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IRAQ RED TEAM – WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN BAGHDAD?

1. Please find enclosed a bullet brief from the DIS Iraq Red Team. The brief has deliberately sought the perspectives of academic sources and members of the Iraqi exile community in UK (military and civilian) to gain fresh insights, and to a certain extent reflects their views.
2. The comment about psyöps at Paragraph 4 has been flagged and taken on board by DTIO.
3. Any comments or questions are welcome and should be directed to on

[signed on CHOTS]

PS/CDI

A Bullet Brief by the DIS Red Team

This brief has deliberately looked wider to a variety of outside sources (including civil and military Iraqi exiles) to seek fresh insights. It is intended to provoke thought rather than to provide authoritative assessment.

1. Now that that coalition forces have moved into the heart of Baghdad this Red Team note assesses the likely reactions of the population (regime, military and civil) in the immediate days ahead, also in the weeks and months to come once the regime is removed.
2. **The City of Baghdad**. It is dangerous to draw too many comparisons between what has happened in Basra and what may happen in Baghdad. Baghdad is much bigger (5.5 million as opposed to 1.5 million). Above all, this will be the first time the population will feel under pressure to choose whether to support the regime or not (unlike Basra with its 91 experience). The reaction of the people of Baghdad is likely to be decisive for the rest of the country, because it is the centre of the Iraq state machinery and contains nearly a quarter of the population. It is a very diverse city and reactions to coalition troops will vary from district to district. In general terms it has four types of district:
 - The poor, working class, over-crowded and predominantly Shia slums East of the Tigris, such as 'Saddam City'. These are very volatile areas, where the security apparatus is at its most brutal and the people have little love for Saddam. These areas are filled with oppressed people who have been fed a concentrated diet of regime propaganda and, as a result, will also be suspicious of coalition troops. It will take a careful combination of low level foot patrolling to establish a secure environment, combined with a 'hearts and minds' campaign together with Humanitarian Assistance to win their trust. Heavy handed tactics will confirm their worst suspicions of the 'new regime' and are likely to be resisted. Needless civilian casualties will provoke extreme anger.
 - The middle class, professional districts, such as Al Mansour in the South West are where the 'sanctions millionaires' live. People here are close to the centre of power, and have gained most from it. They will produce a mixed response, will be concerned to protect their property and privileges and may fight for them. On the other hand they will be unlikely to fight for the regime if they judge it will not survive. They will then seek to protect their patronage networks to exploit 'business' opportunities under the new administration. Many of their families will have left for the country and many of the big villas in these districts may be empty.
 - The government compounds west of the Tigris are where regime leaders and high level party functionaries live. Their homes may have been used to hide WMD evidence etc. Some will have fled to their homes in the country, but they are too closely connected with the regime ever to be allowed back into Iraqi society (so have 'nowhere to go' politically) and can be expected to go down fighting.

- The old town in central Baghdad is a very mixed area of bazaars and densely packed housing with narrow streets. Reactions here will be as mixed as the population, therefore it needs to be treated with particular caution¹.

3. Baghdad also has about 1 million Kurdish residents. They are scattered across all districts and there is no distinct enclave. They may well be more favourably disposed to coalition troops and could be of assistance in the initial stages as interlocutors with other elements of the population.

4. Reactions of the People of Baghdad.

- Fear of the regime is so deeply embedded (Iraqis have known nothing else for 24 years) people will need incontrovertible proof that the coalition is serious about removing the regime (and not doing a deal) before their trust can be won. Therefore, it is important that regime symbols and strongholds continue to be physically attacked by ground troops and special forces and that Saddam is killed or captured as soon as possible².
- Psyops should be conducted in conjunction with symbolic military operations to support key messages; an example might be a raid to free political prisoners. One interlocutor mentioned that psyops are not as effective as they might be; for example, southern Iraqis are having great difficulty understanding the Lebanese and other Arab accents of radio announcers being used by coalition stations in Basra at the moment³.
- In order to gain trust there must be direct contact between coalition troops and the civil population at all levels. This implies using Joint Commission structures in conjunction with non-aggressive foot patrolling. Different districts will also require different approaches and it would make sense to take each district at a time, isolate it, pacify it and introduce Humanitarian Assistance - starting with the potentially more favourable Shia districts.

5. The Security Apparatus. Paramilitary Forces will do one of three things:

- Many, especially the SRG, will resist initially, but fall apart very quickly if shown proof that Saddam is dead or captured. They will then sink back into the community, a relatively easy thing to do in a city of 5.5 million where one's business on the west bank of the Tigris is not necessarily known in one's home on the 'east bank'.
- A hard core will fight, due to peer pressure and because they have nowhere to run or hide. The Mukhabharat, in particular, are likely to kill their prisoners and fight to the end.
- Some are opportunists who joined the security apparatus to escape gaol or worse; they may well surrender and volunteer information.

¹ This is where Qasim made his last stand in the Ministry of Defence against the Ba'ath revolt in 1963, hoping that the populace would protect him. They did come out onto the streets but were mown down by the Ba'ath militia.

² The surrender, capture or killing of other senior regime figures will help, but only the death or capture of Saddam will be decisive.

³ More use could be made of the tens of thousands of expatriate Iraqis in the UK, for example.

- The security apparatus works on fear, not professionalism. With the removal of fear there may well be a widespread law and order problem. The police are all Ba'ath members and cannot initially be trusted until the worst Ba'athists are identified and removed. According to one military interlocutor, the RA is the only respected national institution and could be used for internal security duties, if better trained and equipped.
- Once Saddam is gone there is likely to be widespread and apparently random violence between Iraqis. Specific attacks against coalition forces are likely to come later (perhaps some months later) if particular individuals or groups feel they are being cut out of contracts, administration positions etc. They may then hire 'submerged' paramilitary thugs to redress their grievances.

6. The Role of the Ba'ath Party.

- To be a Ba'athist does not necessarily mean an individual is a hard core supporter of the regime. Most joined to advance their careers or under duress (mostly government employees). In every government department there is a hard-core, who have been responsible for security. They are responsible for the 'disappeared', are known by everybody and will be nervous. They will probably go on the run or try to hide among the populace.
- It will require detailed inside knowledge to identify the 'bad apples' in any organisation; it may not necessarily be the head of the organisation, it could be the number two or three, or someone even further down the hierarchy. Outsiders, particularly Westerners – who lack detailed knowledge of pre-war political agendas which are unconnected with the Saddam regime – may need to exercise caution to ensure they do not become unwitting agents in any infighting in any existing Iraqi organisations that are kept in place.
- The Ba'ath structure grew out of an existing power system based on patronage and networks, this is usual in the Arab world. Once Ba'athism is removed there will be no alternative to using the existing middle class to run the country but we must expect these networks to reassert themselves in new guises. In addition 'leftist' and 'Syrian' Ba'athists returning from exile may seek to re-establish *their* networks.
- Historically there is trouble in Iraq whenever central authority is weakened. It may therefore be advisable to maintain a coalition military government longer than currently envisaged, even at the expense of regional disapproval, until the country is stabilised and only then introduce the Interim Administration.

[signed on CHOTS]

for CDI (des)
Ext: