Iran's Shift from Soft to Hardened Targets: Preliminary Observations from the RAF Fairford Incident

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An in-depth look at the recent UK counterterror scare, illustrating how inexpensive Iranian proxy activities can prompt military redeployments, strain CT resources, and generate friction between allies even without causing damage.

Recent Iran-linked plots against U.S. military bases in the United Kingdom highlight a consequential expansion of Tehran's covert campaigns using disposable criminal proxies in Europe. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Iranian intelligence services now appear willing to extend this approach beyond dissidents, Jewish communities, and other civilians to hardened military targets. Drawing on official statements, court allegations, public reporting, and author interviews, this article examines the RAF Fairford incident, allegedly orchestrated by individuals behind European bombings earlier in 2026 claimed by Harakat Ashab al-Yamin al-Islamiya (HAYI), an IRGC-linked front. They include Mohammed Baqer al-Saadi, previously profiled in *CTC Sentinel* and awaiting trial for terror offenses in U.S. custody. The article situates both campaigns within Iran's evolving external operations, assesses the strategic implications of increasingly ambitious Iranian-directed proxy attacks, and offers preliminary analysis of the underlying role of various Iranian intelligence organizations…

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