

Brigadier General Mohammad-Reza Ashtiani: Islamic Republic of Iran Minister of Defense

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In August 2021, the Islamic Consultative Assembly ratified [President Ebrahim Raisi's](#) selection for Defense Minister, Brigadier General Mohammad-Reza Ashtiani. The Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics (MODAFL) is responsible for the planning, logistics, and funding of the armed forces, and its General Staff, which directly answers to the Supreme Leader, exercises control over the forces. Ashtiani is a senior officer in the Army, also known as the *Artesh*, the 420,000-strong regular military institution that operates alongside the [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps \(IRGC\)](#). Since 1979, the Islamic Republic hierarchy has tended to view the Army with suspicion due to its previous ties to the monarchy, marginalizing it in favor of the IRGC. While the IRGC continues to dominate the most important military and security positions, Ashtiani represents the echelon of senior Army officer corps who have been thoroughly vetted and demonstrated their loyalties to the Supreme Leader. The U.S. Treasury in 2020 [designated](#) Ashtiani, who at the time was the Armed Forces General Staff deputy commander, alongside seven other senior officials who have “advanced the regime’s destabilizing objectives.”

Iran-Iraq War Record

Ashtiani was born in 1960 in Tehran, and [enlisted](#) in the Army officer candidate school, now known as Imam Ali Officer University, in 1980, and graduated in 1982. He transferred to the prominent 23rd Special Forces Division, having met airborne, ranger, skiing, diving, and mountain qualifications. In 1984 or early 1985, then-Army Ground Forces chief and prominent figure Major General Ali Sayyad Shirazi appointed Ashtiani as an Imam Ali Officer University training instructor. According to official media, Shirazi deemed him qualified because of his experience in the Iran-Iraq war and in the fight against Kurdish militant separatists in Kordestan, a [campaign](#) known for its brutality, widespread arrests, and executions without fair trials.

Senior Positions

Following the end of the Iran-Iraq War in 1988, Ashtiani graduated with a master’s degree in defense affairs from Army Headquarters and Command University, and a doctorate in defense affairs from Supreme National Defense University. From 1999 to 2005, Ashtiani acted as Army Ground Forces deputy commander, and then, from 2005 to 2008, Army Overall Deputy Commander. From 2013 to 2019, he acted as Armed Forces General Staff Inspectorate deputy, and from 2019 until 2021 was Armed Forces General Staff Deputy Commander. It was in the latter capacity that he was designated by the U.S.

What We Can Expect From Ashtiani

Ashtiani has laid out his four-year priorities in briefings to the Parliament and the media. He has vowed to [continue](#) developing technology emphasizing “missile power, air defense, drones, cyber and new warfare.” These are elements of the Islamic Republic’s asymmetric warfare

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doctrine and capabilities meant to compensate for Iran's underdeveloped and aging conventional warfare arsenal.

Ashtiani has also [vowed](#) to further research and development by strengthening ties with scientific and research centers in the country. Ashtiani has also [prioritized](#) improving the standard of living and housing of armed forces personnel, which have suffered in recent years. Ashtiani has also told the media that he has cultivated close ties in the IRGC and Law Enforcement Forces that he will leverage while serving as Defense Minister.