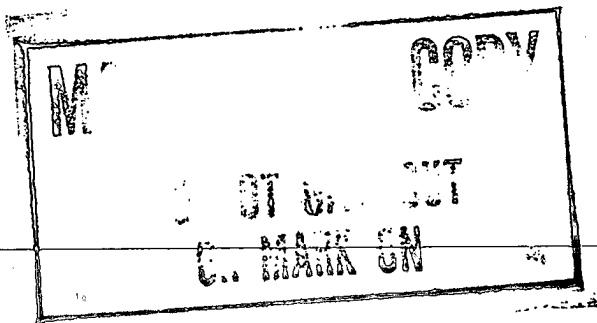




Directorate of Intelligence

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# Iran: Military Manpower Problems Limit War Options



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An Intelligence Assessment

Top Secret

NESA 83-10259C

October 1983

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# Iran: Military Manpower Problems Limit War Options

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**An Intelligence Assessment**

This paper was prepared by [Redacted]  
Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. It  
was coordinated with the Directorate of  
Operations. [Redacted]

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Comments and queries are welcome and may be  
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**Iran: Military Manpower Problems Limit War Options**

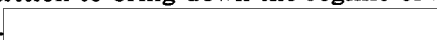


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**Key Judgments**

*Information available as of 3 October 1983 was used in this report.*

Iran's greater population has not given it the decisive advantage in its war with Iraq that Tehran expected. The Khomeini regime's difficulty in securing sufficient numbers of highly motivated volunteers for the battlefield was so great by the spring of 1983 that it was forced to change its military strategy. Iran has abandoned its tactic of frequent large-scale attacks to bring down the Iraqi regime through a major military defeat. Instead it has reverted to a war of attrition to bring down the regime of Saddam Husayn over the long term.



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Iran has nearly three times the population of Iraq—nearly 42 million compared with some 14 million—and theoretically has the manpower to continue throwing masses of infantry against the Iraqis. Indeed, the Khomeini regime has sought to create an image at home and abroad that an "army of 20 million" stands ready to sacrifice itself in the war. In fact, Iran's manpower pool is largely untapped, and its national defense commitment is one-fourth that of Iraq and less than that of almost any other Middle Eastern state.



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We believe the lack of motivated volunteers and declining morale at the front are serious problems for Tehran. Since July 1982, when the first of a yearlong string of costly defeats occurred, the fanaticism of Iran's infantry has failed to overwhelm the better equipped and more heavily armed Iraqis. The regime's difficulty in recruiting volunteers also indicates the erosion of popular support for the war. Iranian leaders are particularly concerned about flagging support among the lower classes, which are the Khomeini regime's primary political base and the source of most military manpower.



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Several interrelated factors have hindered recruitment:

- Tactics that have caused disproportionately heavy casualties among the regime's staunchest supporters.
- Failure to make meaningful gains on the front since May 1982.
- Changed motivations of Iranian troops once the Iraqis were expelled from Iran.
- Lack of a cohesive policy and centralized organization for managing wartime manpower.

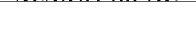


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Of these factors, the heavy Iranian casualties appear to have been the key issue in a debate within the Khomeini regime from mid-1982 through the spring of 1983 that eventually led to its shift in military strategy. Throughout most of the war, the regime has exalted battlefield deaths—which we estimate at 125,000—as martyrdom in the cause of Islam. But in early 1983 Iranian leaders for the first time publicly stated that the regime's decisions on the battlefield were linked to its concern over excessive casualties and that “martyrdom is not the chief objective of the war.”

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- Iran could get more than enough men to prosecute the war at a higher level by using more coercive methods of recruitment or by implementing a general mobilization. Our analysis suggests that Tehran seriously considered, but ultimately rejected, a general mobilization in late 1982. We believe that the regime does not want to risk diluting the political loyalty of the armed forces by resorting to such measures. Moreover, Khomeini believes that the faithful should come forward spontaneously as a religious duty to defend against the evil represented by Iraqi President Saddam Husayn. In Khomeini's view, he, as the religious guardian, can encourage but not coerce Iranians to do their duty. The regime probably also is concerned about the drastic economic consequences of a general mobilization and the limited ability of the military to absorb rapidly large increases in manpower.

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Instead, to alleviate its manpower shortfall the regime has:

- Encouraged volunteers from the paramilitary forces to take additional tours of duty.
- Begun to form a paramilitary reserve system.
- Established an active regular Army reserve.
- Authorized the Revolutionary Guard to use conscripts.
- Lengthened the period of compulsory military service.
- Reduced the number of exemptions from the draft.
- Instituted extreme penalties for draft evasion.
- Authorized the Ministry of Defense to hire educated and specialized personnel under contract in lieu of compulsory military service.

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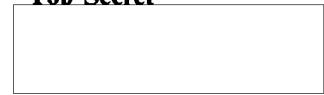
We do not believe these steps will provide Iran with enough manpower to resume launching frequent large-scale attacks against the Iraqis.

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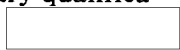
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Iran could rebuild a conventional war-fighting capability by purchasing large quantities of major weapons systems. This would allow Iran to resume fighting a higher intensity war by substituting new weapons, increased firepower, and conventional tactics for politically unacceptable casualty rates. We believe, however, that the effort would require many years and confront the regime with possibly insurmountable political barriers and immense practical problems.



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Moreover, the quality of Iran's military force has been severely degraded by a number of factors that would preclude rapidly assimilating large quantities of new materiel soon. Half of the force is comprised of illiterate, poorly trained, undisciplined paramilitary troops. Training resources are inadequate, and the regime's aversion to foreign dependence has denied the Iranian military access to valuable expertise and training. Finally, selecting personnel for their political reliability rather than their military qualifications will continue to hamper effective employment of forces.



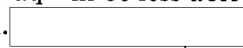
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Although Iran has had to give up any hope of bringing down Iraqi President Saddam Husayn soon by direct military action, we believe that Iran's larger manpower pool gives it an advantage over Iraq in fighting a war of attrition. The Iranians have undertaken a strategy designed to tie down the Iraqi Army while keeping closed Iraq's oil outlets from the Gulf and through the Syrian pipeline. To put greater pressure on Baghdad, Tehran has armed Kurdish groups to fight Iraq and responded favorably to Syrian offers to unify Iraqi opposition groups.



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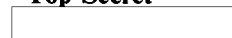
Iran's war of attrition could result in the capture of large areas along the border of the Kurdish area of Iraq, and its economic warfare is increasing the financial and political stress on the Iraqi regime. Continuing the war, however, also increases internal Iranian political and economic pressures that in the past few months have shown up in demonstrations in major Iranian cities. We believe, however, that on balance, Iraq will be less able than Iran to withstand the ravages of a war of attrition.



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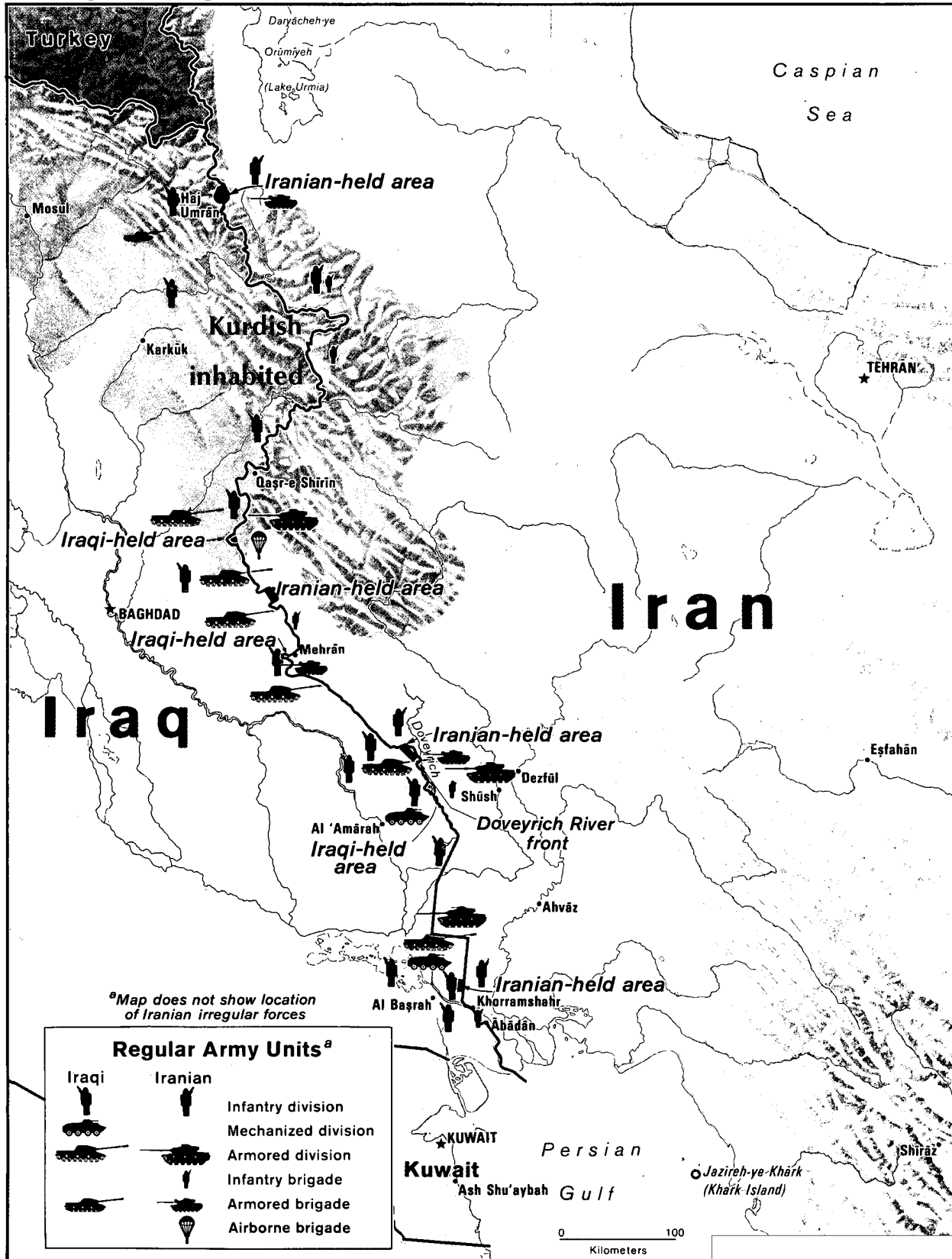


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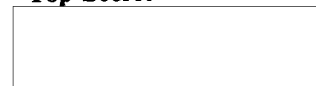
Iran-Iraq Border, September 1983



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**Iran: Military Manpower Problems Limit War Options**



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**Composition of the Armed Forces**

Iran has over 600,000 men in its military, paramilitary, and security forces (see table 1).<sup>1</sup> This is double the number of men under arms before the war and about 20 percent more than the number in the Shah's regular armed forces. Approximately 175,000 of these troops, mostly irregulars, perform internal security roles; the remainder are almost entirely occupied in the war. The figures do not include personnel in a number of defense-related functions such as the Ministry of Defense staff, government or semiprivate arms industries, and revolutionary organizations supporting the war effort.

The composition of Iran's military and security forces has undergone major changes since the Khomeini regime came to power in early 1979. The key change, in our view, was the creation of large paramilitary elements that exist alongside the conventional armed services that provide for national defense—Army, Air Force, and Navy—and traditional domestic security forces—Gendarmerie and National Police:

- *Revolutionary Guard.* The Guard is the regime's elite paramilitary force and the most important armed element in Iran today. Mainly a lightly armed paramilitary force, it has some armored, mechanized, and artillery units. The Guard performs both national defense and domestic security roles.
- *Basij.* The Basij—from Basij-e Mostazafan or Mobilization of the Oppressed—is a mass militia created in late 1979 to prepare the population to resist an expected US invasion to rescue the hostages. It since has become a part of the Revolutionary Guard but is not so well equipped or disciplined as the Guard cadre. The distinction between the two is likely to remain for the near future. Like Guard cadre, the Basij performs both national defense and domestic security roles.

- *Komitehs.* Revolutionary Committees or Komitehs were formed more or less spontaneously at many mosques throughout Iran at the outset of the revolution. They act as local vigilantes to enforce the regime's social and religious policies. Each Komiteh has some light weapons at its disposal for its domestic security role, but only a token number have served at the front.

*Army.* With some 235,000 men, the Army has about the same number of troops as the Guard and Basij combined but is the better equipped and better trained fighting force. About 175,000 Army troops are in combat units.

Initially the Khomeini regime made no changes in the Army's structure but allowed Army manning to fall from 280,000 to less than 150,000.

the Shah's plans to have nine divisions and 300,000 men by the early 1980s were scrapped.

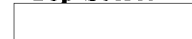
Once the war began in September 1980, however, Iranian press revealed that the regime authorized the Army to expand. During late 1980 and early 1981 the Army brought existing units to prerevolutionary combat strength by calling up reservists, reinstating the draft, and shortening the training period for new conscripts.



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**Table 1**  
**Estimated Number of Men Under Arms in the Iranian Armed Forces, September 1983**

Armed Forces	Range	Best Estimate	At the Front
<b>Total</b>	<b>590,000-780,000</b>	<b>625,000</b>	<b>270,000-333,000</b>
National Defense Forces	430,000-545,000	450,000	265,000-325,000
Domestic Security Forces	160,000-235,000	175,000	5,000-8,000
Army	235,000-270,000	235,000	145,000-150,000
Air Force	40,000-60,000	50,000	NA
Navy	10,000-20,000	15,000	NA
<b>Revolutionary Guard</b>			
National Defense	45,000-75,000	50,000	45,000-75,000
Domestic Security	45,000-75,000	50,000	NA
<b>Basij<sup>a</sup></b>			
National Defense	100,000-120,000	100,000	75,000-100,000
Domestic Security	25,000-30,000	25,000	NA
Gendarmerie	30,000-60,000	40,000	4,000-6,000
National Police	35,000-40,000	35,000	500-1,000
Komitehs	25,000-30,000	25,000	500-1,000

<sup>a</sup> In late 1982 the Basij claimed a membership of 2,500,000 men, of which some 400,000 had been trained for combat.

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**Revolutionary Guard.** We estimate that the Revolutionary Guard has between 100,000 and 150,000 cadre personnel plus an equal number of armed Basij personnel. Our most authoritative source of Guard cadre manning is a progress report publicly issued in March 1982 by the Guard's Programming Division. This official statement on the size of the Guard noted that "preparation of personnel allocation programs for 100,000 Guards" had been made. It is unclear whether that figure represented Guard strength for 1982 or a planned objective for March 1983.

**Basij.** The strength of the Basij, unlike that of the Guard's cadre, has been stated frequently in the Iranian media. Official Iranian statements and Basij training practices suggest the following as of late 1982:

- A total of 2,500,000 people apparently had been recorded as "members" of the Basij.
- Less than 20 percent—about 400,000—had received some form of military training and served at least a two- or three-month tour of duty at the front.
- Approximately 100,000 Basij probably are at the front just before major battles, and most of those sent there after July 1982 already had served at least one three-month tour.
- Each month another 10,000 or 20,000 Basij may be involved in military training courses.

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Revolutionary Guards protect Ayatollah Ardabili, head of the Supreme Judicial Council. Paris Match ©

We believe that notwithstanding the regime's inconsistent statements on Basij manning and its vested interest in inflating the totals to demonstrate support of the masses, official statements in late 1982 generally reflect the actual maximum strength and rate of growth of the Basij.

**Other Armed Elements.** We estimate that the three armed organizations now under the control of the Ministry of the Interior—Gendarmerie, National Police, and Revolutionary Komitehs—have about 100,000 men under arms. Each has had small numbers of men fighting the Iraqis throughout the war, but their primary function is domestic security. (This Ministry does not control the additional estimated 75,000 Revolutionary Guard cadre and Basij personnel who also are involved in domestic security.) These units compete for troops with the regular and irregular armed services. Men serving in the Gendarmerie, Komitehs, and possibly the National Police are exempt from military duty.

### Recruiting Systems

Under the Khomeini regime Iran has evolved a dual approach to military recruitment. A conventional system to recruit males 18 and 19 years old for compulsory military service in the regular armed forces exists alongside a separate system for recruiting volunteers into the Revolutionary Guard and Basij.

The two recruiting systems differ in several respects, according to Iranian press, but most importantly in the motivation of the individual recruit (see table 2). During the war, the Guard and Basij have sent to the front about a half million individuals who are fanatically committed to the defense of the regime and exporting its Islamic ideas. Most regular Army conscripts, on the other hand, apparently are willing to die in defense of Iran but are less likely to fight ardently to advance into Iraq.

Analysis of recruiting systems and military demography also reveals a number of important aspects of Iran's military manpower situation:

- Iran's large pool of males eligible for service and those with prior military service is largely untapped.
- Contrary to the regime's rhetoric, some 50 percent of the troops fighting in the war with Iraq are conscripts, not volunteers.
- The regime's elite Revolutionary Guard has been forced to recruit men, particularly educated and trainable men, from among conscripts.
- The regime has proposed a draft law to lengthen compulsory service, tighten exemptions, and severely punish evasion.
- Lack of a centralized system for managing manpower resources probably has led to inefficient utilization of manpower, particularly of supporters of the regime in the myriad of revolutionary organizations.

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**The Basij**

More than any other group fighting in the war, Iran's Basij—from Basij-e Mostazafan, literally Mobilization of the Oppressed—has captured the imagination of observers. This is largely a result of Iranian and Iraqi reports of children in their early teens leading "human wave" attacks across minefields, selflessly becoming "martyrs" for the Imam and Islam. For its part, the Khomeini regime has carefully nurtured the view that an "army of 20 million" Iranian youth stand willing to sacrifice themselves in defense of Iran and the regime. Basij clearly played a militarily significant role in Iranian victories from late 1981 to mid-1982, but analysis reveals that Iranian propaganda has greatly inflated their contribution. [redacted]

When the war with Iraq began, the Basij was a loosely organized grassroots movement. It was formed in late 1979 in response to Khomeini's call for an "army of 20 million" to defend Iran against a possible US attack. Before the war the Basij had done little but hold political rallies in the major cities, but to most leaders in the regime it was the logical vehicle for rapidly mobilizing large numbers of men to confront the Iraqi invasion in September 1980. [redacted]

During the first few months of the war, public calls for fighters by local Basij "offices" throughout the nation brought in thousands of volunteers who were sent directly to the front. But there was no prior coordination on how they would be organized, equipped, and trained for combat. Some ended up in ragtag Revolutionary Guard "units" and played an important role in the bloody defense of Khorramshahr; most probably did little more than add to the mass confusion created by thousands of refugees fleeing the advancing Iraqis. [redacted]

An insight into the problems of the Basij in the early months of the war was provided by Dr. Mustafa Chamran, Khomeini's representative to the Supreme Defense Council and later commander of irregular forces in Khuzestan. In an Iranian press interview in late October 1980, he graciously thanked the volunteers for their enthusiasm but emphasized that "in order to achieve a speedy victory, it is better to undergo the necessary military training prior to departure for the battlefronts." [redacted]

A mullah haranguing a crowd, encouraging people to volunteer for the front as youngsters have. The children's sashes declare their willingness to die for God. [redacted]



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**Basij Manning in November 1982:  
Official Claims Vary Widely**

*Hojjat-ol Eslam Salek, head of the Basij: "The Basij has so far dispatched over 250,000 volunteers to the fronts . . . The Basij has more than 20 million volunteers at its disposal."* [Redacted]

*President Khamenei, quoting Basij head Salek: "Today we have more than 400,000 battle-hardened men and more than 2,500,000 trained personnel."* [Redacted]

*Hojjat-ol Eslam Rafsanjani, Khomeini's representative to the Supreme Defense Council, quoting Basij statistics: "In only one year, over 410,000 of the children . . . have taken part in training courses and have been sent to the fronts one or two or three times . . . 2,500,000 people have been trained in the same period . . ."* [Redacted]

*Editorial in Kayhan International: "In three years, 2,500,000 of our people have been trained and 450,000 have been sent to the warfronts . . . in 6,000 centers of mosques we have 9,000 groups which encompass 2,500,000 people who can use arms, can defuse bombs or landmines, and so forth."* [Redacted]

*Mohsen Rezai, Commander of the Revolutionary Guard: ". . . there are over 500,000 of the Basij at the fronts."* [Redacted]

Conscription is the primary source of personnel for the Army—even more important than it was under the Shah. The percentage of all Army personnel who were conscripts was 50 percent in 1969, growing to 60 percent in 1976. [Redacted]

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**Conscription.** The regular military's conscription system in many respects is the same as it was under the Shah, although basic changes in the 1972 conscription law have been proposed. Analysis of Iranian press statements indicates the system still is managed mainly by the Gendarmerie through its offices in major cities and towns, although in some rural areas draft registration now takes place at the local mosque. Those selected are called up at 19 years of age, lightly screened, trained at military facilities, and, in wartime, sent to serve two years in the active armed forces. [Redacted]

**Revolutionary Guard and Basij.** The political-ideological criteria for screening new Guard members are more stringent than for its Basij members or any of the other armed forces, according to public statements by Iranian officials. The selection process is aimed at preserving the political and ideological purity of the regime's main security force. Interested men can volunteer by going directly to Guard offices with a letter from their local mullah. Others are identified in

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**Table 2**  
**Iranian Military Recruiting Systems**

Features	Army	Guard Revolutionary	Basij
Primary source of manpower	Conscription	Volunteers	Volunteers
Secondary sources of manpower	Volunteers, reserve recall, and contract employees	Conscripts and contract employees	None
Age of most recruits	19	17 to mid-twenties?	14 to 18
Initial military training	Peacetime: 20 weeks; wartime: nine weeks	1 to 28 days	Wartime only: 1 to 28 days
Term of service in peacetime	18 months (24 months proposed)	Primarily career; conscripts same as Army	Undetermined
Term of service in wartime	24 months (32 months proposed)	Primarily career; conscripts same as Army	Voluntary, but normally 30 to 90 days
Recall status	Probably only in war or general mobilization	Conscripts same as Army	Voluntary only (many now serving 2nd, 3rd, and 4th tours)
Hierarchy of motivations in war with Iraq	Nationalism, defense of Iran, and anti-Arab feelings	Ideological, defense of regime and Khomeinism, nationalism, and anti-Arab feelings	Ideological, defense of regime and Khomeinism, nationalism, and anti-Arab feelings

Basij training courses or recommended for membership by Guard members. Prospective recruits then are investigated by "the spiritual leaders of Qom and the personal representative of Ayatollah Khomeini with respect to level of belief in the Islamic Republic and lack of attachment to East or West," according to Guard Deputy Commander Shamkhani. The few descriptions available to us from the press probably overstate the efficiency of the selection process, but they reflect the regime's emphasis on bringing in only politically reliable personnel.

Over the course of the war, the methods of acquiring manpower for the Basij have become more systematic. Initially an administrative nightmare, the Basij now has a national-level staff within the Revolutionary Guard headquarters that oversees 10 regions that correspond to the Guard's nationwide administrative regions. By December 1982 the Basij staff controlled 9,050 "resistance centers"—groups formed in mosques and villages where volunteers register—and 6,107 training camps. The national staff instructs Basij offices in each locale to issue calls for volunteers through Friday sermons at the local mosques and through the mass media.



*Elderly Basij among other POWs captured by Iraqis in February 1983 battle on the Doveyrich River front.* Paris Match ©

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**Revolutionary Guard Selection Process**

*Membership in the corps has particular sensitivity, and the guards have to be picked with utmost care. Fortunately the department in charge of picking the guards has continuously developed and discovered new methods that prevent the infiltration of undesirable elements into the corps. The Guard now has a vast department called Reception with methods of its own, and even many of the ministries and governmental organizations are inclined to use these experiences and this organization in choosing their own personnel.*

*A Guard Official*

*June 1982* [Redacted]

*After an initial interview, a complete investigation is taken of the volunteer's background before and after the revolution, his ethical qualities, political positions, social activities, conduct in family, neighborhood and place of work. The volunteers are asked to name references who also are investigated. After these requirements have been satisfied, the volunteer must . . . first register with the Basij . . . Then they must be recommended by a special member of the Basij to the Guard personnel unit. Those accepted by the Guard must also spend three months' service in the Basij, where they will be evaluated by the recommending member. With reevaluations, they will be accepted into the Guard.*

*Deputy Guard Commander Shamkhani*

*September 1982* [Redacted]

At times, thousands of people have responded to these calls, so many that, occasionally, the Basij claims in the press that it cannot process and train them all and must conduct a lottery to determine who will get the privilege of being sent to the front. [Redacted]

[Redacted] the Basij is having difficulty getting enough volunteers for frontline duty. [Redacted]

Moreover, a comparison of Basij membership to Basij personnel who have been sent to the front—2,500,000 versus 400,000—strongly suggests that the Basij has been even more important to the regime as a mass

**Guard and Basij Calls for Volunteers**

*In the name of God the compassionate, the merciful . . . it is required of all Tehran mosques—those bases for prayer and struggle—each to earmark a group of 22 people who have undergone military training for preparation and assignment as soon as possible, and to send them to the headquarters of the Basij in the Imam Khomeini Mosque . . . with a written recommendation. These groups, after gathering . . . will be sent to the west of the country.*

*Tehran Domestic News Service*

*26 September 1980* [Redacted]

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*In the name of God . . . right now whoever has the power to go to the fronts should present himself to the responsible officials and if he is needed at the fronts, then he should go to the fronts. And it is more necessary now than at any other time . . . There is a great need for the trained and educated forces to be sent to the fronts . . . I, as the Friday Imam of Yasuj, ask whoever can do so to answer the call of the Imam and go to the Guards committee for registration.*

*Shiraz Domestic News Service*

*14 April 1983* [Redacted]

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movement to spread Khomeini's message within Iran than as a military recruiter. Anyone who will proclaim Khomeini as his leader apparently is eligible to join the Basij's mass membership, and anyone requesting combat duty apparently is allowed to go. Members are predominantly children of elementary and secondary school age, but adults of all age groups also are represented. [Redacted]

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To identify prospective members and fighters, the Basij sponsors rallies and classes. Such "first-stage training," according to Iranian officials, is designed primarily to spread the precepts of the Khomeini revolution to the masses, particularly those in rural areas. It also is supposed to identify those who will be

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sent to "second-stage" military training before going to the front. We do not know the qualifications for combat duty, but old men and children as young as 10 have been sent into combat. The bulk of the fighters, according to the Iranian press, however, are poorly educated, highly religious males aged 13 to 18. [ ]

### Manpower Problems

The Khomeini regime has sought to create an image at home and abroad that it has an "army of 20 million" ready to sacrifice itself to bring down the Iraqi regime and spread Khomeini's Islam abroad. Analysis of Iran's military manpower, however, reveals the regime faces a significantly different situation:

- Iran's military commitment—measured by the ratio of males eligible for military service to males on active duty—is less in wartime than that of some other Middle Eastern states in peacetime.
- The regime has insufficient volunteers to man the present forces and has had to continue the Shah's conscription system to man the regular military. The Army has acquired nearly all its manpower by the draft, and even the elite Revolutionary Guard has been forced to select men from the ranks of conscripts.
- The number of Basij youngsters volunteering for action on the front apparently reached a peak by mid-1982. Many and probably most of the Basij that volunteered during 1982 and early 1983 were the most fanatically committed who already had been to the front more than once.
- The Army and the Guard have had increasing difficulty acquiring and retaining sufficient numbers of men capable of learning to handle and maintain even the relatively unsophisticated equipment in the ground forces. [ ]

**Level of Commitment.** At any given time, only about 5 percent of the Iranian males eligible for military duty are serving in the national defense. By this measure, Iran's military commitment is lower than that of most other Middle Eastern states in peacetime (see table 3). If all domestic security elements were included, the percentage of men under arms would

**Table 3**  
**Comparative Levels of National Defense Commitment, 1983**

Country	Number of Persons			Share of Eligible Males in National Defense (percent)
	Total Population, 1983	Eligible Males Ages 15-49	Males in National Defense <sup>a</sup>	
Iran	41,810,000	9,600,000	450,000	5
Iraq	14,480,000	3,300,000	650,000	20
Egypt	45,110,000	11,190,000	450,000	4
Jordan	3,620,000	820,000	65,000	8
Syria	10,080,000	2,220,000	300,000	14
Israel	4,220,000	1,010,000	200,000	20

<sup>a</sup>Men in paramilitary, gendarmerie, and border police organizations who serve primarily domestic security functions are not included in this table. Including them would double Iran's national defense commitment and raise that of others a few percentage points.

increase to 7 percent. If the few hundred thousand other people in revolutionary organizations directly or indirectly supporting the war effort also were added to the domestic security forces, Iran's "military" commitment might rise to about 10 percent. Nonetheless, Iran's large pool of military manpower is largely untapped. [ ]

Iran has an estimated 9,600,000 males aged 15 through 49 who theoretically are eligible for military duty (see table 4). The Khomeini regime probably perceives the pool of eligible males to be even larger because the Basij draws some of its manpower from the 2,670,000 male children 10 to 14 years old. Draft callups Iran has publicly issued during the war have encompassed some 3 million men. This group is diluted by a number of factors but should be sufficient to keep a much larger force in the field and absorb 375,000 wartime casualties. The group includes the nearly 500,000 young men who annually become eligible for conscription as well as supplementary calls for men as old as 26. Iraq, on the other hand, with a smaller pool of manpower, has had to call up men as old as 35. [ ]

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**Table 4**  
**Iranian Total Population and Males Eligible for Military Service, 1982-83**

Age Group	Male Population	
	1982	1983
<b>Total population, of which</b>	<b>40,550,000</b>	<b>41,810,000</b>
<b>Total males</b>	<b>20,580,000</b>	<b>21,220,000</b>
0-4	3,720,000	3,810,000
5-9	3,080,000	3,200,000
10-14	2,590,000	2,670,000
15-19	2,210,000	2,270,000
20-24	1,860,000	1,920,000
25-29	1,580,000	1,620,000
30-34	1,270,000	1,330,000
35-39	970,000	1,020,000
40-44	770,000	790,000
45-49	640,000	650,000
50-54	530,000	550,000
55-59	440,000	450,000
60-64	340,000	350,000
Over 64	580,000	590,000
<b>Total males eligible (age 15 through 49)</b>	<b>9,300,000</b>	<b>9,600,000</b>

[Redacted]

**Failing Volunteer Drives.** Official Iranian press statements suggest that, despite Iran's large untapped manpower, since mid-1982, the regime has had mounting difficulty acquiring sufficient volunteers for the war. Evidence that shortfalls in recruiting drives have become chronic includes:

- Basij officials and the press have been blamed for poor response to volunteer drives. Colonel Shirazi, Commander of the Army, said that press coverage was inadequate to "attract sufficient forces." (August, September 1982)
- A regional Revolutionary Guard commander stated that "We are faced with one issue that has so far stopped the operation. This is the question of a shortage of manpower. The Imam, as you are aware, stressed this issue. The Basij centers are currently ready to accept you." (September 1982)

**Factors Reducing the Military Manpower Pool**

**Ethnic groups.** The non-Persian ethnic groups and tribes have a low rate of volunteering for the Basij, according to Iranian official statements, and probably present government authorities with major difficulties in serving draft notices. [Redacted]

**Medical Status.** Forty percent of conscripts were rejected as unfit for service under the Shah, but by changing the rules for medical exemption, the new draft law would take a higher percentage. [Redacted]

**Literacy.** Many military specialties require literacy—about 40 percent of the male population is literate—but as in the days of the Shah, few men would be rejected by the Army or Revolutionary Guard today for illiteracy. Literate males probably prefer the Air Force and Navy to wartime duty in the Army or Revolutionary Guard. [Redacted]

**Revolutionary duty.** A large but undetermined number of young men are involved in the myriad of revolutionary organizations important to the regime's efforts to Islamize Iran in its own image. Members of most of these organizations get no legal exemption from the draft but probably can avoid it. [Redacted]

**Family exemption.** For most of the war, one son of families with martyrs has been exempt from military service. Since casualties during much of the war have been disproportionately high among volunteers, this rule has had greater impact on the more fanatical supporters of the regime than the average draft-age male. [Redacted]

- Appeals for volunteers increasingly emphasize the need for personnel with combat experience. Indeed, an increasing percentage of Basij going to the front have been there more than once. (Since July 1982)

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Mullah and other irregulars performing urban security role. [redacted]



Baghdad Observer ©

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- Mohsen Rezai, the Commander of the Guard, stated that the Basij "needs 10 times the forces now at its disposition." Later in the fall he visited outlying provinces to promote recruitment "so as to send more forces to the battlefields." (September, November 1982)

A variety of other "revolutionary organizations," also draw volunteers from the pool of males eligible for military service. These groups could number several hundred thousand supporters of the regime who would not be available for frontline duty. [redacted]

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- Khomeini had to give calls for volunteers the added authority of a religious decree or *fatwah*. (November 1982) [redacted]

**The Quality Problem.** Iranian official statements reveal the regime is concerned not only about absolute shortages but also about shortages of qualified military manpower:

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The regime's pool of committed supporters is drained by a wide variety of factors, but the requirements of the internal security forces—the Gendarmerie, National Police, local Basij vigilantes, and Komitehs—are particularly heavy. The Gendarmerie officers academy received 10,000 applications from college graduates before selecting 800 of "the most faithful and committed brothers," according to official Iranian statements in the press. The high number of college applicants suggests the Gendarmerie is a favored way to avoid the draft. The Police presumably also have similar tests of religious reliability, and last year both organizations were authorized to grow. The Police alone were short 20,000 men last year. In addition, members of the Komitehs are among the regime's firmest supporters but are exempt from compulsory service at the front. [redacted]

- The Majlis (parliament) authorized the Ministry of Defense in late 1981 to hire anyone needed for "combative and technical occupations . . . to make up for shortages of manpower in all organizations of the military." Even draft age men with an elementary school education could be hired under contract in lieu of their compulsory service if they agreed to work in technical specialties for four years.

- Calls for volunteers to the Guard and Basij increasingly include pleas for men with basic skills. For example, the Guard Commander noted the need for volunteers in November 1982, "especially for those who are specialists in various areas such as mechanics, drivers, and support and logistic services."

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**Selected Revolutionary Organizations Draining the Pool of Military Manpower**

**Reconstruction Crusade (Jihad-e Sazandegi).** Members may number a few hundred thousand and are involved in nationwide efforts to build and maintain roads, bridges, and civic facilities. It performs an important role in military engineering activities at the front. [redacted]

**Foundation of the Deprived (Bonyad-e Mostazafin).** In charge of confiscating property of the Shah and other wealthy figures of his regime. [redacted]

**Martyrs' Foundation (Bonyad-e Shahid).** Is responsible for looking after the families of those killed—martyrs—or disabled in the war, the regime's revolutionary analogy to the US Veterans' Administration. [redacted]

**Office of Do Good and Stop Bad Deeds (Amr be Maaruf ve Nahy az Monker).** Members are mainly young, ambitious clerical students who ensure Islamic moral codes are not being violated in homes. [redacted]

- Selection criteria that value political reliability over mental capacity and experience shrink the pool of qualified manpower.
- Closure of the universities and interruption of nationwide literacy programs reduced the quality of the manpower pool. Most volunteers in the paramilitary forces are uneducated and illiterate. 25X1
- Inefficiency of existing recruiting, selection, and assignment procedures hampers effective use of manpower. 25X1
- The stigma of being in the military continues—despite the regime's positive treatment of the regular military in the press—and will slow recruiting of the best personnel for a long time. [redacted] 25X1

We believe most of the problems with manpower quality are a result of policies that the regime considers fundamental to the revolution and is unlikely to alter soon. Some of these factors are endemic to a developing society and hampered recruiting of the best people even under the Shah. As a result, we expect shortages of qualified personnel to continue for the near future. Iran will continue to experience considerable difficulty employing its current military forces and will not be able to rapidly assimilate large quantities of new materiel soon. [redacted] 25X1 25X1

- This spring the regime issued public draft calls for high school graduates between 19 and 26 years of age; which reveal a continuing shortage of literate or competent personnel; previous calls to some of these age groups apparently had not brought an adequate response. [redacted]

In addition to the difficulty of getting qualified people, a number of factors have reduced the overall quality of Iran's fighting personnel, which in our view will seriously impair their ability to fight a conventional war for the next several years:

- Half of the ground force is comprised of ill-trained, poorly disciplined paramilitary forces that will not be integrated into the regular military unless the regime fundamentally changes its policies.
- The Army-Guard dichotomy precludes efficient use of all types of military resources, particularly scarce instructors and training facilities.
- The regime's fear of foreign dependence has denied the Iranian military access to valuable expertise and training.

**Flagging Will To Fight.** Evidence also is mounting that Iranian troops are less willing to fight major battles under present battlefield circumstances, a situation only recently of concern to the regime. In early March 1983 the Iranian Minister of Energy stated that the war was "sapping the revolutionary spirit from the people" and causing increased desertions from battlefield units, [redacted] 25X1 25X1

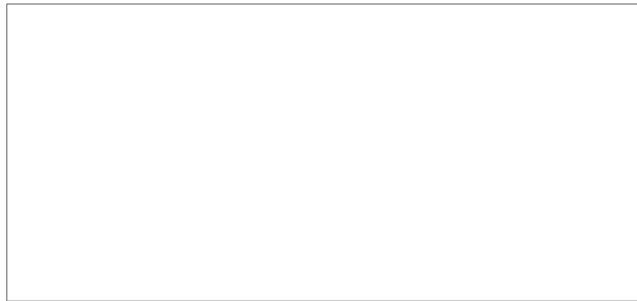
[redacted] The instances of desertion this summer are most meaningful to the regime because they involve Revolutionary Guard personnel. [redacted] 25X1

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*Although we have lost a number of beloved ones in this war . . . what our country has achieved is much greater and more valuable than all these losses . . . Those who are pessimistic, who are sitting in a corner and who point out the deficiencies and who ask why so many of us have been killed, why the situation is such and such, and other such questions, they never look at the other side to see what we have achieved. Of course, we, and everyone, know how many of us have been killed, crippled, or injured . . . with such thinking, criticism also should be leveled against His Holiness the Lord of the Martyrs (Imam Hosein).*

**Causes**

Iran's manpower shortages are caused by a variety of factors, the most important of which are changing motivations of the individual soldier, massive casualties with no identifiable gains on the ground, and poor management [redacted]

*Ayatollah Khomeini  
23 December 1982* [redacted]

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**Changing Motivations.** We believe that the shortages of volunteers and eroding morale reflect a fundamental change in the motivations of many of Iran's troops, partly because they no longer are fighting for their own land but invading that of another. The motivation problems experienced by the Iranians during their attempts to invade Iraqi territory are analogous to those experienced by the Iraqis when they were fighting inside Iran. [redacted]

By the fall of 1982 a variety of indicators strongly suggested that excessive casualties were a primary issue in a debate within the regime over whether to continue the war. [redacted]

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Throughout most of the war regular military personnel were motivated primarily by nationalism, that is, by the desire to defend Iran. Although the bulk of the Basij and Revolutionary Guard troops are motivated by Islam and devotion to Khomeini, the defense of Iran almost certainly has also been a strong component of their will to fight. Some Iranians [redacted]

By late December domestic criticism apparently had reached levels requiring Khomeini to respond to war critics pointedly and at some length. He went so far as to suggest that criticism of the regime's war policy and the large number of casualties was tantamount to criticism of Imam Hosein, Shiism's most important martyr. [redacted]

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[redacted] have consistently argued that most Iranian fighters were nationally motivated. [redacted]

**Casualties.** Another major cause for Iran's manpower problems is the high rate of casualties. We estimate that at least 125,000 troops have been killed and another 250,000 wounded. Hints that concerns over heavy casualties had become a serious policy issue first appeared during the fighting near Basrah in July 1982. [redacted]

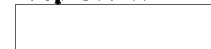
Nonetheless, it was not until after another failure in early February 1983—the first stage of Operation Val Fajr on the Doveyrich River front—and another 8,000 Iranian dead that the regime first publicly stated that its decisions on the battlefield were linked to its concern over excessive casualties. This is a

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Some of the 8,000 Iranian dead after the abortive Baghdad Observer © attack on the Doveyrich River front, February 1983.

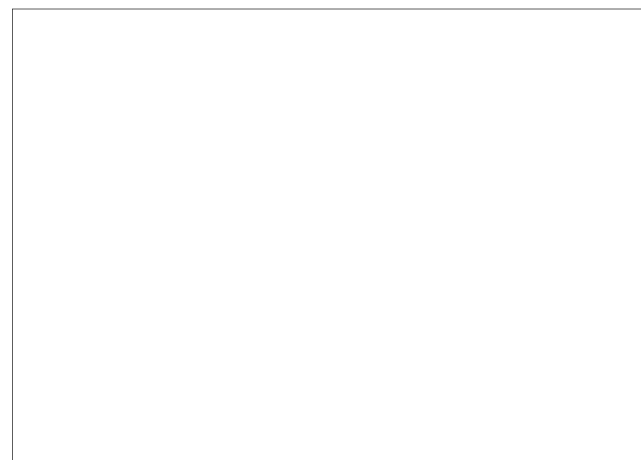
"If we should decide to fight the Iraqis and achieve victory at any price, then it would be sufficient to aim our artillery at Iraqi cities . . . our combatants . . . have shown that if it becomes necessary to cross over to Iraqi territory, they can do so. This shows their might. But we shall not do it, because the lives of our combatants are more precious than anything else. We are trying to end the war with as few martyrs as possible. You who are going to the battlefield must not resort to any measure in order to be martyred, for martyrdom is not the chief objective of war."

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Hojjat-ol Eslam Rafsanjani  
9 May 1983

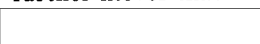


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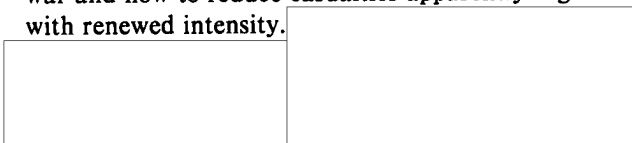


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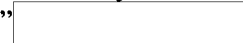
significant departure from the regime's policy of exalting death on the battlefield as martyrdom in the cause of Islam. The statement takes on additional significance because it was made along with leaders' repeated statements that Val Fajr's next phase would be the final offensive. Although the regime had described other offensives as "final"—meaning they would lead to an Iraqi collapse—by March the regime appeared to be reassuring the population that whatever the outcome of the battle, it would desist from further moves that would result in heavy casualties.



While planning the next phase of Val Fajr, the behind-the-scenes debate on whether to continue the war and how to reduce casualties apparently raged with renewed intensity.



The failure forced the regime to again evaluate its position on the war, and casualties were again a major feature—possibly the most significant feature—of its deliberations. On 9 May Rafsanjani again publicly linked battlefield decisions to casualties but pointed out that "martyrdom is not the chief objective of the war."



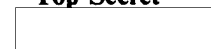
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Rafsanjani probably was joined by President Khamenei, Prime Minister Musavi, Chief of the Joint Staff Zahirnezhad, and many high-ranking professional military officers in arguing against another

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invasion attempt soon, according to public statements by Iranian officials [redacted] We believe those who were predisposed to continue large-scale attacks and were less sensitive to the broader implications of casualties probably include radical clerics such as Ayatollah Montazeri, Commander of the Revolutionary Guard Rezai, and Army Commander Shirazi. [redacted]

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Iran's estimated 375,000 casualties are considerable, but still less than 1 percent of its population of nearly 42 million. The regime's concern, however, is amplified by the disproportionate toll that war casualties have taken among its supporters. One contributing factor is the strategy of leading attacks with Guard and Basij units, which are comprised of the regime's most ardent supporters. Moreover, the bulk of the paramilitary volunteers come from the poorer elements of the Persian ethnic group who are the primary supporters of the regime. This concentration of the burden of the war probably is a major factor slowing recruitment drives. [redacted]

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**Poor Management.** The administrative havoc caused by lack of cooperation among the various organizations requiring manpower probably limits the regime's efforts to tap the pool of males eligible for military duty. It forces the paramilitary recruiters to depend on public calls for men on an ad hoc basis whenever an operational need arises. In addition, it probably has allowed a large number of young men to avoid their military obligation by serving in the various revolutionary organizations, despite the fact that only Komi-teh members are afforded a legal exemption. Finally, lack of centralized management of wartime manpower resources may to some extent negate the regime's attempts to resolve manpower shortfalls by issuing a new draft law and strengthening the reserve system. [redacted]

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The regime's first serious attempt to centralize management of wartime manpower and materiel apparently began in July 1982.<sup>2</sup> A press account of Iranian

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<sup>2</sup> In the first month of the war, the Prime Minister established a group to coordinate the government's war efforts. Even if the government had developed an administrative structure capable of managing such an effort, it probably would have had little jurisdiction over the various revolutionary organizations that derive their authority from Khomeini. [redacted]

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attempts to centralize manpower management at that time revealed the fundamental problems the regime has controlling the anarchic tendencies of competing groups throughout society. This was part of the regime's overall effort to define more narrowly the authority of many revolutionary organizations and to bring them under at least nominal government control. It entailed a meeting of 20 representatives of several governmental and revolutionary institutions in July 1982. The problems of managing war manpower and materiel capabilities were aired, including the lack of:

- A "unified policy toward mobilizing all capabilities."
- "Precise statistical information" on the existing forces and materiel contribution.
- Cooperation among organizations. [redacted]

The manpower management study group decided to form another organization to study the problem further. According to an Iranian press account, an organization called the Mobilization of Capabilities (Basij-e Emkanat) was to hold weekly sessions and create other commissions to study wartime resource management problems and to develop a plan. That organization did not appear to have authority to implement recommendations, a step that probably would require laws passed by the Majlis (parliament) and much additional debate in the regime. [redacted]

The Ministry of Defense was given a key role in bringing order to resource management, but the revolutionary organizations feared a loss of their autonomy. Representatives of the Reconstruction Crusade and other revolutionary groups, according to the press account, emphasized that the new organization must retain a "revolutionary essence" and not become subject to "bureaucratic relations." They correctly feared that centralization could cost them unique Islamic prerogatives they enjoy in a more fluid institutional environment. [redacted]

We do not know if the Mobilization of Capabilities ever became a functioning organization with the authority to resolve Iran's manpower problems. [redacted]

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**Ayatollah Khomeini's Fatwah**

*In the Name of the Most Exalted. In the present conditions every individual who is capable of going to the front should notify the concerned authorities, and if it is considered that he is needed on the fronts, it is incumbent upon him to go and this has priority over every other kind of work.*

7 November 1982 [redacted]

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**Solutions**

Iran could eliminate its shortfalls in military manpower by implementing a general mobilization. Such a step would be highly disruptive, but it would give the regime a legal basis for impressing any males it desired, particularly those who have been trained in military specialties and civilians who have basic skills needed by the military. Our analysis of press statements by Iranian officials suggests that the regime seriously considered implementing a general mobilization in November 1982 but rejected the idea, apparently on political, religious, and practical grounds. [redacted]

**Khomeini's Mobilization Edict.** On 7 November 1982 Ayatollah Khomeini issued an edict (*fatwah*) that was literally a general mobilization order but fell far short of being the religious equivalent of a general mobilization order. A *fatwah* is the most authoritative and binding form of religious directive that can be issued by a senior Shia ayatollah. The edict's issuance demonstrates the regime's need to take unusual measures to get more volunteers. Subsequent statements by Iranian officials reveal that general mobilization was the subject of discussions—probably even heated debate—within the regime: President Khamenei and Prime Minister Musavi were against general mobilization, and the commanders of the Army and Guard were for it. [redacted]

The debate over the *fatwah* appears to have involved arcane religious issues that in most other nations would be irrelevant. Under Khomeini's theocratic

regime, however, these issues have profound importance. Religious issues that probably were at the heart of the debate included:

- *Concept of duty.* Despite its literal English meaning, the edict does not make war duty a religious responsibility. The edict used a nonreligious term that defined duty as a general obligation "incumbent" on every individual.
- *Concept of holy war.* The edict does not explicitly call for a *jihad*—which would be equivalent to the civil concept of general mobilization—against the Iraqis. Were the issue up to some of the more radical Iranian clerics and possibly Khomeini himself, holy war would have been declared against the Iraqis long ago. Muslim doctrine, however, proscribes calling a *jihad* against other Muslims.
- *Authority to redefine duty and declare jihad.* Calling a *jihad* and redefining war duty could be done authoritatively in Iran only if enough of the senior Iranian ayatollahs—few of whom are members of the regime—collectively acted. Such a group officially could declare the Iraqis infidels—as Khomeini and other religious leaders already have done publicly—and then institute a *jihad*. In November the senior ayatollahs, [redacted] balked at Khomeini's attempts because declaring *jihad* against another Muslim state is contrary to Islamic doctrine. [redacted]

Despite Khomeini's strong desire to continue the invasion of Iraq, he did not declare *jihad* on his own authority, possibly because it carried too high a risk of being rejected both by the senior ayatollahs and by the mass of Iranians. The regime presumably could attempt to institute general mobilization using civil, rather than religious authorization. Given the conflict in the regime over how to address the casualty problem, we believe that option also would risk failure and cause additional rifts in the regime. [redacted]

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**The Army-Guard Call for Manpower**

... In the course of thanking the beloved nation for its unprecedented response to the edict (fatwah) of the Imam of the nation and shadow of God for people to go to the battlefronts, we direct the attention of the national officials and various classes of people to some of the priorities and necessities that exist at the front and behind the lines:

- Since activities behind the lines, from helping to mobilize the people to helping with obtaining provisions and support for the fronts, are especially important, it is therefore requested that national officials and authorities, the provincial governors, and officials of organizations give top-priority consideration to the above matters, for the desired management of the war directly depends on this.
- It is necessary that those who have had military training or who have been to the fronts previously, as well as those who are specialists or are familiar with engineering, or mechanical repairs, go to the front with the cooperation of military people throughout the country, so that, with the full cooperation of the armed forces and the help of the fighters of Islam, the evil of Saddam's infidel followers will be eliminated as quickly as possible.
- All of those whose continued presence in the country's offices and organizations is in some way necessary, based on the discretion of organizational and ministry officials, must remain, so that, with the cooperation of officials and adherence to priorities, advisable decisions can be made with regard to sending them to the front. In conclusion, it is necessary to note that, in the event of the emergence of other necessities and priorities, the matter will be put before the martyr-nurturing nation. We are desirous of the glory and greatness of Islam and God.

Col. Seyyed Shirazi, Army  
Commander  
Mohsen Rezai, Revolutionary Guard  
Commander  
7 November 1982 [redacted]

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We have evidence of only one minor religious leader interpreting Khomeini's edict as making service on the front the religious obligation of each Muslim. On 10 November 1983, the Friday Imam of Shiraz broadcast a sermon making war duty a condition for a favorable reception in the afterlife that concluded: "It is my ardent desire that all friends must leave their work and join" other martyrs. The Commander of the Guard repeated the substance of Khomeini's decree calling on "all able persons to go to the front," adding that "the more forces there were on the fronts the better." Guard offices in Tehran used the *fatwah* for added authority in what have become standard calls for "all brothers who have not had the opportunity to be dispatched to the front." Other groups—the cabinet, government workers, political-ideological workers in the Ministry of Defense—announced their readiness to answer the edict by going to the front, a gesture of no substance given subsequent events. [redacted]

**Army-Guard Desire for Mobilization.** A unique call for support from the nation was issued on the same day as Khomeini's edict by the two top commanders at the front, Colonel Shirazi, Commander of the Army, and Mohsen Rezai, Commander of the Revolutionary Guard. The statement—the first such joint address to the nation—is important not only because it amplifies Khomeini's edict but also because it strongly implies that elements in the government are not placing high enough priority on the war. [redacted]

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Unlike Khomeini's decree that all able-bodied personnel go to the front, the commanders explicitly wanted all trained and specialist personnel to go. Nonetheless, if the statement had had legal force, it, too, would be tantamount to a general mobilization. [redacted]

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***Khamenei Deflates Khomeini's Edict.*** In fact, neither general mobilization nor holy war was implemented by the decrees, a point that President Khamenei took pains to make clear the day after they were issued. He was granted an audience with Khomeini in order to clarify whether the edict required everyone to go to the front. Following the audience, Khamenei announced the following:

The Imam said his message did not mean that everyone should go to the fronts. It meant that when there is a need—and there is a need on the frontline for additional personnel—and this need is communicated to the public by military commanders, then, according to this decree, it is necessary to meet this need by sending ordinary people regardless of their job. At present the commanders have not made such a request, and there is no need for such a huge force on that level. Therefore, government employees and other organizations should continue working at their job. At present there is no need for them to be sent to the fronts. Fortunately, from the beginning of the war up to now there has been no need for such a general mobilization, and we hope there will be no need to mobilize everyone in the future. If such a situation arises, then everyone, in whatever job, should leave for the fronts. [redacted]

Khamenei's reinterpretation essentially reversed Khomeini's edict. It directly conflicted with Rezai's assertion that "the more manpower on the front the better for combat operations." It ignored the fact that military commanders—Shirazi and Rezai—had issued a statement of need for previously trained and specialist personnel. Both the Khamenei and Shirazi-Rezai statements agree that government personnel need not go to the fronts now. In an interview with Iranian media representatives a few days later, Prime Minister Musavi stated that the nation was "ready, when necessary, to administer the coup de grace to (the Iraqi) regime with a general mobilization," another effort to reassure the public that, whatever it had heard, this drastic step had not been taken. [redacted]

***Arguments Against Mobilization.*** Our analysis suggests a number of reasons why the regime rejected general mobilization. From a practical standpoint, the regular military, Revolutionary Guard, and Basij

could not train, equip, and manage a massive influx of personnel quickly enough to influence battles then planned. In addition, the already weakened economy would undergo widespread disruption if large numbers of employees were required to go to the front. [redacted]

We believe that political considerations, however, probably were more important factors in the decision to reject general mobilization. Using coercion to place more men under arms not only would field a less motivated force but could place under arms a larger number of men who would threaten the regime. [redacted]

In the context of its broader concerns over casualties and domestic support for the war, the regime probably was unwilling to take the political risks of instituting more coercive recruitment measures. We believe that if the regime had the full support of the population for its war policies, some leaders, including Khomeini, probably would not hesitate to continue throwing ill-equipped infantry into battle in hopes Iraq would run out of men first. But our analysis indicates that over the past year the rate of volunteering has slowed considerably. [redacted]

#### **Other Options**

Instead of a general mobilization, the Khomeini regime has issued more verbal exhortations for volunteers, tightened draft regulations, and formed new volunteer regular and paramilitary reserve units, all of which are only temporary and partial solutions to its manpower problems. [redacted]

***New Draft Law.*** After a yearlong debate in the Majlis, the regime is about to replace the Shah's 1972 conscription law with an Islamic one. According to Iranian officials, the new law will lengthen the periods of service, tighten exemptions, and reduce the chance of evasion. Exemptions for students and professionals that primarily benefited the elite under the Shah would be drastically curtailed. Men previously exempted for certain medical problems like poor eyesight and flat feet would serve in military support units. Even theological students would serve after exemptions for the period of their schooling expire. [redacted]

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**Selected Features of the Proposed Draft Law**

- Requires males to register in their 18th year to be drafted in their 19th year.
- Establishes rules by which males 15 through 18 years of age can volunteer for military service and be accepted if they "have the physical and mental ability"—not further specified—for military service. (This may be an attempt to legalize aspects of the Basij volunteer system.)
- Lengthens the period of peacetime compulsory service in the regular military from one and a half to two years.
- Lengthens the period of service in the "precautionary force" from six to eight months. This reserve force can be activated during wartime, which in effect would extend compulsory service to 32 months.
- Changes the reserve categories to which conscripts will be assigned following compulsory service and time in the "precautionary force": primary reserves (10 years), secondary reserves (10 years).
- Establishes a legal basis for reviewing the political reliability—or, as the draft law states, the "moral and security competence"—of conscripts.
- Tightens significantly the rules for draft exemptions. [redacted]

Draft evasion is so rampant that the regime considers the law's severe punishment for noncompliance to be one of the most important changes. Failure to register for the draft or to appear for duty when selected long has been subject to legal sanctions, including prison terms. The new law, however, would deprive draft offenders of a livelihood. For example, a draft evader would not be able to get a driver's license, sell property, get government financial aid or housing, and, in time of war, would be proscribed from using utilities like running water and electricity. Although the proposed law is not yet in force, press statements by Gendarmerie officials suggest some of the more stringent measures are already being enforced. [redacted]

At the same time, however, the proposed law opens other loopholes that benefit the new religious elite. Drafted theological students are accorded military rank commensurate with their level of religious schooling. In addition, the cleric-dominated Supreme Defense Council is able to exempt high-ranking mullahs. Finally, another law was sent in early 1982 to the Majlis, according to the Iranian press, which would allow the armed men in local Komitehs to perform domestic security jobs in lieu of compulsory military service. [redacted]

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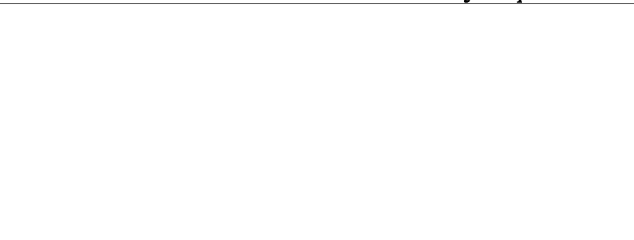
**New Volunteer Army Reserve Units.** Following the debate over whether to institute general mobilization, the Army was authorized on 24 November 1982 to develop a system of volunteer reserve units called Qods (Persian for "Jerusalem") Reserve Battalions, according to official Iranian statements. This constituted the first expansion of the Army that the regime has authorized since the early months of the war. The battalions have permanent facilities at Army garrisons throughout the country and are manned by volunteers who have completed their compulsory service. [redacted]

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The Qods system, as described by President Khomeini, gives the military "access to a vast voluntary force that will greatly increase the forces at the disposal of the armed forces." The Army moved quickly to form some of the battalions and place them in combat. Within two weeks of budget authorization, most major Iranian combat units and training centers had been issued instructions and publicity materials concerning the battalions, and by 9 December 1982 the first units were formed. We do not know how many men volunteered for the units, but the registration period was extended for 10 days, implying that sufficient numbers were not immediately acquired.

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Deployments of regular military units suggest dispersal rather than concentration of forces. Iran appears to have given up any hope of pushing deep into Iraq soon. [Redacted]

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Tehran's problems with recruiting and motivation of military personnel are not serious enough to preclude fighting a long-term war of attrition along the border with occasional multibrigade attacks. Against Iraq's vastly superior firepower, however, we believe such attacks would have little prospect of advancing deep into Iraq. Instead, the Iranians apparently are trying to keep the Iraqi Army tied down while keeping the Gulf and Syrian pipeline closed to Iraqi oil exports and increasing aid to Iraqi dissidents. [Redacted]

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**Paramilitary Reserve System.** In mid-1983 the Revolutionary Guard publicly announced its intention to develop its own system to tap more rapidly the pool of Basij personnel who have served at the front. No other information is available, but the Guard apparently is on the verge of developing a reserve force similar to the active reserve system the Army has been developing since late 1982. Heretofore, the Basij has depended on the initiative of individuals to respond to manning requirements for impending operations. To maintain manning levels, we would expect the Guard also to lengthen the one- to three-month tours of duty that Basij personnel now serve. [Redacted]

Iran's attack near Haj Umran in July fits into such a strategy. [Redacted]

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**Prospects**

We do not believe that these steps will provide Iran with the manpower it needs to resume frequent large-scale attacks against the Iraqis. Unwilling to coerce a larger percentage of recruits into the armed forces and unable to acquire sufficient numbers of highly motivated troops to mount large-scale attempts to invade Iraq, Tehran, in our judgment, has been forced to reduce the scale or frequency of attacks to lower Iranian casualties to a level that could be replaced by current recruiting methods. This entails giving up any hope of bringing down Iraqi President Saddam Husayn by inflicting a major military defeat on Iraq. Such a war of attrition could, with economic pressure and subversion, bring down the Iraqi regime. Iran could also initiate a long-term rearmament program to raise conventional warfighting capability to match Iraq's. This would bypass Iran's manpower problems by substituting new weapons, increased firepower, and conventional tactics for the heavy personnel losses involved in human-wave tactics. [Redacted]

[Redacted] the attack took place in the mountains of northern Iraq, where the terrain favors Iran's infantry and limits the effectiveness of Iraq's armor, artillery, and airpower. Both of these factors also tend to limit Iranian casualties. [Redacted]

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At the same time, the location of the attack is symbolic for dissident Iraqi Kurds. Haj Umran was one of the major staging areas for Mulla Mustafa Barzani, leader of the major Kurdish revolt against Baghdad in 1974-75. [Redacted]

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**War of Attrition.** The current military situation suggests the regime already has reverted to a war of attrition. [Redacted]

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A strategy of limited attacks using Iraqi dissidents will limit Iran's personnel losses while exploiting the ethnic strains in Iraqi society. Given Iran's limited success in Iraqi Kurdistan, additional attacks can be expected. [redacted]

**The Rearmament Option.** To win the war on the battlefield by pushing deep into Iraq would require, in our view, a massive Iranian rearmament program designed to achieve conventional military superiority. This option would allow the regime to resume fighting a higher intensity war by exchanging politically unacceptable casualty rates on the battlefield for new equipment, increased firepower, and conventional tactics. Iran has the economic and manpower potential to achieve that goal, but we believe the effort would require nearly a decade. This option also would present the regime with possibly insurmountable political barriers and immense practical problems. [redacted]

The regime would have to abandon its cherished domestic and foreign policies. To rearm quickly, Iran would have to depend heavily on foreign suppliers and advisers for several years, giving up the relative independence achieved at the revolution's outset. It also would have to decide on major Eastern or Western arms suppliers, thereby giving up the policy of depending on "neither East nor West." Nearly all major suppliers so far have been politically unacceptable to the regime. Moreover, economic development and war reconstruction programs would have to be shelved indefinitely. And finally, the regime would have to bring educated professionals back into the military to handle the influx of sophisticated equipment, another political risk we believe it is unlikely to take soon. A consensus to rearm is unlikely in the short term. [redacted]

From a practical standpoint, the military could not readily absorb large amounts of equipment quickly. In our view, the required numbers of educated and trainable personnel are not now available to operate and maintain existing equipment. The training establishment already is stretched beyond its capability to provide even basic training. Several years and high levels of foreign support would be required to train enough Iranian troops and instructors just to absorb replacement equipment. [redacted]

**Impact of the War.** Iran has little prospect of bringing down the regime of Saddam Husayn by military action in the next few years, but its population resources and economic situation give it a long-term advantage over Iraq in a war of attrition. The burden of keeping a large standing army in the field has a far greater impact of Iraq's smaller population. Moreover, as long as the Gulf and the pipeline across Syria are closed to Iraqi oil exports, Iraq's financial situation will continue to deteriorate and, together with the strains of the three-year-old war, could eventually bring down Saddam's regime. [redacted]

During the next two years Iran probably will be able to occupy large sections along the border in Iraqi Kurdistan, some as large as a few hundred square kilometers. The mountainous terrain there favors the Iranian style of combat and reduces the importance of Iraq's materiel advantage. Such gains are unlikely to directly threaten the Iraqi regime in the short term, however, because the remote sections of Kurdistan always have been tenuously controlled by Baghdad. [redacted]

Continuing the war of attrition in the north will not impair Tehran's power either, even if an occasional large-scale attack incurs heavy casualties. Nonetheless, the war continues to increase internal political and economic pressures that have in the last two months manifested themselves in widespread demonstrations in Iran's major cities. In addition, the regime's policy of arming Kurds and giving them a role in the war of attrition could backfire if the Kurds, known for their shifting allegiances, eventually turn on their Persian patrons. [redacted]

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## Appendix A

**Iran: Army Manning, September 1983**

Units	Brigades	Manning
<b>Total Army personnel</b>		<b>235,400- 269,000</b>
<b>Total combat</b>	<b>32-34</b>	<b>175,400- 189,000</b>
<b>Divisions</b>		
16th Armored	3	14,400
21st Hamzeh Infantry	4	20,000
28th Infantry	3	14,000
64th Infantry	3-4	14,000- 19,000
77th Infantry	3-4	15,000- 20,000
81st Armored	4	16,400
88th Armored	2	10,000
92nd Armored	3	14,400
<b>Independent combat elements</b>		
84th Infantry Brigade	1	5,200
37th Armored Brigade	1	4,000
55th Airborne Brigade	1	5,400
23rd Special Forces Brigade	1	1,600
11th Artillery Group		3,000
22nd Artillery Group		3,000
33rd Artillery Group		3,000
44th Artillery Group		3,000
55th Artillery Group		3,000
<b>Combat units formed during the war</b>		
30th Gorgan Infantry Brigade	1	4,300
40th Sarab Infantry Brigade	1	4,300
58th Zolfaqar Infantry Brigade	1	4,300
11 other new infantry battalions		7,700
12-20 Qods reserve battalions		5,400- 9,000
Support elements		60,000- 80,000

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**Appendix B**

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**Revolutionary Guard Manning**

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Guard brigade is much smaller than a regular Army brigade, usually the size of Army battalions and sometimes as small as a company. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] during the first days of the revolution, the Guard had no central organization and was more a collection of followers of different powerful mullahs who were loosely affiliated by the appellation "revolutionary guard." Members of a number of these organizations were, and some still are, called "revolutionary guards" or *pasdaran*, a source of analytic difficulty. Most members were young, illiterate, fanatical Muslims, and many were ruffians out to profit from the disorder created by the revolution. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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Once given Ayatollah Khomeini's blessing, a narrowly defined Revolutionary Guard organization has emerged from the confusion of the early months of the revolution to become the most powerful armed force supporting the regime. The Guard has since evolved from a loose confederation to a constitutionally approved organization with national and regional offices, military control structures, its own government ministry, and conventional military units. [Redacted]

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Analysis of the manning of Guard conventional combat units suggests that [Redacted] between 50,000 and 150,000 men have been fighting the Iraqis. Such analysis—relatively straightforward when applied to Army units—yields a wide range of manning levels for the Guard because of the hazy distinction between Guard cadre and Basij elements, [Redacted] and the haphazard structure of Guard units.

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