



**Defense Intelligence Agency
Joint Intelligence Task Force – Combating Terrorism**

SPECIAL ANALYSIS

(b)(2)

18 September 2002

~~(S)~~ **Iraq/Worldwide: Iraqi Terrorist Threat in Anticipation/Response to Hostilities with the US**

Executive Summary:

- ~~(S)~~ The government of Iraq probably will attempt to deploy terrorist operatives and support infrastructure abroad in anticipation of regime-threatening hostilities with the United States. Such activities may be in progress or have already occurred.
- ~~(S)~~ The regime will likely reach out to past terrorist surrogates and non-traditional allies in an attempt to enhance its operational capabilities and generate additional political pressures opposed to US intervention against Iraq. Surrogate and non-surrogate terrorist groups may conduct token attacks in sympathy with the regime but will not play a major part in any Iraqi terror offensive.
- ~~(S)~~ Once hostilities begin, the regime will almost certainly order an anti-US terrorist response. These operations may not be limited to the Iraqi theater, and could involve attempted attacks in the US homeland or in countries that support the campaign.
- ~~(S)~~ Iraqi operatives are most likely to attempt assassinations, armed assaults and small bombings since they are most experienced with these types of operations, and they may be quickly planned with a minimum of special equipment.
- ~~(S)~~ Iraqi terrorist attacks with chemical or biological weapons are plausible, although such operations would require more logistical and planning support.
- ~~(S)~~ Saddam may order terrorist attacks prior to hostilities if such operations have a direct and realistic promise of disrupting US war planning. Examples include attempting to assassinate key regime oppositionists or state leaders whose support would be integral to US planning.

(U) **Discussion:**

~~(S)~~ Saddam's Terrorism Intentions. Once a US military campaign has started or is perceived to be imminent and inevitable, DIA assesses Saddam will likely order anti-US attacks and call for popular support abroad. The extent to which Saddam will exercise his terrorism options prior to a beginning of hostilities is extremely difficult to predict but the risk that he will turn to the terrorism tool will increase proportionate to the degree that he perceives a US-led military campaign against him to be imminent.

~~(S)~~ DIA assesses that Saddam will not hesitate to attempt a terrorist attack he believes will contribute to ensuring the preservation of his regime or, in the event he believes that his downfall is imminent and certain, to exact revenge and secure a place in Arab history. However, if Saddam determines that US hostilities are not yet imminent, he will weigh the use of terrorism against possible international reaction on an ongoing basis.

Ultimately Iraq's terrorism policy will depend on:

- His expectations for the type and timing of a US campaign (i.e., large-scale invasion by US forces, heavy US support for internal oppositionists, etc.)
- His confidence in his ability to withstand the campaign
- His level of confidence that a particular terrorist operation can be successfully carried out
- His calculus of the impact of such operations on key centers of gravity (US public, Congress, coalition partners, Arab street, etc.)
- The prospect that he can turn to other political or military options to better achieve his goals

~~(S)~~ Pre-Hostility Activities. Prior to the initiation of hostilities, Saddam has a limited window of opportunity to pre-deploy terrorist operatives and infrastructure (weapons, equipment, support personnel, etc.) with less scrutiny than possible during wartime or a period of perceived imminent hostilities. The regime will likely take advantage of this time to prepare possible terrorist attacks abroad while exhausting diplomatic and public relations options—including possibly readmitting UN weapons inspectors—in an attempt to undermine official and popular support for US initiatives. In addition, the regime may consider pre-emptive terrorist action against key US allies in an attempt to disrupt US war planning. In particular, the regime may attempt to assassinate senior leaders of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the dominant parties that control most territory in non-regime occupied northern Iraq. Other opposition groups that Baghdad might target include the Iraqi National Congress (INC) and the Iraqi National Alliance (INA). Each of these parties recently declared their willingness to support US efforts to overthrow Saddam's regime. Also, Saddam may consider attempting to assassinate senior officials of states suspected of hosting US operations. Riskier and more difficult operations could include attempts to attack key embarkation/disembarkation nodes for US/coalition forces either in the campaign theater or even in the US homeland.

~~(S)~~ Activities When Hostilities Appear Imminent or Have Begun. Once hostilities begin or are believed imminent, Saddam will quickly order anti-US, and possibly anti-coalition

terrorist attacks. Most of these attacks will probably occur abroad, though attacks in the US are possible and would be highly desirable by the regime. Likely targets include symbols of US influence, such as military interests and government-associated officials and facilities. Staging or billeting areas for US forces in the Persian Gulf or campaign Area of Operations (AOR) may also provide attractive targets. Saddam may also target civilian populations in nations that support US actions or anti-regime figures in northern and southern Iraq in an attempt to undermine domestic and international support for the US.

(S) Iraqi operatives are most likely to focus on assassinations, armed assaults and small bombings since they are most experienced with such operations, and they may be quickly planned with a minimum of special equipment. The scale of such operations depends on many unknown variables, particularly the amount and quality of infrastructure he is able to establish prior to the outbreak of hostilities. The minimum volume of Iraqi-directed attacks is likely to be a handful with a maximum volume in the very low tens. Most of these are likely to occur abroad, though we are likely to see at least a few attempted operations in the United States.

(S) The typical scale of each attack will likely be low, though Iraq has the expertise to attempt large-casualty attacks, including the use of chemical and biological substances, if sufficient time and resources are applied. The effectiveness of Iraq's overall terror campaign will be dependent in part on the regime's ability to equip and deploy operatives in advance. While we are not aware of any current indications that Iraq is actively preparing transnational terrorist operations, our intelligence gaps are sufficiently large that the regime may have already begun to augment its external terrorist assets.

(S) A possible factor that could impede pre-operational planning is Saddam's desire to remain disassociated from any terrorist activities that could be discovered by foreign security services and thereby strengthen the US case against Iraq. As a result, Iraqi smuggling and planning would be confined to small-scale activities. Discovery of major terrorist plans could seriously damage Baghdad's attempts to build international opposition to any US-led campaign.

(S//NF) Iraqi Terrorist Capabilities. Iraqi state agents have demonstrated a proficiency in conducting terrorist attacks employing conventional methods and techniques to include assassinations, armed assaults, hijackings, kidnappings and bombings. (b)(1), 1.4 (c)

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(S//NF) Iraq is also likely to attempt bombings since regime services are particularly skilled at constructing technologically advanced improvised explosive devices (IEDs). A wide variety of IEDs were recovered from Iraqi caches, including limpet-type devices (i.e. magnetic), explosive attaché cases, explosive-lined overcoats, and art works made of

cast explosives. Past Iraqi failures to employ IEDs effectively are overwhelmingly due to deficiencies in operational tradecraft, not in the construction of the devices.

~~(S//NF)~~ The device used in the 1993 assassination attempt against former President Bush demonstrates Iraq's advanced level of IED expertise. The Toyota Landcruiser contained 200 pounds of PE-4A explosives: 10 pounds each in the passenger and driver door panels and 180 pounds in an improvised pan in the cargo area of the vehicle. The improvised pan was secured between the gas tank and the floor board of the cargo area and was welded from the bottom so that it would look like part of the vehicle both when looking at the area from the inside and from underneath the vehicle. The device consisted of three independent initiation systems: radio control, electronic time delay, and suicide switch. The wiring was concealed inside the hose ducts of the vehicle vent system. In addition to the vehicle-borne IED (VBIED), there were ten diversionary IEDs with electronic time-delay initiation systems for placement throughout Kuwait City.

~~(C)~~ Saddam's Terrorist Practitioners

~~(S)~~ *Iraqi Intelligence Service (IIS)*. The IIS, or Mukhabarat, is Iraq's primary foreign terrorism arm that usually operates out of Iraqi embassies overseas. It has the most experience operating abroad of any Iraqi terror institution and possesses a significant infrastructure of stations and personnel abroad. Major intelligence gaps leave us with an incomplete understanding of IIS' current competence and capabilities.

~~(S)~~ The IIS' record as a transnational terrorist practitioner is mixed. Its greatest successes have been with select assassinations and harassment operations, mostly against Iraqi émigrés and dissidents. By contrast, Iraq's Gulf War terrorism campaign was feeble, netting:

- a failed detonation of a large explosive device placed in a planter at the US Ambassador's residence in Indonesia
- the deaths of two Iraqi operatives from a premature explosion near a US Cultural Center in Manila, Philippines

• (b)(1), 1.4 (c)

~~(S)~~ Since the late 1990s, Iraq has attempted to rehabilitate its IIS infrastructure abroad by sending more case officers through official postings at Iraqi embassies and diplomatic posts, in addition to other types of cover. There has also been an increase in what appear to be Iraqi attempts to collect intelligence or surveil a number of US facilities abroad. It is not clear to what extent any of this activity is a reflection of current preoperational planning.

~~(S)~~ The IIS probably will demonstrate an improved, but uneven, performance in any future Iraqi terror campaign. The service probably learned some lessons from its failed DESERT STORM campaign and is likely to be more proficient in its tactics. However, inherent weaknesses in the service are likely to reduce, but not eliminate the IIS' effectiveness when stressed during wartime. IIS cadre abroad will have to consider

several factors if ordered to participate in terrorist activity, including their loyalty to the regime, economic self-interest, fear for their families in Iraq and fear for their own safety. Some IIS cadres are self-seeking opportunists likely to respond poorly to orders placing them at great personal risk. Once the regime begins to lose control of its communications and territory, wavering IIS officers may act for self-preservation rather than advancing the agenda of an increasingly impotent regime. Indeed, assuming the regime is suffering defeats in the ongoing war, its deployed operatives will be in an enviable position to abandon Saddam with minimal fear of direct regime reprisal, unlike officers stationed in Iraq. However, it is impossible to determine how many IIS operatives may take this route.

~~(S)~~ DIA assesses that IIS operatives will initially attempt to comply with Saddam's orders to execute terrorist attacks, but will quickly lose effectiveness over the course of the campaign. Complex missions requiring multiple operatives are much more vulnerable to compromise through accident, defection or disruption. Therefore the IIS is most likely to focus on simple operations requiring few logistical complexities.

~~(S)~~ *Special Security Organization (SSO)*. The SSO, or Amn al-Khas, is the regime's preeminent internal security service and its personnel maintain the highest standard of regime loyalty. The SSO has little of its own infrastructure abroad and is less experienced in operating in foreign environments, but may be a better option for Saddam for engaging in particularly sensitive terrorist activities where trust is vital. Saddam could prepare complex missions abroad by taking advantage of the IIS' existing infrastructure to support operations by senior or experienced SSO operatives through a compartmented project. (b)(1),1.4 (c)

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~~(S)~~ *Fedayeen Saddam*. The Fedayeen Saddam (Saddam's Men of Sacrifice) is a reserve militia tasked with internal security. It is also widely reported to possess personnel trained to conduct suicide attacks abroad, whose capabilities are circulated in Iraqi media. The Fedayeen Saddam performs its domestic security missions mainly by threatening, and, if necessary, assaulting an unarmed civilian population, but the organization does not appear sophisticated enough for independent operations beyond Iraq's borders. The Fedayeen conducts only conventional and paramilitary training, and its members have almost no combat or covert cross-border operational experience. Nonetheless, Iraqi intelligence personnel may recruit, train, and assist selected "volunteers" from Fedayeen suicide units or other Iraqi forces to perform foreign missions that suggest a low probability of survival for operatives involved.

~~(S)~~ *Iraqi Military Intelligence*. Iraqi military intelligence reportedly maintains unconventional warfare elements skilled in conducting sabotage and assassinations. The latter element also may draw on personnel assigned to the Republican Guard's Special Forces units or paramilitary security forces for support, depending on the nature of the mission.

~~(S)~~ Potential for CBRN Terrorism. Based on past activity, the Iraqi government has demonstrated a significant proficiency in weaponizing chemical and biological (CB) agents. However, there is little information indicating Iraq has developed applications and methods for terrorist employment of those materials. Iraq probably maintains a significant CB weaponization and delivery capability, and may have further developed possible CB delivery platforms for unconventional attack purposes over the past few years. However, the Iraqi leadership may not fully entrust its operatives to prepare large-casualty transnational attacks involving CB until Saddam abandons hope of holding power through diplomacy and other forms of confrontation. If this realization occurs after hostilities begin, Saddam's options for transnational deployment will be more limited, with Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Turkey the most likely venues for a CB terrorist attack. The inherent uncertainties of Saddam's command-and-control mechanisms over its deployed operational infrastructure may ultimately entail more risk than benefit for a transnational CB scenario prepared well in advance of hostilities, in addition to the operational and logistical hurdles that would have to be overcome in order to execute such attacks.

~~(S)~~ Saddam's preferred policy is expected to be to reduce regional and international support for US operations against Iraq through propaganda and diplomacy. Any exposure of preoperational activity involving CB materials would place the regime in immediate jeopardy. However, as US-led action becomes more imminent—or after hostilities are initiated—he will be increasingly likely to consider traditional military or terrorist CB attacks, provided they are operationally feasible. Saddam is unlikely to provide CB materials to surrogate groups because of the lack of control he would exercise over their use. By contrast, he can execute traditional military CB attacks against regional enemies with greater confidence, though this would not be the case if he intends to attempt such attacks inside the United States. Once Saddam recognizes his defeat is imminent, he could attempt large casualty attacks using any remaining means, including CB terrorism. Iraq is assessed to possess no nuclear or radiological terrorism capabilities.

~~(S)~~ Potential Iraqi Surrogate Groups. Saddam will almost certainly ask terrorist groups using Iraq for safe haven to conduct anti-US attacks abroad. However, these groups probably will not be a major factor in any Iraqi terrorism offensive. Most groups hosted in Iraq are effectively defunct, have little recent operational experience, and little ability to initiate transnational attacks. Examples include the Arab Liberation Front, the Palestine Liberation Front-Abu Abbas Faction, and the 15 May Organization.

~~(S)~~ The two groups hosted by Iraq with the highest terrorist potential are the Mujahidin-e Khalq (MEK) and the Abu Nidal Organization (ANO)—aka Fatah Revolutionary Council. The MEK is heavily dependent on Iraq but has focused its resources entirely on attacking Iranian interests. It is unlikely to reallocate significant resources to targeting US interests abroad, even if its safehaven is threatened. However, the group does present a conventional military threat by virtue its integration into Iraq's military command and control system and its possession of significant military hardware, including armor and artillery. The ANO has an anti-US history and some overseas infrastructure, though it

has resisted past pressure by Baghdad to conduct attacks. The ANO is beset by internal divisions and recent animosity with the Iraqi government stemming from the death of its leader, Sabri al-Banna. The ANO has published its dissatisfaction with Baghdad's account of his death, reportedly by committing suicide when officials arrived to arrest him for entering the country illegally. Furthermore, the ANO benefits from, but is not dependent upon, Iraqi support and disregarded Iraqi pleas to conduct attacks on its behalf during DESERT STORM.

~~(S)~~ Potential Cooperation with Other Sunni/Shia Extremists. While the IIS probably will remain Iraq's preferred transnational terrorist option in the event of a US military campaign against Iraq, all-source reporting indicates that Iraq has either already attempted to initiate contact or provide support to other radical organizations, including non-traditional allies.

~~(S)~~ *Iraq and Iranian State Agents:* Iraq is likely to reach out to Iran to promote joint intelligence and security cooperation in search of ways to undermine anticipated hostilities between Iraq and the US. However, Iran is unlikely to respond to any pleas from Baghdad to support terrorist operations on Iraq's behalf. This is largely due to Iran's concerns over operational security, a deep history of mistrust, ideological differences, and Iran's recognition that it is far less vulnerable than Iraq to near-term hostilities with the US. Iran therefore is unlikely to expose itself to unnecessary risk on Iraq's behalf. These limitations would extend to Lebanese Hizballah's Islamic Jihad Organization, Iran's principal terrorist surrogate.

~~(S)~~ *Iraq and Palestinian Rejectionists:* All-source reporting indicates that Iraq has increased support to Palestinian rejectionist groups (including HAMAS, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Fatah-related elements) since the al-Aqsah Intifadah began in October 2000. While it is unclear if Iraq has provided operational support to any of these groups, Iraq has at least rhetorically supported their anti-Israel campaigns, and has provided financial support to the families of some suicide bombers. Despite Iraq's support, Palestinian groups will most likely not initiate anti-US attacks in Israel or the immediate region (Lebanon, Syria) due to their political objectives—focusing on the Palestinian issue—and operational limitations in executing attacks outside of Israel and the Occupied Territories.

~~(S)~~ *Iraq and al-Qaida:* The nature of the regime's relationship with al-Qaida is unclear. While some al-Qaida personnel are located in Iraq, it is not known to what extent the regime is aware of their location or the nature of their activities. While reporting suggests that contacts between regime officials and senior al-Qaida members may have been made intermittently since the early 1990s, there is no indication of any operational cooperation in any terrorist planning. At first glance, al-Qaida and the Husayn regime appear to have diametrically opposed interests and ideological orientations, but the possibility exists of limited cooperation against a mutual enemy—the United States.

~~(C)~~ *Iraq and Kurdish Groups:* Iraq maintains ongoing relationships with most, if not all, of the Kurdish organizations operating in northern Iraq. This includes ties with the two

largest and most powerful groups, the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)—even though both groups have competed for influence to shape a post-Saddam government in Iraq. However, in addition to the secular/nationalist groups like the KDP and PUK, there are also several Islamic Kurdish groups in northern Iraq. Ansar al-Islam (AI) is the latest iteration of a collection of radical Islamic Kurds that has been active in northern Iraq for the last several years. AI espouses a radical Islamic ideology similar to that of the Taliban and has a militant ethos that has resulted in guerrilla and terrorist operations against secular Kurdish groups. Based on Iraq's relationships with other Kurdish groups and its pervasive intelligence and security presence in northern Iraq, the regime is most likely aware of many AI activities. However, there is no reliable information indicating that the regime has a formal or official relationship with AI or is directing/assisting AI activities against the larger secular Kurdish groups.

(U) Outlook:

~~(S)~~ Iraq will almost certainly attempt an anti-US terror campaign after hostilities with the US begin. Saddam may attempt pre-emptive terror attacks though he will likely exhaust most diplomatic and public relations options designed to forestall hostilities before attempting anti-US attacks abroad. Plots with the potential to disrupt US war planning efforts would likely receive first consideration for pre-emptive options.

~~(S)~~ Baghdad will depend heavily on its own state agents to prosecute a terror campaign. Surrogate or sympathetic terrorist groups may conduct token attacks against US or allied interests but are not expected to play a significant role on Iraq's behalf. Iraqi agents will likely focus on simple operations requiring few logistical complexities such as assaults and small bombings, though the regime possesses the expertise to prepare large-scale bombings given sufficient time and resources.

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