

CIA hires terrorist group to operate inside Iran

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New York, April 4(IRNA) Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has hired a Pakistani terrorist group that has carried out a series of deadly terrorist attacks inside Iran, ABC News has reported on Wednesday.

The group, members of the Baluchi tribe, operates from Pakistan's province of Baluchestan, just across the border from Iran.

ABC cited US government sources it did not identify as saying the US has maintained close ties to its leader, Abdel-Malik Regi, since 2005.

The group, called Jundullah, has carried out raids, resulting in the deaths or kidnapping of Iranian ordinary people as well as soldiers and officials.

The large Iranian community residing in the US protested strongly to Voice of America (VOA)'s live interview with Regi recently in which the terrorist claimed responsibility for the operations.

Regi admitted to have personally executed some of the Iranian captives, the ABC News report said.

Alexis Debat, a senior fellow on counterterrorism at the Nixon Center and an ABC News consultant, told the program that Regi used to fight with the Taliban, adding "he's part drug smuggler, part Taliban, part Sunni activist".

"He is essentially commanding a force of several hundred guerrilla fighters that stage attacks across the border into Iran on Iranian military officers, Iranian intelligence officers, kidnapping them, executing them on camera."

The group claimed responsibility for an attack in February that killed at least 11 members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard riding on a bus in the Iranian city of Zahedan.

Iranian television last month broadcast confessions by those responsible for the bus attack.

They admitted to being members of Jundullah and said they had been trained for the mission at a secret location in Pakistan.

The only relationship with the group that US intelligence acknowledges is cooperation in tracking al-Qaeda figures in that part of Pakistan.

ABC cited Pakistani government sources as saying the secret campaign against Iran was on the agenda when Vice President Dick Cheney met with Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf in February. Asked about the report, Cheney spokeswoman Megan McGinn responded: "We don't discuss conversations between the vice president and foreign leaders."

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