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# Iraq-Turkey-Iran: The Kurdish Insurgencies

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An Intelligence Assessment

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March 1988

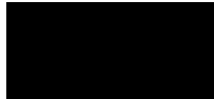
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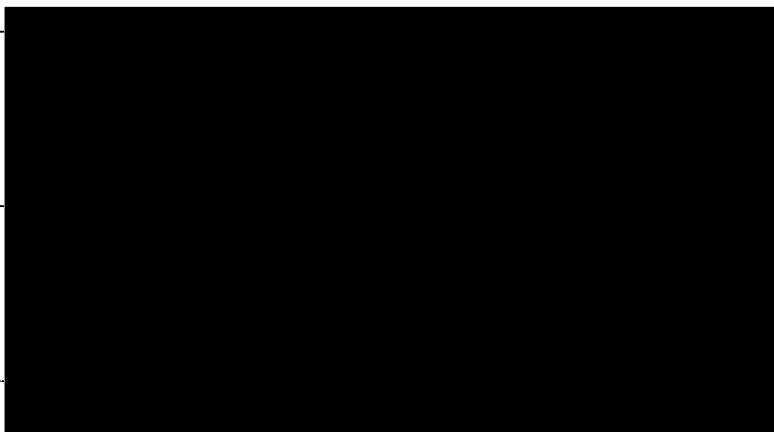
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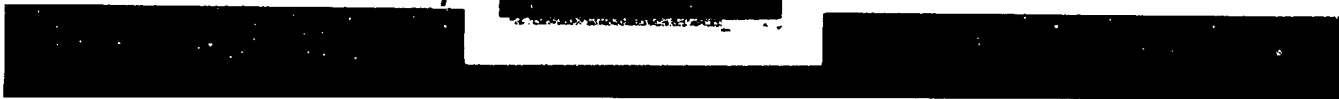
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# Iraq-Turkey-Iran: The Kurdish Insurgencies

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**Iraq-Turkey-Iran:  
The Kurdish Insurgencies**

**Key Judgments**

*Information available  
as of 10 February 1988  
was used in this report.*

Kurdish insurgent activity in Iraq, Turkey, and Iran is likely to intensify during the next several years:

- In Iraq, Kurdish rebels supported by Iranian Revolutionary Guards probably will inflict more casualties on the government and force Baghdad to divert additional troops from the Iranian front. The Kurds are likely to expand their control over some mountainous territory and Kurdish villages in the north this spring, but they will only intermittently threaten Iraq's oil pipeline and road to Turkey.
- The insurgency in Turkey, once largely dependent on support from Syria and Iraqi Kurdish rebels, is becoming increasingly self-sufficient, in part because of contributions from the large Turkish Kurdish exile communities in Western Europe. The predominant dissident group, the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), is likely to attract growing numbers of Kurds to its goal of an independent Kurdish state. The Kurds probably have become a permanent problem for Ankara, but they will not pose a serious threat during the next two to three years.
- The weak Kurdish rebels in northwestern Iran pose less of a threat, but they are a growing annoyance to Tehran.

Iraq's increasing reliance on repression to control its large Kurdish community is causing loyal Kurds to join the rebel ranks. Tehran has successfully countered Iran's fractious Kurdish dissident groups by employing force and cutting their supply lines from Iraq. Turkey continues to repress Kurdish cultural and linguistic expression but has not prevented the Kurdish community from abetting the insurgents.

In the months ahead, regional rivals are likely to intensify their efforts to exploit Kurds as mercenaries. Baghdad is probably increasing aid to Iranian Kurdish rebels so they will fight Iranian forces and block routes Tehran uses to supply Kurdish and Revolutionary Guard forces in Iraq. Syria and Libya have provided support to Iraqi Kurds in the past, but they may have reduced their aid as their ties to Baghdad have improved. Syria is likely to continue to use its aid to Turkey's Kurdish rebels as leverage in negotiations with Ankara over scarce water from the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Iraq may follow suit if its war with Iran winds down and permits Baghdad to focus more attention on Turkey.

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Kurdish Marxist groups—the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan in Iraq, the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran, and the PKK of Turkey—are growing in size relative to traditional Kurdish tribal elements. The increased education and urbanization of Kurds fostered by Baghdad and Ankara probably will accelerate this trend. [REDACTED]

We have no evidence that the USSR is supporting Kurdish rebel groups, although Soviet support for regional Communist parties indirectly aids Kurdish guerrillas. Moscow probably is wary of the increasing dissidence among Kurds, an ethnic group straddling the Soviet border. Moscow is likely to continue contacts with the Kurds to keep an eye on them and to preserve the option of supporting them in the future. [REDACTED]

The Kurdish insurgency in Iraq concerns moderate US allies in the Persian Gulf region because it complicates Baghdad's efforts to defend against Iranian offensives by sapping Iraqi resources and damaging popular morale. The rebels draw Iraqi attention and troops from the Iranian front and encourage dissidents elsewhere in Iraq. This drain probably is not severe, but it contributes to the gradual weakening of Iraq. [REDACTED]

Kurdish rebels probably will focus most of their violence on host governments and rival factions. PKK demonstrations and takeovers of Turkish and other West European diplomatic and commercial offices are likely to increase, particularly if West European countries clamp down on the PKK. Its growing strength also may embolden the PKK to commit terrorism against US or NATO facilities in Turkey. [REDACTED]



Turkish counterinsurgency efforts against the Kurds are not draining resources earmarked for modernizing the country's military. If the insurgency continues to grow, however, the Turks may find it necessary to invest more in its counterinsurgency forces, diverting resources from other military commitments. [REDACTED]

Human rights violations by Turkey and Iraq are likely to complicate their relations with the United States. The Iraqis almost certainly will reject calls to abandon the use of chemical weapons against the rebels, the razing of villages, and the resettlement of villagers. The Turks will be sensitive to US and West European pressure to end repression, particularly as long as their hopes of obtaining full membership in the European Community remain alive. Turkey's opponents will exploit the repression to hamper Turkey's efforts to obtain economic aid from the United States. [REDACTED]

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## Contents

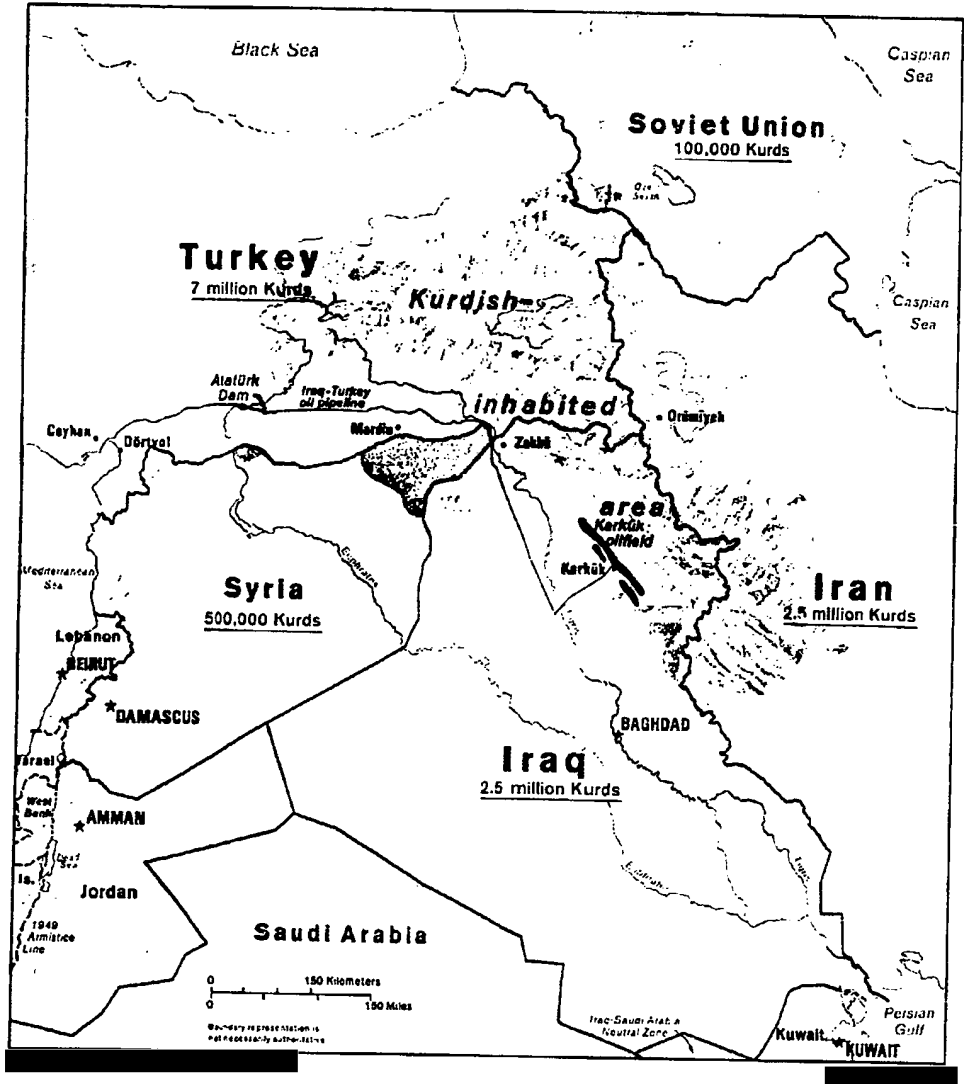
	<i>Page</i>
Key Judgments	iii
Full-Fledged Rebellion in Iraq	1
The Kurdish Democratic Party of Iraq	1
The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan	3
Communist Party of Iraq	4
Iranian Support for Iraqi Kurds	6
Government Forces and Policies	6
	
Dormant Struggle in Iran	15
Government Forces and Policies	15
The Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran	16
Iraqi Support for Iranian Kurds	16
The Soviets and the Kurds	16
Prospects	18
Iraq	18
Turkey	19
Iran	20
An End to the Iran-Iraq War	20
Implications 	21
Appendix	
Chronology of Kurdish Developments	23

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Figure 1  
Kurdish-Inhabited Area



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**Iraq-Turkey-Iran:  
The Kurdish Insurgencies**

The disruptions caused by the Iranian revolution and the seven-year-old Iran-Iraq war have fostered a resurgence of rebellions by Kurds of the Middle East. Iraqi Kurds, taking advantage of Iraqi troop redeployments to the Iranian front, have seized control of mountainous areas in northern Iraq from which they launch frequent guerrilla operations against Iraqi military, political, and economic targets. These efforts have been supported to some extent by Syria and significantly by Iran, which mounts joint military operations with Iraqi Kurds behind Iraqi frontlines.

During the past year, rival Iraqi Kurdish groups have papered over their differences and joined in combined operations against larger government forces. Disparate groups, including Kurdish Communists, socialists, and conservative tribesmen have fought together, frequently joined by Iranian Revolutionary Guards.

*The Kurdish Democratic Party of Iraq.* The tribal-based Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) is the best known and possibly still the largest of the Kurdish groups. Preeminent during the rebellion in the 1970s, the KDP never recovered that status after the death in 1979 of its highly respected leader, Mulla Mustafa Barzani.

6,000 men are members who fight infrequently or would fight if arms became available and Kurdish fortunes rose. KDP deploys between 2,000 and 10,000 tribesmen.

**Full-Fledged Rebellion in Iraq**

Iraqi Kurdish rebels are broadening their control over significant areas of northern Iraq, both in their traditional mountainous strongholds and the hilly terrain that extends to within 170 kilometers of Baghdad. The rebels employ small units to engage in hit-and-run attacks and multibattalion-size forces for fixed battles with government troops. They seize towns temporarily, attack convoys, block roads, and assassinate suspected Kurdish collaborators and officials of the ruling Ba'th Party, according to reliable reporting. The Kurds employ small arms, including rocket-propelled grenades, shoulder-fired SA-7 surface-to-air missiles, and artillery captured from Iraqi forces or obtained from Iran and Syria.

The KDP has an uneasy but necessary alliance with its primary foreign backer, Iran, that dates from the Shah's regime. In our view, Iranian backing is essential for a significant Kurdish uprising in Iraq. The

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### *The Kurdish People—A History of Rebellion*

*The nearly 13 million Kurds of the Middle East are of nomadic origin but came to settle in villages in the mountainous regions of Iraq, Turkey, and Iran. Smaller numbers are found in Syria, the USSR, and Lebanon.<sup>a</sup> Small-scale farming and herding—supplemented in recent decades by the smuggling of drugs, arms, and consumer goods—provide the Kurds a livelihood generally below that of fellow nationals.*

*Although most Kurds share a common religion, Sunni Islam, they are divided by tribes and dialect. Much of Kurdish life revolves around the tribe, particularly among rural Kurds. Tribal loyalties are strong, and tribal leaders exert considerable influence on their followers. Turkish and Iranian Kurds and Iraqi Kurds bordering Turkey speak a dialect called Kurmanji. Farther south, the Sorani grouping prevails. Neither dialect has a script. Turkish Kurds use Roman letters when writing in the banned Kurdish language; Iraqi and Iranian Kurds write in Arabic script. The Kurmanji speakers, at least in Iraq, tend to be more tribal and religious and have a reputation for being fierce fighters. The Sorani speakers are better educated and regard the Kurmanji as backward, according to an academic source.*

<sup>a</sup> Accurate population data on the Kurds are unavailable. We estimate that they number 7 million in Turkey, 2.5 million in Iraq and in Iran, 500,000 in Syria, and 100,000 in the USSR. Syrian, Soviet, and Lebanese Kurds are for the most part politically inactive.

*The Kurds have never been assimilated and have periodically revolted, demanding independence or greater autonomy. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey and Iraq put down revolts in the 1920s. Iranian rebels, backed by their Iraqi counterparts, established the short-lived Kurdish Republic of Mahabad in 1946, which collapsed after the Soviet Union withdrew its support.*

*Dissident activity subsided until 1958 when the fledgling Iraqi republic—in an effort to bolster support against domestic Arab opponents—welcomed the return of Iraqi Kurdish leader Mulla Mustafa Barzani from exile in the USSR. Barzani's faction, strengthened by concessions from Baghdad, initiated armed clashes with the government in 1961. Open revolt, punctuated by cease-fires and additional concessions that were not always honored, marked the 1960s. Barzani—with significant Iranian and Israeli backing—launched a full-scale revolt in 1974 that seriously challenged the regime and produced 60,000 government casualties, according to Iraqi officials. The revolt collapsed the following year, however, when Iran withdrew its support in exchange for concessions on the contested border with Iraq. Until the beginning of the Iran-Iraq war, Kurdish rebels in Iraq were quiescent and their leaders lived largely in exile.*

Kurds do not control territory abutting Syria, and Turkey is hostile to them. Iran, therefore, controls access of the Kurds to their other principal foreign supporters—Syria and Libya—and this gives Tehran considerable leverage over them.

The KDP demands the overthrow of Iraqi President Saddam Husayn and the creation of an autonomous region for Kurds in Iraq. Such a region has been created by the Government of Iraq, but it has little independent authority and is widely regarded as a puppet entity by most Kurds, according to the US Embassy. We believe the KDP wants to expand

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Kurdish rebel. (U)

**Primary Kurdish Dissident Groups**

	Leader	Troops	Political Orientation
<b>Iraq</b>			
Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP)	Mas'ud Barzani	2,000-10,000	Tribal, autonomy for Iraqi Kurds.
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)	Jalal Talabani	3,000-7,000	Marxist, independence for Iraqi Kurds.
<b>Turkey</b>			
Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK)	Abdullah Ocalan	1,500	Marxist-Leninist, independence for Turkish Kurds.
<b>Iran</b>			
Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI)	Abdur Rahman Qasemlu	1,500	Marxist autonomy for Iranian Kurds.

control over Karkuk and its oilfields and to take control of police and military units in the Kurdish regions. [REDACTED]

*The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.*<sup>2</sup> The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), led by the Marxist Jalal Talabani, may soon replace the KDP as the largest Kurdish rebel group in Iraq. We estimate it has 3,000 fighters with perhaps another 4,000 in reserve. The group's socialist agenda attracts Kurdish intellectuals and city dwellers. It is based near As Sulaymaniyah, and its traditional operating area extends from Qal'at Dizah to Jalula<sup>3</sup> in northeastern Iraq. [REDACTED]

<sup>2</sup> The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan was formed in 1975 as an alliance between Jalal Talabani's Kurdish Revolutionary Party and another Kurdish political organization called the Iraqi Marxist Komalah Party. Talabani dominates the alliance, and the Komalah has lost influence. [REDACTED]

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The PUK's vague and changing political and economic goals reflect, in part, the nature of its wily leader and his perceived strength relative to Baghdad. As Kurdish strength has increased, the PUK has at least temporarily shelved its bid for greater autonomy for Iraqi Kurds in favor of the creation of an independent Kurdish state within Iraq's existing borders. According to the PUK's deputy secretary general, the PUK can achieve its goals only through the partition of Iraq into Kurdish, Sunni Arab, and Shia Arab states. In a press account, he said the failed negotiations with Baghdad give evidence of the regime's unwillingness to grant significant autonomy. We believe the PUK's vague socialist program facilitates its role as an umbrella organization for other socialist groups. [REDACTED]

Talabani's well-known aspirations to assume leadership of the Iraqi Kurds have led him periodically in the late 1960s and again in 1983 to make deals with Baghdad at the expense of other Kurds. [REDACTED] these shifts temporarily lost him popular Kurdish support. They have not damaged his long-term prospects, in our view. [REDACTED]

Iran has supplanted Syria as the PUK's most important supporter. Ties to Damascus have not fully recovered from the period in 1984 when the PUK temporarily cooperated with Baghdad while engaged in autonomy talks with the Iraqi regime. Cooperation with Iran became closer after Talabani apparently proved his good faith by joining with Iranian forces in the attack on Iraqi oil facilities at Karkuk in 1985. The alliance, however, is beset with doubt on both sides. Some Kurdish officials believe that deep differences with Iran will eventually lead to a split and that Tehran will attack Kurdish forces. Libyan support for the PUK and other Kurdish groups—never significant—apparently has nearly stopped since relations between Tripoli and Baghdad improved in 1987. [REDACTED]

*Communist Party of Iraq.* The Communist Party of Iraq (CPI)—made up largely of Kurds and Christians—cooperates in combined guerrilla operations with the KDP and the PUK throughout the Kurdish region, although a generally reliable source says the CPI concentrates more on organizational work than

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[REDACTED]

fighting in Kurdish areas. The mainline Communists view the Kurdish rebellion as a vehicle to seize control of Iraq, a policy that we believe detracts from their popularity among Kurds. In keeping with this policy, the CPI calls for greater autonomy for the Kurds rather than independence. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Iraqi Communists are divided into the mainline group of about 1,200 rebels and a 400-man breakaway faction led by Baha al-Din Nuri. We believe the main group operates with the KDP, and Nuri's rebels conduct operations with the PUK in northeastern Iraq. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

We estimate that the Communists' overall strength in Iraq has nearly doubled to 3,000 during the past three years. [REDACTED]

Rivalry between the Communist main faction and the PUK is intense. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Communists are exploiting popular discontent over the protracted war with Iran, casualties, and economic austerity, which the US Embassy believes

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gives them considerable potential popularity in Kurdish and non-Kurdish areas. In our view, the Communists' popular appeal improved following the Iranian invasion of Al Faw when their underground press and foreign offices began calling for an immediate end to the war. [REDACTED]

**Iranian Support for Iraqi Kurds.** Tehran uses Iraq's Kurds to force Baghdad to divert troops from the frontlines and to threaten roads and oil pipelines to Turkey. A combined force of Kurds and Revolutionary Guards wrested control of the "Kurdistan Road" from the Iraqis last March and thereby gained a supply route across KDP-controlled territory from Zakhu to Haj Umran, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Iran has sent several thousand Revolutionary Guards to fight with KDP and PUK rebels. According to a generally reliable source, Iran deploys about one Guard for every two Kurds in mixed units, and it has also supplied the PUK with rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, and 120-mm mortars. Iran also provides food and financial support to the KDP and, presumably, the PUK. [REDACTED]

**Government Forces and Policies.** Over the years, Baghdad has tried to deal with its Kurdish problem by using a combination of diplomacy and force. Currently, the regime is primarily relying on force. The Ba'thist regime is reluctant to divert badly needed soldiers from the Iranian front to fight the Kurds, but, nevertheless, it has often had to commit a substantial number of irregular troops to contain the rebels. During the summer months, for example, several infantry brigades—at least 15,000 men—were sent north to support the campaign against the Kurds. Most of these units were held in reserve and have since been deployed to the southern front, where fighting is traditionally heaviest during the winter months. [REDACTED]

In addition, in 1983 the Iraqis formed a fighting force of Kurdish loyalists called the national defense battalions.<sup>1</sup> The government relies on three main tribes, longstanding rivals of the Barzanis, but brings in other tribes as well. [REDACTED]

<sup>1</sup> This force has gone under several names—Fursan, border guard battalions, and light battalions. [REDACTED]

Baghdad rewards them substantially by Iraqi standards. Militamen receive ID 85 (US \$273) per month and their tribal leaders ID 1,000 (US \$3,215) in addition to government contracts. The tribal commanders gain extra income by exaggerating the number of men in their units, a practice Baghdad ignores to secure their cooperation. [REDACTED]

In the first years of the Iran-Iraq war the government sought to placate the Kurds by continuing a high level of spending on economic development projects and social improvements. Moreover, the US Embassy reports that many Kurds prospered by moving to the cities to fill vacancies in the low-skill job market. [REDACTED]

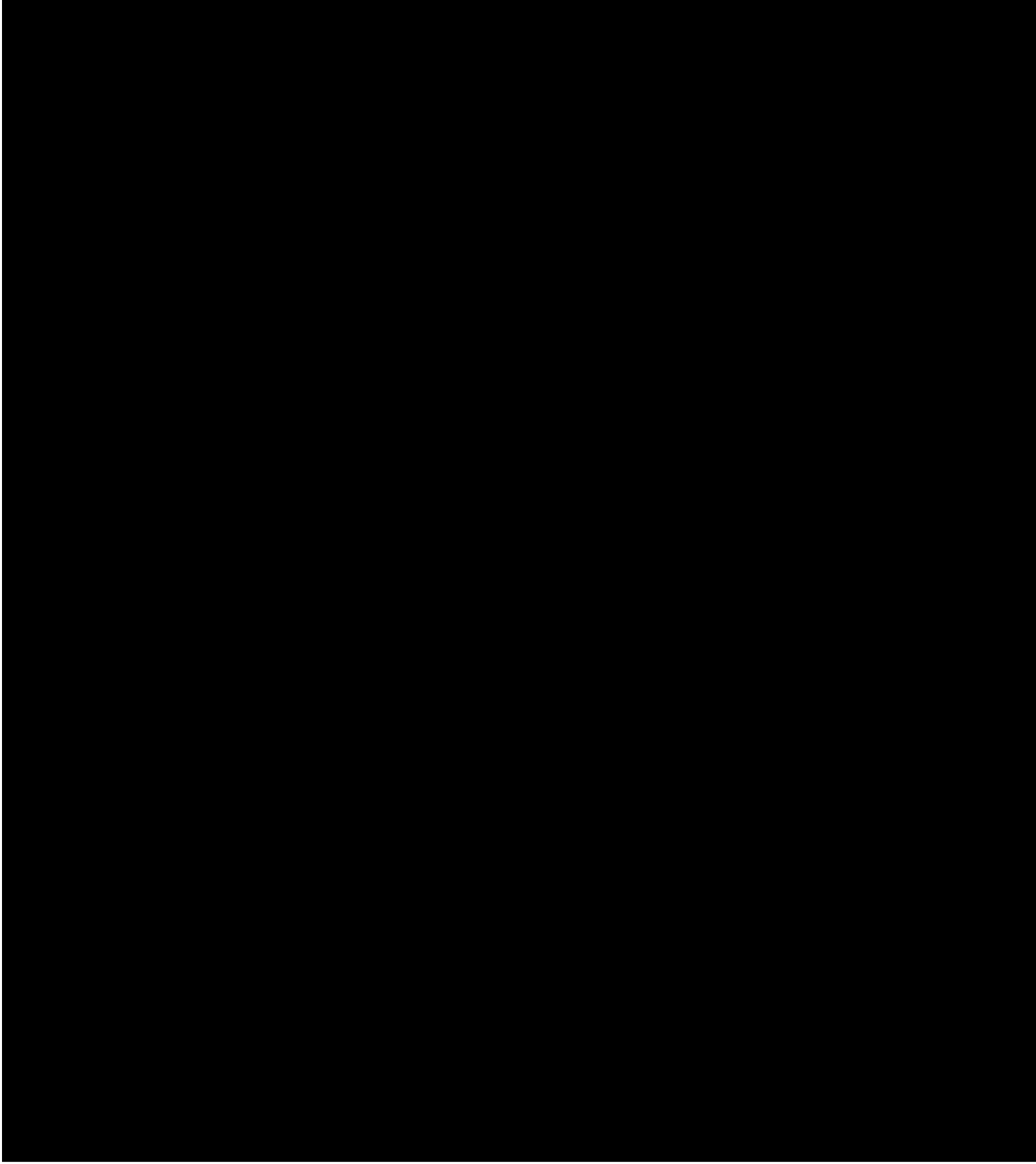
By 1983 the increased Kurdish threat and growing economic problems led Baghdad to revert to exploiting Kurdish political rivalries. The government began negotiations with Talabani for increased autonomy and exempted Kurds from military conscription. In the short term, its gains were impressive. The PUK halted attacks on government forces and fought the KDP and Communists for nearly two years. Negotiations broke down in the fall of 1984, however, over Iraq's unwillingness to fulfill promises of autonomy and access to revenues from the Karkuk oilfields. [REDACTED]

The long-term costs of Baghdad's policy may have outweighed the gains. A stronger, better organized PUK—rearmed by Baghdad during the truce—resumed attacks against the government and concluded a cease-fire with other Kurdish groups in early 1985. [REDACTED]

By late 1985, with fighting still mounting, Baghdad resorted to razing villages sympathetic to the rebels and searching and destroying Kurdish houses in major northern cities, according to the Embassy. The regime further increased repression in 1987 to combat Iranian-backed Kurds and Revolutionary Guards, [REDACTED]

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who threatened Iraq's oil production by attacking the Karkuk oil facility in 1986. Iraqi forces have begun infrequently using chemical weapons against the rebels, delivering the munitions by aircraft and artillery.

██████████ Iraq became more repressive by extending its policy of razing villages to the Kurdish lowlands and along main highways linking the major cities of the north, ██████████

Satellite photography shows that these destructive measures occurred in at least 500 villages, two-thirds of which are north and northeast of Karkuk and As Sulaymaniyah in northeastern Iraq. ██████████

██████████ the government has relocated thousands of displaced villagers to holding camps and newly built settlements in the arid regions near Ar Ramadi and An Nasiriyah and in the desert near the Saudi and Jordanian borders. ██████████ these camps can hold more than 160,000 people and ██████████ 50,000 Kurds were transferred from Kallar to Jadaydat Arar last June, but we have no figures on the overall camp populations. ██████████

Baghdad's repressive policies appear to have backfired. Not surprisingly, Kurds are angry about the destruction of their homes and their forced displacement. Although these measures probably have intimidated some Kurds, others have joined the guerrillas. Some Kurds who previously were loyal to Baghdad have left the national defense battalions. ██████████

██████████ The inhabitants of several Kurdish villages resisted the demolition of their homes, and demonstrations took place in a few villages near the Iranian border. Sources of varying reliability report that some Kurds have sought refuge in Iran. ██████████

Iraq's leadership apparently is divided over the repressive measures. According to the US Embassy, opponents include Iraq's longstanding negotiator with the

Kurds, Revolutionary Command Council Vice Chairman Izzat Ibrahim, Iraq's token Kurdish Vice President Taha Muhyi al-Din Ma'ruf, senior Army officers, and loyalist tribal leaders. These leaders argue the government's harsh policies are driving the Kurds into the arms of the rebels. The leading proponent of the repressive measures appears to be Ali Hassan al-Majid, head of the ruling Ba'th Party's northern command and Saddam Husayn's cousin and senior intelligence adviser. During the period of intensive razing, Majid appeared to take responsibility for Kurdish affairs from Ibrahim. ██████████

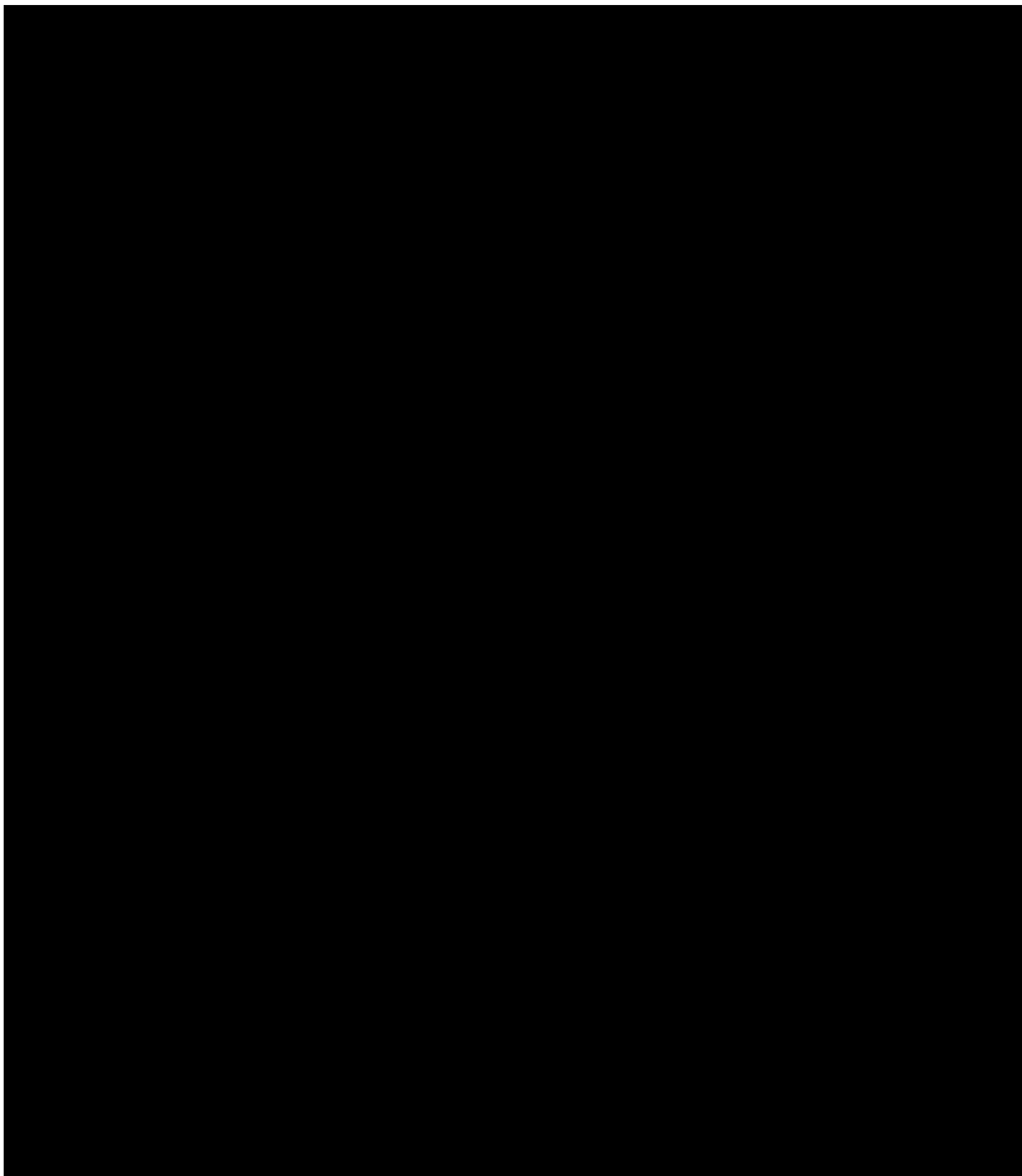
We believe that the extent of disagreement among Iraqi leaders is exaggerated to facilitate Iraq's carrot-and-stick approach. By using Majid to apply the harsh measures, Baghdad preserves Ibrahim's favorable reputation among Kurds, thus allowing him to offer them the prospect of negotiations and relief from harassment. ██████████

Some Iraqi policies appear to reflect Baghdad's concern that Turkey may use Kurdish unrest to justify seizure of the oilfields at Karkuk. ██████████

██████████ the Iraqis believe the Turks have contingency plans for retaking this oil-rich territory, which used to belong to Turkey under the Ottoman Empire, if Iraq appears to be losing the war with Tehran. The West European press has carried reports of such plans. ██████████

The Iraqis probably believe that in extremis Turkey could justify a move into Iraq as an effort to counter support for Turkish Kurds by their Iraqi brothers; correct the Treaty of Lausanne of 1925, which awarded Iraq the territory around Karkuk; and protect 250,000 to 300,000 Turcomans, an ethnic Turkish group that settled in northern Iraq centuries ago and speaks a Turkish dialect. ██████████ Baghdad has resettled thousands of Turcomans—and Kurds—who used to live in the Karkuk and As Sulaymaniyah areas in northeastern Iraq. Although the Turcomans may have moved for a variety of reasons, we believe Baghdad is relieved that a possible pretext for a Turkish invasion has been reduced. ██████████

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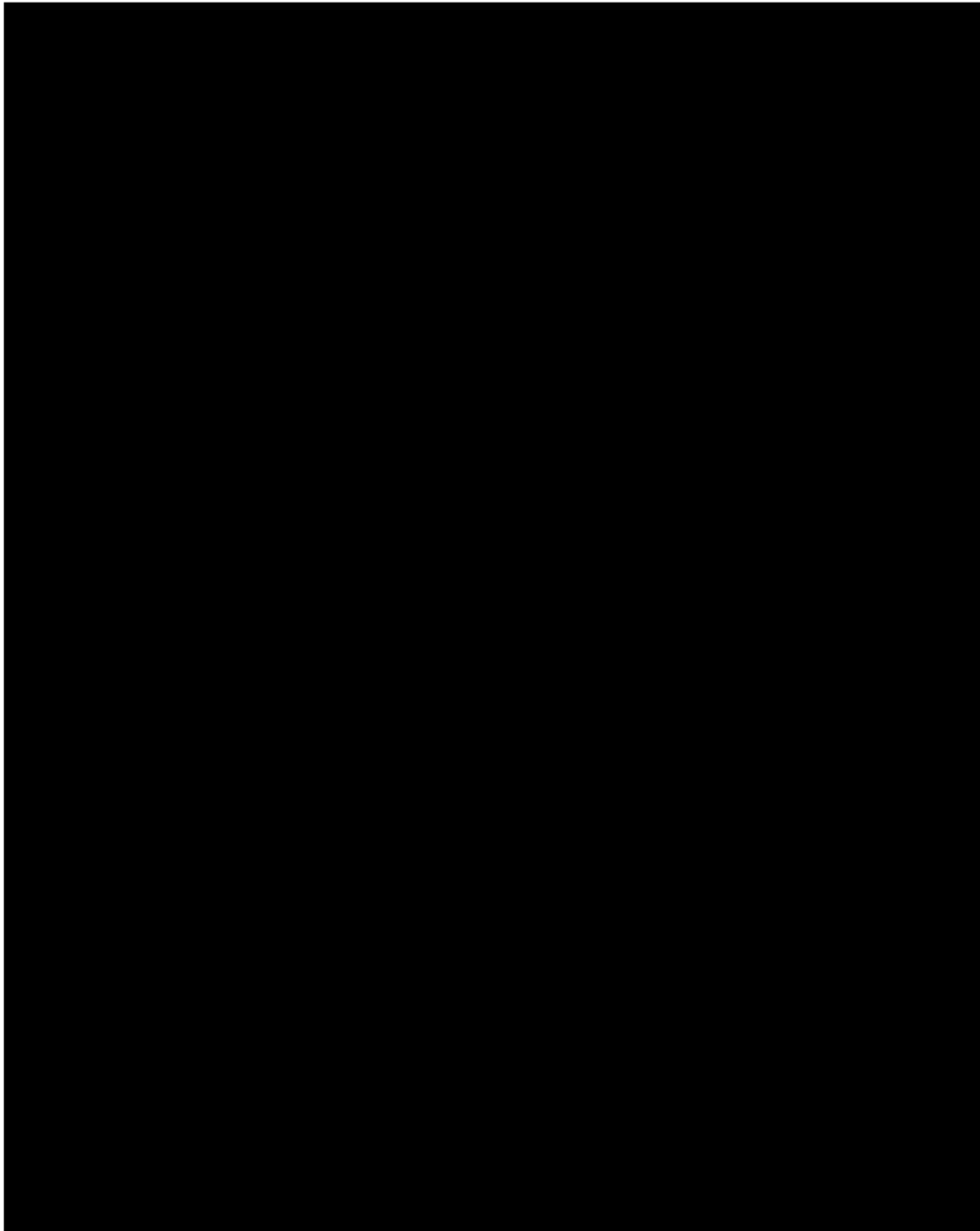
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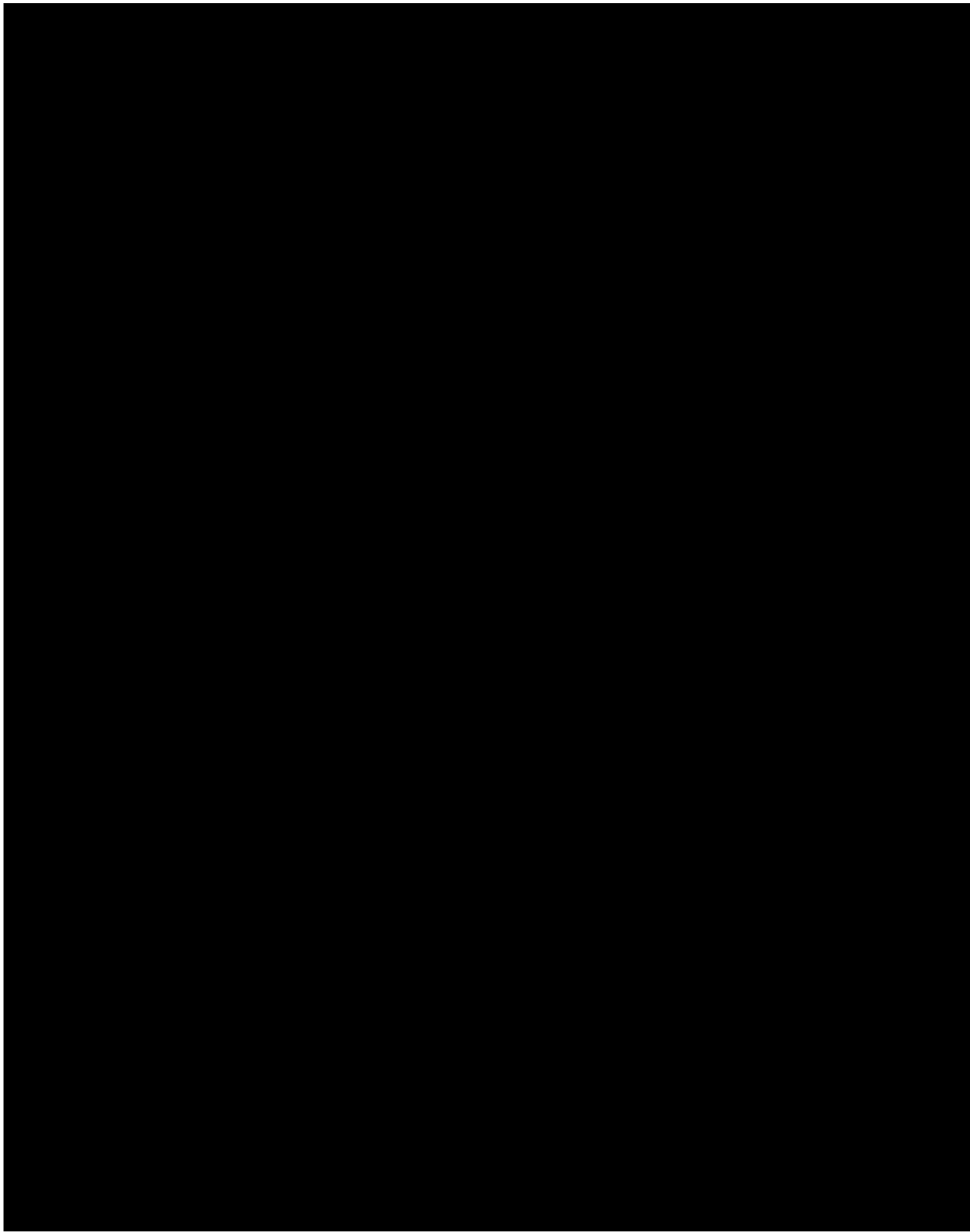
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### *The PKK in Western Europe*

We believe that Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) exploitation of the large Kurdish presence in Western Europe to raise funds and recruit members is vital to its Turkish operations. The PKK also employs terrorism against defectors and members of rival organizations and demonstrates against government treatment of Kurds in Turkey and other West European countries.

After the 1980 military coup in Turkey, many PKK members fled to Western Europe and organized among thousands of Kurdish expatriate laborers there. At present, these laborers form the bulk of PKK membership in Western Europe—particularly in West Germany. The PKK is also active in the Netherlands, France, Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark, Greece, and Cyprus.

Since 1984 the PKK has violently attacked former members and Kurdish rivals in Western Europe opposed to its leadership of a unified struggle for an independent Kurdish state. We believe that the PKK has assassinated at least 10 rivals in Western Europe since 1984.

The PKK's less violent rivals in Western Europe include the Federation of Kurdish Workers' Organizations in West Germany (KOMKAR) and the Federation of Democratic Kurdish Workers' Unions (KKDK). These groups seek a federated Turkey, rather than the independent Kurdish state advocated by the PKK, and view the PKK as an anarchist organization.

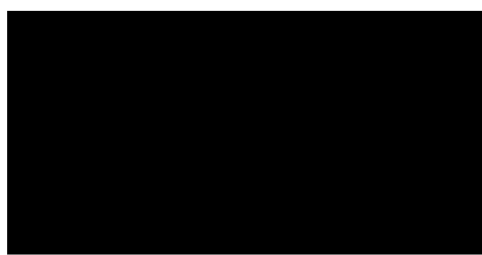
The PKK's West European branches tax members and extort money from other members of the local Kurdish community. PKK members, sympathizers, and followers are expected to contribute a portion of their income to the party, arrange fundraising banquets, and establish businesses in support of PKK activities.

Security Threat. The PKK has created public disturbances through violent clashes with rival Kurdish groups and organized protests against host governments. The PKK has targeted two countries—Sweden and West Germany—for demonstrations and occupations of government and semipublic offices in retaliation for government detention of PKK members suspected of crimes. After a government raid on PKK offices throughout West Germany in early August 1987, the PKK and ERNK retaliated by briefly occupying Lufthansa offices in Greece and Denmark and West German Consulates in Belgium and Switzerland, according to the press.

PKK branches in Western Europe apparently have also begun operating against Turkish targets.

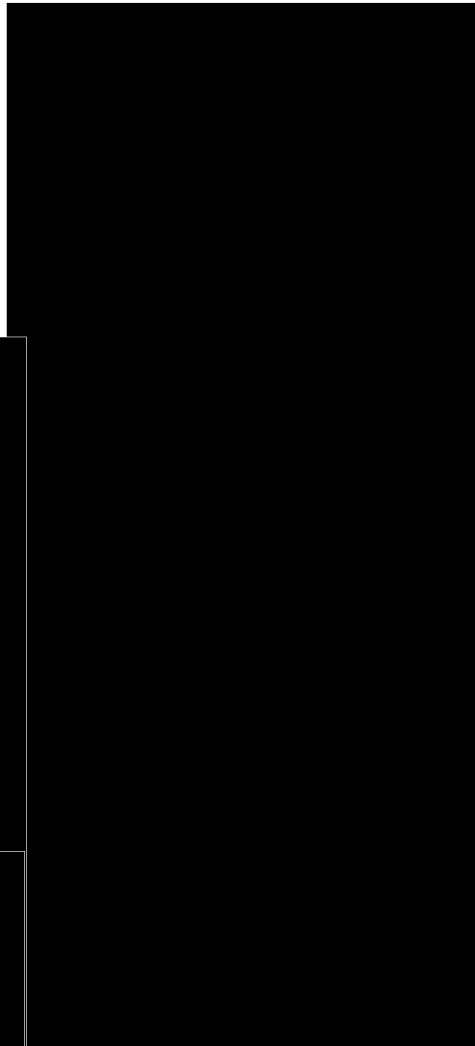
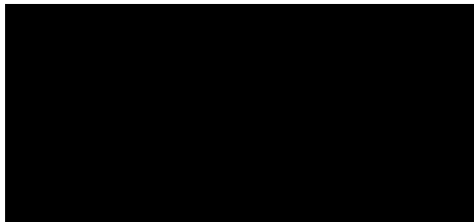
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Kurdish collaborators to accept the PKK as the sole Kurdish representative and to press for Kurdish independence. In Western Europe the PKK terrorizes rival Kurdish groups. [REDACTED]



*Prospects. PKK activities in Western Europe probably will continue to play an important role in any Kurdish insurgent successes in Turkey. We believe that the PKK will devote additional organizational efforts to tap the pool of Kurdish expatriate workers for fighters and funds.* [REDACTED]

*In the longer term, the PKK is likely to expand attacks against Turkish interests and those of other West Europeans perceived as supporting Turkey or repressing the PKK. Such attacks focus attention on its cause and are easier to conduct than operations in Turkey, where drastic punishment awaits those captured.* [REDACTED]



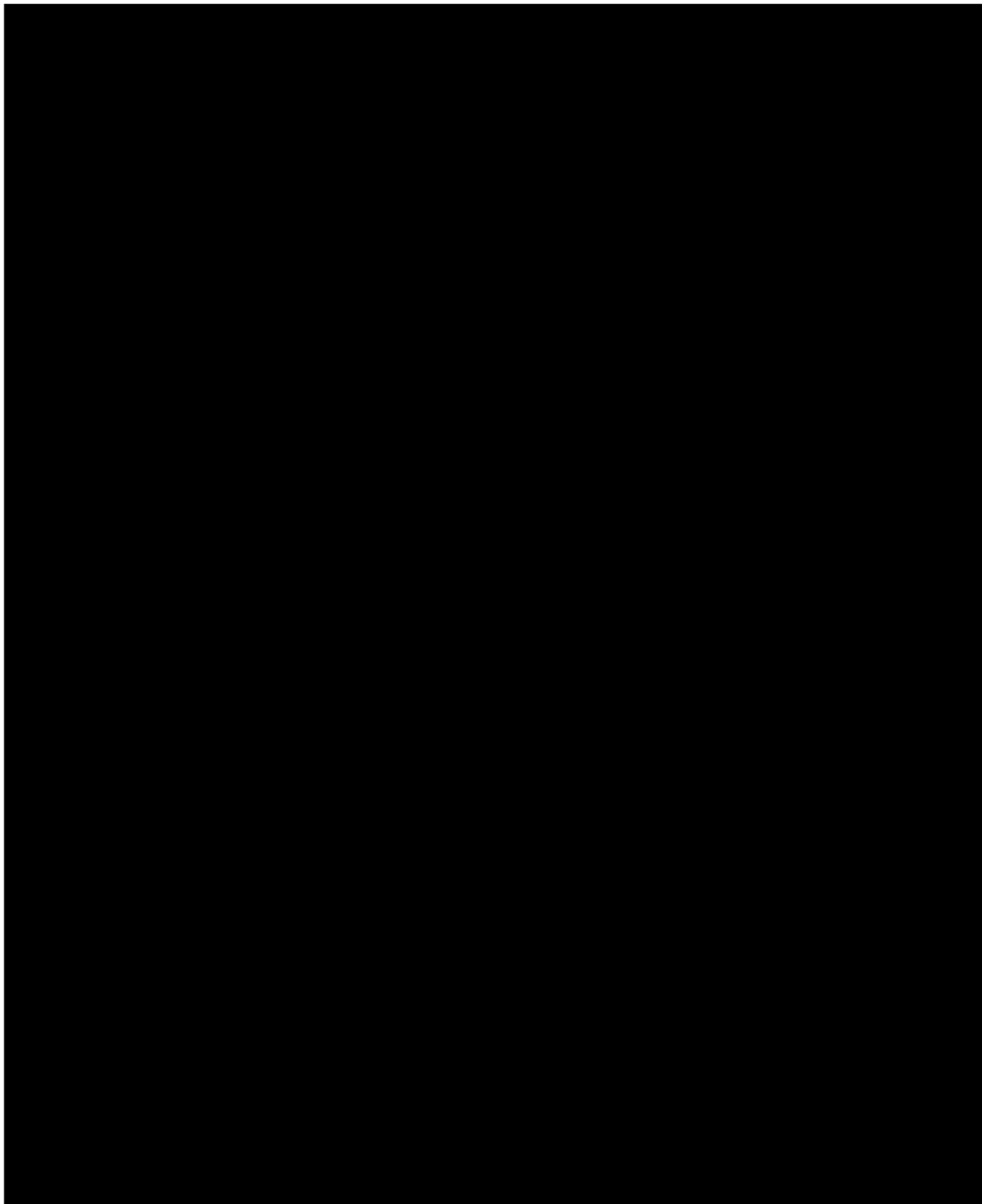
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The PKK created an umbrella organization in Damascus in 1985, the National Liberation Front of Kurdistan, to unite all Turkish Kurdish organizations. Party leaders recently created a military arm, the Kurdistan People's Liberation Army, to force Ankara and its

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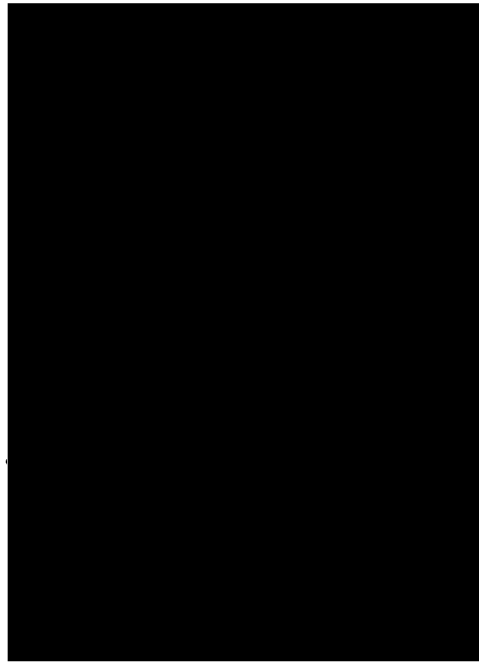
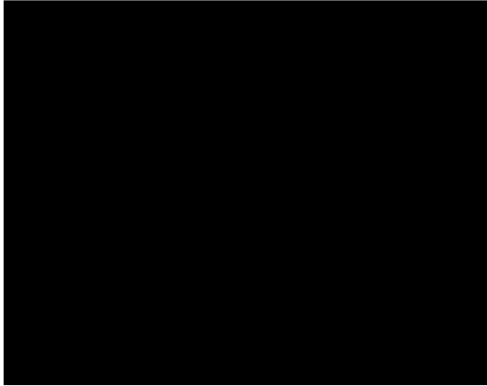


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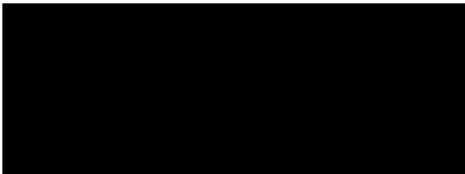
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Ankara is giving high priority to assimilating its Kurdish population through long-term economic and social development programs. Ankara has always refused to recognize the Kurds as a separate ethnic group—referring to them as “mountain Turks”—and has banned the printing of Kurdish-language publications and use of the Kurdish language in schools. The Kurds are culturally different from other Turks and have a lower living standard, in part, because they inhabit the remote mountains of eastern Turkey. The Turks hope soon to bring roads, schools, electricity, and state-controlled Turkish-language television to these remote villages to facilitate linguistic Turkification and the socialization of the Kurds to Turkish values. The centerpiece of the plan is a large public works program stemming from the construction of the Ataturk Dam on the Euphrates River. When completed, the dam—the world’s fifth largest—will irrigate millions of hectares of land and generate 8 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity [redacted]

Ankara is also trying to counter the growing violence in the southeastern provinces through the development of counterinsurgency forces and the strengthening of the border security system:



**Dormant Struggle in Iran**

**Government Forces and Policies.** As the revolutionary government in Tehran strengthened its grip on power, it shifted from a conciliatory posture toward the Kurds to aggressive exploitation of them as mercenaries in the Iran-Iraq war. Following the ouster of the Shah in 1979, the weak Iranian Government negotiated with the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), which controlled large areas of Kurdish Iran. The KDPI rejected Tehran’s offers of concessions in 1979, including administrative decentralization and guaranteed use of the Kurdish language. Since then, the regime has turned to harsher measures. Repeated government offensives, supported by Iraqi Kurdish allies, forced most rebels into Iraq, severed the major supply route Iraq used to support Iranian Kurds, and at least temporarily eliminated the Kurds as a significant threat. Iran has bought off some Kurds to help government forces police the Kurdish regions [redacted]



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*The Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran.* Iranian repression has reduced Iranian Kurdish dissidents—who controlled a large portion of the Kurdish area of Iran in 1983—to operating from bases along both sides of the Iran-Iraq border between As Sulaymaniyah and Sar Dasht in Iran. The largest group, the Marxist Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran, runs guerrillas [redacted] into Iran, [redacted]

[redacted]

*Iraqi Support for Iranian Kurds.* Following Iran's large-scale expulsion of the KDPI into Iraq, Baghdad appears to have provided only limited support for the rebels. We believe Baghdad's reduced level of support reflects disappointment over the Iranian rebels' lack of military effectiveness, the difficulty in infiltrating supplies across the border, and domestic demands for funds when Iraq's financial situation deteriorated in 1983. [redacted]

[redacted]

Iraq, however, appears to have recently increased support for the Iranian Kurds. Baghdad Radio is playing up attacks by the KDPI and particularly the Iranian National Liberation Army of the Mujahedin-e Khalq, a Marxist group that was the clerical regime's main opposition until its leader, Masud Rajavi, fled to France in 1981. The Mujahedin-e Khalq settled in Iraq after France expelled Rajavi in 1986 as part of its attempted rapprochement with Iran. We estimate the Mujahedin-e Khalq has fewer than 1,000 Kurdish members, largely in Iraq near As Sulaymaniyah. [redacted]

The KDPI receives its strongest support from Iraq and, ironically, the Iranian-backed PUK, whose socialist views and culture are close to those of the KDPI. Each group permits the other free passage of troops and probably arms across territory it controls. [redacted]

[redacted] perceived Iraqi favoritism toward the Mujahedin-e Khalq has angered Iranian Kurds. [redacted]

The KDPI appears deliberately vague in its calls for Kurdish autonomy and socialism within Iran to maximize its appeal to various segments of Kurdish society. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

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[redacted]





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#### Prospects

*Iraq.* We believe increasing Kurdish strength will create greater domestic instability in Iraq, which is fighting for its life against Iran. Cyclical patterns of intense fighting by the Kurds followed by lowered activity during the winter will continue. We believe Kurdish and Iranian forces will target oil pipelines and facilities, as well as main roads, in northern Iraq. Temporary interdiction of the pipelines and main roads is increasingly likely. The rebels also are likely to gain greater control and influence in the rural areas and even many cities, including Irbil, during the coming year. [REDACTED]

Nonetheless, Kurdish insurgents are unlikely to cause substantial damage to Iraq's oil facilities or to close the 1.5-million-barrel-per-day Iraq-Turkey export pipeline for a prolonged period. Critical choke points in the system, located in Iraq, are well defended. The Turkish portion of the pipeline is less well defended. Even so, although damage to pumping stations along the pipeline would disrupt oil exports for more than several days, emergency repairs should enable much of the lost capacity to be regained within several weeks. Iraq and Turkey almost certainly would enhance security on the line following any attack, making further disruptions more difficult. A temporary disruption would have relatively little impact on world oil prices because of the current excess supply of oil. [REDACTED]

The Iraqi regime probably will achieve its main goal of containing the rebels with only moderate casualties and diversions of men from the front. Baghdad appears willing to accept greater Kurdish activity, provided the main roads and oil-exporting facilities remain open. Baghdad is likely to suffer enough casualties to cause it to deploy some regular troops from the Iranian front to the Kurdish region. We anticipate that Iraqi forces will make greater use of chemical weapons in the evacuated sections to reduce their casualties. Baghdad probably will also respond with even greater repression in the belief that reconciliation would require concessions unacceptable to Iraq. The government's continuing campaign of razing selected villages and relocating their inhabitants is likely to fuel rather than dampen dissidence as angry Kurds on the sidelines join the fray. [REDACTED]

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Figure 7. Kurdistan: Mountainous terrain. [REDACTED]

Increased Kurdish fighting probably will foster security problems in the south as well. Kurdish successes are likely to embolden other Iraqi dissidents, particularly Shia fundamentalists and Communists. These dissidents will also benefit to the extent that Iraq's security services focus resources on the Kurds. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] government and Ba'th Party officials prefer to remain in cities or military camps out of fear of attack from organized bands of Army deserters when they travel on the main roads, especially through marshy areas. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

In the short term, we believe Ankara faces a growing but manageable threat from Kurdish rebels. The rebellion is likely to expand at least as long as the Iran-Iraq war permits Kurdish rebels in Iraq and Iran to support their counterparts in Turkey. More troubling is the prospect that the PKK's support network is becoming sufficiently strong within Turkey to operate without foreign assistance other than the financial aid provided by its West European branches. The terrain in Kurdish Turkey is generally more rugged and favorable to the guerrillas than in Iraq, where Kurds require outside support to pose a significant threat.

[REDACTED]

A major Turkish intervention in Iraq is unlikely unless the Kurds threaten oil supplies. [REDACTED] the Turks suspect Iran of inciting Turkey's Kurds to revolt and are concerned that fighting might sever the oil pipeline from Iraq, which provides Turkey with one-third of its oil and \$325 million annually in transit fees. Ankara has repeatedly warned both Iran and its Iraqi Kurdish allies against attacking the vital pipeline and oil facilities. Although Ankara probably would reluctantly enter Iraq to fight Kurdish rebels, the Turks would be more reluctant to meet a threat from Iranian forces against these same facilities unless this was part of a larger Arab or Western effort. Military action is the Turks' final option, and they hope the threat of such intervention will be enough to keep the Iranians and their Kurdish clients from seriously threatening Turkish interests. Ankara seeks good relations with both of its warring neighbors and hopes to preserve economic ties to benefit from their postwar reconstruction.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

*Iran.* Increased Iraqi support for the KDPI and Mujahedin-e Khalq probably will produce a modest increase in fighting in the Kurdish areas of Iran in the coming months. This is unlikely to be a significant challenge to Tehran, given the weakness of the Iranian Kurds, Iran's control of rebel supply routes, and Iran's willingness to risk casualties to put down the rebels. Nonetheless, the fighting probably will complicate Iran's efforts to mount ground offensives against Iraqi Government forces and support Iraqi Kurds.

[REDACTED]

Leftist Kurdish rebels in all three countries are likely to gain influence at the expense of the traditional tribal leaders. This is the result of natural and forced urbanization of the Kurds, increasing literacy, and increasing modernization of their economy, which reduces the role of tribal chiefs.

[REDACTED]

*An End to the Iran-Iraq War.* The prospects for the Kurdish rebels in all three countries—but especially Iraq—would decline dramatically if Iran and Iraq were to negotiate an end to the war. Iraq almost certainly would deploy sufficient troops to crush the rebellion as it did in 1975 and tighten its borders with Iran and Turkey. The rebellion probably would not completely die out in any of the countries but would await a renewal of regional friction to provide an opportunity for a resurgence. The PKK in Turkey, largely because of the financing from its branches in Western Europe, probably would suffer relatively less than Kurdish organizations in Iraq and Iran.

[REDACTED]

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*Prospects for a Kurdistan*

*An Iranian victory over Iraq in which the victors established a puppet regime in southern Iraq would greatly benefit the Kurdish rebels. We believe that, under these circumstances, Iraqi Kurds would declare an independent Kurdish state within Iraqi borders. Feuding by rival Kurdish groups, however, would lead to considerable instability and present foreign powers with even greater opportunities for meddling in Kurdish affairs. The new state probably would eventually aid Kurdish rebels in Turkey and Iran; but, for the time being, internal problems and the necessity to assuage the fears of Turkey, Iran, and the rump government in Baghdad would force the leadership to postpone such support. Such a state almost certainly would not survive and would eventually be reabsorbed into Iraq once a strong government emerged in Baghdad.*

**Implications**

The Kurdish rebellion in Iraq is of concern to the moderate Arabs in the Gulf region because it complicates Baghdad's efforts to defend against Iranian offensives by sapping Iraqi resources and damaging popular morale. The guerrillas not only draw Iraqi attention and troops from the Iranian front but encourage similar dissidence elsewhere in Iraq. We believe that the extent of this drain is not severe but contributes to the gradual weakening of Iraq, which already has suffered more than 400,000 casualties against a fanatical enemy with at least three times Iraq's population.

Turkish military and security forces and equipment committed against the Kurds constitute an important portion of Turkey's resources, which could be better used for needed modernization programs. An emboldened Kurdish insurgency, requiring more government manpower and equipment, could begin to drain these resources and thus undercut NATO's defenses in the southern region.

In the long term, the emergence of a strong rebel movement in Turkey would give outside powers a greater lever against Turkey. Syria, Iraq, and Turkey are vying for shares of Tigris and Euphrates river waters. The completion of Turkey's dam on the Euphrates threatens to further reduce the waterflow, already lowered by growing consumption in all three countries. Turkey's tensions with its neighbors are increasingly likely to be reflected in violence in south-eastern Turkey. Syria probably will maintain its ties to the PKK as a potential negotiating card, and Iraq is likely to explore a similar option after the Iran-Iraq war ends.

The Iraqis almost certainly will deflect calls to abandon the use of chemical weapons against the rebels, the razing of villages, and the resettlement of villagers. They will perceive that threats to national security and the need to limit government casualties outweigh concerns about tensions with the United States.

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## Appendix

### Chronology of Kurdish Developments

- 1979
- Iraq.* Isolated violence by remnants of the Kurdish rebellion crushed in 1975.
- Iran.* Kurds revolt against weakened government after the fall of the Shah.
- Turkey.* Kurdish dissidents conduct terrorist attacks in Turkish cities.
- 1980
- Iraq.* Baghdad invades Iran, diverts troops from Kurdish areas, sparking resumed Kurdish fighting. Barzani brothers return.
- Iran.* Fragmented rebels [REDACTED] assume control of large areas in Kurdish Iran and demand autonomy.
- Turkey.* Military government assumes power and begins clampdown that largely drives Kurdish leaders into exile.
- 1981-82
- Iraq.* Kurds assume control of mountainous regions along Turkish border and near As Sulaymaniyah; level of fighting is relatively low.
- Iran.* Protracted negotiations between Kurds and Tehran break down over Tehran's refusal to grant autonomy. Government forces launch attack to sever Kurdish supply routes from Iraq.
- Turkey.* The Kurdish Workers' Party begins organizing in Syria, northern Iraq, and Western Europe for guerrilla operations in the southeast.
- 1983
- Iraq.* The Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) combines with Iranian forces to seize Haj Umran, a strategic choke point on the Iranian border. The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) begins cease-fire with Baghdad and attacks KDP and Communist forces in its areas.
- Iran.* Iranian forces and the KDP drive Iranian Kurdish rebels for the most part into exile, although pockets of resistance remain along the border.
- Turkey.* Attacks by PKK from bases in northern Iraq lead Ankara to conduct cross-border operations against the rebels. Ankara and Baghdad conclude agreement on such operations.

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1984

*Iraq.* Autonomy negotiations with the PUK collapse over Iraq's rejection of demand for revenues from Karkuk oilfield. Level of rebel fighting is low.

*Iran.* Weak and divided Kurdish rebels conduct low level of activity as Iranian forces continue mopping up operations.

*Turkey.* PKK continues predominantly cross-border operations from Syria and Iraq; numbers grow, but activity is still low.

1985

*Iraq.* The PUK resumes attacks on the regime and agrees to a cease-fire with other Kurdish rebel groups. Fighting intensifies.

*Iran.* Situation is generally unchanged.

*Turkey.* Ankara dispatches more forces to contain the threat.

1986

*Iraq.* Iran increases arms supplies to KDP and PUK, which agree to cooperate in combined operations against the Baghdad regime. Iranian Revolutionary Guards and Iraqi Kurds mount combined operation against Karkuk oil facilities. Level of fighting continues to increase.

*Iran.* Situation is generally unchanged. Mujahedin-e Khalq leader Rajavi and followers expelled from France and settle in Iraq.

*Turkey.* Small PKK bands operate in large areas of southeastern Turkey.

1987

*Iraq.* Kurds launch major campaign in spring that is met with government repression by razing villages and resettling inhabitants.

*Iran.* Iraq appears to increase support for Rajavi and Iranian Kurdish rebels. Guerrilla activity increases.

*Turkey.* PKK growth continues. Turkish pressure leads Syria to close PKK training camps and expel PKK leader Ocalan. Iran provides PKK safehaven.



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