



The Director of Central Intelligence
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SENSE OF THE COMMUNITY MEMORANDUM

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Iraq: Saddam's Next Moves [] 3.5(c)

The risk is increasing that Saddam Husayn will act impulsively to score a victory—at least a symbolic one—against his enemies, to regain initiative and attention, and to spur Iraq's supporters to act more forcefully on its behalf. US targeting of his key security assets during Operation Desert Fox, continuing US and UK airstrikes against Iraqi air defenses, growing regional opposition, and internal unrest—which Saddam believes is abetted by foreign governments—have turned up the pressure on his regime. In addition, Iraqi frustration is mounting over unmet demands for lifting UN sanctions and uncertainty over the outcome of UN review panels.

1.4(c)

- Losses to his air defense, antiship, and command and control assets may be prompting the Iraqi leader to consider more audacious measures than challenging the no-fly zones. Iraq's actions [] suggest Saddam is contemplating the use of terrorism in and beyond the region, sabotage and subversive activities in Kuwait and/or Saudi Arabia, and limited military strikes against these states and regionally-based US forces. 1.4(c)

- The scarcity of corroborated reporting on Baghdad's intentions, however, makes it difficult to predict the scope and timing of Saddam's response to perceived external threats. [] 3.5(c)

Saddam's security forces have effectively suppressed recent internal threats, suggesting that, absent further decline in his domestic position, external pressure will be the key driver of his next moves. Saddam established four regional security commands on the eve of US bombing last December, reportedly executed a small number of senior officers for coup-plotting, and partially implemented the Baghdad security plan in the wake of Shia unrest in the capital. [] 1.4(c)

- An escalation of civil unrest probably would distract Saddam from pursuing outside enemies, but would raise the prospect for protracted instability and regime reprisals resulting in thousands of civilian casualties. Saddam would not hesitate to deploy Republican Guard forces to the no-drive zone—inviting more coalition airstrikes—to quell unrest in the south.
- *Saddam does not appear to be approaching the threshold of desperation—vis-à-vis foreign or domestic pressures—thus he is not likely to lash out with weapons of mass destruction.* [] 3.5(c)

A decision by the UN to close weapons files and/or move to ongoing monitoring and verification could affect the timing of Saddam's decision. Baghdad's request that UN Panel Chairman Amorim visit Iraq in his ambassadorial capacity shows that Saddam has not abandoned diplomacy and suggests he will await the UN panel results (some will be available in March; the full report in April) before he decides whether to temporarily pull back from confrontation or to raise the ante.

- Saddam's options for escalating the crisis with the United States would invite devastating retaliation, a consideration that in the past has led him to settle for tactical political gains in lieu of a strategic breakthrough on UN sanctions. [] 3.5(c)

This memorandum was prepared by the NIO for Near East and South Asia following an Intelligence Community Warning and Forecast Meeting and was coordinated with representatives of CIA, DIA, INR, and NSA.

3.5(c)