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United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

EBB

August 12, 2002

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM
S/ES

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SECRET

DECL: 20120812

TO: The Secretary

FROM: INR - Carl W. Ford, Jr. *CW*

SUBJECT: Iraq--Ever So Many Options. (U)

(S) Thus far Saddam Hussein has reacted to speculation about a military operation to unseat him with his usual mix of defiance and pseudo-diplomacy.

- In view of his history of unpredictable behavior and ability to switch course abruptly, Saddam could pursue options ranging from taking steps to appease the UN and the region, to a more active offensive use of terrorism or even preemptive military moves.
- His decision will depend largely on whether he opts for personal survival or securing his image in history as a vanguard of the Arab and Muslim world.
- Saddam has never before faced such a potentially lethal threat to his personal (and regime) survival; in response he could take measures that heretofore seemed unimaginable for him.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: ARCHIE M BOLSTER
DATE/CASE ID: 29 DEC 2010 200601489

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Classified by: Carl W. Ford, Jr., INR A/S

Reason: E.O. 12958-1, 5(c) and (d)

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United States Department of State
Bureau of Intelligence and Research

(S) Iraq: Ever So Many Options

(S) Thus far Saddam Hussein has reacted to speculation about a military operation against Iraq with his usual mix of defiance and pseudo-diplomacy. In view of his history of unpredictable behavior and ability to switch course abruptly, Saddam could pursue options ranging from taking steps to appease the UN and the region to a more active offensive use of terrorism or even preemptive military moves. His decision on which to follow will largely depend on whether he opts for personal survival or securing his image in history as a vanguard of the Arab and Muslim world. Saddam has never before faced such a potentially lethal threat to his personal (and regime) survival; in response he could take measures that heretofore seemed unimaginable for him.

■ Predictably unpredictable

(S) Saddam's strategy so far remains similar to that of past periods of confrontation. His personal rhetoric resounds of defiant martyrdom, while members of his regime continue to offer "diplomatic" initiatives, such as Foreign Minister Hadithi's invitation to UNMOVIC Chairman Blix and his technical team to visit Baghdad for talks and the national assembly's similar invitation to leaders of Congress to come to Iraq. At the same time, Iraqi officials are approaching various regional and international actors, using a carrot-and-stick approach (usually based on economic interests) in an effort to limit support for military action.

(S) In view of the media frenzy relaying international cautions against a military action, Saddam probably perceives his strategy is at least somewhat successful. Though he doubtless remains concerned about US intentions, as illustrated by his military and political preparations at home, he is likely to continue his current strategy until he senses a definitive shift in the international climate. He probably will intensify his diplomatic initiatives by providing more tangible concessions, both on the UN front (possibly on the Kuwait file) and in his bilateral and multilateral relationships—especially in the economic field. He also will continue to prepare his military and civilian population for possible confrontation, and ready contingencies for a US attack.

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■ Dictator's prerogative

(S) If Saddam perceives a concerted effort to unseat him is imminent, he retains the capability to shift his strategy with little or no notice. Whether such a shift focuses more on diplomacy or on potentially dangerous offensive action will largely depend on whether Saddam decides to try to secure his own survival at any cost or to carve a place in history for himself along the lines of Nebuchadnezzar or Saladdin.

■ Self-preservation beats all

(S) If Saddam finds himself in a position where he is forced to face his own mortality, he could take unpredictable actions in an effort to save himself. Saddam could justify various forms of "complete capitulation," though they would appear to be out of character, by arguing that Iraq's (and, by extension, his) long-term survival is more important than winning a small battle and that, by preserving himself, he preserves Iraq's potential to come back stronger than ever. Under such circumstances, Saddam could take actions, such as the following, that seemed inconceivable in the past.

(S) **Actually abiding by all UNSCRs**, including full and complete disclosure on WMD and allowing inspectors back into Iraq. Saddam could conceivably rationalize such a move by citing the fact that Iraqi scientists still retain the knowledge necessary to reconstitute these programs at a later date. The biggest hurdle for Saddam on this front is his fear that allowing inspectors back into Iraq would not only fail to block an attack, but also would provide the United States with sensitive Iraqi security and military intelligence that would be used in an assault. In addition, he fears the United States would continue to block the lifting of economic sanctions, leaving him still vulnerable to outside controls. Nonetheless, such a move would almost certainly have resonance within the international community—both in the region and among key UN Security Council members.

(S) **Fully accommodating neighbors**. On a less dramatic note, Saddam could decide fully to accommodate his neighbors by offering serious concessions. If he is still able to, he could turn over Kuwaiti POWs, and return Kuwait's National Archives and other stolen property. He could also offer concessions to Iran, as he did before the Gulf war. In addition, he could intensify his economic sweeteners to Jordan, Syria, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia.

(S) **Turning the reins of power over to Qusay**. There has been much speculation that Saddam is grooming his second son, Qusay, to take power, either in the event of his death or to allow him to "step aside" to avert international criticism. Though "stepping down" seems completely out of character for Saddam, regional governments almost certainly would

see such a move as a solution to the Iraqi threat. Europeans probably would be more skeptical and continue to push for WMD disclosures.

■ **Preserving a place in history**

(S) Saddam has long likened himself to the great Arab warriors and continues to paint himself as the one Arab leader willing to risk all on behalf of the greatness of Arabs and Muslims. Should he conclude his demise is imminent, he could attempt to take steps to ensure he is forever remembered as a "true warrior." In fact, there are some signs that Saddam may be preparing options along these lines.

(S) **Using WMD against Israel, Kuwait, northern Iraq, and/or coalition forces** could be a way for Saddam to solidify his claims to follow in the steps of Saladdin to liberate Jerusalem from the unbelievers. There are indications Saddam may be preparing for the use of CW during a confrontation. He might also calculate that making clear his intention and capability to do so as an attack drew near would cause key regional states to reconsider their support for an attack on Iraq.

(S) **Enlisting the aid of al-Qaida or other terrorist organizations** against coalition forces, Israel, or both would further Saddam's goals by ensuring the battle could rage on—possibly beyond even his own demise. Saddam has increased his contacts with Palestinian rejectionist groups in his effort to cloak himself in the Palestinian cause. Though his connections, if any, to al-Qaida remain unclear, the presence of al-Qaida members on Iraqi soil would provide him an opportunity to cultivate a relationship—if al-Qaida were interested. In a more far-fetched but not entirely inconceivable scenario, Saddam might even be willing to share some WMD knowledge or materials with terrorist organizations in an effort to ensure major damage to his enemies.

(S) **Preemptive military moves against northern Iraq or key neighbors such as Jordan or Kuwait** could potentially complicate military operations. A move into northern Iraq is the most likely because it would be less egregious and provide the tangible benefit of preventing the Iraqi opposition from launching an attack from the north.

(S) **Using UN or other international workers as human shields** could make targeting more difficult for coalition forces. Saddam withdrew his "shields" before Desert Storm—a move he reportedly later regretted.

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US Department of State
Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Intelligence Assessment
08/12/2002

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