



Iran's abandoned bases in Syria: Years of military expansion lie in ruins



Mouldy half-finished food on bunk beds, discarded military uniforms and abandoned weapons - these are the remnants of an abrupt retreat from this base that once belonged to Iran and its affiliated groups in Syria.

The scene tells a story of panic. The forces stationed here fled with little warning, leaving behind a decade-long presence that unravelled in mere weeks. Iran was Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's most critical ally for more than 10 years. It deployed military advisers, mobilised foreign militias, and invested heavily in Syria's war.

Its elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) built deep networks of underground bases, supplying arms and training to thousands of fighters. For Iran, this was also part of its "security belt" against Israel.

We are near Khan Shaykhun town in Idlib province. Before Assad's regime fell on 8 December, it was one of the key strategic locations for the IRGC and its allied groups. From the main road, the entrance is barely visible, hidden behind piles of sand and rocks. A watchtower on a hilltop, still painted in the colours of the Iranian flag, overlooks the base.