Finishing the Job: Targeting Iran's Repression Machine

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I. Executive Summary

Despite President Donald Trump's claim during his April 1 speech that "regime change has occurred" in Iran with new "less radical" and "reasonable" authorities in place, the same repressive theocracy continues to hold power. By the president's own admissions, the rulers in Tehran have killed hundreds of Americans, as well as thousands of Iranians, and the Iranian people remain "petrified" of protesting because "one side has guns, and they have very nasty guns… and what they do is they shoot you. The people are brave, but they're not brave when they see people gunned down left and right." Until the regime can no longer prevent Iranians from removing it from power, it will continue to endanger the United States, its partners, and the Iranian people. The United States and Israel should, therefore, prepare for operations to target and degrade Iran's security apparatus.

Targeting Iran's internal security forces requires specific operations because these small, decentralized units operate in ways that make them difficult to distinguish from the civilian population. This type of operation also requires significant surveillance and strike assets, which are currently in high demand for other targets. Once the war ends, Washington will want to redeploy much of the force posture it has surged to the region, particularly its crewed aircraft.

Overcoming these challenges requires a rapid, reliable intelligence network and strike assets specifically devoted to targeting the entire system of personnel and infrastructure that repress the Iranian people, while minimizing risks to civilians. A frequent aircraft presence above Iranian skies, both during and after major combat operations, should conduct flyovers of major cities, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), and strike operations. This combination would help deter regime forces, intensify psychological pressure, and enable swift responses against attacks on civilians or attempts to rebuild Iran's military and nuclear programs. Extending help to the Iranian people after the war requires maintaining the political will and capabilities in the region to continue monitoring Iran's repression apparatus and quickly respond if necessary. Support will also need to ensure opposition forces have necessary communications and weapons resources. Regardless of whether the war ends through a negotiated ceasefire or a unilateral U.S.-Israeli decision to stop, the United States should not enter into any agreement that legitimizes the regime, grants it concessions, or restricts continued operations over Iran.

To pursue this effort both during and after the war, the U.S. Department of Defense should provide U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) with enough drones and precision missiles for rapid, targeted strikes that can reach hidden security forces while minimizing civilian harm. Drone operations should track mobile units and checkpoints. Iran has already shown that its remaining air defenses can shoot down fighter aircraft, and post-war air operations would likely face a more contested airspace as Iran rebuilds its air defense capacity. These factors increase the value of drone operations, while electronic warfare aircraft can suppress regime communications and air defense radars. The United States and Israel should also further covertly arm opposition groups with small arms and man-portable drones and expand transfers of secure communications platforms capable of circumventing signal tracking methods. Acting now to preposition and distribute these capabilities will enable long-term operational momentum.

II. Operational Achievements Against Enforcement Personnel and Infrastructure

The Islamic Republic of Iran's revolutionary ideology inherently requires that it sustain hostility, and project power, against its existential enemies both at home and abroad. Degrading the means of repression it uses to maintain control over the country by silencing its own people therefore directly supports the broader U.S. and Israeli goals of removing Iran's military and nuclear threats.

For years, Iran has relied on a dense web of Basij, police, and intelligence networks, in particular the Ministry of Intelligence of the Islamic Republic (MOIS) to control neighborhoods and suppress unrest, alongside a court system specifically designed to oppress Iranians. Removing these means of repression reduces the regime's capacity to silence and kill its own people, paving the way for Iranians to eventually overthrow those in power. The campaign does not need to bring about immediate collapse, as long as it prevents Tehran from rebuilding its ability to suppress the population before people can take action, even if that moment is not in the immediate foreseeable future.

Airstrikes have hit both the personnel and physical infrastructure Tehran relies on to enforce control, neutralizing senior commanders and some street-level enforcement units and checkpoints. By mid-March an estimated one-third of all strikes may have targeted Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Basij leadership, bases, and enforcement infrastructure. The combination of civilian-sourced intelligence and drone swarm operations has made it possible to find and hit enforcement targets that would otherwise be invisible from the air.

A. Neutralizing Security Personnel

Iran's repressive system depends on a continuous supply of personnel willing to beat, arrest, and murder civilians on the street, man checkpoints, and run informant networks that identify dissidents. Neutralizing Basij personnel, police, and intelligence services both limits Tehran's ability to enforce its policies and raises the personal cost to remaining personnel, encouraging them to either stop or face becoming the next target of a U.S. or Israeli strike. Eliminating the IRGC Ground Forces' capacity to reinforce paramilitary units significantly weakens the regime's ability to carry out street-level violence, while also empowering opposition groups in ethnic regions to challenge Tehran's control and foster greater opposition activity.

Israeli strikes have eliminated the senior command tier of the internal security apparatus, killing Intelligence Minister Esmail Khatib, IRGC Intelligence Commander Brigadier General Seyed Majid Khademi, Basij Commander Brigadier General Gholamreza Soleimani, Basij Deputy Commander Qassem Qoreishi, and Law Enforcement Command Intelligence Chief General Gholamreza Rezaian. A single night of Israeli strikes killed nearly 300 Basij field commanders and officials.

B. Degrading Security State Infrastructure

Destroying the physical infrastructure Tehran uses to enforce control reduces its ability to project enforcement across neighborhoods. Strikes have hit IRGC Ground Forces bases, including the Seyyed ol Shohada Operational Base in Isfahan, the 14th Imam Hossein Division, the Saheb ol Zaman Provincial Unit, and the Ground Forces Headquarters in eastern Tehran, damaging facilities, equipment, and personnel. Basij bases, IRGC garrisons, and police stations enable security forces to stage operations, store equipment, coordinate patrols, and hold detainees before transfer. Without them, surviving personnel lose the logistics necessary to amass forces quickly, sustain operations, and maintain the visible presence that signals to ordinary Iranians that authorities still control the street. As that presence thins, Iranians will gain the physical space to gather, organize, and confront remaining forces.

Using tips from ordinary Iranians to find and strike checkpoints and patrols that would otherwise be hard to find from the air has enabled Israel to act faster and strike more precisely. Iranians on the ground have reportedly transmitted information through Israeli Persian-language social media accounts, with Israeli authorities vetting this intelligence before conducting strikes.

Cyber means have turned Iran's surveillance infrastructure against the regime. In addition to cyberattacks disrupting Iranian communications and sensor networks ahead of the initial U.S. and Israeli strikes, Israeli intelligence reportedly hacked Iran's closed-circuit television and traffic camera networks—originally a tool to monitor dissent—to find senior leadership in real time. This breach enabled Israeli forces to track the movements of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and his inner circle and ultimately conduct lethal strikes on their headquarters, demonstrating a critical vulnerability in Iran's reliance on its surveillance technologies for regime security. Israeli operations also reportedly took control of Iranian state broadcasting channels to transmit messages urging Iranians to oppose the regime.

Israeli strikes have already hit financial infrastructure tied to regime personnel. A missile hit the digital security center of Sepah Bank in Tehran, which handles payments for IRGC personnel, disrupting financial services. *Iran International* later reported that Iranian security units have faced pay delays as the bank crisis spread, demonstrating the potential for further rifts between the leadership and the personnel it needs to exert control.

III. The Iranian Regime Remains Durable

However, each layer of the security apparatus retains enough capacity to continue exercising control. Despite Trump's assertions that the war would create an opportunity for regime change, the Iranian regime remains firmly in place, with new leaders at the top continuing the cycle of brutality against the Iranian people. Strikes have damaged the top levels of the security apparatus but left it functionally intact where it impacts Iranian civilians most: at the street level and in the courtroom. So long as this remains the case, the regime's ability to retain control and enforce its brutal policies will endure.

A. Crackdowns on Dissenters Continue

The intensified crackdown that began with the crushing of January's nationwide protests has continued even under bombardment. Security forces retain a visible and threatening presence in major cities even as strikes continue. Authorities have sustained the crackdown on civilians who document the war, detaining Iranians who film strike sites. This willingness and ability to threaten and detain civilians in the middle of an air campaign demonstrates how much coercive capacity the state retains at the street level despite the damage to its upper command structure. Iranian officials claimed to have arrested 500 people accused of sharing information with adversaries, with half the cases involving location data on military and security assets or footage of strike locations.

The regime's security forces have also reportedly used specialized software to detect and physically locate SpaceX Starlink satellite communications terminals that enable internet access despite the regime's weeks-long blackout. Tracking internet signatures that likely indicate Starlink or virtual private network (VPN) use can expose users to severe punishment, including espionage or sabotage charges that could carry the death penalty.

B. Adapting Means of State Control

Checkpoints within Iran have expanded since the war began, demonstrating that damage to headquarters and senior leaders has not translated to reduced enforcement. For example, the Israeli Air Force struck more than 10 Basij positions across Tehran on March 17, but new positions keep appearing because authorities treat checkpoint crews as expendable and replace them from a volunteer pool that runs into the tens of thousands.

With major headquarters destroyed, surviving forces have broken into smaller mobile elements, sheltering inside civilian facilities, as well as under bridges and overpasses, to reduce their exposure to overhead surveillance and drone strikes. Some checkpoints dismantle and reposition within hours. This dispersal makes the remaining force harder to target but also less effective at mounting the kind of synchronized crackdown Tehran relied on during the 2019 and January 2026 protests. Further strikes can widen that gap until street-level presence thins enough to change the calculation for ordinary Iranians.

C. Judicial Terror Has Continued

Alongside security forces, the Iranian judicial system has terrorized its populace. Coerced confessions amplified through state media seek to convince Iranians that acting on any perceived opening will cost them their lives. Prosecutors pursue charges such as waging war against God and corruption on earth, violations broad enough to cover almost anything, including sentencing an 18-year-old to death for damaging a bank ATM. State television then broadcasts the coerced confessions to show the population that arrest leads to public humiliation and death.

Three weeks into the war, Tehran hanged three men, including Saleh Mohammadi, a teenager who had turned 19 only the week before and was a member of Iran's national wrestling team, marking the first officially announced protest-related executions since strikes began. Iran's judiciary has announced at least nine executions of protesters since the war began, and courts continue to issue death sentences after proceedings built on torture-extracted confessions and no meaningful access to independent counsel. Iran's Attorney General Mohammad Movahedi-Azad activated "round-the-clock, non-stop judicial emergency units" in March 2026 to eliminate any remaining delay in processing cases because authorities likely view a population emboldened by Iran's battlefield setbacks as an existential threat. Emphasizing the use of the courts to deter any dissent, the First Deputy Chief of the Judiciary Hamzeh Khalil warned publicly on March 23 that anyone spreading information would face consequences with no possibility of clemency.

IV. Challenges for Targeting Low-Level Security Forces

Targeting the lower tiers of Iran's repression apparatus requires distinct operations and tactics from other Iranian political or military targets because these forces operate within the civilian population in ways that make them difficult to identify and separate from noncombatants. Finding them, hitting them without causing civilian harm, and sustaining that pressure while the campaign simultaneously pursues other military objectives all present distinct operational challenges.

A. Decentralized Security Forces

The Basij's decentralized structure limits operational damage from its leadership being killed. Basij units function with a high degree of local independence, with individual cells capable of conducting enforcement operations without direction from central command. While senior regime leadership directed the January 2026 crackdown, enforcement required IRGC, Basij, and police units deployed across cities and neighborhoods nationwide, where they conducted arrests, beatings, and shootings of protesters.

B. Locating Enforcement

Iran's vast size, roughly four times the size of Iraq and two and a half times the size of Afghanistan—where U.S. forces similarly sought to find elusive targets from the air—creates challenges for locating and striking dispersed enforcement units. Unlike fixed weapons or nuclear sites, Basij neighborhood cells, plainclothes intelligence operatives, and ad hoc checkpoint teams can appear and disappear quickly, operate without distinctive clothing, and co-locate with civilian infrastructure in ways that shrink the margin for error of military operations against them. Even when a security presence appears obvious to locals, translating that visibility into actionable targeting data, with precise coordinates, positive identification, and time-on-target for U.S. or Israeli air assets often requires persistent observation that is difficult to maintain across multiple cities and target sets.

C. Targeting the Iranian Regime, Not the Iranian People

The closer strikes move to low-level enforcement, the more success depends on avoiding civilian harm and avoiding effects that look indistinguishable from collective punishment. Checkpoints and riot formations often embed among civilians, and enforcers can deliberately use civilians and protected sites for cover, turning tactical opportunities into strategic liabilities. Civilian harm would undermine the intended strategic effect, regardless of operational gains. Both countries already place high priority on minimizing civilian casualties, and have demonstrated an ability to precisely hit regime targets interspersed among civilians. However, as operations focus more on dense areas closer to civilians, maintaining this distinction becomes even more critical and challenging.

D. Iran's Remaining Air Defenses

Even though the United States and Israel have established air superiority over key swathes of Iranian territory, this does not completely remove the risk of U.S. fighter aircraft and drones being shot down. Shifting to more close-in targeting, as operations move lower and into more urban environments, would expose aircraft to greater risk from surviving or reconstituted Iranian surface-to-air threats.

E. Balancing Other Campaign Objectives

Compounding these challenges, targeting Iran's internal security forces during the current campaign also competes with other priorities for finite ISR coverage and strike capacity, particularly missile, drone, weapons-production, and nuclear sites. Shifting more ISR and strike assets toward targeting low-level internal security units means those capabilities will not be able to hit other, potentially higher priority, target sets.

V. Designing a Sustained Street-to-Strike Campaign

Overcoming these challenges requires shifting from episodic disruption of Iranian internal security forces to a persistent approach that can locate, identify, and pressure enforcement units without eroding support for the broader campaign. The United States and Israel must find and strike these units quickly and precisely, maintain that tempo through and after major operations, and do so without diverting effort from other missions.

A. Build a Reliable Intel-to-Strike Pipeline

Translating local awareness of enforcement activity into actionable targeting data requires continuous observation that aerial surveillance alone cannot maintain across multiple cities and targets. Since Iran relies on internet shutdowns, phone seizures, and intimidation to isolate neighborhoods and prevent real-time reporting, outside support should prioritize resilient technologies for civilians to exchange tips, transmit video, and coordinate turnout even under blackout conditions.

Human intelligence networks can provide real-time identification of checkpoint locations, unit movements, and enforcement activity at the street level, while drones translate that intelligence into strikes on time-sensitive targets. These networks should prioritize areas with documented Basij activity, recruit through diaspora and existing opposition contacts, and integrate through secure protocols that route coordinates directly to CENTCOM.

Increasingly devoting drone assets for these missions would reduce the need for crewed aircraft that carry larger munitions best suited for degrading Iran's missile, drone, nuclear, and weapons production facilities. The increased danger from Iran's remaining air defenses further strengthens the case for relying on drones, as opposed to manned aircraft, for close-in targeting. Since targeting Iran's paramilitary forces requires frequent overhead coverage to respond speedily as intelligence identifies targets, slow-moving and loitering drones provide a better option than fast-flying fighter aircraft. Overhead ISR from U.S. MQ-9 Reapers and Israeli Hermes and Heron UAVs can locate and strike targets. In addition, the AGM-114R9X Hellfire "Flying Ginsu" missile offers a standoff precision strike capability, using blades to eliminate specific personnel while minimizing collateral damage because there is no explosive.

Similarly, the ability of loitering munitions to fly at low altitudes allows them to travel under and around overpasses, bridges, and other terrain features that mobile units use to conceal movements. Man-portable and tube-launched drones, such as the Switchblade loitering munition, enable operators to launch, identify, and track mobile units before guiding the drone onto a specific target with precision, enabling rapid strikes and mission aborts if civilians are at risk. The Switchblade 300 variant can strike personnel and light infantry targets at a range of 10 km, while the Switchblade 600 has a larger anti-armor warhead capable of penetrating more hardened targets up to 40 km away.

B. Target the Whole Repression Network

Alongside striking enforcement personnel, the decentralized nature of the regime's internal repressive system makes it even more important to target their logistical infrastructure. U.S. and Israeli strikes should seek to make it difficult for Iran to keep checkpoints operating by targeting locations where officials frequently set them up, as well as nearby staging areas.

The United States and Israel should also increase their targeting of the IRGC Ground Forces to keep them from surging manpower and weapons to supplement Basij and police units. Strikes should focus on hitting regional commands, rapid-reaction forces, and mechanized units necessary for reinforcement. In

particular, degrading armories, vehicles, ammunition and fuel storage, and engineering equipment would limit their ability to deploy.

The United States and Israel should expand targeting of financial institutions that directly support Iran's internal security apparatus, particularly those that process salaries, benefits, and operational funding for IRGC, Basij, and police units. Disrupting these systems imposes immediate friction on Tehran's ability to pay, incentivize, and sustain personnel carrying out repression.

C. Reduce Civilian Risk in Targeting

Planners should tighten an already stringent civilian-harm standard for strikes near civilians because potential targets may infiltrate crowds and move through civilian spaces. Commanders should apply tighter identification standards for targets in dense areas, prioritize repeatable targets such as checkpoints, vehicles, and staging sites, and time strikes to minimize civilian exposure. Flying drones, in particular loitering munitions, closer to the ground will enable more accurate ISR, targeting, and an ability to terminate a strike if needed.

VI. Extending Support for Dissidents Post-War

Degrading enforcement capacity creates the conditions for mass mobilization only if Iranians on the street have some protection from whatever security forces survive the campaign. Providing aerial support to protesters and dissident movements, during the war or even after major combat operations conclude, further extends the campaign's effects. A frequent aircraft presence above Iran even after the war ends would serve as both a deterrent and means to preempt regime attacks on Iranian civilians. Regular flyovers of major Iranian cities would remind checkpoint crews, patrol units, and other security personnel that they remain exposed to immediate U.S. or Israeli action, which could disrupt routines and force them to disperse.

Once major operations end and carrier strike groups redeploy, the forces and infrastructure needed to support opposition groups in Iran with overhead drone operations will not be ready unless the United States and Israel plan for post-war engagement now. Dismantling Iran's repression network over the long term requires the political will to conduct operations even after the war, as well as the continued presence of offensive and defensive capabilities in the region to locate and hit targets inside Iran rapidly. Regardless of how the regular exchange of fire stops, Washington should avoid reaching any deal that curtails America's ability to keep operating over Iran.

A. Maintaining Political Will After the War Ends

U.S. and Israeli leaders have paired their targeting with political messaging about the urgent need for different leadership in Tehran, while simultaneously warning that mass mobilization remains unlikely to be safe until operations further damage Iranian security forces. On the opening day of the war, Trump framed the operation as creating an opportunity for Iranians to "take over" their government, even as U.S. officials have stressed that the moment for public action would be after further strikes to degrade security forces. Although CENTCOM Commander Admiral Brad Cooper urged civilians to stay inside "for right now" during an interview with *Iran International* on March 23, he indicated "there will be a clear signal at some point, as the president has indicated, for you to be able to come out" and take action against the regime. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu similarly claimed at the start of the war that "help has arrived" and explicitly warned Iranians, "don't miss the opportunity," because "this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity" to eventually "take to the streets."

Although both U.S. and Israeli leaders have emphasized the importance of breaking the security apparatus, Israel appears more committed to this objective over the long term. Netanyahu reportedly urged Trump during a recent call to jointly push for Iranians to rise up, but the president rejected the proposal out of concern it would simply invite a repeat of the brutal January crackdown. Instead, Trump has moved starkly in the other direction by claiming on April 1 the war already had achieved regime change that led to "less radical" and "reasonable" leadership, despite the same brutal regime remaining entrenched in power.

B. Ensuring Necessary Capabilities Remain in the Region

If the regime in Iran does not collapse during the war, continuing operations against its enforcement apparatus will become harder. While the United States may maintain a large force posture during potential ceasefire negotiations or shortly after combat ends, the massive force buildup in the region is unlikely to last, reducing U.S. fighter aircraft capacity. Maintaining a force posture sizeable enough to identify, track, strike and defend against threats rapidly without another buildup of U.S. forces to the region will remain critical to post-war operations.

Continuous drone operations for ISR, deterrent flyovers, and—when necessary—strikes after the conflict remains essential. Ongoing surveillance enables the tracking of mobile units, the monitoring of rebuilt or redeployed missile and drone infrastructure, and early detection of emerging threats to regional partners. Even once active hostilities subside, ISR drones provide intelligence on internal movements, command posts, and logistics hubs, enabling the United States and its partners can respond quickly to new provocations or clandestine activity. Sustained coverage would also support the targeting and assessment of high-value military and nuclear sites, preserve operational knowledge gained during the conflict, and deter the regime from reconstituting capabilities unobserved.

Unlike the current campaign, which steadily degraded those defenses to secure broader air superiority, a post-war targeting effort would likely face a more contested airspace as Iran works to reconstitute its air defenses. Aircraft will have to operate through much narrower airspace, either by carving out temporary air corridors or by penetrating and evading surviving air defense networks. That constraint increases the value of drones, which can absorb losses more readily than crewed aircraft and sustain pressure in an air domain that would become more dangerous and less permissive.

At the same time, opposition forces inside Iran also require access to weapons to effectively challenge the regime and respond to threats in a timely manner even after U.S. and Israeli operations end. Trump indicated on April 5 that "we sent guns to the protesters, a lot of them," via Kurdish groups but that he believes "the Kurds took the guns." Transferring these weapons immediately and confirming that channels provide them to groups inside of Iran remains critical to ensuring they are ready for use before the regime can consolidate control, strengthen checkpoints, or restrict movement.

Yet, these operations carry escalatory risks, and Tehran may treat continued armed drone presence over Iranian cities as sufficient justification to resume attacks on Israel, Gulf nations, energy sites, or maritime targets if it sees U.S. or Israeli operations post-war as threatening its survival. If Iran chooses to escalate after a U.S. drawdown, the region may lack sufficient defenses or offensive strike capacity to respond effectively. To guard against Iranian preemptive action, the United States should maintain robust air defense assets in the region after major combat operations conclude.

C. Exposing the Perpetrators

Using drone ISR coverage, cyber means, and human intelligence, the United States and Israel should intensify efforts to identify and publicly attribute officials involved in repression—particularly Basij commanders and intelligence personnel. Governments should pair these attributions with targeted sanctions, visa bans, and asset freezes. Sustained, credible attribution for the atrocities these individuals have committed would better inform the Iranian public about who is responsible for repression and enable opposition forces to take action against them. These measures will remain essential even after the war, as they provide ongoing tools to counter renewed repression should the regime attempt to crack down on the Iranian people in a post-war environment.

VI. Building the Capabilities to Dismantle Iran's Repression System Now and After the War

To implement this campaign to dismantle Iran's repression system, the United States must strengthen Iranian civilians' ability to communicate, keep security forces under constant threat from the air, put weapons in the hands of Iranians willing to fight back, and ensure necessary assets for this effort remain in the region after the war. Acting now will enable the campaign to maintain an ability to support the Iranian people whenever they are ready to remove the despotic leadership from power.

A. Deploy Drones to Maintain Presence Over Iranian Urban Areas

The United States and Israel should conduct repeated drone operations over Iranian cities to watch and, when needed, strike forces used to control the population. U.S. MQ-9 Reapers and Israeli Hermes and Heron drones can provide near-constant surveillance and track unit movements, rotations, and concentrations. Loitering munitions like SkyStriker and Harop can then hit smaller, routine targets that make repression possible, such as checkpoint crews, patrol vehicles, and staging areas. Hits on the everyday units that enforce control will make it harder to move forces around, reduce the number of available personnel, and force commanders to spend more time protecting their own units instead of policing the population.

B. Preposition Weapons Capable of Close-in Precision Strikes

Similarly, the Department of Defense should provide CENTCOM with sufficient quantities of precision systems, including the AGM-114R9X Hellfire "Flying Ginsu" missile and man-portable loitering munitions, such as Switchblade loitering munition, so that U.S. aircraft and allied forces can conduct targeted strikes that minimize civilian harm while eliminating high-value targets. These capabilities provide flexible options for engaging mobile and hardened targets, and their continued availability will be especially important in the post-war environment to help control escalation and preserve operational leverage.

C. Deploy Electronic Warfare Aircraft to Disrupt Regime Communications

Maintaining a robust electronic warfare aircraft presence in the region after the war will be critical to suppressing air defenses for ongoing drone operations. The United States should deploy additional EA-18G Growler squadrons to the region and maintain them on a rotational basis to sustain continuous jamming operations over Iranian urban areas through and beyond major combat operations. The EA-18G's Next Generation Jammer Mid-Band can focus narrow jamming on specific locations and air defenses.

D. Arm Opposition Groups

Beyond conducting its own operations, the United States and Israel should also use clandestine networks to arm vetted opposition elements and protest organizers with weapons capable of targeting Basij enforcers directly. This should include providing man-portable loitering munitions, like Switchblades, and small arms to expand their ability to shape the battlefield independently, degrade regime strongpoints, and maintain initiative across dispersed areas of operation. Additionally, support should extend to ethnic groups within Iran that are committed to countering repression but remain dedicated to preserving national unity after the fall of the Iranian regime. Providing this weaponry would enable local forces to fight without relying on complex infrastructure or prolonged external support.

E. Expand Distribution and Updates of Communication Platforms

To help facilitate the intelligence necessary for these operations, the United States, Israel, and other regional partners should expand their delivery of Starlink terminals, satellite phones, VPN software, mesh networking devices, and encrypted communications applications into Iran through border smuggling networks, diaspora channels, and opposition groups. Reducing the size of a Starlink terminal would also help conceal them better.

The United States should work with SpaceX and other technology companies to modify Starlink terminal firmware to defeat Iranian detection methods, including randomizing signal identifiers, masking emission characteristics, and making terminals indistinguishable from ordinary Wi-Fi traffic. These updates should emphasize building software and operating concepts that reduce the need for prolonged local use, shorten transmission windows, prioritize burst data transfer, and enable rapid remote shutdown. Providing devices pre-loaded with VPNs and encrypted messaging tools will help Iranians maintain secure communications if Iran restores internet access. As Iranian countermeasures evolve, the United States should provide continuous hardware and software updates to stay ahead of detection.