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***Iran Expands Economic  
Ties to the CIS***

Iran is pursuing closer economic cooperation with the Islamic members of the CIS in hopes of expanding its influence in the region. According to press reports, Iran has sent several high-level Iranian delegations to the CIS in recent months and has signed numerous economic agreements, including building a new rail link, establishing new air routes, constructing dams, expanding Iranian banks' branch offices, and eventually transporting oil from the republics through Iran to a Persian Gulf port. Financial constraints probably will limit development efforts,

although Iran approved a \$50 million line of credit to each of the six Islamic CIS republics, [REDACTED] Iran probably hopes expanded economic ties to the republics will promote stability on its northern border, provide new markets for its exports, and increase its influence at the expense of other countries—such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia—that it sees as competitors in the Islamic CIS republics. [REDACTED]