# Threat Tactics Report:

## *Iran*

**TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats Integration**

# Threat Tactics Report: Iran

## Executive Summary

- The US State Department has "long-standing concerns over Iran's nuclear program, sponsorship of terrorism and human rights record."[1]
- Iran would likely use an adaptive hybrid threat consisting of regular, irregular, and criminal elements to defend its territorial assets and national interests.
- Iran's military presents a threat that uses both high- and low-tech threat capabilities to challenge a potential technologically-superior adversary.
- Iran is geographically positioned on a major strategic chokepoint (Strait of Hormuz).
- Iran conducts well-organized and effective information warfare (INFOWAR) operations, sometimes in the form of military exercises that demonstrate the potential and intent to disrupt maritime operations in the Strait of Hormuz.
- Iran's operatives continue to support groups such as Lebanese Hezbollah, Palestinian Hamas, Badr Group, and Iraqi militias.
- Iran continues to support Assad's regime in Syria.
- "Iran's destabilizing activities" are a continued "problem" for the US.[2]
- The Iranian military consists of two elements: The Artesh composes the conventional military that resembles the pre-1979 force before the Islamic Revolution. The 1979 revolution created the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) that primarily protects the Islamic regime.
- The IRGC espouses an unconventional military doctrine.
- The IRGC has projected Iran's agenda via terrorist operations in Azerbaijan, Georgia, India, and Thailand in 2012.[3]

*Cover photo: IRGC Seal, 20 November 2013.*

# Introduction

TRADOC G2 ACE Threats Integration (ACE-TI) is the source of the Threat Tactics Report (TTR) series of products. TTRs serve to explain to the Army training community how an actor fights. Elements that contribute to this understanding may include an actor's doctrine, force structure, weapons and equipment, education, and warfighting functions. There will be a discussion of the actor's tactics and techniques, and recent examples of tactical actions will be described. An actor may be regular or irregular, and a TTR will have a discussion of what a particular actor's capabilities mean to the US and its allies.

A TTR will also identify where the conditions specific to the actor are present in the Decisive Action Training Environment (DATE) and other training materials so that these conditions can easily be implemented across all training venues.

## Section 1: Introduction to Iran

This is version 1.0 of the TTR Iran series that focuses on the Iranian military and how it can be translated to the Training Circular (TC) 7-100 series. This product was produced for an unclassified venue for the US training community.

Iran as a state actor has numerous internal and external factors that influence its military spectrum and affect everything from equipment procurement to overall military strategy. Issues within the Iranian operational environment, compounded by current sanctions (that are in the process of being reduced), the controversial nuclear program, and the ongoing support to terrorist organizations, have created divides between religious/political conservatives and moderates within the country, as well as criticism from state and non-state actors globally.[4]

In recent years, the Iranian leadership's stance on its nuclear program has heightened tensions between Iran and the rest of the world.[5] Iran's lethal aid support to proxy actors worldwide, especially in Bahrain, Yemen, and Syria, continues to agitate regional tensions with the focus to disrupt Saudi Arabia's interests.[6] The five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany (P5+1) talks have temporarily defused the Iranian nuclear issue; however, the country's nuclear ambitions still have the potential for being a future flashpoint.[7]

## Strategy and Goals

The Iranian leadership's hierarchy is complex, intertwined, and sometimes inconsistent, which at times hinders the country's overarching strategic objectives.[8] Factors that influence the paradigm of Iran's military strategies are manifested in the ongoing tentative balance between religious, political, and historical rivalries (both real and perceived); the current fragile economy; and the geopolitical characteristics that are consistent with the Iranian operational environment.[9] These variables converge to shape the strategic, operational, and tactical echelons within the armed forces' structure, which is further translated into their capabilities, tactics, and equipment.

These factors drive Iran's decisionmaking process with regard to military equipment/weapons acquisition (purchased or developed organically) and how these systems are employed on the battlefield in training or in conflict. Further muddling Iran's strategy and goals are the two unique and, at times, competing military entities. The joint headquarters has command authority over both the Iranian Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Artesh (regular military), even though below this command level the chain of command for both the IRGC and the Artesh usually plan and conduct operations separately.
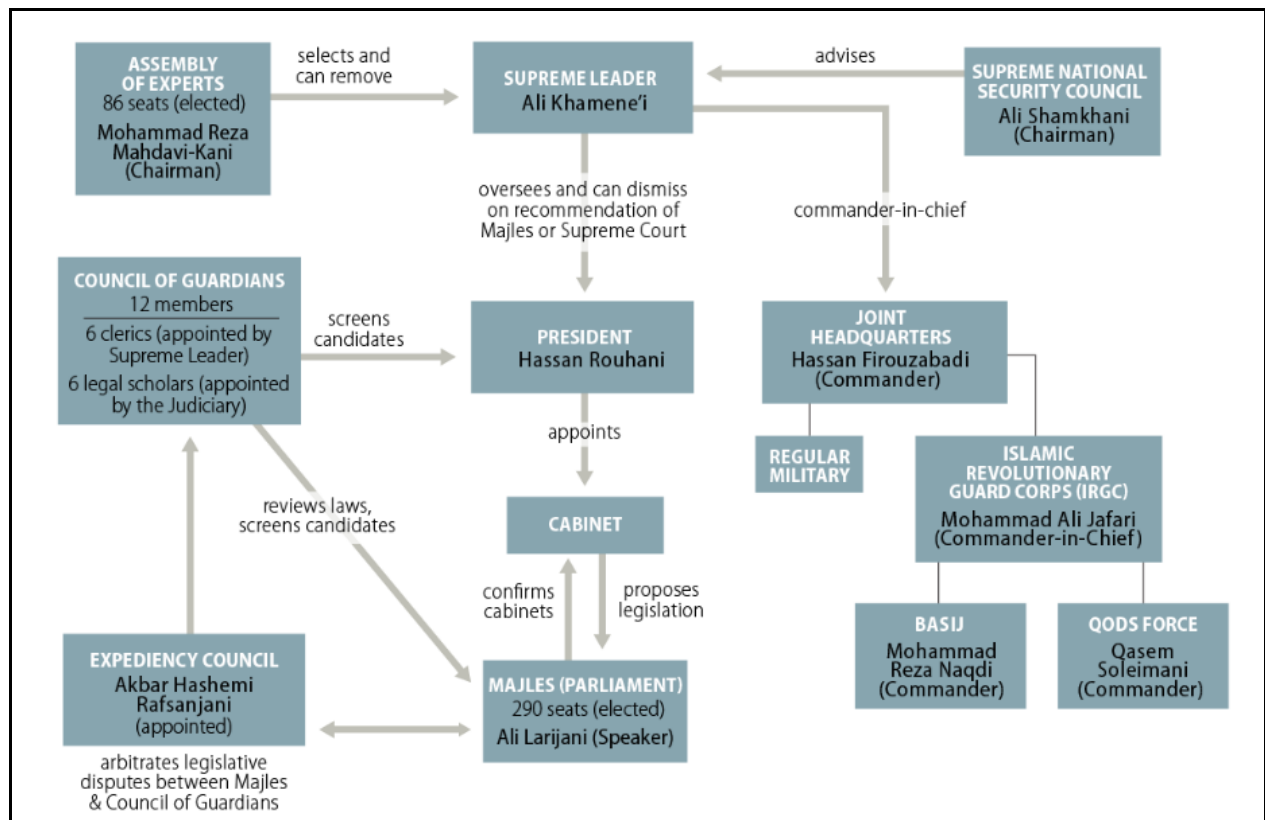


**Figure 1. Iranian leadership**

Iran's military espouses four major intertwined strategic imperatives:[10]
- Modernizing the military[11]
- Exporting the evolution paradigm (military projection)
- Defending Iran's sovereignty and territorial assets
- Becoming the dominant regional military power and being regarded as a global power

## Military Modernization

As mentioned above, Iran has engaged in a logical sequence of imperatives in order to support its overarching strategic goals. The first imperative consists of Iran's military modernization initiative. Iran's military is currently experiencing a considerable modernization and rearmament effort that by itself is a strategic objective intertwined with implications on the other three lines of effort.[12] The IRGC and

Artesh (ground and air) have an aging fleet. Iranian modernization emphasizes Iranian-based weapons development, updating, and reverse-engineering that permits Iran to become self-sufficient even with past sanctions.[13] Iran is upgrading its mechanized forces but still is dependent on an aging armor fleet; however, the country is beginning to produce its own mechanized vehicles based on older models/chassis within its inventory. The focus has shifted to less armor and more fast-attack vehicles, such as motorcycles or speedboats, to align with pieces of Iran's adaptive doctrine. The air force's aging inventory presents challenges to mission readiness with regard to air power. Iran's military industry has primarily focused on development and expansion within the following categories: cruise and ballistic missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and cyber warfare.[14]

## Exported Revolution Paradigm (Military Projection)

Iran has been listed since January 1984 as a state sponsor of terrorism according to the United States Department of State, and has supported multiple acts of terrorism in recent years.[15] In the future, Iran will likely continue to keep exporting its ideologically-charged Shia-based revolution with the use of

| Date | Incident/Event | Likely/Claimed Perpetrator |
|---|---|---|
| April 18, 1983 | Truck bombing of U.S. Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon. 63 dead, including 17 U.S. citizens. | Factions that eventually formed Lebanese Hezbollah claimed responsibility. |
| October 23, 1983 | Truck bombing of U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut. 241 Marines killed. | Same as above |
| December 12, 1983 | Bombings of U.S. and French embassies in Kuwait City. 5 fatalities. | Da'wa Party of Iraq—Iran-supported Iraqi Shiite militant group. 17 Da'wa activists charged and imprisoned in Kuwait |
| September 20, 1984 | Truck bombing of U.S. embassy annex in Beirut. 23 killed. | Factions that eventually formed Lebanese Hezbollah |
| May 25, 1985 | Bombing of Amir of Kuwait's motorcade | Da'wa Party of Iraq |
| June 14, 1985 | Hijacking of TWA Flight 847. One fatality, Navy diver Robert Stetham | Lebanese Hezbollah |
| April 5, 1988 | Hijacking of Kuwait Air passenger plane. Two killed. | Lebanese Hezbollah, seeking release of 17 Da'wa prisoners in Kuwait. |
| March 17, 1992 | Bombing of Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires. 29 killed. | Lebanese Hezbollah, assisted by Iranian intelligence/diplomats. |
| July 18, 1994 | Bombing of Argentine-Jewish Mutual Association (AMIA) building in Buenos Aires. | Same as above |
| June 25, 1996 | Bombing of Khobar Towers housing complex near Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. 19 U.S. Air Force personnel killed. | Saudi Hezbollah, supported by Iran, but some assessments point to involvement of Al Qaeda. |
| July 19, 2012 | Bombing in Bulgaria killed five Israeli tourists. | Lebanese Hezbollah |

**Figure 2. Iranian/proxy terror attacks**

smaller clandestine units within the IRGC's Quds forces. The IRGC's Quds forces advise, train, and equip anti-Western factions in Syria, Yemen, Gaza and Lebanon.[16] The majority of Iran's lethal aid support is geared toward Shia-based militias; however, Iran also supports Sunni groups, such as is the case with Hamas.[17]

The IRGC's export of lethal aid to terror groups has a multi-pronged benefit for Iran's military complex. This force projection is intended to disrupt US interests and/or other potential adversaries, confirm Iran's role as a regional power, and create an outlet for a recurring financial gain through the sale of lethal aid.[18] The IRGC's relationships with terror groups are vital to its ability to supply lethal aid, conduct clandestine direct action missions, and support Iran's intelligence-gathering apparatus. The IRGC has projected its influence in the form of terrorist operations in Azerbaijan, Georgia, India, and Thailand in 2012 alone.[19]

The key appendage for the Iranian military's projection is the IRGC and in particular the Quds forces.[20] The conventional (Artesh) Iranian military has a limited reach capability as related to forced entry operations. The IRGC, especially the Quds forces, has links to terror and criminal organizations with a potential global strike capability, including targets within the United States.[21]

## Defend Iran's Sovereignty and Territorial Assets

The primary mission of the Artesh is to protect the territorial sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran and that of the IRGC is to protect the regime. Iran has developed a flexible military doctrine and often uses aggressive information warfare (INFOWAR) campaigns in order to defend the country's interests.

**Military Personnel**: 460,000+
**Artesh**: 220,000,
**IRGC**: ground 130,000
**Basij:** 600,000 (counting reserves)
**Security Forces:** 40,000-60,000 (law enforcement)

**Figure 3. Snapshot of the Iranian military**

The Iranian government, in the past, has used hostile INFOWAR messages with the repetitive theme of disrupting maritime operations in the Strait of Hormuz, which is a transit point for 30% of all seaborne-traded oil.[22] A recent example of INFOWAR arose in late December of 2011, when the US threatened to restrict Iran's oil exports. At the time, Iran's Vice President Mohammad Reza Rahimi stated, "If Iran oil is banned, not a single drop of oil will pass through Hormuz Strait."[23]

The Strait of Hormuz consists of a constricted channel that provides an entrance into the Persian Gulf from the Gulf of Oman, making it a natural chokepoint.[24] The Strait of Hormuz's narrowest point is 21 miles wide. The shipping lane in each direction is two miles wide, with a two-mile buffer zone. The IRGCN incorporates the natural chokepoint into its military wargaming and defensive protocols.[25] The Iranian military developed these tactics based on the lessons from the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988)—which also encompassed the Tanker Wars (1984–1987)—and now includes its learned experiences in its adaptive tactics.[26]

## Key Alliances

In the past, China, Russia, and North Korea have supplied Iran with military technology and have maintained some type of diplomatic relationship. The connections have fluctuated over the years

depending on the strategic environment. This project acknowledges the importance of these bonds; however, it will not examine these particular relationships. This portion focuses instead on Iran's major exports of lethal aid to terror organizations.

## Lebanese Hezbollah

Iran has an extensive history and played a critical role in the creation and development of Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) dating back to 1982. In the past, Iran has used LH as a proxy and to support lethal aid shipments.[27] Iran supplied weapons and equipment to LH during the 2006 conflict with Israel, during which reports indicate that Hezbollah launched 10,000 Iranian rockets at Israeli cities.[28] The 2006 Hezbollah conflict supports Iran's military doctrinal theory of how a hybrid threat using adaptive tactics can defeat a technologically-superior adversary. Hezbollah links to the IRGC are also playing a large role in the Syrian conflict.[29]

## Syria

Historically, Iran's closest Arab supporter has been the Syrian political regime. Iran is providing a considerable amount of resources in the form of funding, weapons, and advisors to the Syrian civil war against the Sunni-led insurgents.[30] If the Syrian regime were to be defeated by the rebels it would be a substantial setback for Iran's strategic influence and would greatly disrupt Iran's lethal aid logistical network.[31] The Iranians have used Syria has a distribution point for lethal aid shipments in support of Hezbollah, among other terror organizations. A Congressional Research Service (CRS) report in 2012 stated that "the fighting in Syria also reflects the regional tensions between Sunni and Shia Muslims, Arabs and Kurds, and Arabs and Iranians that have shaped events in Iraq, Lebanon, and Bahrain in recent years."[32] The conflict in Syria is divided along sectarian lines and has the potential to spread to other locations with similar demographics such as, but not limited to, Yemen, Bahrain, and Iraq. These potential sectarian proxy conflicts could be fueled by supporters loyal to Iran's Shia population or Saudi Arabia's Sunni-based majority.

## Hamas

Iran remains flexible in its foreign policy and is willing to support either Shia or Sunni terror organizations when it suits the country's geostrategic needs, in spite of its repeated INFOWAR messages focused on exporting Shia-based ideology. An example that personifies the willingness of the Iranians to ignore the Shia-Sunni divide was reported in the US State Department's 2014 Country Report on Terrorism, which specified that Hamas received "funding, weapons and training from Iran."[33]

Iran's support to the Syrian regime with regard to the ongoing civil war diminished its relationship with Hamas. CRS reports that, as of late 2012, Iran had made multiple attempts to restore the damaged connection with Hamas using "missile technology" as one source of leverage.[34] The same report also states that Iran has supported Hamas with the Fajr-5, a short-range missile that can reach Israel. Hamas has reversed-engineer the Fajr-5 to create its own variant, which was used in the November 2012 conflict between Israel and Palestinian militant groups.[35] Another example of Iran's lethal aid logistical support to Hamas was reported on 5 March 2014 by CBS News, which stated that the Israeli navy seized a ship on the Red Sea with a cargo of M-302 rockets destined for Gaza militants.[36]

## Iraq

Strategically, the removal of Iran's longtime rival Saddam Hussein in Iraq from his position as dictator by coalition forces greatly benefitted Iran's interests.[37] The two regimes had an historical tension that predated the Iran-Iraq War. Sixty to sixty-five percent of the population in Iraq is Shia, heavily congregated in the southern provinces neighboring Iran.[38] This virtually ensured that Iran, through its influence of Shia political parties, would have a significant impact on the Iraqi operational environment. The remodeling of the Iraqi political system led to further isolation of the Sunni minority. Iran is currently supporting the Iraqi military as well as the Shia-based militias.[39] Kataib Hezbollah (KH) is an example of a militia group that is militarily engaging the Sunni-based Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in an attempt to halt the latter's progress in Iraq. The US State Department has designated KH as a foreign terrorist organization that has "exacerbated sectarian tensions in Iraq and have committed serious human rights abuses against primary Sunni civilians."[40]

## Organizational Size and Structure

The Iranian military is comprised of two main components that consist of the Artesh and the IRGC, both of which consist of a ground force, navy, and air force. The IRGC was originally created in 1979 to protect the newly-founded religious-based Islamic regime from potential threats, including the Artesh.[41] The IRGC elements are providers of lethal aid to radical Islamic terror groups worldwide in exporting of the Islamic Revolution's vision. The IRGC has an adaptive and unconventional-based doctrine derived from firsthand experiences, such as the Iran-Iraq War, extracting lessons learned from historical conflict, and monitoring current military engagements. Iran views the US as a major threat and is attentive to the US military's activities, including the past/current involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. Iran also extracts lessons learned from the ongoing Israel/Hezbollah conflicts, including important lessons from the 2006 conflict. The Iranian military has developed a defensive posture and a flexible, adaptive doctrine for its military forces.

| IRGC (Ground) |
|---|
| Strength: |
| Infantry Divisions: |
| Independent Brigade: 14 |
| Armor Division: 3 |
| Independent Brigade: 3 |
| Artillery Regiment: 3 |
| Commando Division 1 |
| Airborne Brigade |

| Artesh (Ground) |
|---|
| Strength: |
| Infantry Divisions: 4 |
| Independent Brigades: 4 |
| Armor Divisions: 4 |
| Independent Brigades: 3 |
| Artillery Regiments: 7 |
| Commando Divisions: 2 |
| Independent Brigades: 3 |
| Special Forces Brigade: 1 |
| Airborne Brigade: 1 |

**Figure 4. IRGC and Artesh (ground)**

## The Iranian Revolution Guard Corps

The IRGC was originally created to protect the religious-based Islamic regime and has adapted the lessons from the Iran-Iraq War that formed the current unconventional doctrine. The IRGC is divided into 31 separate commands across the country, one for each province.[42] These units are semi-independent with a decentralized command structure that, in theory, would mitigate damage to command and control (C2) if an invasion by a technologically-superior adversary were to become a reality. If provoked, the Iranian military could be described as a hybrid threat with regular, irregular, and criminal elements working in tandem to defend Iran's borders and territorial assets. The IRGC's units would likely organize into

smaller hunter-killer type units fighting an irregular fight with emphasis on speed, mobility, and surprise. The Iranian doctrine emphasizes the use of fast-attack vehicles on land and sea that would put a premium on mobility, and decentralized command and control to ensure a flexible, more adaptive military force that takes advantage of the restrictive terrain within the country.

The IRGC has become a powerful element within Iran and is entangled in the political, religious, and economic sectors. The dynamics of these relationships in many instances have translated into better funding, missions, and equipment for the IRGC.

## Artesh: Islamic Republic of Iran Ground Forces (IRIGF)

The Artesh maintains a robust conventional military organization. The Artesh has a military force that consists of 350,000 soldiers divided into the army, navy, and air force.[43] The ground forces possess six infantry divisions, four armor divisions, six artillery divisions, two commando divisions, one airborne brigade, and one special forces brigade.[44]
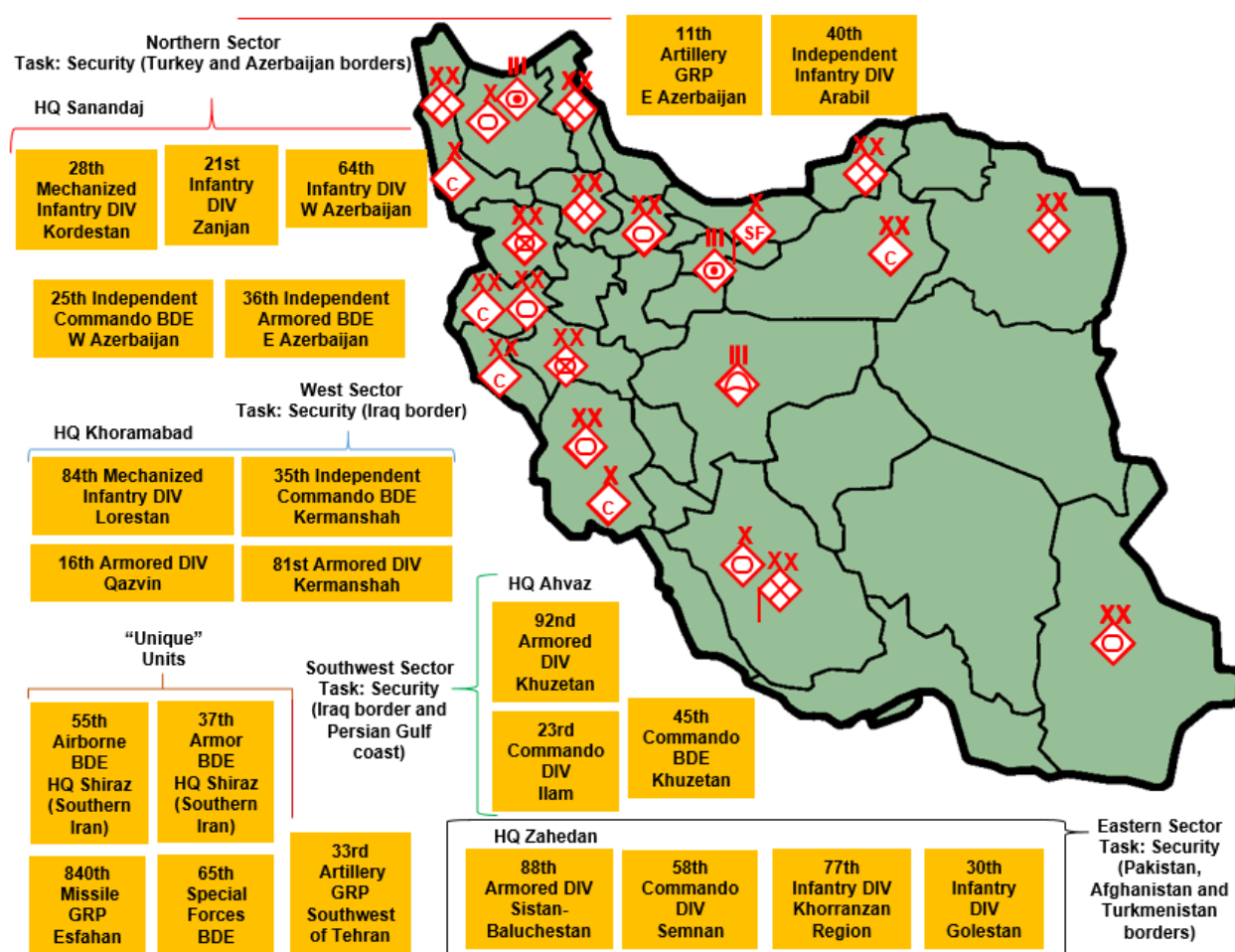


**Figure 5. Iranian ground forces**

The primary mission of the Artesh is to protect the territorial sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Artesh IRIGF consists of 222,000 active duty soldiers (excluding the navy and air force).

The following are significant weaknesses that would hinder the Artesh's regular capabilities:
- Antiquated and poorly maintained equipment
- Primitive and localized C2 capabilities
- A lack of highly-training technical professional soldiers
- Insufficient replacement parts for equipment, especially air assets
- The rugged terrain and Iran's size create mobility gaps and challenges for defender or aggressor
- Lack of logistical capabilities for long-term operations

## The Iranian Air Forces

Iran's military possesses two distinct air force organizational structures. The Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force (IRIAF) maintains many of the fixed wing aircraft and is similar to the air force's structure before the 1979 revolution. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Aerospace Force (IRGC AF) has control of the controversial ballistic mission program, a UAV program, a large number of rotary wing aircraft, and a small number of fixed wing aircraft.

The primary mission of the Iranian Air Forces (both IRGC and IRIAF) is to protect and defend Iran's airspace and sovereignty. The IRIAF's air inventory consists of a mixture of aircraft from a range of different ages and a multitude of different countries. However, the majority of the Iranian aging inventory consists of US-supplied aircraft predating the 1979 revolution.[45]

Overall, the Iranian air components do not comprise a formidable threat to a technologically-advanced air force. Many of Iran's aircraft are still operational due to the efforts of its domestic military industry, which has worked on gaps caused by the lack of replacement aircraft parts due to past sanctions. The IRGC clandestine elements have attempted to purchase parts from the black market using witting and unwitting sources.[46] Despite Iran's creative problem-solving, the issues of operational readiness, sustainment, and training, as well as the overall air force as an organization, are problematic and contradictory to the vision of Iran's modernization goal.

Jane's reports that China supplied at least 65 F-7 fighters—a Chinese-replicated MiG-21—to Iran.[47] The American F-14 and the Russian MiG-29 remain the biggest air threats to Western forces. Air elements primarily support their ground forces. Iran's military leadership would likely position the best air defense artillery (ADA) assets and prized aircraft near strategic sites, such as nuclear plants, in order to interdict and deter possible attacks. Overall, the Iranian air component does not comprise a formidable threat to a technologically-advanced air force.

The IRIAF's headquarters, training, sustainment, and air defense center is located in the capital of Tehran. The IRIAF is organized into three geographical commands: Western Area Command (WAC), Southern Area Command (SAC), and Eastern Area Command (EAC), with an estimated 30,000 personnel overall divided among the three separate commands.[48] Reporting indicates that the WAC has the majority of the combat air power divided among the following bases: Mehrabad, Tabriz, Hamadan, Dezful, Omidiyeh, Shiraz, and Esfahan.[49] The WAC has the key responsibility of monitoring the airspace along the Iraqi border and is tasked with securing Tehran's airspace. The heavy support to the WAC illustrates the importance that the Iranian hierarchy has placed on its organizational responsibilities. The

SAC has the mission to protect the airspace along the Persian Gulf with bases in Bushehr, Bandar Abbas, and Chah Bahar. The EAC main airbase in Mashhad is assigned to protect the Iran-Afghanistan border.

Jane's estimates that Iran could potentially possess 16 combat squadrons; however, the exact operational readiness number is still unknown. Open source reports greatly vary from source to source and compounding the problem is the mixing of IRGC air elements with the Artesh air assets.[50]

The IRGC has control over Iran's extensive missile program, which has received support from China, Russia, and North Korea in the past.[51] As an example, Iran's Shahab 3 missile is a modified version of North Korean's No Dong missile that can range targets out to 2,000 km.[52]

Single-source reporting from Jane's states that the IRGC missile force consists of five brigades (BDEs):[53]
- 15th Ghaem Missile BDE, location unknown, with short-range missiles (Fajr)
- 5th Ra'ad Missile BDE northwest of Tehran in Karaj, with Shahab 3 & 4 missiles
- 7th Al-Hadid Missile BDE located in Karaj, with Shahab 1 & 2 missiles, has C2 over the Ali Missile Site in Khorrambab
- 19th Zulfeqar Missile BDE located in Karaj, also has short-range systems (Nazeat and Zelzal)
- 23rd Towhid Missile BDE located in Khorramabad

| IRGC's Navy and Air force | Artesh's Navy and Air Force |
|---|---|
| **I. IRGC Navy**<br>Personnel: 20,000<br>Equipment: 18 Chinese-made patrol boats and 155 smaller boats<br>Area of Operations: Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz<br>Tactics: Swarming, mining, and Waterborne IED | **I. Islamic Republic of Iran Navy (IRIN)**<br>Personnel: 18,000<br>Equipment: 100+ smaller boats and 3 Kilo subs & 11 Midget<br>Area of Operations: Gulf of Oman |
| **II. IRGC Air Force**<br>Personnel: 12,000 (air defense)<br>Mission: Ballistic Missile Programs<br>Headquarters: Tehran<br>Organization: Five Brigades (BDE)<br>• 15th Ghaem Missile BDE (short-range)<br>• 5th Ra'ad Missile BDE (northwest of Tehran in Karaj)<br>• 7th Al-Hadid Missile BDE (Western Iran Khorramabad)<br>• 19th Zulfeqar Missile BDE (short-range) in Karaj<br>• 23rd Towhid Missile BDE (Khorramabad) HQ | **II. The Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force (IRIAF)**<br>Personnel: 52,000<br>Mission: Controls most of Iran's combat aircraft<br>Equipment: 23 Combat Squadrons (operational readiness questionable)<br>Headquarters: Tehran.<br>Organization: Three geographical commands: Western Area Command (WAC), Southern Area Command (SAC), and Eastern Area Command (EAC). WAC has the majority of the combat air power divided among the following bases Mehrabad, Tabriz, Hamadan, Dezful, Omidiyeh, Shiraz and Esfahan. |

**Figure 6. Overview of Iranian air and naval assets**

## The Iranian Naval Forces

Iran has two distinct navies that consist of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy (IRGCN) and the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy (IRIN). The missions are similar for both organizations, which are to defend Iran's littoral territories and protect Iranian interests. The IRGCN and the IRIN have different areas of operations. The IRGCN possesses a lighter fleet of ships and is charged with the vital close-in mission of coastal defense and the responsibility to protect the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz.[54] The IRGCN's naval doctrine has adapted to use swarming and fast-attack tactics.[55] The IRIN is considered the more

conventional navy and possesses a longer force projection, considered the "blue water" mission; however, the IRIN ships and boats are suffering from antiquated equipment, which leads to questionable operational readiness. The Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) noted that the overall IRIN remains "far less capable of fighting a conventional battle at sea than when it was decisively defeated by the US Navy in the 'tanker war' of 1987-1988."[56]

Most of Iran's military operates in defensive belts in order to deter an aggressor.[57] As an example, if an opponent was to engage by sea, the IRIN would be the first entity to attempt engagement, while the IRGCN would be second and commit closer to the borders. The biggest threats posed by Iran's navies would consist of swarming attacks by fast boats with missiles and vehicle borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs), submarines, and mining the Strait of Hormuz.[58]

## Paramilitary Forces and Intelligence

The Iranian government tasks its paramilitary forces with the following missions: basic law enforcement, border control, and maintenance of public order.[59] The paramilitary agencies within Iran are divide into the following organizations: the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS), the Law Enforcement Forces (LEF) under the Interior Ministry, and, in a separate chain of command, the IRGC, which includes the Basij militia. Jane's estimates that Iran possesses at least 400,000 paramilitary personnel throughout the country.[60]

When viewed from the Western perspective, the multi-organizational paramilitary presents an illusion of chaos and disarray. The multifaceted institutional structure, however, is not in a state of constant anarchy, such as it might appear; rather, the smaller components collaborate in a semi-competent overlapping manner to support the regime's overall agenda. In 2009, the US State Department reported that Iran's security forces faced corruption issues and acted with impunity as they conducted serious human rights violations, especially in demonstrations after the 2009 elections.[61]

## Law Enforcement Forces (LEF)

According to Jane's, the Iranian government formed the LEF in 1991 by unifying the police, gendarmerie, and the revolutionary committees.[62] In 2007, the Iranian government announced a new program to improve the border regiment's equipment. The government provided updated technology to strengthen border security as a method to combat smuggling and insurgency groups that pose a threat to the state.

The LEF conducts law enforcement, border control, and maintains internal civil order. The Supreme Leader approves the LEF chief, who is recommended by the president even though the organization falls under the Ministry of Interior. Multiple units overlap, such as the Social Corruption Unit and the Public Establishment Office, which attempt to weed out unacceptable, lewd social behaviors such as questionable clothing or music and public interaction between males and females.[63]

## The Basij: "Mobilization of the Oppressed"

The IRGC has command of the Basij—another category of reserve military personnel or militia. Translated, the Basij means "Mobilization of the Oppressed." The organization was established during the 1979 revolution, but gained prominence in the Iran-Iraq War. The Basij became infamous for military operations that consisted of young boys and/or older men that conducted human wave attacks against

the Iraqi defensive lines.[64] Human waves would advance into Iraqi defensive positions, including minefields, and in many cases be "martyred."

The Iranian government organized the Basij geographically around local cities or districts. Basij Ashura battalions contain only males while Basij al-Zahra battalions contain only females.[65] The Iranian government subordinates the Basij units to the IRGC and would likely use their personnel to fill out the IRGC's ranks in a large-scale conflict.

The Basij organizational structure has three major categories:[66]

- **Regular Members** consist of unpaid volunteers that can be mobilized during periods of internal civil unrest or conflict. The member is paid if he takes part in war-time duty.
- **Active Members** receive compensation during periods of non-conflict and tend to be political and religious hardliners that go through extensive indoctrination.
- **Special Members** are paid cadre that are dual members of the Basij and the IRGC's ground forces.

Actual Basij members are estimated at around 300,000 with the potential to mobilize 1,000,000 more, although Iran publicly claims numbers as high as twelve million.[67] In addition to traditional military operations, Basij units perform civil support missions. In the past, Basij units assisted with public health activities, assisted in construction projects, guarded administrative centers, and assisted the police.

The government considers the Basij as a critical section with regard to internal security, as witnessed during the 2009 elections. The government also considers the mobilization of the Basij as crucial if an aggressor threatens Iran. The Basij would fill the ranks of the IRGC, as was the case during the Iran-Iraq War.

## IRGC's Quds Forces

The IRGC's Intelligence Directorate controls the Quds forces, which is a paramilitary elite entity that has the mission for extra-territorial covert operations including an unconventional warfare component. The organization is headquartered out of the southwestern city of Ahvaz. CSIS reports that the unit was 5,000 and was to increase to 15,000, including support elements.[68] The missions consist of lethal aid, advising, financing, and building relationships with terror organizations like Hezbollah.[69] These elements sometimes use diplomatic institutions like embassies as backstops to conduct operations.

## Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS)

Iran has a number of intelligence services including the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS), which handles the more traditional foreign and domestic intelligence responsibilities. MOIS belongs to the Ministry of the Government and has a close relationship with the president—unlike the IRGC, which is closer to the Supreme Leader. The main headquarters for MOIS is in Tehran. There are five directorates included in MOIS:[70]

- The Directorate of Analysis and Strategy's main function is to provide Iran's leadership with intelligence analysis.
- The Internal Security Directorate's main function is to safeguard state institutions, including transit points such as airports, seaports, and border crossings.

- The National Security Directorate has the mission of monitoring and conducting surveillance on opposition movements.
- The Counterintelligence Directorate's main purpose is to eradicate espionage within and outside the country.
- The Foreign Intelligence Directorate's mission is to collect, conduct research, and prepare analysis on foreign intelligence entities.

The MOIS also has a subset of departments embedded in the five main directorates that differs in responsibilities, such as interior intelligence, foreign affairs, open source intelligence, religious studies, planning, attorney general, operations, training, administration, financial services, and stores.[71]

## Section 2: Iranian Weapons and Equipment

The majority of Iran's air/land weapons and equipment is antiquated. Iran's military inventory presents challenges to mission readiness with regard to ground and air power. Its arsenal consists of systems from a myriad of different countries; however, a large portion of its inventory was supplied by the United States before the 1979 revolution. Iran's military industry has focused on the development of UAVs, missiles (both cruise and ballistic), and extending cyber capabilities.[72] This action is consistent with its defensive adaptive doctrine to deter attacks.

Iran has focused a large amount of resources on an inventory of fast-attack vehicles that emphasize speed and mobility, like motorcycles and fast-attack boats. During the Prophet 9 exercise, motorcycles with Iranian soldiers armed with anti-tank weapons and boats with cruise missiles swarmed targets.[73] This weapons/equipment procurement could be perceived as a cost-effective way to counter a heavy-mechanized adversary.

Due to sanctions, Iran's military industry has upgraded and reverse-engineered a number of systems in the mechanized arsenal. Iran claimed to produce its own mechanized vehicles, such as armor and armored personnel carriers; however, many of its claims with regard to these new vehicles are based on older chassis and models within the preexisting inventory.

| ARMY | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Armored Equipment in Service | | | | | |
| Zulfiqar | 150 | Chieftain Mk 3/5 | 150 | BMP-2 | 400 |
| T-72 / T-72S | 480 | M47M | UNK | Sarir | UNK |
| T-72M1 | 50 | M48A5 | 150 | Boraq Type-86 | 140 |
| Safir-74 | 100 | M60A1 | 150 | BTR-50/60 | 300 |
| Type 72Z | UNK | Tosan | UNK | M113A1 | 200 |
| T-54/55 | 320 | BRDM-2 | UNK | BMT-2 (Cobra) | UNK |
| Type 59 | 220 | Scorpion | 80 | Rakhsh | UNK |
| T-62 | 75 | EE-9 Cascavel | 35 | Type-80 | UNK |
| Type 69- II | 200 | BMP-1 / Boraq | 140 | Half-track | UNK |

| Artillery Systems in Service | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 155 mm / Raad-2 (Thunder 2) | UNK | 122 mm / D-30 / Shafie D-30 1 | 550 | 122 mm / Arash | 50 |
| 122 mm / Raad-1 (Thunder 1) | UNK | 122 mm / Type 54 / M-30 | 100 | 240 mm / Fadjr-3 | UNK |
| 203 mm / M110 | 30 | 75 mm / M116 | 115 | 330 / Fadjr-5 | UNK |
| 170 mm / M1978 (Koksan) | 30 | 105 mm / M56 | 20 | 333 mm / Shahin 1 / Shahin 2 | UNK |
| 175 mm / M107 | 22 | 105 mm / M101A1 | 130 | 120 mm / M-65 | 200 |
| 155 mm / 2S1 (Gvozdika / M1974) | 60 | 122 mm Type 60 / D-74 | 30 | 120 mm / DIO | 500 |
| 155 mm / M109 / 109A1 / 109A1B | 150 | 130 mm / Type 59-1 | 985 | 107 mm / M30 | 150 |
| 155 mm / GH N-45 | 120 | 85 mm / D-44 | 80 | 37 mm | UNK |
| 203 mm / M115 | 20 | 107 mm / Type 63 | UNK | 81 mm | 900 |
| 155 mm / M114A1 | 70 | 107 mm / Haseb (Fadjr 1) | 600 | 81 mm / M-29 | UNK |
| 155 mm / HM41 | UNK | 122 mm / BM-21 | 100 | 60 mm / M19 | 500 |
| AT/SAM Weapons in Service | | | | | |
| 9k111 Fagot (AT-4 Spigot) | UNK | RPG-7V | 490 | SPG-9 Kopye (73 mm) | UNK |
| 9k14/9k11 Malyutka (AT-3 Sagger) | 4000 | Saeghe | UNK | Misagh-1 | UNK |
| 9M111 (AT-4 Spigot) 1 | 4500 | Saeghe 2 (Dragon) | UNK | Misagh-2 | UNK |
| 9M113 (AT-5 Spandrel) 2 | 2400 | Shahin 1 | 1000 | FM-90 | UNK |
| 9M114 (AT-6 Spiral) 3 | 500 | SPG-9 Kopye (73 mm) | UNK | FM-80 / Crotale / Shahab Thaqeb | UNK |
| BGM-71A | 250 | Toophan /Toophan 2/3/4/5/6 (TOW / Improved TOW) | UNK | MIM-23 HAWK | 120 |
| Entac | 90 | TOW | 150 | Pantsyr-S1 / 96K6 SA-22 (Greyhound) | UNK |
| FGM-77 / Dragon | 30 | Konkurs / Towsan-1 (9K113) | UNK | 57 mm / ZSU-57-2 | 80 |
| M18 (57 mm) | 150 | Strela-3 (SA-14 Gremlin) | 200 | 23 mm / ZSU-23-4 | 100 |
| M20 | 50 | Pantsyr-S1 96K6 SA-22 Greyhound | 10 | 14.5 mm / ZPU-2 / ZPU-4 | UNK |
| M20 (75 mm) | 200 | Igla-S (SA-24 Grinch) | UNK | 23 mm / ZU-23-2 | 300 |
| M40A1 (106 mm) | 200 | Tor-M1 (SA-15 Gauntlet) | 29 | 85 mm / M1939 | 300 |
| Nafez (40 mm) | UNK | FIM-92A (Stinger) | UNK | 57 mm / S-60 | 200 |
| Red Arrow | UNK | Strela-2M / 9K32M SA-7b Grail | 250 | 40 mm / L/70 | 50 |
| RPG-22 Neto | 200 | HN-5A | 190 | 35 mm / Skyguard | 92 |

| ARMY AVIATION | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Rotary Wing Aircraft in Service** | | | | | |
| EC-635 | 4 | Mi-171E | 22 | SA 342 Gazelle | 6 |
| Mi-17 | 16 | | | | |

| AIR FORCE | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Fixed Wing Aircraft in Service** | | | | | |
| F-5 (and variants) | 60 | J-7 | 60 | PC-6 | 8 |
| C-130E Hercules | 22 | Boeing 707 | 6 | P-3 Orion | 4 |
| Su-24 | 29 | Boeing 747 | 11 | Tazarve | 25 |
| Su-25 | 13 | F27 Friendship | 15 | TB-21 | 8 |
| Saeghe | 3 | Il-76 | 7 | TB-200 | 4 |
| F-14 Tomcat | 44 | Y-12 | 9 | F33 Bonanza | 34 |
| F-4 Phantom II (and variants) | 54 | Jetstar | 1 | EMB-312 | 15 |
| MiG-29 | 48 | Falcon 50 | 3 | PC-7 | 35 |
| Mirage F1 | 20 | Falcon 20 | 1 | | |
| **Rotary Wing Aircraft in Service** | | | | | |
| CH-47 Chinook | 2 | Bell 212 | 6 | Bell 412 | 2 |
| Bell 206 | 2 | Bell 214 | 19 | Shahed 274 | 2 |
| Sea King | 2 | | | | |
| **Missiles in Service** | | | | | |
| AIM-9P Sidewinder | UNK | PL-2 Atoll | UNK | AS-11 Kilter | UNK |
| AA-8 Aphid | UNK | PL-5 | UNK | AS-12 Kegler | UNK |
| AA-9 Amos | UNK | PL-7 | UNK | AS-14 Kedge | UNK |
| AA-10 Alamo | UNK | PL-9 | UNK | AS-16 Kickback | UNK |
| AA-11 Archer | UNK | Sattar-1 | UNK | YJ-6 (CAS-1) | UNK |
| AIM-7F Sparrow | UNK | Sattar-2 | UNK | C-801C Sardine | UNK |
| AIM-54 Phoenix | UNK | AGM-65 Maverick | UNK | Fajr-e-Darya (CPMIEC C-802K) | UNK |
| MIM-23B Hawk | UNK | AS-10 Karen | UNK | RIM-66 Standard | UNK |
| R 550 Magic | UNK | | | | |

| NAVY | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Vessels** | | | | | |
| Swiftships 35 m | 6 | Type 2010 | 4 | Seaspray | 24 |
| Al-Uboor | 3 | Type 200 | 2 | Al-Shams | 1 |
| Predator | 5 | Defender | 26 | | |

**Table 1. Iran military equipment**

## Military Capabilities

### Command and Control

Iran possesses the only government in the world in which the executive branch does not control the military. Instead, the Supreme Leader, not the President or Prime Minister, serves as the military's commander-in-chief and maintains sole authority to declare war and peace.[74] He controls the Islamic republic's intelligence and security directorates and sets the country's foreign and domestic goals. The Supreme Council for National Security (SCNC), under nominal control of the president, acts in an advisory capacity and its purpose lies in the preservation of the Islamic revolution, the protection of Iranian physical territory, and the maintenance of national sovereignty.

The military's chain of command does not include the SCNC, but SCNC members include many of those commonly associated with national security issues.[75] The SCNC membership includes the Iranian president; speaker of parliament; head of the judiciary; chief of the combined general staff of the armed forces; ministers of foreign affairs, intelligence, and interior; two additional representatives appointed by the Supreme Leader; and heads of the IRGC and Artesh.[76] The Supreme Leader also embedded his personal representatives in the SCNC. Day-to-day functioning of the armed forces falls upon the joint headquarters, so named because both the IRGC and the Artesh are under its command.[77]

Iran lacks a robust, secure, interoperable ground communications system that can handle a high volume of message traffic.[78] Iran experiences communications difficulties within the various military branches. The communication equipment includes HF, VHF, and UHF bands and encryption systems.[79]

### Maneuver

During the Iran-Iraq War, Iran used mass infantry assaults against Iraqi positions. The IRGC's Basij attacked in human waves as light infantry, most of the time taking heavy casualties.[80] The use of armor during this war was generally ineffective and Iran took heavy casualties to its armor forces.[81] Both militaries took up defensive postures; however, Iran learned to seize the initiative and attack during the night or during inclement weather. Limited logistical support kept the mechanized force from seizing the initiative over large distances.[82] During the Prophet 9 exercise, the IRGC used preparatory fires before motorcycles and armor maneuvered to engage. In a fight against a technologically-superior opponent, Iran's IRGC would likely use its fast-attack vehicles, such as jeeps and motorcycles, as a major part of its maneuver fight.

### INFOWAR

The Iranian government and military consider INFOWAR as a core competency for their organizations. Iran integrates INFOWAR at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. The country remains cognizant of its growing conventional military weakness in comparison to the US and plans to mitigate its deficiencies with a national defense strategy based upon unconventional tactics.[83] Iran involves itself heavily in all INFOWAR tools, with an emphasis on perception management, deception, and computer attack.

**Computer Attack**: Iran has offensive and defensive cyber capabilities. The regime has created an intricate system within the country to track Internet traffic—targeting internal threats and criminal behavior—and most likely based from the Cyber Defense Center.[84] The Iranian Cyber Army, which is thought to be linked to the IRGC, is the primary organization that conducts offensive cyberattacks.[85] In December 2014, Iran's offensive cyber elements were deemed responsible for cyberattacks that targeted the US military, transportation, public utilities, and other critical infrastructure networks.[86] Iran has invested heavily in cyber capabilities in its programs. These programs will evolve, mature, and continue to maintain the ability to threaten Western targets in cyberspace.[87]

**Perception Management**: Iran uses perception management as a critical element to simultaneously rally the population against external threats and support the Islamic republic; to marginalize internal dissent; and to deter, dissuade, and defeat external actors that might attack Iran.[88] An example can be drawn from the Prophet 9 exercise, when the IRGCN used a mock-up of a US aircraft carrier as the main target. A video was released on YouTube, with the INFOWAR theme targeted at internal and external audiences.[89]

### Reconnaissance, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Target Acquisition (RISTA)

Iran's military has multiple means of collecting intelligence and conducting target acquisition and surveillance. From the air, it has UAVs and fixed-wing capability that can observe potential targets and collect target information. Pre-1979, the US shipped F-14As that were equipped with long-range AWG-9 radar systems.[90] Iran is reported to have one Boeing 707-3J9C transport in service that has the capability of conducting signals intelligence missions.[91] Field artillery and air defense elements have radars that collect on incoming air targets. Iran's ground forces have a robust special forces and commando element that consists of three divisions and six brigades of troopers that can conduct RISTA.[92] The mechanized force has common reconnaissance vehicles such as the BRDM-2, Scorpion, and EE-9 Cascavel.[93]

### Fire Support

Jane's estimates that Iran now possesses 3,000 to 3,200 medium to heavy artillery weapons and rocket launchers.[94] Iran's fire-support arsenal continues to have a large number of US-supplied systems predating 1979; however, due to lack of mobility of the systems during the Iran-Iraq War, Iran invested in Russian self-propelled guns. Iran's military industry is now producing systems that are most likely reverse-engineered copies.

In theory, if Iran was attacked it would most likely disperse the weapons systems and rely heavily on cover, concealment, decoys, and tactical shielding to protect from air and counterbattery attacks. It is questionable how effective the coordinating efforts would be between the IRGC and Artesh elements with regard to fire support. Fire support coordination during the Iran-Iraq War was substandard.[95] The

decentralized commands that make up the Mosaic Defense would also possibly negatively affect fires coordination and increase the possibility of likely fratricide. During the Prophet 9 exercise, a video shows field artillery used as preparatory fires before the ground force assault.[96]

### Protection

Iran most likely can execute most of the 15 warfighting tactical tasks for protection if engaged in a major conflict. The proficiency level would be dependent on the type of unit and most likely be inconsistent across the spectrum of the IRGC or Artesh. However, from Iran's perspective, conducting the tasks of "law and order" is the primary objective throughout the country. Of the 15 protection tasks, Iran is remarkably good at suppressing dissidents, who are perceived as criminals, as witnessed with the 2009 elections.[97]

### Logistics

Like Iran's military doctrine, the logistical system is intended to support a defensive military posture.[98] Iran's military is not organized to support a long-range conventional force projection of power outside the country.[99] The challenge presented by the mixture of equipment and weapons within the IRGC and Artesh compounds the logistical and resupply problems faced by the warfighting systems. The IRGC has provided lethal aid to a number of terror organizations. This allows for an irregular power projection with regard to logistics and lethal aid.[100] Iran's military industry produces, stores, and transports an extensive variety of munitions. Its air force can provide troop airlift resupply support with C-130s and Boeing 707s/747s; however, the fleet is aging and operation readiness is questionable.[101] Iran's navy has the capability to insert or resupply commandos using naval assets.

### Air Defense (AD)

In 2007, Iran was promised the "highly capable S-300 air defense system" by the Russians.[102] The shipments were not delivered for years; however, after the lifting of sanctions in 2015, Russian officials indicated they would proceed with the S-300 delivery. In a recent article by the BBC the Iranians showcased the S-300 tube and radar in a parade.[103] In 2009, Iran established a new air defense command with responsibility charged to the Artesh. This command provides C2 and was designed to unite and consolidate equipment with regard to the country's land-based air defense systems.[104] This new command consolidation effort was in order to increase AD maneuverability and operability, and to consolidate intelligence collection efforts. This action was initiated due to the increased potential of an air attack on its nuclear facilities. Iran's air defense apparatus consists of a headquarters in Tehran and five regional air defense sectors.[105] The air defense assets generally follows the ring of air bases across the northern border and down the western section of the country, which Iran likely considered the most likely air avenue of approach. Interoperability and lack of quality maintenance for the aging equipment in the command creates difficulties in carrying out the mission.[106] Iran has a wide territory to protect and will likely use a point defense strategy to protect key bases and facilities.

The following are Iran's major AD threats for an adversary:[107]
- S-300 air defense system[108]
- Surface to air missile systems: Hawk, SA-24, FM-80 (see ADA chart above)
- Anti-aircraft artillery: 100 mm, 57 mm, 35 mm, 23 mm

## UAVs

Iran's research and development program on unmanned aerial vehicles dates back to around 1984, during the Iran-Iraq War. Iran learned the value and importance of timely intelligence as it related to UAVs during this war and made them a priority for the military industry. The Iranians will continue to improve their UAV technology through research and development. The military industry within Iran has an extensive production of surveillance and reconnaissance equipment with regard to UAVs. In 2010, Iran released an armed UAV named the Karrar. The news agency Fars reported that the Iranian military industry has designed and produced 40 categories of unique UAV systems.[109]

## Chemical and Biological Weapons

Official US intelligence reporting indicates that Iran is assessed as possessing a weapons of mass destruction program that includes offensive chemical and "probably" biological warfare agents.[110] Even with these capabilities, the Congressional Research Report states "Iran is widely believed unlikely to use chemical, or biological weapons or to transfer them to its regional proxies or allies."[111]

# Section 3: Iranian Tactics and Techniques

Iran's military posture is mostly defensive in nature despite INFOWAR and the IRGC's force projection. Iran's doctrine was created to deter potential attacks and/or fight a retrograde adaptive conflict that would trade time for casualties in order to allow a resolution in the political arena and/or a defeat of the invader's national will. The following diagram illustrates a snapshot of sequences on how Iran's coastal defenses would likely conduct anti-access tactics.[112] Hypothetically, if an invader attacked Iran, the IRIN, IRGCN, and air forces would be the first opposing forces that would engage the invader with anti-access operations.[113]

Iran would use ballistic and cruise missiles to attack maritime ships. The IRGCN would then use swarming attacks and fast-attack ships to isolate and overwhelm potential targets. These tactics of fast-attack vehicles also translate to ground units that put a premium on mobility.[114]

An example was illustrated in February 2015, when the Iranian military showcased the IRGCN's adaptive anti-access capabilities during the Prophet 9 annual exercise.[115] The IRGCN exercise demonstrated the ability to deploy mines; operate fast-attack boats; and launch cruise/ballistic missiles from land, air, and sea.[116] The IRGCN used fast-attack boats, some armed with C-802 anti-ship missiles, to conduct a swarming attack to overwhelm one potential target that was a mock-up of a US aircraft carrier.[117]
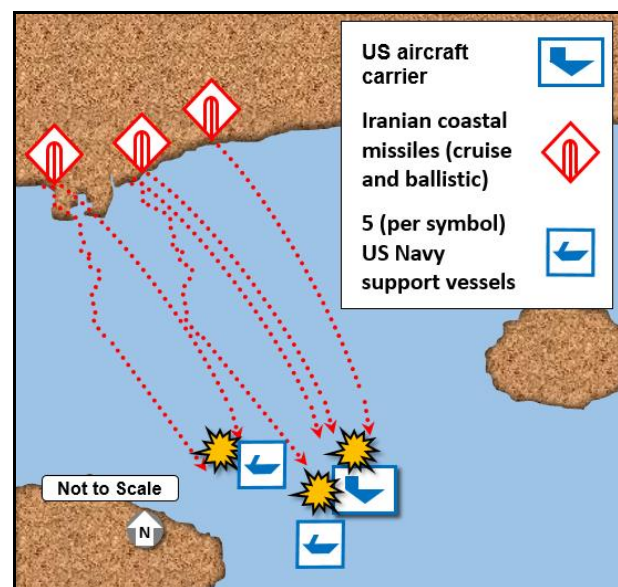


**Figure 7A. Swarming attack**

This was another example of ominous INFOWAR messages directed towards the US. These are four key observations extracted from the Prophet 9 exercise:

- The IRGCN coastal defense fired cruise and ballistic missiles, hitting the target; however, this did not demonstrate an over-the-horizon missile capability. It is also worth noting that a US aircraft carrier would most likely not be traveling alone, but with convoy and air support, and would also return fire as well as employ defensive countermeasures.
- The IRGCN used fast-attack boats with missiles to overwhelm and isolate targets with a swarm attacks.
- The IRGCN used boats as VBIEDs.
- A helicopter fired a cruise missile during the attack on the mock-up US aircraft carrier. This illustrates a fast-attack missile threat from land, air, and sea.

At a tactical level, the IRGCN armed its coastal defense force with the Ra'ad anti-ship missile that is likely based on the modified Chinese HY-2 Seersucker cruise missile.[118] The IRGCN deployed the Ra'ad missiles to 5–7 locations along the Iranian coast, utilizing the natural terrain and narrow channel to its advantage.[119] The Ra'ad is a subsonic cruise missile with a low flight altitude and a range of 150 km.[120] The IRGCN can launch cruise missiles from land, sea, and air-based weapons platforms.

The IRGCN's tactics of fast-attack vehicles put a premium on speed and mobility. In a real-world scenario, the theory is that these fast boats could fire and maneuver quickly to safety, unlike larger naval platforms.

IRGC's elements, while conducting fast-boat swarming tactics, could simultaneously start operations with missiles that can range regional adversary's bases. The use of UAVs, cyber operations, and clandestine/covert proxies or
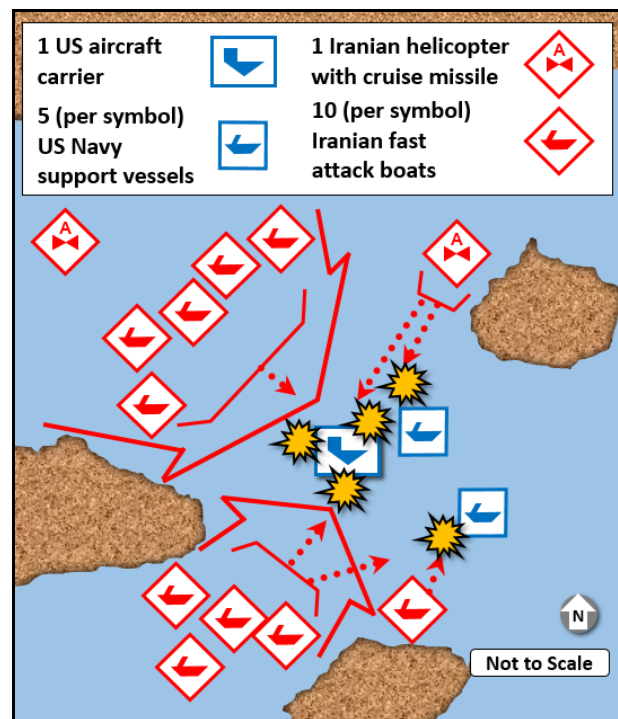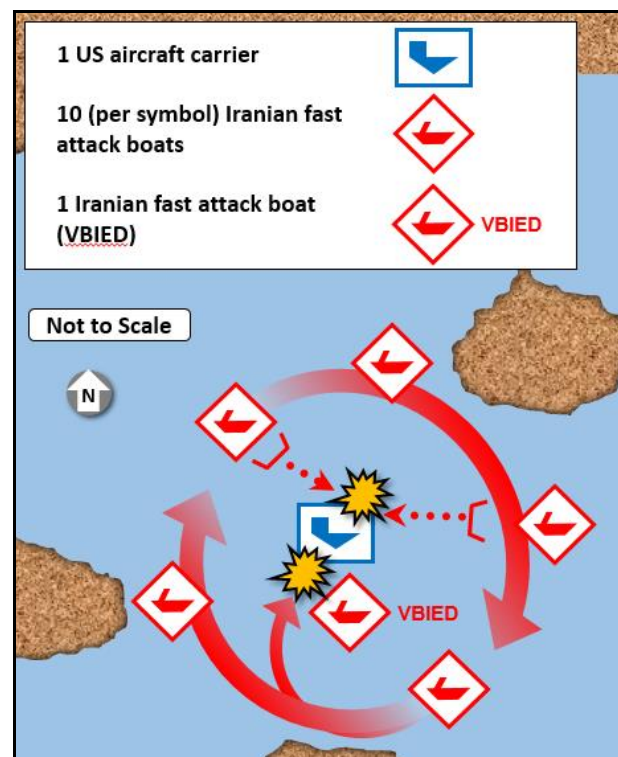
Figure 7B. Swarming attack

Figure 7C. Swarming attack

terror sleeper cells could also be used as a means to attack targets. Sleeper cells and commandos could potentially be used to attack military installations worldwide.[121]

After anti-access operations, the Artesh would be the first major resistance encountered in most ground-based invasion scenarios.[122] Theoretically, if a technologically-superior country invaded Iran, it would immediately be confronted with the Artesh's ground forces, which consist typically of light and mechanized infantry.[123]

The Artesh would attempt to repel or destroy the invader with conventional force-on-force engagements. If this course of action failed to deter the aggressor, then the operational and tactical task would likely shift to delay for time, to allow the mobilization process and the "asymmetrical doctrine" to commence.[124]

The Artesh's forces would rely heavily on cover, concealment, and deception. The Artesh would use key terrain and lines of communication, such as natural chokepoints and/or man-made infrastructure, to canalize enemy forces. Iran's military during the Iran-Iraq War also realized the significance of using terrain to mask troop movements while forcing the aggressor to engage at a disadvantage in urban or canalized terrain, thus limiting a technologically-advanced enemy.[125]

A terrain analysis of Iran's physical environment quickly explains the disposition of its military forces. The Zagros Mountains canalize movement from the northwest to the southeast.
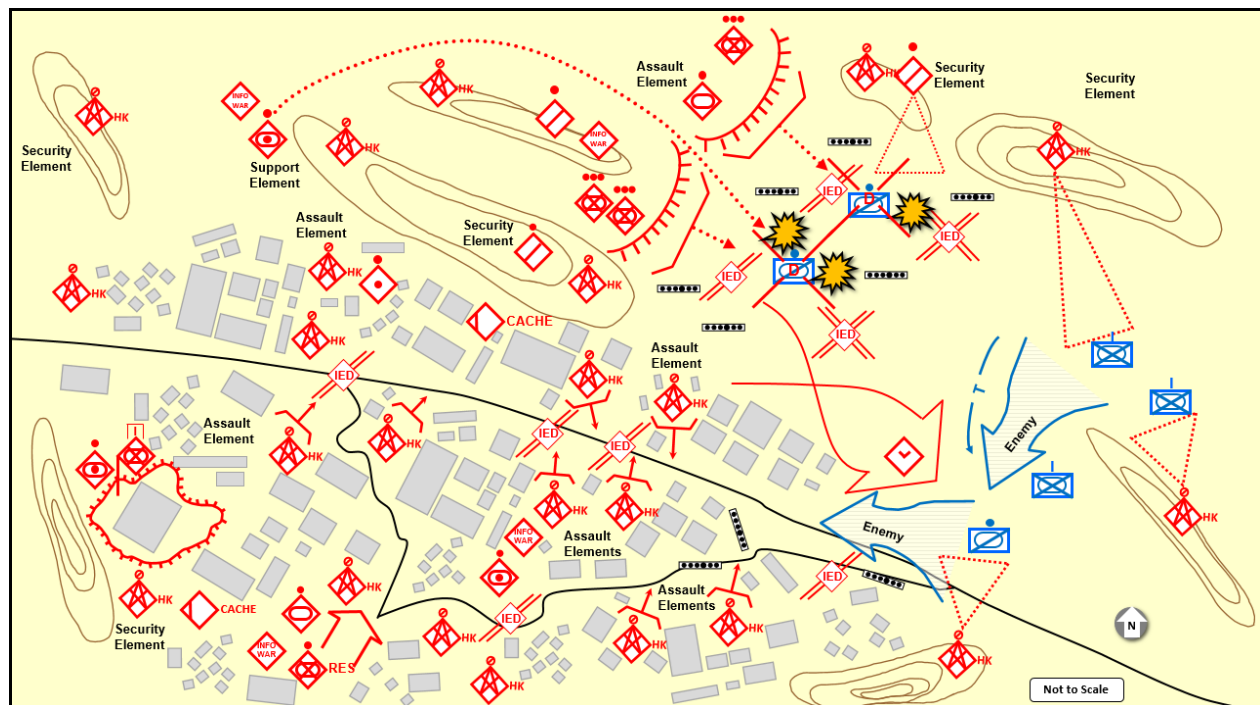


**Figure 8a. Artesh defense**

Overall, Iran's size and terrain dictate its military defensive strategy, as adapted by Iranian doctrine. Iran's ground forces would likely fight a retrograde delay similar to a maneuver defense as described in Training Circular 7-100.2. This tactical action would maximize the advantages of the restrictive terrain while falling back to preplanned battle positions.
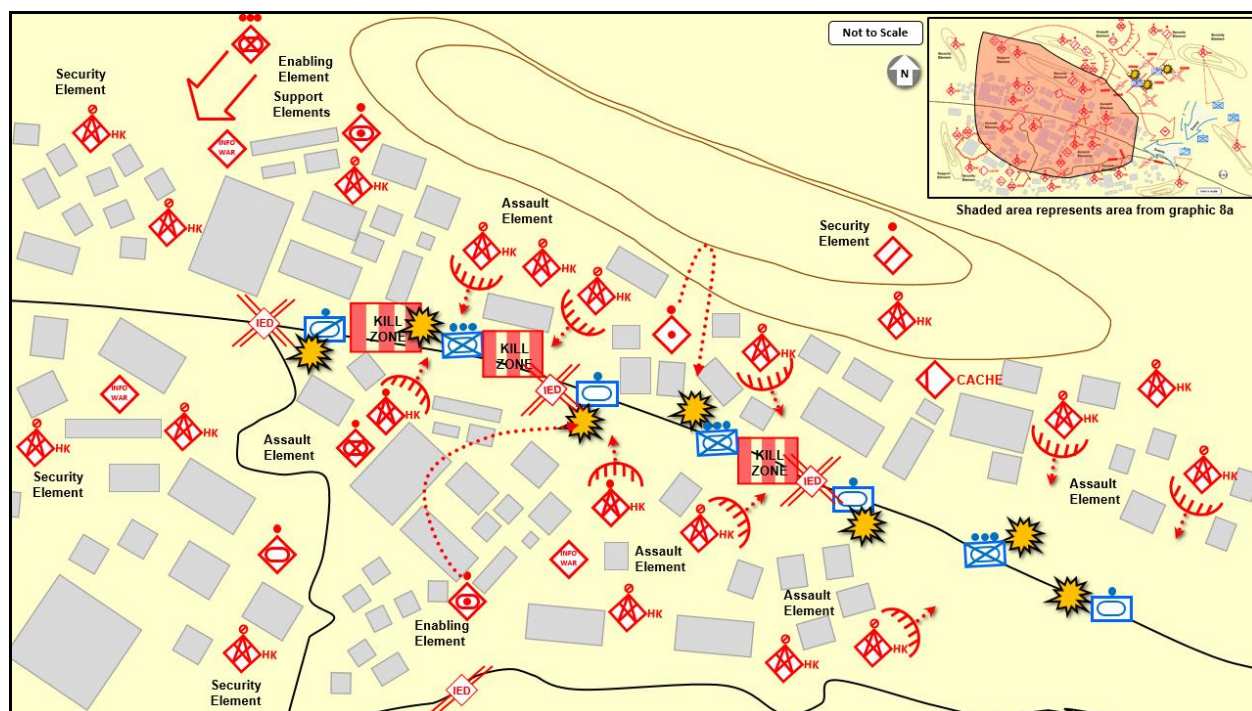


**Figure 8b. Artesh defense**

This course of action would draw the invader further into the country and potentially overextend his logistical lines, making him vulnerable to raids, assaults, and ambushes. The Iranians would likely take advantage of interior lines of communication that would allow them to concentrate on the enemy at chokepoints, such as mountain passes, and put a premium on urban fighting.

Simultaneously during the Artesh's maneuver defense, the IRGC would begin its Mosaic Defense doctrine, consisting of a hybrid threat that would conduct irregular warfare.[126] During this stage of the conflict, the Iranians—mostly the IRGC and Basij—would use small units, such as hunter-killer teams equipped with motorcycles and fast-attack vehicles, to conduct ambushes, raids, and assaults.

Iran's military learned the importance of these types of small unit tactical actions towards the end of the Iran-Iraq War. The IRGC started to empower junior leaders in order to seize the initiative on the battlefield at lower-level military echelons. The use of reconnaissance and assaults during bad weather in conjunction with night raids became a common variable for success against the Iraqi military. Iran's military leadership started implementing a decentralized C2 with smaller units that conducted irregular warfare on targets of opportunity and high-value targets.[127]

During the first stages of the Iran-Iraq War, the IRGC used human waves to conduct tactical assaults on Iraqi military lines. The first evolution of these assaults mostly took place during daylight without the use of reconnaissance to identify weakness within the Iraqi defenses. Even though the human wave tactic was not overly effective during the Iran-Iraq War, it still was psychologically damaging to the defenders and the Iranians did capitalize on the INFOWAR narrative. The IRGC's Basij could potentially conduct human wave attacks against invaders' military lines.

The diagrams below are illustrative of examples taken from the Iran-Iraq War. This course of action is consistent with events during that war and could be seen again in a modern conflict.

The Iran-Iraq War was Iran's last major conflict and still heavily influences the country's military doctrine. Many of its senior military leaders are veterans of that conflict. Many hardliners and veterans within Iran's hierarchy have rationalized that innovative tactics, self-sacrifice, and the Iranian people's faith overcame a technologically-superior Iraqi force. This rationale is translated by the Iranians into future potential conflicts with other technologically-superior adversaries.
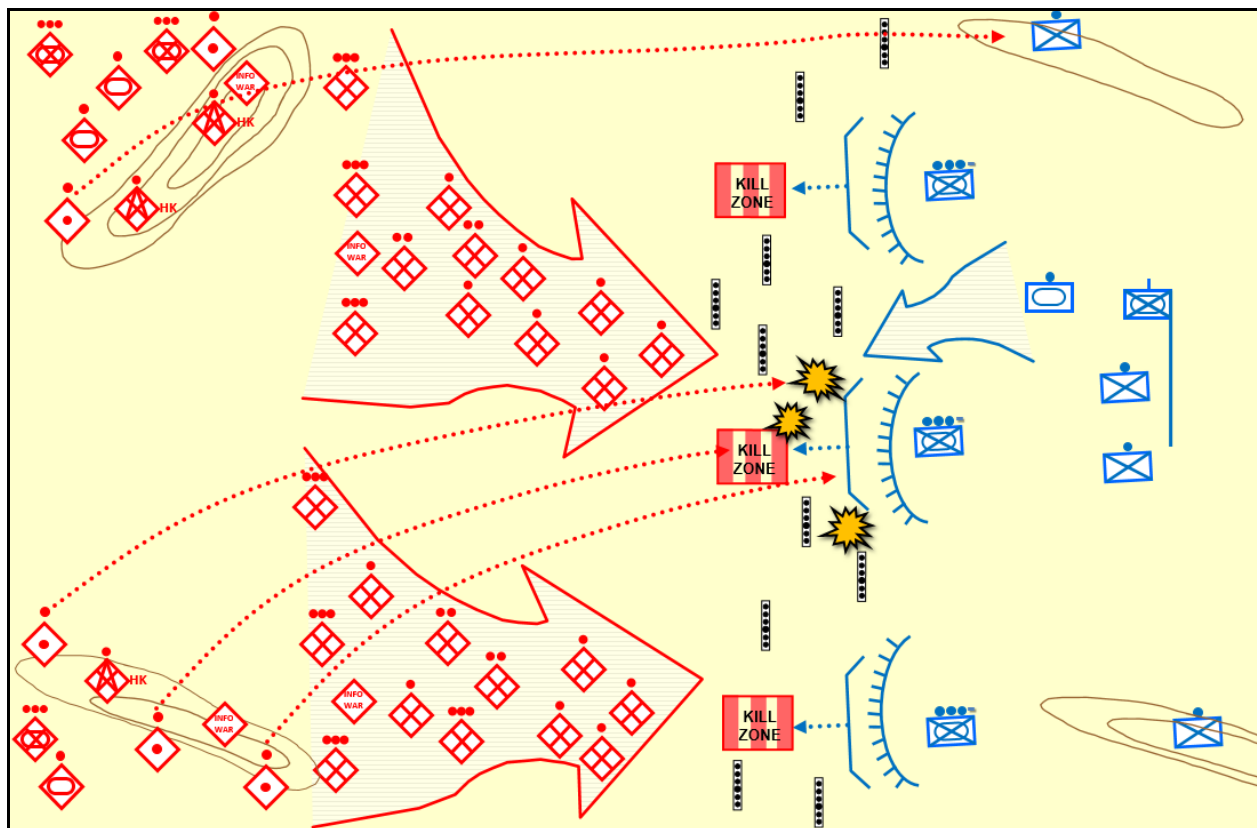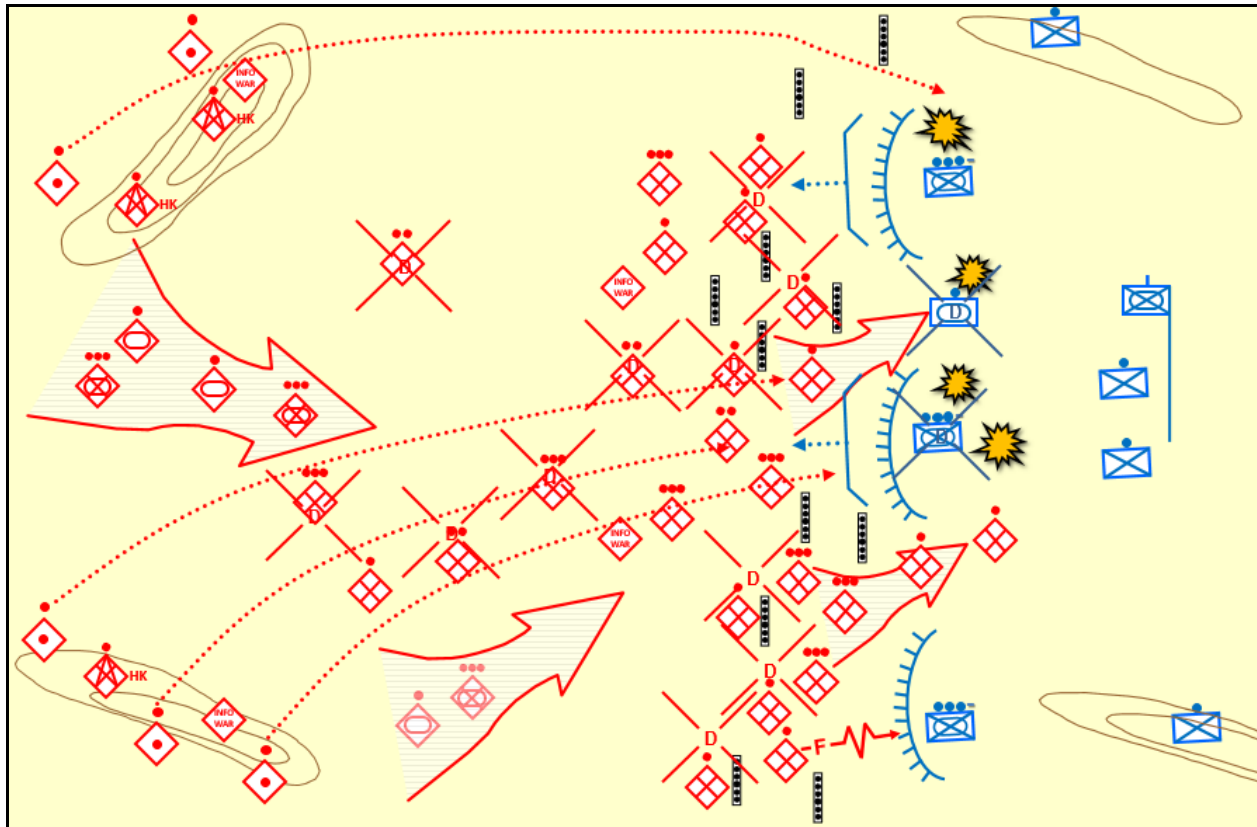


**Figure 9a. Wave attack**

**Figure 9b. Wave attack**

## Conclusion

The Government of Iran's responses to its nuclear program and continued support for terror organizations increased regional and global tensions during 2014. The US should be concerned with Iran's continued support in the form of lethal aid and advisors to terror organizations in Gaza, Lebanon, and Yemen. Iran has and will continue to support the Syrian regime's civil war. The P5+1 talks reached an agreement for the future of the Iranian nuclear issue; however, this issue still has the potential to develop into a crisis. Iran uses a repetitive INFOWAR narrative of threatening to disrupt shipping in the Strait of Hormuz. If Iran's INFOWAR narrative is physically translated and executed into a tactical action by the IRGCN, it may potentially hamper US and global interests. Iranian military doctrine focuses on an adaptive hybrid threat defensive posture against a modern industrialized enemy. The Quds forces and other intelligence organizations allow the Iranians the capability of military power projection. In the future, Iran will continue to support terror organizations with advisors and lethal aid and will increase influence in countries like Iraq and Yemen.

## REAL-WORLD CONDITIONS APPLIED TO TRAINING

The Training Circular (TC) 7-100 Hybrid Threat series, the Decisive Action Training Environment (DATE), and the Worldwide Equipment Guide provide training resources for applying real-world conditions to training. The tactics used by Iran's military can be found as part of the composite threat model that exists in the Hybrid Threat Doctrine series. Iran's Artesh and IRGC use principles of offense and defense very similar to those present in TC 7-100.2, *Opposing Force Tactics* and TC 7-100.3, *Irregular Opposing Forces*. Additionally, the operational environment outlined in DATE also includes characteristics of the Artesh, the IRGC, and the Iranian operational environment.

## Replication in Training

Of the countries in DATE, the one that can most realistically replicate Iran is Ariana. Ariana possesses the second-strongest military within DATE. Like Iran, Ariana is a country intent on growing its national power through diplomatic and irregular force projection by military means. Ariana is not a complete representation of Iran due to military equipment and organizational readiness. In order to portray Iran in a training environment, Ariana's military equipment would need to be downgraded to tier 3 or 4 systems with niche technology focused on missiles, cyber, and UAVs.

All of the tactics in this report can be found in TC 7-100.2, *Opposing Force Tactics*. For more information on how to replicate these actions, reference the TC 7-100.2. For information on how to build a force structure to conduct these actions, reference TC 7-100.4, *Hybrid Threat Force Structure Organization Guide* (Chapter 3, Section VIII, "Building an OPFOR Order of Battle"). The table below contains excerpts from the TC 7-100.2 that define the tactical actions discussed in this report.

| TC 7-100.2 & TC 7-100.3 Tactics | |
|---|---|
| *IRGC/Basij Human Wave Attacks*<br><br>**(Dispersed Attack)** | TC 7-100.2 Para 3-74. *Dispersed attack* is the primary manner in which the OPFOR conducts offensive action when threatened by a superior enemy and/or when unable to mass or provide integrated C2 to an attack. This is not to say that the dispersed attack cannot or should not be used against peer forces, but as a rule integrated attack will more completely attain objectives in such situations. Dispersed attack relies on INFOWAR and dispersion of forces to permit the OPFOR to conduct tactical offensive actions while overmatched by precision standoff weapons and imagery and signals sensors. The dispersed attack is continuous and comes from multiple directions. It employs multiple means working together in a very interdependent way. |
| *Artesh Defense*<br><br>**(Maneuver Defense)** | TC 7-100.2 Para 4-62. In situations where the OPFOR is not completely overmatched, it may conduct a tactical *maneuver defense*. This type of defense is designed to achieve tactical decision by skillfully using fires and maneuver to destroy key elements of the enemy's combat system and deny enemy forces their objective, while preserving the friendly force. Maneuver defenses cause the enemy to continually lose effectiveness until he can no longer achieve his objectives. They can also economize force in less important areas while the OPFOR moves additional forces onto the most threatened axes. |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Positional Defense*<br><br>**(Area Defense)** | TC 7-100.2 Para 4-85. In situations where the OPFOR must deny key areas (or the access to them) or where it is overmatched, it may conduct a tactical area defense. Area defense is designed to achieve a decision in one of two ways:<br><br>• By forcing the enemy's offensive operations to culminate before he can achieve his objectives.<br>• By denying the enemy his objectives while preserving combat power until decision can be achieved through strategic operations or operational mission accomplishment.<br><br>TC 7-100.2 Pg 4-1. OPFOR defenses can be characterized as a "shield of blows." Each force and zone of the defense plays an important role in the attack of the enemy's combat system. |
| *Artesh Defense*<br><br>**(Simple Battle Position)** | TC 7-100.2 Para 4-107. A *simple battle position* (SBP) is a defensive location oriented on the most likely enemy avenue of approach. SBPs are not necessarily tied to complex terrain. However, they often employ as much engineer effort and/or camouflage, concealment, cover, and deception (C3D) measures as time allows. |
| *Artesh Defense*<br><br>**(Complex Battle Position)** | TC 7-100.2 Para 4-108. A *complex battle position* (CBP) is a defensive location designed to employ a combination of complex terrain, C3D, and engineer effort to protect the unit(s) within them from detection and attack while denying their seizure and occupation by the enemy. CBPs typically have the following characteristics that distinguish them from SBPs:<br><br>• Limited avenues of approach. (CBPs are not necessarily tied to an avenue of approach.)<br>• Any existing avenues of approach are easily observable by the defender.<br>• 360-degree fire coverage and protection from attack. (This may be due to the nature of surrounding terrain or engineer activity such as tunneling.)<br>• Engineer effort prioritizing C3D measures; limited countermobility effort that might reveal the CBP location.<br>• Large logistics caches.<br>• Sanctuary from which to launch local attacks. |

| | |
|---|---|
| *IRGC/Quds Terrorism Force Projection*<br><br>**(Terrorism Actions)** | TC 7-100.3 Para 6-51. Irregular forces use a wide array of tactics and techniques to apply terrorism. The TTP [tactics, techniques, and procedures] are intended to be flexible and adaptive approaches. Surprise, secrecy, and indirect methods of attack are fundamental to acts of terror. The tactical options are as broad and diverse as the resolve of the irregular force leader to improvise and/or innovate with available resources.<br><br>TC 7.100-3 Para 6-54. Tactics, techniques, and procedures typical of irregular force actions and terrorism include—<br><br>• Threat-Hoax.<br>• Arson.<br>• Sabotage.<br>• Bombing.<br>• Hijack-Seizure.<br>• Kidnapping.<br>• Hostage-taking.<br>• Raid or ambush.<br>• Assassination.<br>• Weapons of mass destruction (WMD). |
| *Anti-Access Operations in the Strait of Hormuz*<br><br>**(Access Limitation)** | FM 7-100.1 Para 1-61. *Access limitation* seeks to affect an extraregional enemy's ability to introduce forces into the theater. Access-control operations do not necessarily have to deny the enemy access entirely. A more realistic goal is to limit or interrupt access into the theater in such a way that the State's forces are capable of dealing with them. By controlling the amount of force or limiting the options for force introduction, the State can create conditions that place its conventional capabilities on a par with those of an extraregional force. Capability is measured in terms of what the enemy can bring to bear in the theater, rather than what the enemy possesses. |

**Table 2. Excerpts from US Army doctrine**

Additional considerations for replicating Iran in training environments would be duplicating Iran's capabilities. These areas are focused mostly on INFOWAR, terrorist acts via proxies, and direct fire support. The chart below details how training centers could replicate a capability comparable to Iran.

| Capability (What) | Actor/Order of Battle (Who) | Tactic (How) |
|---|---|---|
| **INFOWAR** | Ariana has an INFOWAR brigade (section 2A-9 of DATE) that can be used for INFOWAR replication. | TC 7-100.2, *Opposing Force Tactics* Chapter 7<br><br>FM 7-100.1, *Opposing Force Operations* Chapter 5<br><br>To replicate Iran: Highlight strategic INFOWAR operations discussed in the FM. |
| **INFOWAR (Information Attack)** | Ariana has an INFOWAR brigade (section 2A-9 of DATE) that can be used for INFOWAR replication. | TC 7-100.3, *Opposing Force Tactics* Chapter 6<br><br>FM 7-100.1, *Opposing Force Operations* Para 5-48 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | To replicate Iran: Place emphasis on proxy or small clandestine cells.<br><br>TC 7-100.3; Para 6-108<br><br>an enemy can include—<br><br>• Sabotage cyber networks.<br>• Extort concession from an enemy.<br>• Damage enemy or supporting activities and infrastructure. |
| **Indirect Fire Support** | Ariana has a very powerful fire support capability that can be scale back by the exercise designer with niche technologies to replicate Iranian surface-to-surface missiles (SSMs) and indirect fire assets. Ariana's units are equipped with tier 2 fire support as a default. | TC 7-100.2, *Opposing Force Tactics* Chapter 9<br><br>FM 7-100.1, *Opposing Force Operations* Chapter 7.<br><br>To replicate Iran: Highlight missile systems.<br><br>The OPFOR doctrine stresses that fire support should combine air assets, SSMs, and artillery into an integrated attack of enemy targets throughout the area of responsibility. |
| **Special Purpose Forces (SPF) (proxies and clandestine terror cells)** | Iran has placed great emphasis on growing its SPF and irregular forces capability. Ariana's SPF has a BDE that can sufficiently represent Iran's organizational network. | TC 7-100.2, *Opposing Force Tactics* Chapter 15<br><br>FM 7-100.1, *Opposing Force Operations* Chapter 13<br><br>To replicate Iran: Highlight amphibious and airborne operations. |

**Table 3. How to use doctrine to replicate Iran**

## Related Products

Follow these links to view related products:

- Training and Doctrine Command G-2. Operational Environments to 2028: The Strategic Environment for Unified Land Operations. 2012
- Operational Environment Assessment: Iran 2010
- Attacks Against the Iranian Nuclear Program 2012
- Irregular Forces Financing Handbook March 2012
- Terror Operations: Case Studies in Terrorism 2007

See also the Red Diamond Newsletter, which contains current articles on a variety of topics useful to both soldiers and civilians, ranging from enemy tactics and techniques to the nature and analysis of various threat actors.

For detailed information on weapons and equipment, see the Worldwide Equipment Guide.

To see more products from TRADOC G2 ACE Threats Integration, visit the Army Training Network (ATN) with CAC access: https://atn.army.mil/dsp_template.aspx?dpID=377

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*Note:* **Not all references listed in this publication are readily available to the public; some require a government common access card (CAC) to view.**

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## Figure Credits

Figure 1. Iranian leadership. Source: Congressional Research Service. 25 July 2014.

Figure 2. Iranian/proxy terror attacks. Source: Congressional Research Service. 25 July 2014.

Figure 3. Snapshot of the Iranian military. Source: Adapted from Multiple Sources. Created by TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats Integration. 9 June 2015.

Figure 4. IRGC and Artesh (Ground). Source: Congressional Research Service. 23 January 2012.

Figure 5. Iranian ground forces. Source: TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats Integration. 9 June 2015.

Figure 6. Overview of Iranian air and naval assets. Source: TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats Integration. 9 June 2015.

Figure 7a. Swarming attack. Source: TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats Integration. 24 June 2015.

Figure 7b. Swarming attack. Source: TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats Integration. 24 June 2015.

Figure 7c. Swarming attack. Source: TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats Integration. 24 June 2015.

Figure 8a. Artesh defense. Source: TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats Integration. 13 May 2015.

Figure 8b. Artesh defense. Source: TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats Integration. 13 May 2015.

Figure 9a. Wave attack. Source: TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats Integration. 13 May 2015.

Figure 9b. Wave attack. Source: TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats Integration. 13 May 2015.

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