countries as among those targeted by Iran's extension of terror networks throughout South America. In this report, Nisman reiterated that the same Iranian-

controlled network that carried out the AMIA attack in 1994 was still active in Chile, among other countries. Nisman pointed to Ghassan Youssef Abdallah, who, according to the U.S. Department of Treasury, has strong links to Hezbollah.<sup>138</sup> Ghassan Youssef Abdallah owned properties Iran used to establish its informal cultural presence in Chile. In addition to Ghassan, Wasim Saleh owns other properties in Chile used by Iran and has close ties to the embassy of Lebanon in Santiago. Wasim Saleh is Suhail Assad's nephew and the son of Claudia Bibiana Assad, a part of the same Lebanese clan that performed this function for Iran in Argentina prior to the AMIA attack.

Purchasing properties is a critical first step in expanding Iran's terror network in a host country. Besides Chile, Nisman warned that these methods used by Iran were also taking place in Brazil where properties were used, for instance, to provide logistical support for terrorist networks. Today, in Brazil, similar activities have reached levels greater than those before the AMIA attack, as increased commercial trade is potentially being exploited

## 6. Risky Business in Brazil

*“The shackles of sanctions have been removed and it is time to thrive,”* Iranian President Hassan Rouhani tweeted in January 2016. Prior to the big announcement, in October 2015, a 35-member trade delegation led by Brazilian Trade Minister Armando Monteiro traveled to Tehran to explore ways to bolster economic relations. During their visit, Iran’s Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif stressed the importance of improving relations with Brazil, stating *“This country [Brazil] has always been among priorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s foreign policy.”*<sup>139</sup> He further added that Tehran and Brasilia are seeking a new roadmap for enhanced ties and emphasized banking and agricultural trade.

Since 2011, trade between Brazil and Iran shrank 30 percent, down to \$1.67 billion in 2015. Trying to rebound from this

decline, Iran went on the offensive after the partial lifting of sanctions, seeking to sign a range of economic agreements with Brazil from energy, banking, transportation to technology. Under renewed optimism, Minister Monteiro is eager to accomplish the same, expressing that *“in the short term, in a five-year horizon, I think we can triple trade with Iran.”*<sup>140</sup>

Despite a decline, Brazil remains Iran’s largest trade partner in Latin America. Virtually all trade between the two countries relies on Brazilian exports to Iran. The largest export is bovine beef, reaching a record high in 2010 before dropping drastically by more than 50 percent thereafter.<sup>141</sup> The chart below shows this trend and the recent rise in 2014, depicting the importance of beef exports to the trade relationship between the two countries.

As explained in previous sections of this report, Iran has historically exploited the legitimate business of beef trade by blending it with illicit and intelligence activities. The Iranian regime hides some of these activities through trade transactions via front companies, cut-outs, and clerics, who pose as *halal* meat inspectors. Moreover, many analysts, have called attention to the growing influence the IRGC has over various industries in Iran. By some estimates the IRGC controls between 25 and 40 percent of Iran’s gross domestic product (GDP).<sup>142</sup> Under the previous Ahmadinejad regime, the IRGC’s economic power surged as the presidency awarded multiple no-bid

**Total Meat Exports from Brazil to Iran (1996-2015)**



Source: Brazil’s Ministry of Development, Industry and Foreign Trade (MDIC)

contracts to IRGC affiliated businesses. Some of this business belonged to various “charitable” non-profit organizations, known as bonyads, which act as holding companies claiming the seized assets and properties previously owned by the Shah of Iran and his supporters.

### A Brief History of Bonyads

Nominally, the bonyads (Farsi for “Foundation”) are tax-exempt charitable entities that do not depend on the dollar and make up approximately 30 percent of Iran’s GDP.<sup>143</sup> They were initially acquired through generations of donations or confiscated assets after the revolution. The 1980s Iran-Iraq war gave a boost to the bonyads, pushing them to the front line of relief and reconstruction work, rebuilding towns and providing food to Iranian forces.

The bonyads represent enormous economic and cultural power within Iran, a major reason why the IRGC has gotten into the business of running them. The biggest is *Bonyad Mostazafan*, or the Foundation of the Oppressed, which took charge of welfare programs and is the largest foundation in Iran. Mohsen Rafiqdust, one of the founding members of the Revolutionary Guards, headed the Foundation of the Oppressed at its founding.<sup>144</sup> The current director is Mohammad Forouzandeh, a past IRGC officer and former head of the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics (MODAFL). The Foundation of the Oppressed allocates half of its revenue toward social programs and the other half to a maze of subsidiaries,

estimated at 350 organizations, both in Iran and abroad. The largest subsidiary is the Agriculture and Food Industries Organization responsible for beef imports.

The Foundation of the Oppressed has a history of soliciting contract work abroad, including in Latin America. According to U.S. Air Force veteran Kerry Patton, in Venezuela, there are at least ten manufacturing plants whose shareholding distribution is 49 percent Iranian businesses connected with bonyads.<sup>145</sup> Patton cites the widely-reported case of the *Banco Internacional de Desarrollo* in Venezuela, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the sanctioned Iranian Saderat Bank with ties to bonyads.<sup>146</sup> An opaque network that publishes no accounts and, in most cases, answers only to Iran’s Supreme



G.B.H. Serviços de Apoio Administrativo Ltda - a mysterious Iranian beef business in São Paulo concealed from outside observers.

leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the bonyads<sup>146</sup> became prevalent during the height of the sanctions and may have appeared in Brazil as well.

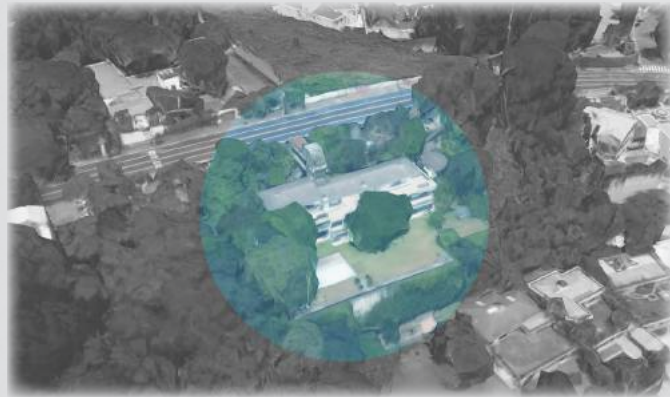
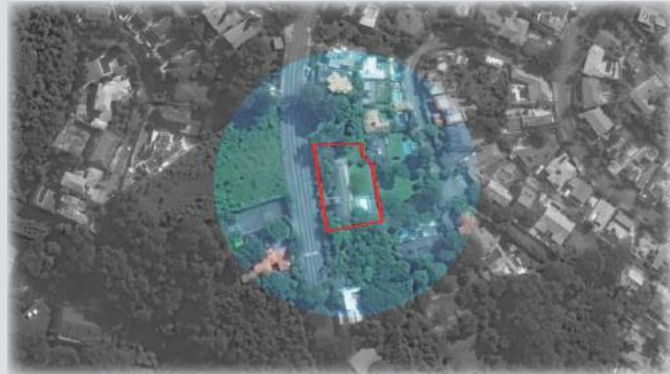
## Bonyads and Beef

In 2015, Seyed Hassan Khomeini, grandson of the original Iranian supreme leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, toured several cities throughout Brazil at the invitation of a Shi'a cleric Taleb Hussein al-Khazraji.<sup>147</sup> According to Nisman, al-Khazraji is a prominent Iranian operative connected to high officials in Iran, such as Ali Akbar Velayti, one of the co-conspirators of the AMIA attack.<sup>148</sup> In São Paulo, Taleb Hussein al-Khazraji directs the *Arresala* Islamic Center<sup>149</sup> registered at an address that, according to Brazil's federal register, is owned by *G.B.H. Islamic Center*.<sup>150</sup>

The Brazil-Iran Chamber of Commerce confirms that G.B.H. represents the halal beef-certification process in Brazil.<sup>151</sup> This includes multiple companies with similar corporate structures, including *G.B.H. Serviços de Apoio Administrativo Ltda.* that, according to property records in Brazil, on March 6, 2013, bought the house where the *Arresala* Islamic Center is located. G.B.H. Serviços is perhaps the most highly-secure meat company in Brazil. A three-story house complete with a guarded gate on both ends of the street monitoring all vehicles traveling along this road, G.B.H. Serviços has security cameras and tall trees around the perimeter of the house concealing it from outside observers. The property owners of G.B.H. Serviço are the same owners of a similar company called *G.B.H. Comércio e Serviços de Apoio Administrativo Ltda.* According to property records of G.B.H. Comércio, and related enterprises, the owners are Brazilian housekeepers, one of whom testified to being tricked

into serving as a cutout for this and other Iranian businesses in Brazil.<sup>152</sup> As a housekeeper, Ms. Neusa Maria dos Santos admitted she does not possess the means to own this type of property, suggesting G.B.H. Comércio is a possible front company for Iran in Brazil.<sup>153</sup>

An aerial view of Iran's consulate registered in São Paulo that is not publicly listed nor offers consular services. The consulate is registered at the same address as several Iranian companies.



## The Phantom Consulate

In March 2016, G.B.H. Comercio registered a donation from a supposed consulate in São Paulo of the Islamic Republic of Iran.<sup>154</sup> According to the website of Iran's Foreign Ministry, the only official representation for Iran in Brazil is its embassy in Brasília, with no mention of a consulate in São Paulo or elsewhere. Nevertheless, on June 10, 2013, a few months after the construction of the aforementioned meat company, the Iranian embassy registered a consulate in São Paulo.<sup>155</sup> Having a consulate in

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**A possible Iranian cultural-commercial-diplomatic nexus within Brazil is strikingly similar to that used in Argentina prior to the AMIA attack.**

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São Paulo or even Foz do Iguazú would make sense, given these cities have the largest concentration of Iranian expatriates. According to the federal register of Brazil, the new Iranian consulate in São Paulo is located on *Avenida Morumbi*, in an affluent, residential neighborhood of the city. Much like the physical location of the meat company, the supposed "consulate" is surrounded by vegetation and completely out of sight from the street.

Taking security precautions on a consulate is not uncommon. Registering other businesses at the same address as the consulate, is, at best, unusual. According to property records, G.B.H. Serviços and at least one other commercial enterprise, *G.B.H. Viagem e Turismo*, are listed at the same address as the consulate.<sup>156</sup> Both are owned by an Iranian businessman, Mohammad

Hossein Ghorbanian Siahkalroudi, who also owns the previously mentioned Islamic center and meat company. This maze of G.B.H. enterprises, Islamic cultural centers, *halal* certification companies, and a phantom "consulate" present a possible Iranian cultural-commercial-diplomatic nexus within Brazil. The nexus is strikingly similar to that used in Argentina prior to the AMIA attack. It is important to note that Mohsen Rabbani's initial activity in Argentina was to purchase properties in order to create front companies and cultural centers providing logistical and intelligence support to the AMIA attack.

Like Argentina prior to the AMIA attack, Brazil is now the largest exporter of bovine beef to Iran. According to Iran's Ministry of Agriculture Jihad, 84 percent of beef imports to the country come from Brazil.<sup>157</sup> As a result of the Mad Cow disease outbreak in 2012, a three-year ban on beef supplies from Brazil's Parana state hurt the beef trade between the two countries. This ban was lifted in 2015.

The Association of Brazilian Beef Exporters (ABIEC) suggests that the cancellation of the ban in light of lifting international sanctions against Iran, could allow Brazil to restore its position as the top beef exporter to the Islamic Republic in less than three years.<sup>158</sup> Other local experts, however, remain skeptical given the fact that, over the past three years, Iran has significantly increased domestic beef production. What these experts fail to consider is the possibility that while trade and commerce is part of the equation, Iran's strategic interests in restarting its beef business in Brazil is likely centered around expanding its logistical and intelligence network of state-sponsorship of terrorism. Nisman warned of this threat, now becoming increasingly evident, even in countries that are not considered a traditional target of Iran and Hezbollah.

# 7. Peru: A New Target

There is a refrain within the intelligence community that the “failures are known but the successes are not.” This embodies the work of quiet professionals around the world neutralizing a myriad of threats, any one of which could be catastrophic at a moment’s notice. The death of Alberto Nisman in Argentina was perhaps one of those failures, however, less than three months prior, on October 2014, a relative success was seen in Peru when authorities arrested a Hezbollah member preparing for a major terrorist attack.

Eight months prior to this arrest, on February 17, 2014, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu welcomed the Peruvian president, Ollanta Humala Tasso, to Jerusalem to discuss increased bilateral cooperation.<sup>159</sup> On the eve of another round of nuclear negotiations between the P5+1 and Iran, Prime Minister Netanyahu took this opportunity to remind President Humala that:

“the greatest threat to this peaceful world is Iran’s quest for nuclear weapons” and further stated that “Iran, unfortunately, continues its aggressive behavior, both in arming terrorist groups and supporting the butchery of the Assad regime and calling for Israel’s destruction and in subversive activities everywhere around the world, including in Latin America.”<sup>160</sup>

Hezbollah operative, Mohamad Ghaleb Hamdar, used a fraudulent passport from Sierra Leone to attain Peruvian identification under the alias "Muamad Amadar."



At 5:50 p.m. on October 28, 2014 the Peruvian National Police arrested a 28-year-old Lebanese national, Mohamad Ghaleb Hamdar, in the Surquillo neighborhood of Lima, the capital of Peru.<sup>161</sup> Hamdar appeared to be manipulating explosives and later tested positive for traces of nitroglycerine on his left hand and within the garbage of his apartment. Peruvian prosecutors charged Hamdar with conspiracy to commit acts of terrorism and falsifying documents since he entered Peru with a fake passport from Sierra Leone under the name “Muamad Amadar.”<sup>162</sup> During his interrogation, Hamdar confessed he belonged to Hezbollah and declared he had been tasked to scout the airport in Lima. Prosecutors in the case, however, are certain Hamdar was casing several terrorist targets in Lima to plot a major attack, which could have taken place during the first weeks of December 2014 at the 20th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP20), UN Climate Change Conference in Lima.<sup>163</sup>

## A State of High Alert

Less than three months after Hamdar's arrest, and a week after the death of Alberto Nisman, the Peruvian Director of National Intelligence, Javier Briceño Carpio, testified before the Peruvian Congress that the country was on "high alert from Islamic terrorism."<sup>164</sup> On January 28, 2015, in a tense congressional hearing lasting over seven hours, Director Briceño described an operation by the Peruvian national intelligence service (*Dirección Nacional de Inteligencia*—DINI) to infiltrate various Islamist networks in the country.

This congressional hearing was called after the intelligence commission of the Peruvian congress released a report alleging that President Humala used the national intelligence office (DINI) to spy on his vice president, Marisol Espinoza, and political opponents.<sup>165</sup> Javier Briceño was named DINI director just weeks before his testimony, replacing the former director who was abruptly removed as a result of allegations of illegal surveillance. Intelligence and surveillance is a sensitive topic in Peru because of previous abuses in the 1990's by former intelligence chief Vladimir Montesinos.<sup>166</sup> This scandal placed Peru's national intelligence service under the spotlight, but in his testimony, Director

Briceño insisted that any wiretaps or surveillance had little to do with politics. He described an operation called "Plan Islam 2011 and 2014" that carefully monitored the movements of persons of interest in Peru affiliated to Islamic terrorist networks. Briceño emphasized that Peruvian intelligence did not target the vice president, and was collecting intelligence on Islamist networks operating in and around Lima in preparation of the COP20, UN Climate Change Conference in December.<sup>167</sup>

Following this and subsequent congressional hearings, members of the Peruvian opposition met with President Humala. The meeting prompted the suspension of Peru's national intelligence service DINI for 180 days.<sup>168</sup> Immediately after this suspension, on February 12, 2015, a Peruvian activist, Edwar Quiroga, submitted a complaint to the President of the Peruvian Council of Ministers (equivalent to a Prime Minister).<sup>169</sup> Quiroga's complaint was based on Briceño's congressional testimony naming him (Quiroga) as an Iranian asset. According to Briceño, Edwar Quiroga visited an Islamic community in Lima on August 19, 2014, prompting a DINI investigation leading to the arrest of Mohamad Ghaleb Hamdar a few months later. Legal counsel for the Peruvian government forwarded Quiroga's complaint to Director Briceño who



Argentine Sheik Suhail Assad leading a protest in Abancay, Apurímac, Peru in 2011. Suhail Assad is the right-hand of Mohsen Rabbani, the Iranian "mastermind" of the 1994 AMIA bombing.

responded on March 5, 2015, then abruptly resigned from his position as intelligence director later that month.<sup>170</sup> A year later, on January 22, 2016, Javier Briceño Carpio suffered a stroke and died while swimming in Chorrillos, a beach in southern Lima.<sup>171</sup> Some Peruvian congressman called for further investigation into the circumstances of his death.<sup>172</sup>

### Iranian support network

Joys Edwar Quiroga Vargas, a 40-year-old political activist from Abancay, a mineral-rich, rural city in the southern province of Apurímac, is by most accounts Iran's point man in Peru. According to Peruvian intelligence reports, Quiroga's relationship with Iran began in Bolivia in 2009 while attending a climate change conference sponsored by the Bolivarian Alliance of the Americas (ALBA).<sup>173</sup> In Bolivia, Quiroga met an Iranian representative who introduced him to Suhail Assad, whom he later met in person in 2010 at another ALBA climate change conference in Peru.

Suhail Assad's first trip to Peru is reported to be on September 21, 2010, through the invitation of the *Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos*.<sup>174</sup> Thereafter, Assad would visit Peru every year and send Quiroga to Iran. According to Peruvian immigration authorities, Quiroga traveled to Iran in December 2011 returning to Peru in February 2012, inaugurating the country's first Shi'a Islamic cultural center: Inkarri-Islam.<sup>175</sup> As a non-profit organization, Inkarri-Islam is registered alongside the Sumac Kawsay Foundation in Peru's public registry.<sup>176</sup>

While on a recent trip to Iran, on August 22, 2015, Edwar Quiroga gave an

interview to the Ahlul Bayt News Agency (ABNA) revealing his revolutionary goals in Peru:

"...in the case of Peru and Latin America we are hungry for justice, which is why we joined the socialist and communist movement to achieve our revolutionary goals, however, we have failed because of the secular nature of these movements. Now we have the hope of Islam, the last successful revolution, where we will rid [Peru and Latin America] of all that is negative."<sup>177</sup>

Over the last several years, the number of Shi'a Muslim converts has been gradually growing in southern Peru. Estimates suggest that some 150 Peruvians have been converted to Shi'a Islam and proselytized in this southern sub-region, of which at least 20 have traveled to Qom, Iran.<sup>178</sup> A large part of this indoctrinated Islamic network comes from the *Etnocaceristas*, a militant nationalist movement founded in 1993 by the family

**Like the *Quebracho* in Argentina, control of the Peruvian *Etnocaceristas* provides Tehran a surrogate force for its objectives in the Southern Andes.**

of the current president.<sup>179</sup> The paramilitary arm of the *Etnocaceristas* is the Plurinational Association of Reservists from Tahuantinsuyo (*Asociación Plurinacional de Reservistas del Tahuantinsuyo—ASPRET*), led by Eddy "Sacha" Villaroel Medina, Quiroga's close colleague. ASPRET works closely with Inkarri-Islam to recruit, proselytize and indoctrinate displaced and disgruntled youth throughout the countryside. Over the last five years, additional Shi'a Islamic centers have been formed in Cusco, Puno, Arequipa and the most recent Imam Mahdi Islamic Center in Lima.<sup>180</sup> Together, these Shi'a Islamic centers promote the Iranian revolution throughout Peru.

Through these Islamic centers, Iran



and Hezbollah embed themselves into the indigenous population of the host country. Like the *Quebracho* in Argentina, increased control of the *Etnocaceristas* provide Tehran with a surrogate force for its strategic objectives in Peru. These objectives include:

- Opening an Iranian embassy in Lima. Peru is the last Andean nation without an official presence by the Islamic Republic.
- Creating a vanguard generation of future leaders who gain political prominence in Peru. It is important to note that Quiroga has repeatedly run for regional office in Apurímac, under the banner of the *Etnocaceristas*, and forming part of the *Frente Amplio* (Broad Front) political coalition of the failed Peruvian presidential candidate Veronika Mendoza.

Iran and Hezbollah's presence in Peru dates back prior to the AMIA attack, in November 1992, when alleged Hezbollah operative Nidal Bazoun arrived illegally in Puno and married a local nurse. Less than two months after the AMIA attack, in September 1994, Bazoun was detained in Piura by Peruvian authorities and deported back to Lebanon. Suhail Assad and his sisters in Buenos Aires were, at one time, implicated in the AMIA attack because of their ties to Nidal Bazoun, who formed relationships with Peruvians in Buenos Aires.<sup>181</sup>

Edwar Quiroga emphatically denies having ties to terrorist groups and refers to Hezbollah as a political organization providing social services in Lebanon. He quickly dismisses any terrorist action by Hezbollah as a Zionist conspiracy. Quiroga has not openly commented on the alleged Hezbollah terrorist plot in Lima of October 2014; however, his initial recruitment and Iranian presence at climate change conferences in Bolivia and Peru, suggest that the alleged Hezbollah terrorist plot against the 2014

COP20 conference in Lima could have been initiated by this Iranian support network in Peru as far back as 2010.

## Logistical ties

The arrest of Muhammad Ghaleb Hamdar received limited attention from the international press, however, after careful review of the case, it is highly likely that Hamdar is part of a larger logistical network in Peru and was preparing a major terrorist attack. Critical to this network is his wife, Carmen del Pilar Carrión Vela, whom he married on November 15, 2013, in her hometown of Yurimaguas, a week after Hamdar arrived in Peru. This marriage

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### A key detail in the case of Hezbollah operative Mohamad Ghaleb Hamdar is a trip to Brazil between March and July 2014.

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was critical to Hamdar's operation since it afforded him immediate residency status, preventing deportation. Edwar Quiroga unwittingly referenced this tactic in his letter to the Council of Ministers by stating that "*there are hundreds of Peruvians married to Iranians who share the religion of Islam.*"<sup>182</sup>

Carmen Carrión Vela, a Peruvian-American dual-citizen through a previous marriage, was arrested and detained in Lima on November 25, 2015.<sup>183</sup> This arrest could be integral to unraveling Hezbollah's logistical network in Peru because it appears that Ms. Carrión Vela provided material support to Hamdar beyond their rushed marriage. Muhammad Ghaleb Hamdar did not speak Spanish and relied on his wife, Ms. Carrión Vela, for communications and financial transfers

via Western Union.

One key detail in Hamdar's case is a four-month trip he took to Brazil between March and July 2014, returning to Peru on the same date his wife arrived on a flight from the State of Florida. Ms. Carrión Vela returned to the U.S. on October 9, 2014, weeks before Hamdar was arrested in Lima. The prosecutor in the Hamdar case, Wendy Calero Espino, questioned why Ms. Carrión Vela lived in the U.S. while Muhamad Ghaleb Hamdar remained in Peru. She also questioned why Ms. Carrión Vela traveled to Lebanon twice within a short timeframe prior to Hamdar's arrest. These remain key questions that must be answered to understand Hezbollah's tactical playbook in Peru. Hamdar is currently serving an 18-month-detention as he awaits the final verdict in his case. Some legal analysts suggest the evidence presented against Mr. Hamdar is weak and will not result in a conviction. While awaiting the final verdict, what is certain is that Peru is a new target of Islamic terrorism.

## Why Peru?

Peru is not new to terrorism. For decades, the country has fought against indigenous terrorist groups, including the violent Shining Path and Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (*Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru—MRTA*). Given that Iran and Hezbollah have grown stronger in neighboring countries (e.g. Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, etc.), this places Peru in the crosshairs of Islamic terrorism. Therefore, it is critical to draw parallels between the conditions in Argentina leading to the AMIA attack and those in Peru.

First, the criminal activity that permeates the southern sub-region of Peru, known as the VRAEM, named after

the valley between the Apurímac, Ene and Mantaro rivers, provides a permissive environment for Iran and Hezbollah. Much like how the Tri-Border Area (TBA) between Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina was used to logistically support the AMIA attack, a new TBA at the intersection of southern Peru, northern Chile, and Bolivia could do the same. Moreover, the VRAEM, as the primary coca-producing region in Peru, is known to have a high level of activity from Colombian and Mexican drug cartels, who also have ties to Hezbollah.

Second, like Argentina, the pro-Iran sympathizers in Peru perceive the Jewish community as politically active in the country. Jewish politicians have held cabinet level posts throughout the last three Peruvian governments. For Iran and Hezbollah, this could be perceived as a challenge in their pursuit of regional influence throughout the the Andes. In this regard, the public signs of solidarity expressed in Jerusalem between Primer Minister Netanyahu and President Humala in early 2014 may have catalyzed an increase in Iranian and Hezbollah activity in the Andean nation.

The international context of these activities combined with nuclear negotiations between Iran and the P5+1 is imperative in evaluating the geopolitical implications of Mohamad Ghaleb Hamdar's arrest in Peru. At the time of his arrest in late October 2014, the nuclear negotiations were arguably in its tensest phase and were extended multiple times due to differences at the negotiating table. Peruvian authorities believe Hamdar was targeting a UN climate change conference in Lima and given the nuclear negotiations were with UN members, it is possible that this terrorist plot was a contingency by Iran in the event the negotiations over its nuclear program failed.

## 8. Moving North

On May 4, 2016, an alarm went off in Argentina when press reports surfaced in Colombia that Mohsen Rabbani was allegedly going to lead an Iranian trade delegation to Bogota later that month.<sup>184</sup> According to these reports, the delegation aimed to strengthen the *halal* beef business in Colombia, where Rabbani's son-in-law, Sheik Qomi, was already active. News of Rabbani's supposed visit to Colombia shocked Argentine authorities who scrambled to activate his Red Notice with Interpol.<sup>185</sup> Should the sheik set foot in Bogota he would be extradited to Buenos Aires to stand trial for his role in the 1994 AMIA attack.

Rabbani has traveled to South America on several occasions in years past, but certainly not through formal channels nor under his real name.<sup>186</sup> His purported visit to Colombia was never confirmed, thus, it's possible this news was meant to send a signal to the region that Iran is back in business. Rabbani's alleged visit was publicized amidst the formal announcement that Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif was set to take a five-leg official visit to Latin America following the implementation of the nuclear agreement between Iran and the P5+1.<sup>187</sup> Minister Zarif's Latin America tour was abruptly postponed, possibly due to political instability in two (Brazil and Venezuela) of the five countries he was scheduled to visit. Nevertheless, Iran's message of solidarity to Latin America was clear.

Iran's presence, starting in the early 1980s in the southern-most tip of South America, has gradually spread north into the Andes through the Panama Canal into Central America and Mexico. El Salvador, overwhelmed with rising insecurity and violence, has become a central hub for Iranian proxy networks looking to

broaden their horizons in the Northern Triangle. Meanwhile, Iran's formal presence and activity in Managua and Mexico City has increased. Unlike their presence prior to the AMIA attack, Iran and Hezbollah now have a footprint in every country throughout Latin America.

Alberto Nisman warned the world that the perpetrators of one of the deadliest terrorist bombings in Latin America, remain active in the region. He dedicated a better part of a decade to educating the public about this mounting threat, often challenging the status quo in his country and even in the U.S. Nisman knew Iran was growing stronger and took action to prevent the Islamic

Republic from rewriting history. Unfortunately, his murder killed more than the prosecutor; it stopped his critical work.

Nisman never lived to see Iran gain unprecedented global legitimacy through a nuclear agreement with a group of six world powers. Were he alive, no doubt, Nisman would understand that the Islamic Republic, as a

revolutionary regime, will use its newly-acquired legitimacy to attack its adversaries as it did in the past. Before 1994, Iran had only one legitimate link to Latin America, the beef trade, which it exploited to plan and execute the AMIA attack in Argentina. Iran now prepares for increased "commercial" relations with the region, which, as Nisman knew, could come at a terrible cost.

It is incumbent upon policymakers throughout the Western Hemisphere to learn the lessons from Alberto Nisman and heed his warning about Iran and Hezbollah. This is not a warning about a threat thousands of miles away in the Middle East, it is here at our doorstep, where Iran has built a terrorist infrastructure that's outflanked our U.S. Southern Security Perimeter. It is part of a global strategy, encompassing many theaters of operation. In the words of retired Lt. General Michael T. Flynn, the former Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, *"if we can't win in our own hemisphere, we'll end up losing everywhere."*<sup>188</sup>

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**Nisman's warning is not about a threat thousands of miles away, it's here at our doorstep, where Iran has built a terrorist infrastructure that's outflanked our U.S. Southern Security Perimeter.**

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# Notes

- 1 “Alberto Nisman protest: 40,000 rally in Argentina to demand judicial independence after prosecutor’s suspicious death,” AFP/Reuters, Feb. 18, 2015; Accessed: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-02-19/more-than-4002c000-rally-in-argentina-over-prosecutor-death/6145892>
- 2 For a detailed narrative of the circumstances surrounding the death of Alberto Nisman, see the article by Dexter Filkins in the July 20, 2015 issue of The New Yorker: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/07/20/death-of-a-prosecutor>
- 3 “Argentina prosecutor Nisman death has no outside link,” The Telegraph, January 20, 2015; Accessed: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/southamerica/argentina/11356656/Argentina-prosecutor-Nisman-death-has-no-outside-link.html>
- 4 Reuters, “Death of prosecutor probing Argentine president ruled a murder,” New York Post, Feb. 25, 2016; Accessed: <http://nypost.com/2016/02/25/death-of-prosecutor-probing-argentine-president-is-deemed-a-murder/>
- 5 For a comprehensive, balanced view of Argentina’s Dirty War, see: *Guerrillas and Generals: The Dirty War in Argentina* by Paul H. Lewis, Praeger Publishing, Oct. 30, 2001.
- 6 The full English version of the 675-page AMIA investigation by Alberto Nisman and Marcelo Martinez Burgos of the Investigations Unit of the Office of the Attorney General in Argentina can be read in its entirety on [AlbertoNisman.org](http://AlbertoNisman.org)
- 7 A description of the Interpol meetings in France are described in this WikiLeaks cable, dated Jan. 31, 2007: [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07BUENOSAIRES182\\_a.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07BUENOSAIRES182_a.html)
- 8 Interpol press release on Mar. 15, 2007, titled “INTERPOL Executive Committee takes decision on AMIA Red Notice dispute,” see here: <http://www.interpol.int/News-and-media/News/2007/PR005>
- 9 The full English-version of the 289-page criminal complaint filed by Alberto Nisman before Judge Dr. Ariel O. Lijo of the National Federal Criminal and Correctional Court in Argentina can be read in its entirety on [AlbertoNisman.org](http://AlbertoNisman.org)
- 10 A poll taken almost immediately after Nisman’s death showed that 70 percent of the people in Argentina believe that the crime will never be solved. See here: [http://www.clarin.com/politica/argentinos-piensen-justicia\\_0\\_1289871125.html](http://www.clarin.com/politica/argentinos-piensen-justicia_0_1289871125.html)
- 11 Video of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner’s address before the National Congress on March 1, 2015 can be seen on YouTube, excerpt is taken from the 5:30 minute mark: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcmfJGyd-ak>
- 12 President Fernández de Kirchner cited this article by Paula Lugones from Clarin on Feb. 27, 2015, titled “La decisión de Rafecas sorprendió en Washington,” see here: [http://www.clarin.com/politica/Rafecas-Cristina-Washington-Nisman-AMIA-denuncia-desestimacion\\_0\\_1311469001.html](http://www.clarin.com/politica/Rafecas-Cristina-Washington-Nisman-AMIA-denuncia-desestimacion_0_1311469001.html)
- 13 President Fernández de Kirchner cites the previously cited Clarin article and this author’s interview at the 23:50 minute mark of her address before the National Congress: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcmfJGyd-ak>
- 14 The 56-page document signed by Alberto Nisman is in possession of the author. It is dated December 2014 (with no specific date annotated) and directed toward the Argentine Attorney General, Dr. Alejandra Gils Carbó. It was recovered from a safety deposit box on February 20, 2015.
- 15 In his last televised interview on *Dos Voces* (an Argentine news show), Alberto Nisman mentioned that his legal team found a provision within international law that could bring the Iranian suspects of the AMIA bombing before Argentine justice. He hinted toward this strategy at the 32:54 minute mark of this interview, available on YouTube.
- 16 As precedent, Nisman used the 1988 bombing of PanAm flight 103 in Scotland, which killed 270

people, known as the Lockerbie case. In 1991, the U.S. accused two Libyan nationals and turned to the UNSC for help in extraditing them. The UNSC passed three resolutions and sanctioned Libya. Seven years later, in 1998, the Lockerbie case was finally tried in a third-party court in Holland. Four years after that, in 2001, a sentence was handed down and Libya accepted responsibility for its role in the bombing.

- 17** For a concise overview of the potential consequences, see a report of the American Foreign Policy Council Task Force on A Nuclear Deal with Iran: Managing the Consequences published on October 2015.
- 18** For a closer look at the effects of sanctions relief to Iran, see FDD Policy Brief: “The Fundamental Flaws of the Emerging Nuclear Deal” by Mark Dubowitz, Annie Fixler on June 19, 2015.
- 19** Shaper Suren-Pahlav, “Chess: Iranian or Indian Invention?” Pars Times, Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies; Accessed: <http://www.parstimes.com/sports/chess/chess.html>
- 20** A video documentary, called “AMIA: El Informe Secreto,” aired on América TV on July 18, 2004, the 10th anniversary of the AMIA attack. The documentary was produced by EBTV Entertainment Boutique in Argentina, and focuses on the classified intelligence report of the AMIA investigation.
- 21** Author interviews in Buenos Aires, Argentina on December 2015 with Miguel Ángel Toma, former SIDE Secretary of Intelligence for the Republic of Argentina from 2002 to 2003.
- 22** See Ley de Inteligencia Nacional (Ley 25.520) sanctioned on Nov. 27, 2001. See Title VII, titled “Interceptación y Captación de Comunicaciones” for how this reform led to the legal authorization for wiretaps in the AMIA investigation. Accessed: <http://infoleg.mecon.gov.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/70000-74999/70496/norma.htm>
- 23** “La CIA colaborará con la causa de la AMIA” La Nación (Buenos Aires), Sept. 19, 2002; Accessed: <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/432971-la-cia-colaborara-con-la-causa-de-la-amia>
- 24** Miguel Angel Toma, “El informe AMIA debe ser desclasificado,” Clarin (Buenos Aires), Dec. 17, 2012; Accessed: [http://www.clarin.com/opinion/informe-AMIA-debe-desclasificado\\_0\\_830916967.html](http://www.clarin.com/opinion/informe-AMIA-debe-desclasificado_0_830916967.html)
- 25** For more on this motive see Nisman & Martinez Burgoz 2006 indictment of AMIA case. Op cit.
- 26** Hernán Capiello, “Declarará en el juicio oral el testigo C,” La Nación (Buenos Aires), May 21, 2003; Accessed: <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/497696-declarara-en-el-juicio-oral-el-testigo-c>
- 27** For more on Mohsen Rabbani, see Nisman’s 2006 investigation of the AMIA case and his subsequent 2013 dictum on Iranian networks expanding terrorism networks throughout South America.
- 28** Nisman, Alberto, M. Martínez Burgos, “Office of criminal investigations AMIA CASE,” Investigations Unit of The Office of the Attorney General (Argentina), October 25, 2006. English version Accessed: <http://albertonisman.org/nisman-indictment-in-english-full/>
- 29** “AMIA: El Informe Secreto” documentary, op cit.
- 30** Biography of Ayatollah Khamenei the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, taken from his official website; Accessed: <http://english.khamenei.ir/news/2130/Biography-of-Ayatollah-Khamenei-the-Leader-of-the-Islamic-Revolution>
- 31** Matthew Levitt, “Iranian and Hezbollah Operations in South America, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (United States), December 16, 2016; Accessed: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/opeds/Levitt20151216-PRISM.pdf>
- 32** Author interviews in Madrid, Spain with European intelligence officials on December 2015.
- 33** Nisman & Burgos, 2006, op cit.

- 34** Author interviews in Buenos Aires, Argentina with retired Argentine intelligence officials on February 2016.
- 35** Alberto Nisman cited, in his 2006 report, that the Iranian embassy in Brazil and Colombia were the primary centers for the logistical support prior to the 1994 AMIA bombing.
- 36** Video documentary, "AMIA: El Informe Secreto," op cit.
- 37** The three in Argentina are the At-Tauhid Mosque, Tucuman "El Martir" Mosque, and the Cañuelas "Al Imam" Mosque. The At-Tauhid Mosques was on San Nicolás 674 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.
- 38** On 5 June, 1990, Claudia Assad was in attendance of an event held in Buenos Aires which marked "the year anniversary of the death of Ayatollah Khomeini." Remarks at the event included "Zionism is racism," "you must put an end to the farce of the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires," and "You have to cry out against this hypocritical Israeli embassy." See Alberto Nisman 2006 indictment for more.
- 39** SFS researchers conducted a social network analysis of the Assad clan based on information from social media, Nisman's reports, open source research and the Argentine intelligence wiretaps made public on March 2015. This analysis is in the author's possession.
- 40** Daniel Schnitten, "Causa AMIA: El Informe Secreto," La Voz y La Opinion (Buenos Aires); Accessed: <http://www.delacole.com/cgi-perl/medios/vernota.cgi?medio=lavoz&numero=julio2004&nota=julio2004-1>
- 41** As mentioned in the following Jan. 23, 2015 article on Infobae Política (Buenos Aires): <http://www.infobae.com/2015/01/23/1622587-la-verduleria-que-funciono-como-sede-secreta-un-enviado-hezbollah/>
- 42** Maria Jimena Duzán, "Quién es Samuel Salman El Reda?" Semana (Bogota), Jan. 31, 2015; Accessed: <http://www.semana.com/opinion/articulo/maria-jimena-duzan-quien-es-samuel-salman-el-reda/416313-3>
- 43** Schnitten, op cit.
- 44** Author interviews in Madrid, Spain on December 2015 with European intelligence officials.
- 45** For a quick summary of Argentina's beef industry see this article by Whitney Eulich's article on "Where's the Beef? How Argentina humbled a once-mighty economy." Published in the The Christian Science Monitor on March 8, 2015; Accessed: <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Americas/2015/0308/Where-s-the-beef-How-Arentina-humbled-a-once-mighty-economy>
- 46** During a televised interview on the program "Americas" in Buenos Aires, Yousef Khalil mentions that 80% of Iran's domestic beef consumption was imported from Argentina during the tenure of President Raúl Afonsín from 1983 to 1989. See video here: [http://www.clarin.com/politica/Jorge\\_Yusuf\\_Khalil-memorandum\\_de\\_entendimiento\\_con\\_Iran-AMIA-Alberto\\_Nisman-Luis\\_D-Elia-escuchas\\_telefonicas-Luis\\_Majul\\_0\\_1321667974.html](http://www.clarin.com/politica/Jorge_Yusuf_Khalil-memorandum_de_entendimiento_con_Iran-AMIA-Alberto_Nisman-Luis_D-Elia-escuchas_telefonicas-Luis_Majul_0_1321667974.html)
- 47** For more on the G.T.C. Iranian front company, see Nisman's 2006 indictment of the AMIA case.
- 48** Kenneth R. Timmerman, "Evidence Fuels Iran Terror Debate," June 24, 2003; Accessed: [http://www.kentimmerman.com/news/2003\\_06\\_11amia.htm](http://www.kentimmerman.com/news/2003_06_11amia.htm)
- 49** Ibid.
- 50** On page 24 of the 2006 AMIA indictment, Nisman mentions the increased movement of functionaries, diplomatic couriers, and money believed to be indicative of the attack on the AMIA building.
- 51** Author interviews on February 2016 in Buenos Aires, Argentina with retired Argentine intelligence officials.
- 52** Hossein Alikhani, Sanctioning Iran: Anatomy of a Failed Policy, I.B. Tauris, December 2000.

- 53** “Eat from that over which Allah’s Name has been mentioned, if you are believers in his signs.” (Transliteration) Quran 6:118.
- 54** For more on the halal process and Iran’s regulations standards, see the website (<http://www2.irost.org/ari/en/>) of the National and Regional Iranian Halal Research Center at the Iranian Research Organization for Science and Technology.
- 55** Gustavo Khalil is the president of The Halal Catering Argentina, a company that proclaims to have over forty years of experience in the Islamic practice of halal meat processing. Read more on their website: <http://www.thehalalcateringargentina.org/#!que-es-halal/cee5>
- 56** The news broke when Judge Juan José Galeano ordered the arrest of eight Iranians in Buenos Aires, Argentina, some of whom worked for South Beef. See Raúl Kollmann, “Detuvieron a ocho y uno de ellos implico a Rabhani” Pagina 12 (Buenos Aires); Accessed: <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/1998/98-05/98-05-16/pag07.htm>
- 57** Daniel Santoro, “AMIA: Galeano investiga si una firma iraní financió el atentado,” Clarín (Buenos Aires), July 14, 1998; Accessed: <http://edant.clarin.com/diario/98/07/14/t-00801d.htm>
- 58** “Iran suspendió sus compras a la Argentina” Clarin (Buenos Aires), May 29, 1998; Accessed: <http://edant.clarin.com/diario/1998/05/29/t-01801d.htm>
- 59** Leonardo Coutinho, “The Tehran-Caracas-Buenos Aires Connection” VEJA International (Sao Paulo), March 14, 2015; Accessed: <http://vejainternational.com/news/the-teheran-caracas-buenos-aires-connection/>
- 60** Ibid.
- 61** “Néstor Kirchner se había negado a este acuerdo cuando era Presidente,” Infobae Política (Buenos Aires), Jan. 15, 2015; Accessed: <http://www.infobae.com/2015/01/15/1621024-nestor-kirchner-se-habia-negado-este-acuerdo-cuando-era-presidente>
- 62** For more see Alberto Nisman’s 289-page judicial complaint filed on January 14, 2015 before Federal Judge Ariel O. Lijo; Accessed: <http://contenidos2.tn.com.ar/2015/01/21/denunciafinal.pdf>
- 63** Argentina’s energy crisis is a major point emphasized in Nisman’s 2015 judicial complaint, referenced throughout this documents. In addition, Nisman cites the former Venezuelan Ambassador in Argentina, Roger Capella, as part of this nexus between Tehran-Caracas-Buenos Aires, aimed to import Iranian oil to Argentina in exchange for grains, soy and meat (pg. 53 of complaint).
- 64** Chavez’s purchase of Argentinian debt credited for paying off \$9.8 billion debt to the International Monetary Fund. See Juan Forero, “Chavez using oil money to buy influence abroad,” The New York Times (United States), April 4, 2006; Accessed: [http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/04/world/americas/04iht-venezuela.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/04/world/americas/04iht-venezuela.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)
- 65** Infobae released the close to 40,000 wiretaps through its website on March 1, 2015: “Todas las escuchas de la causa Nisman sobre el presunto encubrimiento del atentado a la AMIA”; Accessed: <http://www.infobae.com/2015/03/01/1671562-todas-las-escuchas-la-causa-nisman-el-presunto-encubrimiento-del-atentado-la-amia>
- 66** Douglas Farah, “Fixers, Super Fixers and Shadow Facilitators: How Networks Connect” International Assessment and Strategy Center (Wash. DC), April 23, 2012; Accessed: [http://www.strategycenter.net/docLib/20120423\\_Farah\\_FixersSuperFixersShadow.pdf](http://www.strategycenter.net/docLib/20120423_Farah_FixersSuperFixersShadow.pdf)
- 67** Nisman 2015 complaint, pg. 8, (English version) op cit.
- 68** A widely used quote from Carl von Clausewitz military treatise “On War” originally published in 1832.
- 69** Jacob W. Kipp, “Clausewitz: The Militarization of Marxism, 1914-192,” Military Affairs, October 1985; Page 189 - “Lenin has come full circle. War and politics have been transposed as subject and object. Here politics have become a continuation of war by other means.”

- 70** Conversation on 9/19/12, Audio File B-1009-2012-09-19-131746-14.mp3
- 71** For more on Jorge Alejandro “Yussuf” Khalil please see pages 234 – 242 of Nisman 2015 complaint.
- 72** Nisman 2015 complaint, pg. 237, op cit.
- 73** Nisman 2015 complaint, pg. 238, op cit.
- 74** Conversation on 4/27/13, Audio File B-1009-2013-02-27-125331-24.mp3
- 75** Luis D’Elia has traveled several times to Iran dating as far back as 2007, as referenced in this Feb. 25, 2007 article from La Nacion (Buenos Aires) titled, “D’Elia viajó a Irán y dará un document de apoyo;” Accessed: <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/886579-delia-viajo-a-iran-y-dara-un-documento-de-apoyo>
- 76** For more on La Cámpora see Douglas Farah’s report from May 13, 2013, titled, “La Cámpora in Argentina: The Rise of New Vanguard Generation and the Road to Ruin;” Accessed: [http://www.strategycenter.net/docLib/20130513\\_LaCámporaFINAL.pdf](http://www.strategycenter.net/docLib/20130513_LaCámporaFINAL.pdf)
- 77** Series of telephone conversation recordings indicate Fernando Esteche was imperative in the drawing up of the document reflecting specifics of the AMIA attack. Nisman 2015 complaint, pg. 108, (English version) op cit.
- 78** “Mariotto en crisis: se fue del PJ al partido de D’Eía y también, de Banfield” Clarín (Buenos Aires), May 4, 2016; Accessed: [http://www.clarin.com/politica/Mariotto-PJ-partido-DElia-Banfield\\_0\\_1570642940.html](http://www.clarin.com/politica/Mariotto-PJ-partido-DElia-Banfield_0_1570642940.html)
- 79** Nisman 2015 complaint, pg. 96, (English version) op cit.
- 80** “La nota que provocó la furia de Youssef Khalil contra Infobae,” Infobae Política (Buenos Aires), Mar. 2, 2015; Accessed: <http://vzla.infobae.com/2015/03/02/1713288-la-nota-que-provoco-la-furia-yousseff-khalil-contra-infobae>
- 81** “Dos redes terroristas ligadas a Hezbollah operan en América Latina,” Infobae Política (Buenos Aires), June 1, 2013; Accessed: <http://www.infobae.com/2013/06/01/1072460-dos-redes-terroristas-ligadas-hezbollah-operan-america-latina/>
- 82** Conversation on 4/6/13, Audio File B-1009-2013-06-04-082254-20.mp3
- 83** “Quien es Juan Labaké, el abogado que denunció a Longobardi y que dice que a Nisman lo mató la CIA,” Clarín (Buenos Aires), May 1, 2015; Accessed: [http://www.clarin.com/politica/Juan-Labake-Longobardi-Nisman-CIA\\_0\\_1349265253.html](http://www.clarin.com/politica/Juan-Labake-Longobardi-Nisman-CIA_0_1349265253.html)
- 84** Heshmatalloh Rahnema was mentioned on pg. 92 of Nisman 2015 complaint.
- 85** Martin Tetaz, “La economía política detrás del caso Nisman,” El Día (Argentina), January 25, 2015; Accessed: <http://pasado.eldia.com/edis/20150125/La-economia-politica-detras-caso-Nisman-opinion0.htm>
- 86** Conversation on 2/27/13, Audio File B-1009-2013-02-27-125331-24.mp3
- 87** Conversation on 5/14/12, Audio File B-1009-2013-05-14-125442-12.mp3
- 88** “International Religious Freedom Report 2005,” U.S Department of State (United States), Accessed: <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2005/51624.htm>
- 89** Natasha Niebieskikwiat, “El día que Timerman intervino el área que se ocupa de terrorismo,” Clarín, January 18, 2015; Accessed: [http://www.clarin.com/politica/Timerman-intervino-area-ocupa-terrorismo\\_0\\_1287471411.html](http://www.clarin.com/politica/Timerman-intervino-area-ocupa-terrorismo_0_1287471411.html)
- 90** Conversation on 9/11/12, Audio File B-1009-2012-09-11-155053-16.mp3
- 91** Conversation on 12/26/12, Audio File 72.56626.20121226.225002.mp3



- 92** “Plan for Meat Self-Sufficiency,” Financial Tribune, February 8, 2016; Accessed: <http://financialtribune.com/articles/economy-domestic-economy/35963/plan-meat-self-sufficiency>
- 93** “Self-Sufficiency in Red Meat in 5 Years,” Financial Tribune, September 10, 2016; Accessed: <http://financialtribune.com/articles/economy-domestic-economy/25472/self-sufficiency-red-meat-5-years>
- 94** “Market Overview of Iran’s Agricultural Food Sector,” Italian Trade Agency, January 25, 2016; Accessed: <http://iran.exporthub.it/wp-content/plugins/download->
- 95** Vladislav Vorotnikov, “Iran invests millions in meat production,” Global Meat News, January 9, 2015; Accessed: <http://www.globalmeatnews.com/Industry-Markets/Iran-invests-millions-in-meat-production>
- 96** See also: <http://www.globalmeatnews.com/Industry-Markets/Iran-invests-millions-in-meat-production>
- 97** Emilio Persico’s activism is highlighted in this diplomatic cable from July 7, 2009 published on WikiLeaks titled “Argentina: Profiling Key Kirchner-allied Piquetero Leaders.” Accessed: [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BUENOSAIRE5794\\_a.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BUENOSAIRE5794_a.html)
- 98** Conversation on 9/6/12, Audio File B-1009-2012-09-06-111030-18.mp3
- 99** Conversation on 9/6/12, Audio File B-1009-2012-09-06-105658-28.mp3
- 100** Conversation on 9/16/12, Audio File B-1009-2012-09-16-172653-6.mp3
- 101** Conversation on 9/20/12, Audio File B-1009-2012-09-20-154136-22.mp3
- 102** Ruben Remedi’s background with Frigorifico Gorina is described in a conversation on 11/15/12, Audio File B-1009-2012-11-15-154641-6.mp3
- 103** Conversation on 11/11/12, Audio File B-1009-2012-11-11-113244-28.mp3
- 104** Conversation on 11/11/12, Audio File B-1009-2012-11-11-113533-12.mp3
- 105** Conversation on 11/23/12, Audio File B-1009-2012-11-23-162703-4.mp3
- 106** Conversation on 11/30/12, Audio File B-1009-2012-11-30-163313-28.mp3
- 107** Nisman 2015 complaint, pg. 95, (English version) op cit.
- 108** Nisman 2015 complaint, pg. 8, (English version) op cit.
- 109** Nisman 2015 complaint, pg. 8, (English version) op cit.
- 110** Roger F. Noriega, “Argentina’s Secret Deal with Iran?” American Enterprise Institute AEI Ideas, July 20, 2011; Accessed: <https://www.aei.org/publication/argentinas-secret-deal-with-iran/print/>
- 111** Ibid.
- 112** For more see pg. 3 – 4 of testimony by Douglas Farah before Senate Foreign Relations Committee on March 17, 2012 “Deepening Political and Economic Crisis in Venezuela: Implications for U.S. interests and the Western Hemisphere.”
- 113** Conversation on 2/12/13, Audio File B-1009-2013-02-12-100525-14.mp3
- 114** “La verdulería que funcionó como sede secreta de un enviado de Hezbollah,” Infobae, January 23, 2015; Accessed: <http://www.infobae.com/2015/01/23/1622587-la-verduleria-que-funciono-como-sede-secreta-un-enviado-hezbollah>
- 115** Infobae interview with Suhail Assad on June 12, 2013, titled: “Sheik Edgardo Ruben Assad pone en duda el Holocausto judío,” Accessed: <http://www.infobae.com/2013/06/12/1073000-sheik-edgardo-ruben-assad-pone-duda-el-holocausto-judio/>

- 116** “La extraña verdulería donde almorzaron D’Elía y Khalil,” Infobae, January 23, 2015; Accessed: <http://www.infobae.com/2015/01/23/1622552-la-extrana-verduleria-donde-almorzaron-delia-y-khalil/>
- 117** To read more about Héctor Ramon “Allan Bogado” see page 243 of Nisman’s 2015 complaint, (English version).
- 118** Conversation on 6/2/13, File 221245 CD 44
- 119** Conversation on 5/20/13, Audio File B-1009-2013-05-20-143508-24.mp3
- 120** Conversation on 12/18/12, Audio File B-1009-2012-12-18-183332-8.mp3
- 121** The Data Team, “Iran’s nuclear deal becomes a reality” The Economist, Jan. 14, 2016; Accessed: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2016/01/graphics-iran-sanctions-and-nuclear-deal>
- 122** Ibid.
- 123** For more on various sanctions-busting schemes by Iran in Venezuela and Ecuador, see chapter 5 & 7 respectively of Iran’s Strategic Penetration of Latin America, Lexington Books, 2014.
- 124** Conversation on 10/5/12, Audio File B-1009-2012-10-05-144155-30.mp3
- 125** Conversation on 9/19/12, Audio File B-1009-2012-09-19-131746-14.mp3
- 126** The following diplomatic cable on WikiLeaks describes Amb. Kambiz Jalili as an “activist ambassador” and is becoming a fixture in Chilean diplomatic circles. See “Chile to Welcome Iranian Trade Delegation in November,” June 12, 2008, U.S. Embassy Cable 08SANTIAGO553; Accessed: <http://cables.mrkva.eu/cable.php?id=157980>
- 127** Hassan Dai, “Al Mustafa University, Iran’s global network of Islamic schools,” Apr. 12, 2016, Iranian American Forum; Accessed: <http://www.iranian-americans.com/irans-export-of-islamic-fundamentalism-al-mustafa-global-training-centers-2/>
- 128** Ivan Witker, “The Southern Cone: Iran’s Backdoor,” Chapter 4 of Iran’s Strategic Penetration of Latin America, October 2014 (Lexington Books).
- 129** The full English-version of the 502-page dictum filed by Alberto Nisman before the National Federal Criminal and Correctional Court in Argentina can be read in its entirety on AlbertoNisman.org. The section on Chile begins on pg. 228.
- 130** Hernán López, “La Amia, Nisman y Chile,” La Tercera (Santiago), Feb. 1, 2015; Accessed: <http://diario.latercera.com/2015/02/01/01/contenido/reportajes/25-182737-9-la-amia-nisman-y-chile.shtml>
- 131** Author interviews in Santiago, Chile with former Chilean intelligence officials on December 2015.
- 132** “Tambien sufrimos por la inflación mundial,” Diario Llanquihue (Chile), Mar. 30, 2008; Accessed: [http://www.diariollanquihue.cl/prontus4\\_not/site/artic/20080330/pags/20080330001026.html](http://www.diariollanquihue.cl/prontus4_not/site/artic/20080330/pags/20080330001026.html)
- 133** Author interviews in Santiago, Chile with former Chilean intelligence officials on December 2015.
- 134** “Embassy of Chile to Reopen in Tehran 35 Years After Closure,” Sputnik Politics, Sep. 29, 2015; Accessed: <http://sputniknews.com/politics/20150929/1027717186.html>
- 135** Ibid.
- 136** An example is Mahsa Allahbakhshi, an Iranian post-doctoral student in Chile who received her Ph.D. in mathematics from Victoria University in Canada. She received a state scholarship from the FONDECYT research project to examine “Ergodic Theory and Dynamic Systems” and is now teaching courses at Andrés Bello University, as well as Catholic University and Adolfo Ibañez University in Santiago, Chile. You can read more about Mahsa Allahbakhshi’s profile here: <http://ingenieria.uchile.cl/noticias/93982/postdoctorados-en-la-fcfm-el-inicio-de-una-carrera-cientifica>

- 137** Letters of invitation by Javier Oyarzún Vega to Seyed Javad Ebrahimi dated in 2012 and 2013 are in possession of the author.
- 138** The U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has sanctioned Ghassan Youssef Abdallah's brother, Mohammed, through the Hizballah International Financing Prevention Act of 2015. See press release on Apr. 15, 2016: <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20160415.aspx>
- 139** "Iran, Brazil firm to boost economic relations," Press TV (Iran), Oct. 26, 2015; Accessed: <http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2015/10/26/435096/Iran-Brazil-Zarif-Monteiro->
- 140** Isabel Fleck, "Brazil wants to triple trade with Iran in five years," Folha de Sao Paulo (Brazil), Jan. 19, 2016; Accessed: <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/internacional/en/business/2016/01/1731025-brazil-wants-to-triple-trade-with-iran-in-five-years.shtml>
- 141** "Iran may restore beef imports after last year's drop," GlobalMeatNews.com, Sep. 24, 2015; Accessed: <http://www.brazilianbeef.org.br/noticia.asp?id=1371#.VziQTJMrLow>
- 142** Juan Zarate, "Terrorism, Missiles and Corruption: The Risks of Economic Engagement with Iran," Testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, May 12, 2016.
- 143** Data taken from "The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps" by the Rand Corporation on Dec. 31, 2008.
- 144** Matthew Douglas Robin, "Explaining the economic control of Iran by the IRGC," University of Central Florida HM 1990-2015 Open Access, 2011; Accessed: <http://stars.library.ucf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2235&context=honorstheses1990-2015>
- 145** Kerry Patton, "Bonyads: Iran's Greatest Strength against Sanctions," American Thinker, Jan. 5, 2012; Accessed: [http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2012/01/bonyads\\_irans\\_greatest\\_strength\\_against\\_sanctions.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2012/01/bonyads_irans_greatest_strength_against_sanctions.html)
- 146** In 1995, the brother of Mohsen Rafiqdust, Morteza, was jailed in connection with a \$400 million fraud scheme involving the Bonyad and Bank Saderat. Morteza Rafiqdust allegedly shifted large amounts of money into foreign bank accounts. (Report titled "Iran: Herasat Bonyad Mostafazan va Janbaazan" from the Research Directorate of the Immigration and Refugee Board, Canada, Accessed: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6ad6260.html>)
- 147** Emanuele Ottolenghi, "Moderation is a Misnomer in Iran," U.S. News & World Report, May 3, 2016; Accessed: <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2016-05-03/calling-hassan-khomeini-and-other-iranians-moderates-is-a-misnomer>
- 148** Alberto Nisman, Dictum on Iran's terrorist networks throughout Latin America, submitted to the Argentine judiciary on May 29, 2013.
- 149** See the website of the Arresala Islamic Center: <http://www.arresala.org.br/sheikh-al-khazraji>
- 150** Registry documents are in the possession of the author.
- 151** Please see the Brazil-Iran Chamber of Commerce website, section on Halal certification: <http://camiranbrasil.com.br/servicos/certificado-halal-ou-halal-slaughtering-certificate>
- 152** All property records of G.B.H. Comercio and G.B.H. Servico are in the possession of the author.
- 153** Ms. Neusa Maria dos Santos made this declaration in the public registry of the company "Shiny Trading Comercial Alimentos Importacao e Exportacao Ltda," registered in the government of Sao Paulo State.
- 154** The donation is listed within the local public records of the registry of the property.
- 155** Website of Iran's Foreign Ministry visited on April 2016. The "consulate" is registered in official records of Brazil's federal register, however, not listed anywhere on the internet.

- 156** All property records are in the possession of the author.
- 157** Vladislav Vorotnikov, "Iran may restore beef imports after last year's drop," GlobalMeatNews.com, Sep. 23, 2015; Accessed: <http://www.globalmeatnews.com/Industry-Markets/Iran-may-restore-beef-imports-after-last-year-s-drop>
- 158** Vorotnikov, op cit.
- 159** EFE Noticias, "Humala se reúne con Netanyahu para potenciar la cooperación económica," El Nacional (Caracas), February 17, 2014; Accessed: [http://www.el-nacional.com/mundo/Humala-Netanyahu-potenciar-cooperacion-economica\\_0\\_357564345.html](http://www.el-nacional.com/mundo/Humala-Netanyahu-potenciar-cooperacion-economica_0_357564345.html)
- 160** Press Release, "PM Netanyahu's statement with Peruvian President Humala," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, February 17, 2014; Accessed: <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2014/Pages/PM-Netanyahu%E2%80%99s-statement-with-Peruvian-President-Humala--17-February-2014.aspx>
- 161** "Presunto miembro de Hezbolá fue detenido en Surquillo," El Comercio (Lima), October 28, 2014; Accessed: <http://elcomercio.pe/lima/ciudad/presunto-terrorista-hezbola-fue-detenido-surquillo-noticia-1767375>
- 162** For a detailed look at the arrest and investigation of Mohammad Ghaleb Hamdar please see this investigative documentary by SMT Peru on November 23, 2014, titled "Terrorismo Mundial en Peru;" Accessed: <http://diariocorreo.pe/ciudad/fotos-y-documentos-del-miembro-del-grupo-terrorista-hezbola-en-peru-video-546779/>
- 163** In an interview with Diario Correo (Lima) on December 2, 2014, Prosecutor Wendy Calero Espino states she is "sure [Hamdar] was going to realize a terrorist attack;" Accessed: <http://diariocorreo.pe/ciudad/de-que-iba-a-realizar-un-atentado-de-eso-tengo-certeza-548455/>
- 164** Full transcript [Diario de los Debates] of 5th congressional session of the Permanent Commission of the Peruvian Congress on January 28, 2015 with testimony by Javier Briceño Carpio, director of Dirección Nacional de Inteligencia (DINI). Transcript in author's possession.
- 165** "Peru's National Intelligence Service in the spotlight," Peru's Support Group (United Kingdom), April 14, 2015; Accessed: "<http://www.perusupportgroup.org.uk/article-832.html>
- 166** Vladimir Montesinos was the longstanding head of Peru's intelligence service under former President Alberto Fujimori, and is serving a 20-year prison term in a maximum-security prison in Callao naval base in Peru, for arms trafficking. He is facing 63 additional charges from drug trafficking to murder.
- 167** See pages 55 - 69 of the transcript of Javier Briceño Carpio's congressional testimony, in which he describes the intelligence activities surrounding "Plan Islam 2011 & 2014." His testimony was interrupted several times by Peruvian congressman/woman who felt his testimony should be classified, and not given in a public setting.
- 168** "Peru shuts down national spy agency amid wiretapping scandal," PanAm Post, February 10, 2015; Accessed: <https://panampost.com/panam-staff/2015/02/10/peru-shuts-down-national-spy-agency-amid-wiretapping-scandal/>
- 169** See letter of complaint by Joys Edwar Quiroga Vargas, notarized on Feb. 12, 2015, addressed to Ms. Ana Jara Velázquez, president of the Council of Ministers of Peru (and received by the Council on Feb. 13, 2015) requesting the Peruvian government retract statements by the director of intelligence during a congressional testimony in January. Letter posted publicly on Quiroga's Facebook.
- 170** See memo dated Feb. 12, 2015 from a government lawyer, Carlos Ly Carruitero, to Mr. Martín Pérez Salazar, Director of the General Office of Legal Counsel, providing legal advice on how to respond to the complaint letter of Joys Edwar Quiroga Vargas. Memo is in author's possession.
- 171** Óscar Chumpitaz, "Ex jefe de la DINI Javier Briceño muere ahogado tras sufrir paro cardíaco," La Republica (Lima), January 23, 2016; Accessed: <http://larepublica.pe/impresia/sociedad/735652-ex-jefe-de-la-dini-javier-briceno-muere-ahogado-tras-sufrir-paro-cardiaco>
- 172** Peruvian Congressman Héctor Becerril suggests that Briceño's death could be similar to the

death of Emerson Fasabi, a former employee of the Peruvian president who died mysteriously on July 22, 2015. See Jan. 24, 2016 note in *El Expreso* (Peru); Accessed: <http://www.expreso.com.pe/politica/piden-investigar-muerte-de-exjefe-de-la-dini/>

**173** Declaration of the VII Cumbre de ALBA-TCP in Cochabamba, Bolivia, October 17, 2009; Accessed: <http://albatcp.cubaminrex.cu/page/vii-cumbre-cochabamba-bolivia-17-de-octubre-de-2009>

**174** Jorge Serrano, "Las organizaciones del terrorismo fundamentalista Islamista Hezbollah y Al Qaeda enlazadas con los cárteles del narcotráfico y otros grupos terroristas son una amenaza real para el Perú y el continente Americano," Special Report by ProJusticia (Lima), November 2014.

**175** Author interviews in Lima, Peru with Peruvian immigration officials on March 2016.

**176** The Sumak Kawsay - Fundación Jardín de Dios is registered with Peru's national public registry (SUNARP) under number 11036398, as verified by this author.

**177** ABNA interview of [Edwar] Hussein Quiroga at the 6th General Forum of the World Assembly of Ahlul Bait on August 22, 2015 in Tehran, Iran. Transcript of interview in author's possession.

**178** Estimates of 150 converts in Peru was provided by Dardo Lopez-Dolz during a congressional testimony on March 18, 2015 before the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee. Additional estimates that 20 - 25 of these converts traveled to Iran was provided by Javier Briceño Carpio during his congressional testimony on January 28, 2015 before the Permanent Commission of the Peruvian Congress.

**179** Antauro Humala, the brother of Peruvian President Ollanta Humala, is the leader of the Etnocaceristas and co-founded the movement in 1993 along with his father Isaac Humala. The name is derived from the concept of "etnocentrismo" and the the surname of former Peruvian President Andrés Avelino Cáceres, who is a war hero in Peru from the 19th century.

**180** Author interviews in Lima, Peru with Peruvian intelligence officials on March 2016.

**181** "La verdulería que funcionó como sede secreta de un enviado de Hezbollah," Infobae, January 23, 2015; Accessed: <http://www.infobae.com/2015/01/23/1622587-la-verduleria-que-funciono-como-sede-secreta-un-enviado-hezbollah>

**182** See para 2 of Edwar Quiroga's letter of complaint dated Feb. 12, 2105 to the Council of Ministers in Peru.

**183** "Detienen en Perú a esposa de libanés preso acusado de terrorismo," *La Información*, November 28, 2015; Accessed: [http://noticias.lainformacion.com/policia-y-justicia/policia/detienen-en-peru-a-esposa-de-libanes-preso-acusado-de-terrorismo\\_uHbkN8yPUDIR3U774BSF27/](http://noticias.lainformacion.com/policia-y-justicia/policia/detienen-en-peru-a-esposa-de-libanes-preso-acusado-de-terrorismo_uHbkN8yPUDIR3U774BSF27/)

**184** See this report titled "Guardianes de la Revolución Iraní en Colombia?" released on May 4, 2016 through the Agencia de Reportajes y Ensayos Especiales para la prensa (ARES) based in Bogota, Colombia. Accessed: [http://www.aresprensa.com/cms/cms/front\\_content.php?idart=1016](http://www.aresprensa.com/cms/cms/front_content.php?idart=1016)

**185** Martin Dinatale, "AMIA: la Argentina alertó a Colombia por una visita de Rabbani," *La Nación* (Buenos Aires), May 10, 2016; Accessed: <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1897117-amia-la-argentina-alerto-a-colombia-por-una-visita-de-rabbani>

**186** Most notable is Mohsen Rabbani's unannounced visit to Brazil exposed by VEJA magazine in a cover story on April 6, 2011. According to VEJA, this visit was under surveillance by Brazilian authorities who set up a sting operation to arrest him on sight, however, the operation was discarded due to political pressure from Brazilian parliamentarians. In this instance, Rabbani traveled using a Venezuelan passport with a false name. See more: <http://jeffersonws.blogspot.com/2011/04/o-terror-finca-bases-no-brasil.html>

**187** Press TV, "Iran FM to embark on five-state Latin American tour," Apr. 30, 2016; Accessed: <http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2016/04/30/463333/Iran-Latin-America-Zarif>

**188** Michael Flynn, "Why the silence about the deadly terror threat in our own hemisphere?" *Fox News*, May 23, 2016; Accessed: <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2016/05/23/gen-flynn-why-silence-about-deadly-terror-threat-in-our-own-hemisphere.html>



## About the Author

Joseph M. Humire is a global security expert, specializing in asymmetric warfare. Since 2010, Mr. Humire has engaged in an ongoing investigation into Iran and Hezbollah's presence and activities in the Western Hemisphere. His research resulted in a leading policy report, released in July 2014, titled "Canada On Guard" revealing an immigration security scheme between Iran, Venezuela and Cuba. In October 2014, Mr. Humire co-edited the most authoritative book on the topic, "Iran's Strategic Penetration of Latin America," published by Lexington Books. In addition, he has been invited by several entities within the U.S. Department of Defense and intelligence community to brief on the subject matter, and has testified several times before the U.S. Congress, as well as the Canadian parliament. On July 9, 2013, Mr. Humire testified before the House Homeland Security Committee, to which Argentine Special Prosecutor Alberto Nisman was invited but unable to participate. Moreover, Mr. Humire traveled to twelve countries throughout Latin America briefing policymakers and defense officials on the growing influence of Iran and Hezbollah in the region. A regular commentator on major English and Spanish-language media outlets, Mr. Humire is an opinion leader on Islamic extremism in the Americas. He is currently the executive director of the Center for a Secure Free Society (SFS) and an eight-year veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, serving combat tours in Iraq and participating in a multinational training exercise in Latin America.

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