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SENIOR EXECUTIVE INTELLIGENCE BRIEF

11 March 2003

PASS SEIB 03-057CHX

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**Iraq: Saddam's Eleventh-Hour Options** [redacted]

*Saddam probably realizes the inspections process is unlikely to stave off war much longer and now may try eleventh-hour maneuvers to forestall coalition military action* [redacted]

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*Saddam may try to play on hopes he can be persuaded to resign.* Saddam's behavior and public comments [redacted] suggest, however, that he will not step down [redacted]

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[redacted]

-- Although Saddam has a strong instinct for self-preservation, he also has a high estimation of his ability to survive and a demonstrated willingness to exhaust all means to retain power. He understands that outside Iraq he would be vulnerable to capture, the ultimate humiliation for him. His numerous speeches and interviews during the years show he hopes to leave his mark on Arab history as a heroic leader.

-- Saddam never has faced such a threat to his regime, however, and his calculations could change suddenly, possibly leading to his resignation if he believed he would remain free and could one day return to power [redacted]

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[redacted]

Saddam's past negotiating behavior suggests he would try to buy time by dragging out discussions on possible conditions for his exile, including safe passage for many of his relatives, and close associates, detailed security arrangements, and guarantees of full amnesty.

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-- Saddam probably only would consider resigning if he believed it could stave off war and

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he still could control Iraq behind the scenes. [redacted] (b)(3)

To make a public offer to accept exile would be a high-risk maneuver for Saddam that would undermine his military's already fragile morale and weaken his ability to resist an attack [redacted]

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*Saddam within days could revert to crude Gulf war-style tactics when he sees an attack is days or hours away, but his actions [redacted] suggest he believes his best option is to preserve a measure of international antiwar pressure on the US. He may believe such pressure already has gained him precious time and international support.*

[redacted]

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-- Unlike the runup to the Gulf war, Saddam has played to the international audience deftly by giving interviews that show him composed and articulate. He also has learned from his Gulf war experience and has not used hostage taking or other crude propaganda stunts that repulsed Western audiences.

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