



Fiscal Year 2016  
Report on the Military Power of Iran

(Unclassified upon removal of classified report)

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**(U) Fiscal Year 2016 Report on the Military Power of Iran  
January 2017**

**(U) Unclassified Executive Summary**

(U) During 2016, Iran continued taking steps to improve its military capabilities to secure itself from both internal and external threats, and emerge as a dominant regional power. Tehran believes robust military capabilities—along with economic prosperity—will enable it to assume regional leadership. Iran wants to use sanctions relief provided by the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to improve its economy, although many Iranians perceive the JCPOA as providing slower-than-expected economic relief. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei maintains a deep distrust of U.S. intentions toward Iran, and he continues to criticize perceived U.S. efforts to undermine Iran's security and economic development.

(U) In June 2016, Khamenei appointed new leaders to the highest positions of the armed forces for the first time since 1989. The supreme leader replaced Iran's long-serving top military officer, Maj Gen Hasan Firuzabadi, with Maj Gen Mohammad Bagheri—a younger, more operationally experienced and strategically minded officer. This leadership change occurred as Iran continues to be involved in military engagements in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) forces have been engaged in Syria and Iraq, with the IRGC's Qods Force (IRGC-QF)—Iran's external operations element—maintaining a leading role in battlefield operations. In the spring, Tehran deployed a small number of ground forces from the regular military (the Artesh) to Syria—the first such deployment outside Iran since the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War. Iran's military relationship with Russia, despite Tehran's historical uncertainty about Moscow's overall regional objectives, continues to improve and advance.

(U) Iran has improved capabilities to deter potential adversaries, defend its homeland, and control avenues of approach—including the Strait of Hormuz—in the event of a military conflict. Iran has received the Russian SA-20c Surface-to-Air Missile system, becoming Iran's most advanced, long-range air defense asset. Iran continues to improve its Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) capabilities and has demonstrated the ability to conduct air-to-ground UAV strikes in Syria. The IRGC-QF continues to seek improved access within foreign countries and to support proxy groups to advance Iran's interests. Iran also perceives cyberattacks as a top threat to Iran's security and continues to develop offensive and defensive cyber capabilities.

(U) Since the Iran-Iraq War, Tehran has placed significant emphasis on developing and fielding ballistic missiles to project power and to deter and counter perceived threats from Israel, the United States, and regional adversaries. Iran maintains a substantial inventory of missiles capable of reaching targets throughout the region, including U.S. military bases and Israel, and the regime continues to develop more sophisticated missiles.

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