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Director of Central Intelligence (u)



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National Intelligence Council Memorandum (u)

**A More Confrontational Saddam?—
Iraqi Intentions and Options**

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Key Points (u)

Saddam Husayn is unlikely to move toward Kuwait or otherwise confront coalition forces in the next two months, but the risk of provocative Iraqi behavior will rise in early 1996.

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The August defections and Baghdad's subsequent revelations about its weapons-of-mass-destruction programs have set back Saddam's hopes for sanctions relief, but Iraqi expectations for relief probably will rise again as early as January 1996.

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If Saddam decides he can wait no longer, his options range from accepting UNSCR 986 (which would permit export of \$2 billion worth of oil over six months in exchange for food and medicine) to creating a crisis by acting against UNSCOM, the Kurds, coalition forces, or Kuwait.

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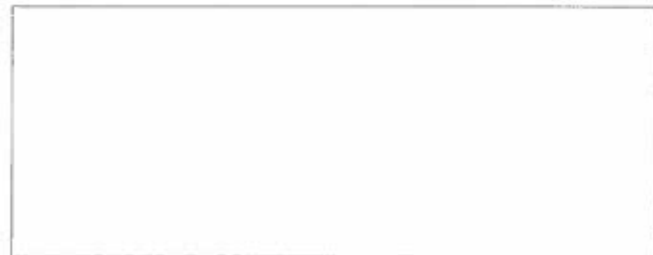
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Iraq has taken a number of steps to improve military readiness and performance in recent months, but on balance these measures afford no more than marginal improvements in capabilities due to the ongoing deleterious effects of sanctions.

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This memorandum was prepared by the National Intelligence Officer for General Purpose Forces and the National Intelligence Officer for Near East and South Asia. It was coordinated by representatives of CIA, DIA, NSA, INR, Army, Navy, and Air Force. (U)



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Key Questions (C)

- Will Saddam adapt confrontation with the UN or the United States? If so, when?*
- What options might he choose? What warning will we be able to provide?*
- Have recent military activities in Iraq improved Saddam's military?*
- What might restrain Saddam? (C)*

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A More Confrontational Saddam?— Iraqi Intentions and Options

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Saddam's Intentions (C NF)

The probability of Iraqi confrontation in the next two months appears low but will rise again in early 1996. Saddam Husayn's expectations for sanctions relief were set back by the August 1995 defection of two senior Iraqi officials:

- While Saddam reportedly was close to provoking a confrontation in late summer, fallout from the defections (especially Baghdad's own revelations about its weapons-of-mass-destruction programs) dampened Security Council members' enthusiasm for sanctions relief and prompted the Iraqi leader to adopt a conciliatory strategy.
- CIA, DIA, and NSA believe that Iraqi patience may run out as early as the January 1996 UNSC sanctions review, raising again the possibility that Saddam will cause a crisis to hasten Security Council action. INR believes that Iraqi expectations are more realistic and that Saddam may wait until summer 1996 before taking any action.

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Internal stability will play an important role in Saddam's decision about whether to confront or cooperate with the international community. Should Saddam decide that sanctions are weakening his regime's hold on power to an intolerable degree, he has several options:

- One would be to accept or attempt to renegotiate UNSCR 986 (which would permit Iraq to export \$2 billion worth of oil over a six-month period in exchange for food and medicine), although Iraqi officials have denied recent rumors that this was under consideration in Baghdad.
- A second option would be for Saddam to make a serious effort to reach a detente with Iran. Improved economic relations with Iran could supplement or replace those with Jordan. Strategically, detente with Iran could yield benefits regarding both Shia insurgents in the south and Kurds in the north and would be quite disturbing to Gulf Arabs. While there are strong obstacles to a successful detente, both states' perceived threats from the United States provide a mutual incentive to improve relations.

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- Another option would be for Saddam to lash out, for example, by obstructing UN operations, challenging coalition no-fly zones, attempting to retake territory in northern Iraq, or moving forces toward Kuwait.
- Saddam could also play the terrorism card and stage attacks against UNIKOM/Kuwaiti/Saudi targets, US equipment and facilities in Kuwait, MCC/UN Guards/NGOs in the north, or Iraqi defectors in Jordan. [redacted] 3.5(c)

Saddam's Options [redacted] 3.5(c)

Confrontations With UNSCOM. UNSCOM operations remain the more likely and easy target of Iraqi provocative tactics because Saddam might judge that such actions are less likely to be met by a US or coalition military retaliation. Specific options include:

- **Administrative harassment.** The Iraqis are able to exert substantial leverage over UNSCOM's weapons inspectors, some of whom are US citizens. Harassing options include instituting or intensifying requirements for Iraqi-issued identification cards, examinations for drivers permits, and more complicated filing procedures to obtain travel permits. The Iraqis could also, as they have in the past, harass UN personnel by denying laundry services, making late-night harassing telephone calls, and so forth. More extreme measures include government-arranged mass demonstrations against UNSCOM, detaining UNSCOM members, and arresting US citizens as spies. [redacted]

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- **Travel restraints.** These can be imposed by refusing to refuel UN helicopters or not guaranteeing safety of crews and passengers. Saddam could also deny landing rights to UN aircraft. By grounding UNSCOM's German-supplied CH-53 helicopters or C-160 transport aircraft, Iraq would effectively confine the inspectors without taking them hostage.
- **Disruption of monitoring operations.** Iraq could cut power to UN cameras and other sensors. In a more extreme option, Saddam could declare all UNSCOM personnel persona non grata and completely shut down UN weapons inspections operations, or even take inspectors hostage. [redacted] 3.5(c)

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Military Options (U)

Reasserting sovereignty in the north [redacted]

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[redacted] 1.4(c)

The Iraqi military remains capable of taking Kurdish-held territory, but Saddam so far has been deterred from doing so by US warnings, the presence of Operation Provide Comfort, and the knowledge that such operations would likely unite the UN Security Council against him. Saddam probably also recognizes that such operations could result in protracted operations against guerrilla forces. [redacted]

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Challenging the UN in the air [redacted]

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Saddam could challenge UN operations with air or air defense forces to test the southern or northern no-fly zones, seek to lure coalition aircraft into surface-to-air missile traps, or threaten U-2 reconnaissance flights with SA-2s or air assets. [redacted]

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Military feints, demonstrations, and provocations [redacted]

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Without serious intent of attacking Kuwait, Saddam could conduct repeated readiness drills, exercises, and deployments—perhaps even temporarily deploying heavy forces south of the 32nd parallel—in a manner calculated to draw deterrent reactions from the United States. Saddam would avoid providing a pretext for sustained military operations against him but would probably be willing to risk limited airstrikes against his ground forces deployed south of the 32nd parallel in defiance of UNSCR 949. His objective would be to impose the economic and strategic burdens of repeated force deployments on the United States and to sow seeds of potential discord between the United States and Gulf Arabs. [redacted]

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[redacted] 1.4(c)

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The advantage of this option is that for relatively modest risk Saddam could impose significant burdens on the United States and its Gulf Arab friends. The disadvantage is that it would require careful execution over an extended period. [redacted]

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Attacks into Kuwait and Saudi Arabia [redacted]

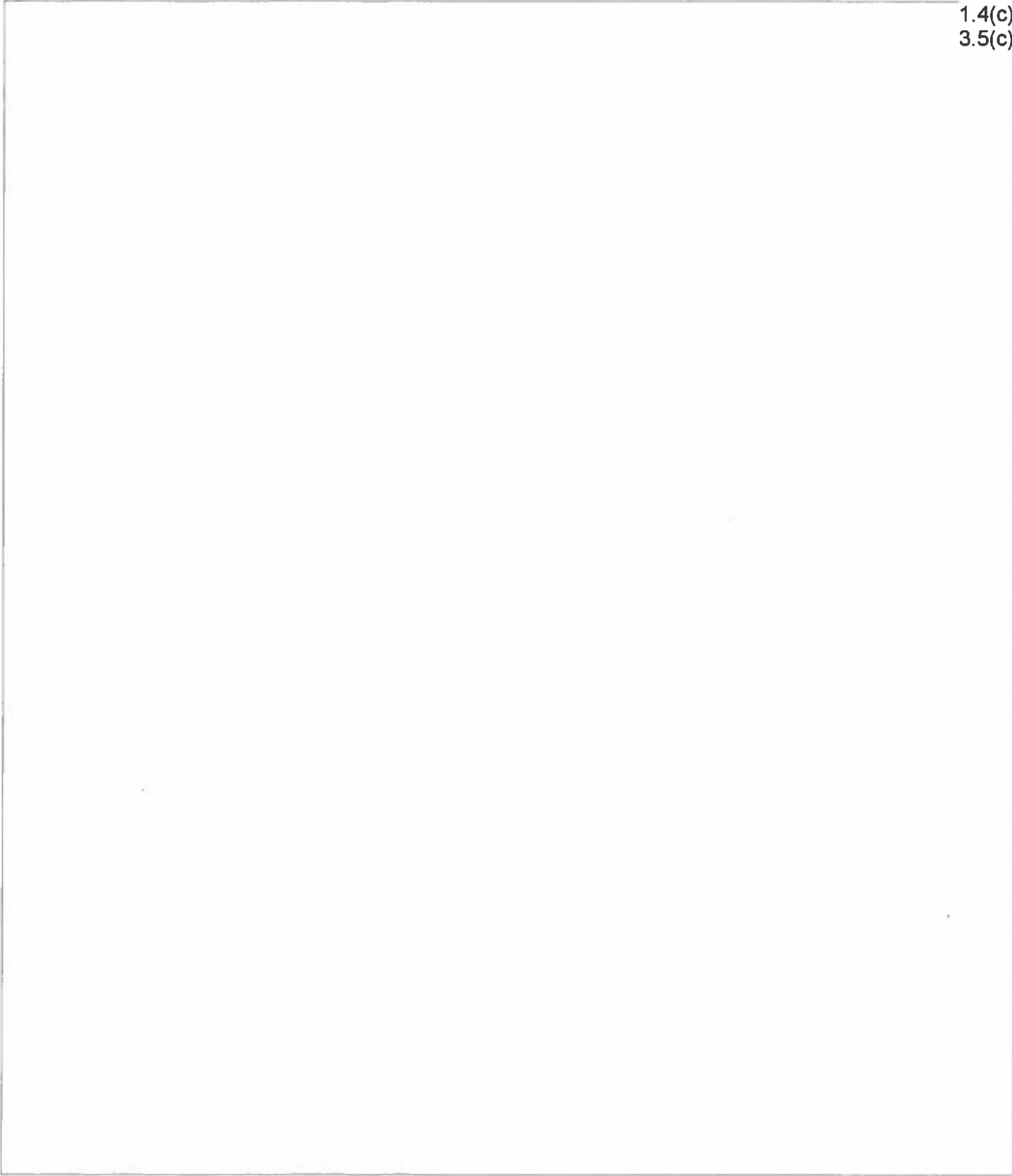
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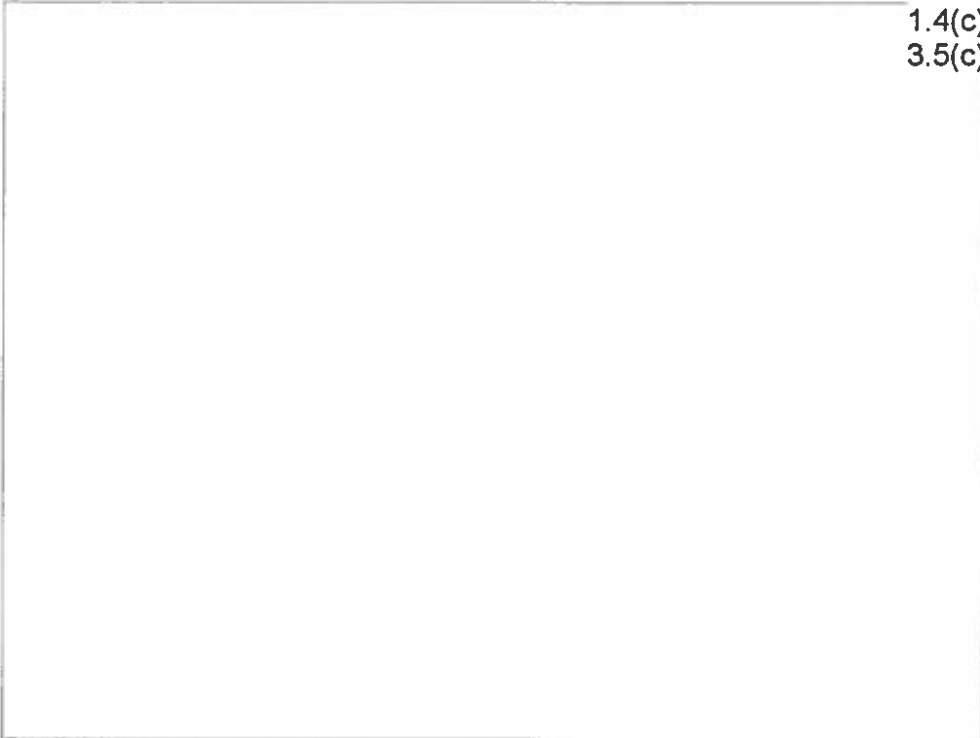
Iraq is capable of launching *limited attacks into Kuwait*, either with regular Army units or a Republican Guard division. Limited attacks could inflict considerable damage on selected oil and water facilities in northern Kuwait. Iraq might also seek to seize selected areas or facilities adjacent to the border, although if confronted by concerted Western opposition, Iraq could not hold terrain or facilities indefinitely. [redacted]

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Iraq could also conduct a *major offensive into Kuwait* with regular Army divisions from III Corps and possibly IV Corps or with a Republican Guard-led attack, most likely consisting of two RG divisions followed by three or four regular Army divisions. Either option could overrun Kuwait. The regular Army attack option entails the greatest risk for Saddam and is likely to grind to a halt if met by serious opposition by US-led coalition forces in the region.

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Iraq also could attack Kuwait after a more *deliberate buildup of forces*. Such an attack would provide additional warning and would permit Saddam to extend operations into northern Saudi Arabia. This option was addressed in a January 1995 Update Memorandum to NIE 94-19, *Iraqi Military Capabilities Through 1999*

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Recent Iraqi Military Readiness Activities: Have They Made a Difference? [redacted] 3.5(c)

Readiness Activities. Since our Update Memorandum, the Iraqi military has taken a number of measures to improve military readiness and performance. The most significant include:

- **Leadership and command and control changes.** Saddam has made sweeping changes in military leadership at all levels in the past nine months. Although many, if not most, of these changes were probably motivated by a desire to improve Saddam's control of the military, some have resulted in marginal improvements in the professionalism of the Iraqi military:

- Changes have been instituted in unit stationing practices (reduced dispersal of units and construction of better accommodations for units deployed away from garrisons) and training (renewed emphasis on basic, small unit performance). Together, and if effectively executed by subordinates and sustained over time, these changes are likely to improve equipment condition and small unit proficiency.

- Establishment of two Corps headquarters in the Republican Guard earlier this year could permit more flexible and responsive employment of Saddam's most effective forces. Before this change, the RG Forces Command was responsible for seven divisions and operations throughout the country. The new arrangement assigns responsibility for operations in the south to one of the corps and operations throughout the rest of the country to the other corps headquartered north of Baghdad. At the same time, we have evidence that Saddam is further centralizing the C³ of his forces, so that only Qusay and corps commanders can order units to move.

- **Equipment refurbishment.** Initiated earlier this year and headed by Saddam's oldest son, Uday, this program is an effort to restore damaged and inoperative equipment. [redacted]

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Much of this equipment appears to be used to form new security units (the Fedyadeen), established as yet another force to help assure reliability of the Iraqi military. Others items have been used to flesh out

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reconnaissance units in both Republican Guard and active Army divisions. Except for the HETs, which increase Iraqi heavy transport capabilities by about a fifth, the remainder of this program provides only a marginal increase in offensive capability. Most of the equipment is older vintage and dispersed to units more likely to conduct security rather than warfighting operations.

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The bottom line (U)

The force improvements described above are, for the most part, methods for coping with the constraints imposed by UN sanctions. Together, they may enable Saddam to slow the decline in his military capabilities as sanctions continue. They do not, in our judgment, afford more than marginal improvements in current Iraqi military capabilities. We assess that, as long as sanctions remain in force, the capabilities of the Iraqi military will continue to gradually, but steadily, decline. Over the longer term, if sanctions were eased and leadership improvements sustained, Saddam's forces could improve markedly. 3.5(c)

What Might Restrain Saddam 3.5(c)

Short of a large, standing coalition military presence with significant US participation, there is no guarantee that Saddam Husayn can be deterred from considering or employing military force if he believes it would ultimately be to his benefit. Any military move (whether toward Kuwait or

in another direction), even one doomed to ultimate military failure, might be part of a larger Iraqi strategy to increase momentum toward sanctions relief. Saddam's past behavior shows that he pushes until he meets resistance in the form of clear demonstrations of strong coalition military resolve—unambiguously constructed and communicated—to limit his behavior (such as the southern and northern no-fly zones).

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