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IRAQ: POTENTIAL COMPLIANCE WITH UNMOVIC

1. You may find it helpful to have views on Saddam's possible next moves with UNMOVIC. Saddam's strategy is to play for time, gradually releasing limited information on Iraq's terms or when there is no other option.

Saddam may judge that a last minute declaration could stave off war, but for now he will attempt to spin out the inspection process. Even if he does opt for a declaration of WMD, we are confident that his aim would be the eventual recreation of his capability.

2. The decision to destroy the Al Samoud 2 missiles is indicative of Saddam's strategy: a drawn out debate with UNMOVIC over legality; an offer to form a 'technical committee' to review the weapon; compliance; and an attempt to portray compliance as a major concession on Iraq's part. It is likely that Iraq will now draw out the destruction process. Iraq has proposed destroying 6-9 missiles per day. Unconfirmed reports suggest that 34 have now been destroyed, although we think that some or all of these had not yet been deployed with the Army. It may be more difficult to maintain this rate for deployed missiles.

Iraq will try to take as long as 2 months to complete the task. A similar process was employed over the use of U2 surveillance flights: disagreement; a counter proposal from Iraq; and eventual compliance.

3. Iraq believes its strategy is working. Its future actions are likely to follow the pattern of a drip feed of information to UNMOVIC. The National Monitoring Directorate has begun to hand over additional documents to UNMOVIC. but the need for translation will delay verification of this. Passing only Arabic documentation may be a deliberate tactic. Iraq also intends to provide further documentation to back up its claims to have destroyed its VX but there are concerns regarding how Iraq has calculated the total quantity destroyed. It could take 2-3 weeks to validate Iraq's claims.

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4. Progress with interviews continues to be unsatisfactory, although there appears to have been some improvement with additional interviews (including one chemical and one biological related interview) scheduled for this week. It is unclear to what extent UNMOVIC is being allowed to choose its own candidates, rather than having to accept Iraqi nominations. We are likely to see continued Iraqi attempts to monitor interviews and, in particular, continued resistance against conducting interviews overseas. If overseas interviews became an issue over which military action might be taken, Iraq might concede. But the usefulness of anyone put forward by Iraq for interviews overseas would be questionable and, in the case of UNMOVIC nominated interviewees, we could expect Iraq to try to disrupt their value, perhaps by ensuring that some family members remained in Iraq.

5. In general, Saddam will look favourably on any proposal put forward within the UN by those reluctant to endorse a resolution permitting war which allowed inspectors more time to do their work, or which led to an agreed timetable or checklist to which Iraq had to work. Any new or additional draft resolutions will also allow the Iraqis to claim that there is no unanimity on a military option. Beyond this there are proposals mooted by others that Saddam could use to demonstrate that he is co-operating with the international community. These include:

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- A South African proposal to provide a team to advise on the management of disarmament programmes;
- A French and Saudi proposal to offer immunity to Saddam if he were to step aside.

6. There has been some interest in a more intrusive regime to strengthen inspections, including deploying UN forces to 'freeze' inspection sites, run mobile customs teams and patrol the border. Saddam might view this as tantamount to military defeat, especially if US forces are involved. But the Iraqi Permanent Representative apparently believed (on 22 February) that Saddam would accept anything that fell short of US control of Iraq, including up to 50,000 UN sponsored troops on Iraqi soil. (Such an approach would probably rely on maintaining US/UK forces in the region to provide leverage.)

7. In short, we have seen no indication that there will be a change in Iraq's strategy of dealing with the inspectors. Iraq will continue to put the onus on the inspectors to set out what they want rather than pro-actively provide information to

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UNMOVIC. Saddam will be prepared to offer further concessions – or at least to say he is ready to. But based on current behaviour, any information will be incomplete, will be difficult to interpret and will not represent a full declaration of Iraq's capability. On overseas interviews and any proposal for a substantial UN military force, agreement is likely only in the face of imminent military action.



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6 March 2003

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