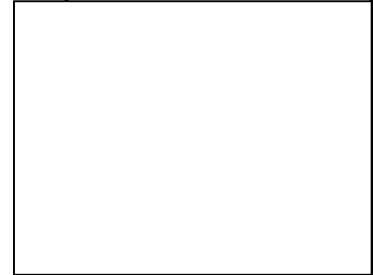




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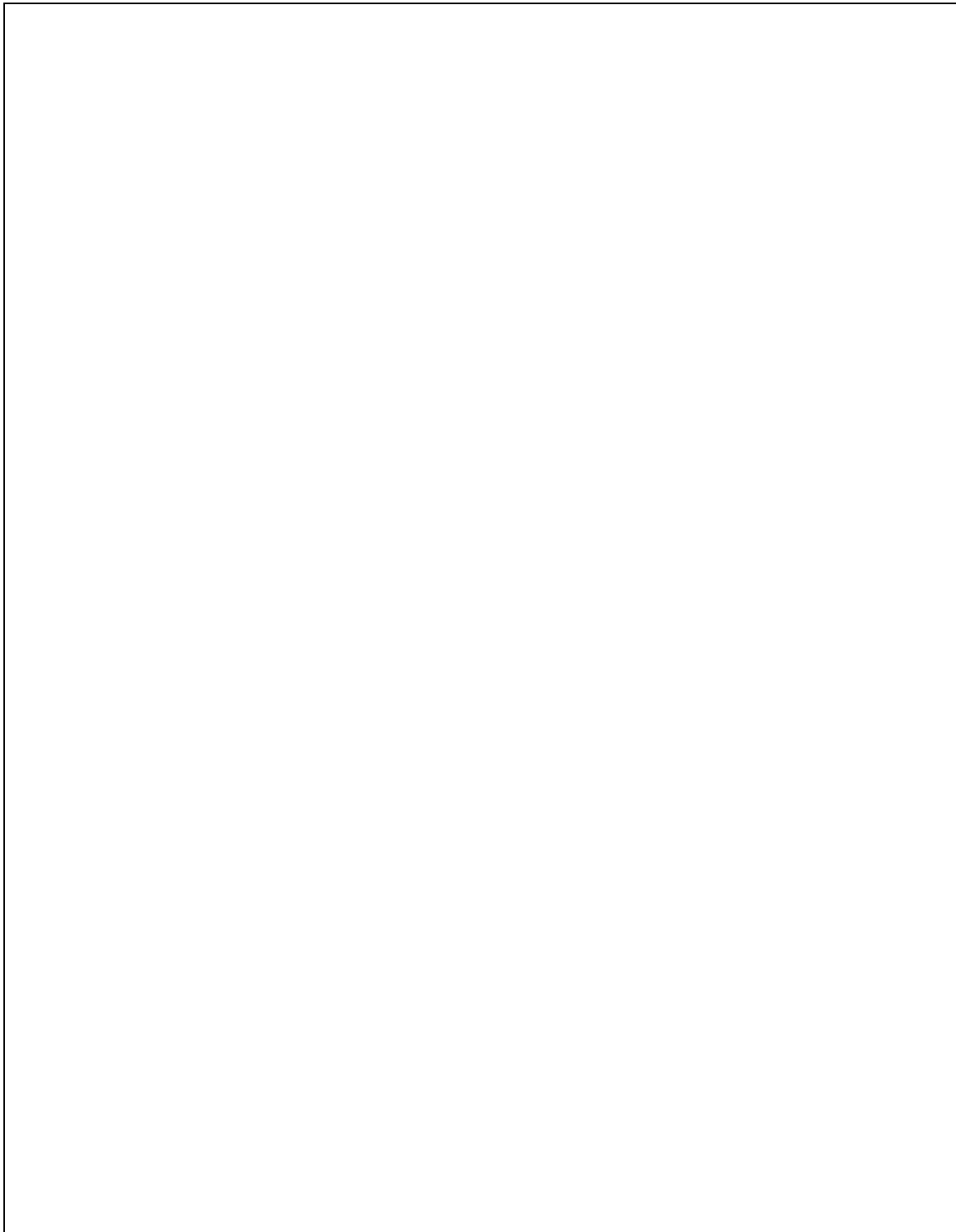
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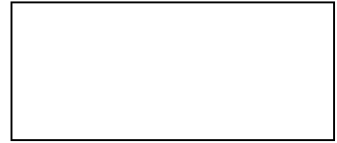
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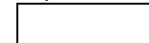


15

Iran: Military Weaknesses
Reflected in Anti-Kurdish Operations

During operations against Kurdish insurgents this past year, Iran's armed forces have demonstrated combat weaknesses which suggest serious deficiencies in command and control, tactical planning, logistics, and discipline. Government forces have had some success

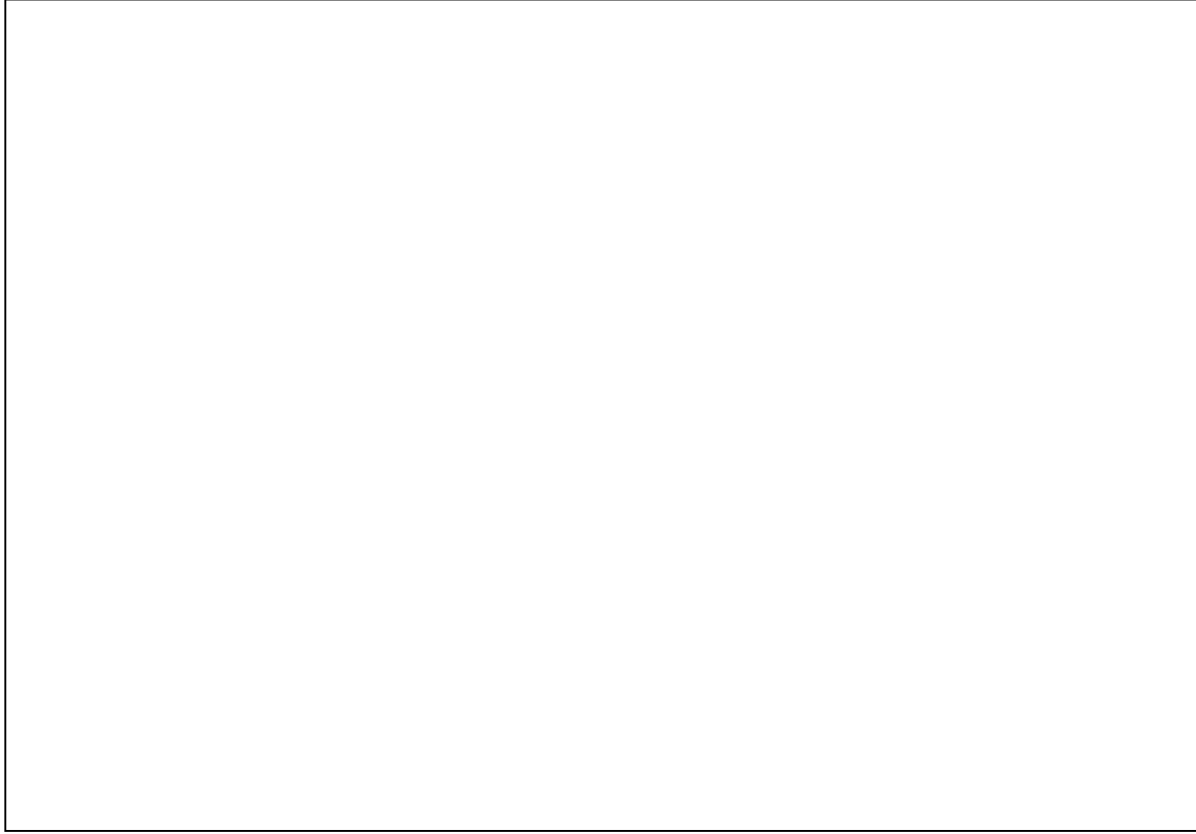
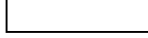
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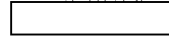


against the insurgents but have demonstrated vulnerabilities that could easily be exploited by an enemy stronger and better organized than the rebels.



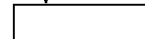
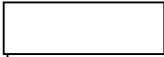
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Iran: Military Weaknesses Reflected In Anti-Kurdish Operations (U)

During operations against Kurdish insurgents this past year, Iran's armed forces have demonstrated combat weaknesses which suggest serious deficiencies in command and control, tactical planning, logistics, and discipline. Government forces have had some success against the insurgents but have demonstrated vulnerabilities that could easily be exploited by an enemy stronger and better organized than the rebels.



[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Execution of Operations

Many of the Army's failures apparently are caused by poorly conceived and clumsily executed tactics. At the same time, some of the setbacks can be attributed to the nature of modern guerrilla warfare. Any conventional army, regardless of its training and weaponry, has difficulty gaining and holding the initiative against a resourceful, foreign-supported insurgent force. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

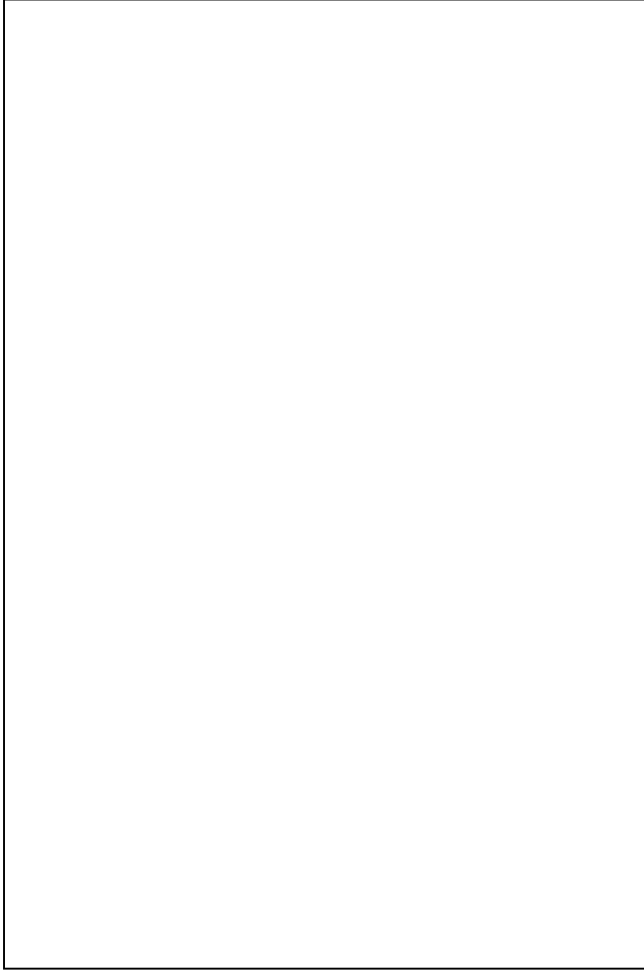
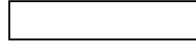
Morale and Discipline

In part because of the problems already noted, the government cannot prevent deterioration of military discipline and morale. Soldiers in the field have experienced the effects of poor leadership, inadequate supplies, confused combat operations, and unnecessary casualties. More basic problems also have kept morale low and the desertion rate high. Many regular army soldiers are reluctant to be involved in a war against fellow Iranians and apparently are not convinced of the merits of the government's cause. (In contrast, the Revolutionary Guards fervently believe that the Kurds are counterrevolutionaries who must be crushed.) [Redacted]

Delays in meeting the enlisted man's needs for food, pay, medical care, and timely changes in duty assignments have further lowered morale. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]



The military's performance against the insurgents suggests that Iran would have great difficulty organizing and implementing a complex plan of multiservice operations. Army counterinsurgency tactics have been erratic and mostly reactive. A stronger enemy presumably would exploit this weakness by striking first and at several points simultaneously. The Iranian command would probably order activation of an established defensive plan. After implementing such an operation, Iranian field commanders probably would be inflexible, fearful of making an error in judgment.



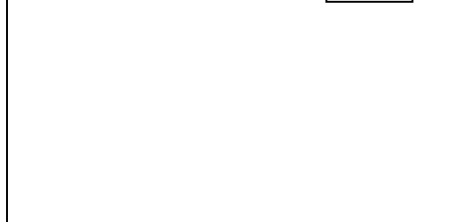
In engaging a foreign enemy, the armed forces initially would be more united, more motivated, and less likely to dwell on interservice distrust than during counterinsurgency operations. This expected initial period of patriotic fervor probably would not sustain the military, however, in the face of the tactical setbacks that almost certainly would develop.



Iranian forces would probably perform best in a static battle in which they could use their firepower and predetermined battle plans to their best advantage while minimizing the need for complex multiple-unit coordination. A short war — one that would not critically strain the ponderous supply system — would also be to Iran's advantage.

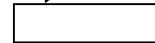


Iran's recent combat experience provides the military leaders with useful information about areas of needed improvement. If Tehran were able to take advantage of this experience and make the needed changes, a much stronger, more proficient force would develop. But the armed forces are still adrift, beset by doubts about their own mission and capabilities. Only after the central government is united enough to provide confident leadership will the prospects for essential changes significantly improve.

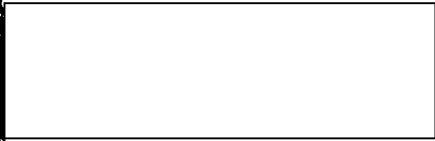


Implications

The performance of Iran's forces in operations against the Kurds highlights deficiencies which, if not corrected, could be fatal during a major conventional conflict. Government tactical successes against the insurgents, when they have occurred, have resulted largely from overwhelming superiority in firepower and control of the air. In a clash with the conventional forces of almost any potential enemy, however, these advantages would almost certainly be absent, forcing the armed forces to rely more on tactical skills, interservice coordination, and their own determination and discipline. These are the areas where the armed forces demonstrate major weaknesses.



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