A boy carries a portrait of Iranian Revolutionary Guard Gen Qassem Soleimani, who was killed in a US airstrike in Iraq, prior to the Friday prayers in Tehran, Iran, on Jan 3. Iran has vowed “harsh retaliation” for the US airstrike near Baghdad's airport that killed Tehran's top general and the architect of its regional proxies, sparking a new crisis in US-Iranian relations.

Iranian state media has not elaborated on his time in the Guard. Ghaani’s remit was those to the east like Afghanistan and Pakistan. However, he worked with Soleimani, as well as led counterintelligence efforts at the Guard.

The Quds Force is part of the 125,000-strong Revolutionary Guard, a paramilitary organization that advises all of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards. Ali Reza Zolghadr, the Guards commander Iran’s ballistic missile program, has also served as chief of the Guard’s Quds Force, responsible for unconventional warfare, for more than 30 years.

Born Aug. 8, 1957 in the northeastern Iranian city of Mashhad, Ghaani grew up during the last decade of revolution. He joined the Guards a year after the 1979 revolution, like Soleimani. He first deployed under the command of the Guards to the qlad region of Iran to fight against the separatist Kurd rebels who had launched a rebellion against the regime. Like Soleimani, he was deeply involved in the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.