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Politico-Military Memorandum

Removing Saddam



5 March 2002

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REMOVING SADDAM

Following speculation that Iraq was moving into US sights in the War Against Global Terrorism, CDI directed DI Gulf to examine US military options for removing Saddam. The attached paper studies options that might be undertaken in the next 12 months. It does not look at longer-term options, such as a covert action programme designed to achieve regime overthrow. Saddam is well aware of the possibility of action against him and so the study also considers his options and likely intentions. This is the final version of the document of which some addressees saw an initial draft on 28 February.

ADI Gulf

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KEY JUDGEMENTS

- Saddam's greatest fear is US attack on a regime-threatening scale. Currently, he assesses that such an attack is possible, but not inevitable.
 - Iraqi diplomatic and security activities are intended to build international and regional opposition to US military action, to suppress internal dissent and, ultimately, to deter the US from determined military action.
 - Iraqi re-engagement with the UN and regional states is, for the moment, more nominal than real. Russia and China view Iraqi diplomacy with scepticism. Regional support for Iraq is fickle - in private most Arab leaders would welcome Saddam's demise. Saddam does feel exposed - especially over WMD Inspectors (UNMOVIC). We judge that Saddam would eventually permit entry of UNMOVIC if he believed that such a concession would deter the US from imminent, determined military action. Iraqi compliance would significantly undermine US justification for military action. But for the moment Saddam has made no such decision, and will continue to manoeuvre tactically.
 - Domestically Saddam is secure. Assassination or direct targeting of Saddam and the senior leadership is unfeasible and there is no organised Sunni opposition to him. Currently, neither Kurdish nor Shia opposition activity threatens the regime. Exile groups are discredited and penetrated by Iraqi Intelligence. Only outside intervention will topple the regime.
 - Perception of US intent will be critical to the success of any military action. Given the bitter experience of the 1990s (and the 1991 uprising in particular) domestic opposition forces will be loath to openly move against the regime unless they are convinced of US determination to overthrow the regime. The Sunni security apparatus is unlikely to fracture unless they perceive a similar intent and believe that removing Saddam can preserve their hegemonic status. We judge that sustained airstrikes alone will not convince the Iraqi populace of this intent and are highly unlikely to remove Saddam.
 - Airstrikes plus widespread insurgency (with US SF/Covert action on the ground) is a feasible option for removing Saddam. But it will not guarantee success. Managing the competing aspirations of opposition groups will be difficult. Even if they can be convinced to mount widespread insurgency (which is not certain) the Kurds and Shia alone will not topple Saddam - that will require fracturing of the Sunni security apparatus. Under certain conditions a Sunni alternative to Saddam (e.g. a senior Republican Guard officer) could emerge and move against the regime. But he will do so only in order to preserve Sunni hegemony within Iraq. Much will depend upon the acceptability of such a solution to the US. But such a figure (and such a solution) is highly unlikely to be acceptable to Kurdish and in particular, Shia insurgents.
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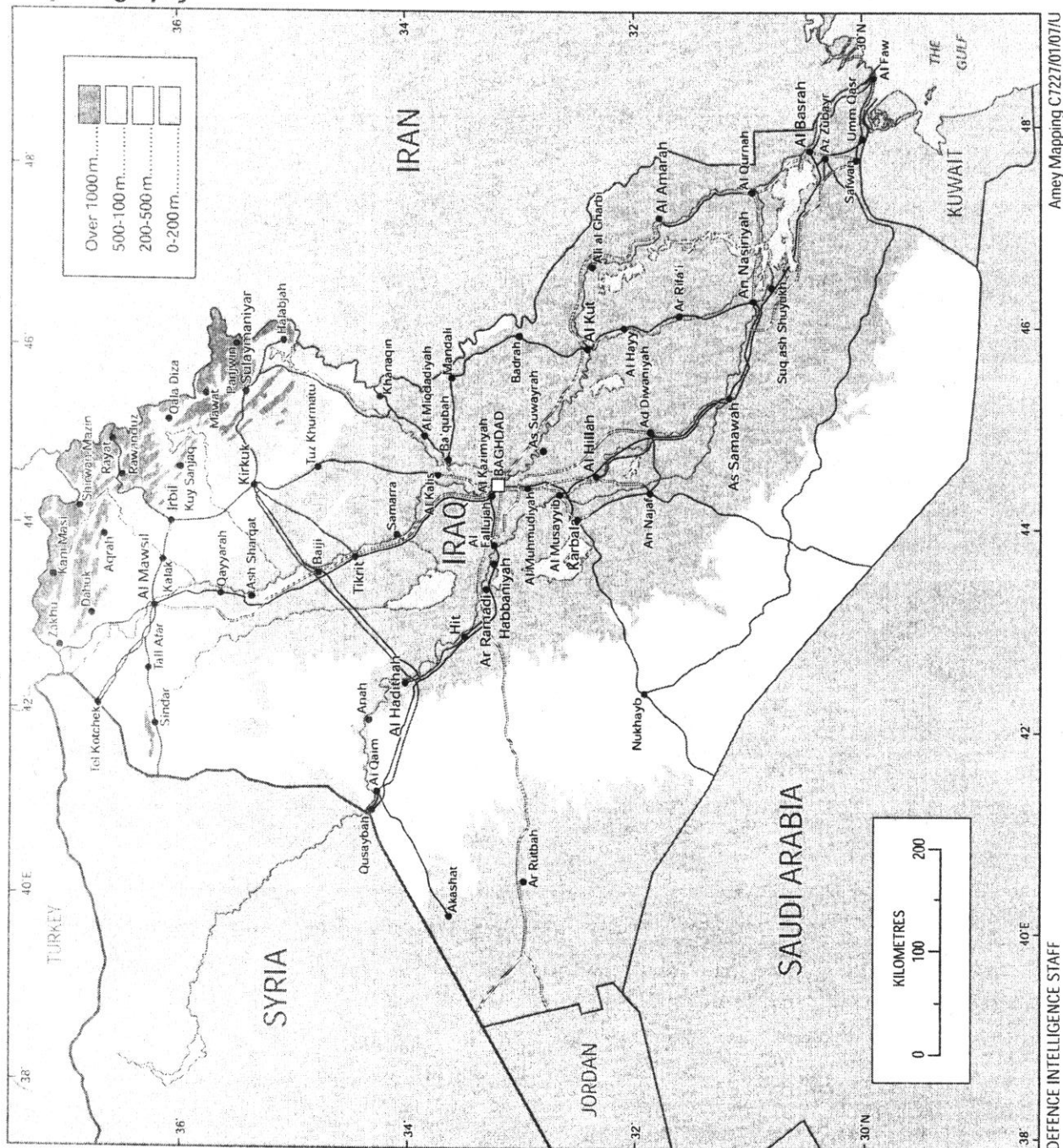
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KEY JUDGEMENTS (Cont.)

- A sustained air campaign combined with a ground invasion will topple the regime. Iraqi ground forces are less than half the strength of those in 1990. Equipment is increasingly obsolescent and US air supremacy is certain. Key units such as the Republican Guard (RGFC) and Special Republican Guard (SRG) may fight, but the regime could fall quickly. Even RGFC units might turn against the regime. The regime would quickly lose control of the South along similar lines to 1991. Once again managing the differing aspirations of Iraqi factions will be difficult. If the Sunni core of the regime perceive that the US really intends to overthrow Sunni dominance (and not simply remove Saddam) resistance to US attack will be far greater. Conversely, if domestic insurgents perceive that the US does **not** intend to overthrow Sunni dominance (or at least re-structure the Iraqi polity) their contribution could be far smaller.
 - Basing rights for US Ground Forces will be problematic. Kuwait alone may not suffice and the Saudi leadership have publicly opposed military action against Saddam. Given the position of US forces and equipment levels an air campaign could begin by May 02. But for any ground force option early Autumn would be optimum, given climatic constraints.
 - The UK intelligence community has consistently assessed that the only viable, long term successor to Saddam will come from within the Sunni security/military structure. Such a figure is unlikely to command popular support among the Shia or Kurdish populations and would be forced (and probably inclined) to run Iraq along autocratic lines. Iraq will remain a unitary state, but many of the long-term problems of Iraq will not disappear with Saddam.
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Iraq: Geography



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REMOVING SADDAM

I - SADDAM'S OPTIONS

[] and events over the last 5 years show that Saddam is unyielding when he believes that a threatened military attack is likely to be unsustainable (i.e. "pinprick" air attacks lasting less than a week or two) or unlikely to threaten regime stability. And he is prepared to take a risk, erring towards an assumption – which proved accurate throughout the 1990s – that the West will not sustain an attack.

But [] that he would make concessions if he believed they could avert his greatest fear – a sustained onslaught that seriously threatened his hold on power. Currently Saddam assesses that a US attack on this scale is possible but not inevitable – we judge he has a nuanced view of the debate within the US administration. Current Iraqi diplomatic and military strategy is intended to complicate that US decision making process or make the implementation of any decision problematic.

Saddam's **internal security measures** include:

- **Re-deployed Iraqi military forces on the KAZ border and political dialogue with the Kurds:** Saddam will refrain from any offensive activity against the Kurds – he knows this will definitely provoke US action. Nevertheless his military dispositions on the KAZ are a clear warning to the Kurds that the Iraqis have the capability to overrun the KAZ should they choose to do so. We judge the Iraqi army could overrun the KAZ within a matter of days, with little or no warning. Triggers for such action would be use of the KAZ for basing of anti-regime forces (opposition or []

- **Warning the Shia:** We are aware of meetings between Saddam and the Southern Shia tribes. We believe Saddam has warned them against co-operation with any US regime change strategy. As with the Kurds Saddam's key fear will be the use of Shia areas for [] activity. However, provocative Iraqi actions, such as movement of RGFC units south of the 32nd parallel (the US 'no drive' zone) are unlikely in the current circumstances.

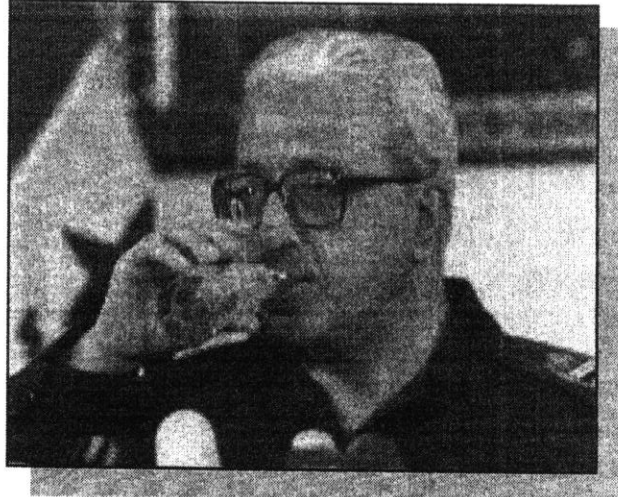
- **Establishing alternate command structures:** [] that Saddam has re-established a regional command system. Regional commanders (all hard-line, Ba'ath Party veterans) would be able to act autonomously in the event that Baghdad's C3 structure had been disrupted. []

Diplomatic initiatives are designed to build regional and international opposition to US attack. They are also intended to disrupt UK/US efforts to implement revised

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sanctions initiatives and reduce pressure for the immediate return of UN Weapons Inspectors (UNMOVIC). A range of diplomatic initiatives (labelled a 'charm offensive') include:

- Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz visited **Moscow** (twice) and **Beijing** in late January and early February to solicit support against sanctions and the US threat;



Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz

- Iraq has offered **Egypt** an oil export agreement on favourable terms.

We judge that Saddam's re-engagement with the UN is, for the moment, more nominal than real. He seeks to create the appearance of engagement in order to complicate support for US action. While this may have limited success with regional states (and may play well with regional Arab populaces) Iraq's diplomatic position remains relatively weak.

Regionally support for Iraq is fickle. Kuwait has rejected Baghdad's offers and Iraq's relationship with Iran remains, fundamentally, one of deep mistrust.

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Hence Saddam does feel diplomatically exposed. Non-compliance with UNSCRs on WMD Inspectors remains a weak point in the Iraqi position and Saddam realises that continued non-compliance might be used to justify a US attack aimed at overthrowing him. Hence we judge that Saddam would eventually permit the return of UN Weapons Inspectors if he believed that the threat of large scale US military action was imminent and that concessions would prevent the US from acting decisively. Though this would be a huge setback for Saddam he may judge that, once inspectors returned, he could delay, deny, obstruct and obfuscate on a scale that would retard the Inspectors ability to uncover WMD programmes.

Iraqi compliance would seriously undermine US justifications for military action. Nor could the US simply claim that the Iraqis had not complied or make compliance conditional upon demands that the Iraqis could not meet. Once Inspectors are allowed back in the judgement on Iraqi compliance or otherwise will be made by UNMOVIC not the US. Regional support for military action against Iraq will be impossible to sustain if UNMOVIC operations in Iraq have resumed.

For the moment we assess that Saddam has made no decision on Weapons Inspectors – he is usually a tactical decision-maker. Iraqi diplomats see the 27 March Arab Summit in Beirut as a key date. They will hope to secure broad Arab support at the Summit in opposition to a US attack.

If Saddam thought an attack was inevitable?

We have considered Iraqi courses of action to deter attack. However were Saddam to believe that a regime threatening US attack was inevitable and that Iraqi initiatives would have no effect on that decision his behaviour would be far less predictable. We have no intelligence to indicate that Saddam does believe this. But, [redacted] senior Iraqi diplomats (including Tareq Aziz) have stated to the Russians and Syrians that they consider US attack inevitable and that concessions, such as permitting UN Inspectors to return, would make no difference. Indeed, Aziz has stated that the return of inspectors might be a prelude to an attack. Were Saddam to come to such a conclusion he might embark on some form of military adventure (such as re-occupation of the KAZ) designed to increase his survivability.

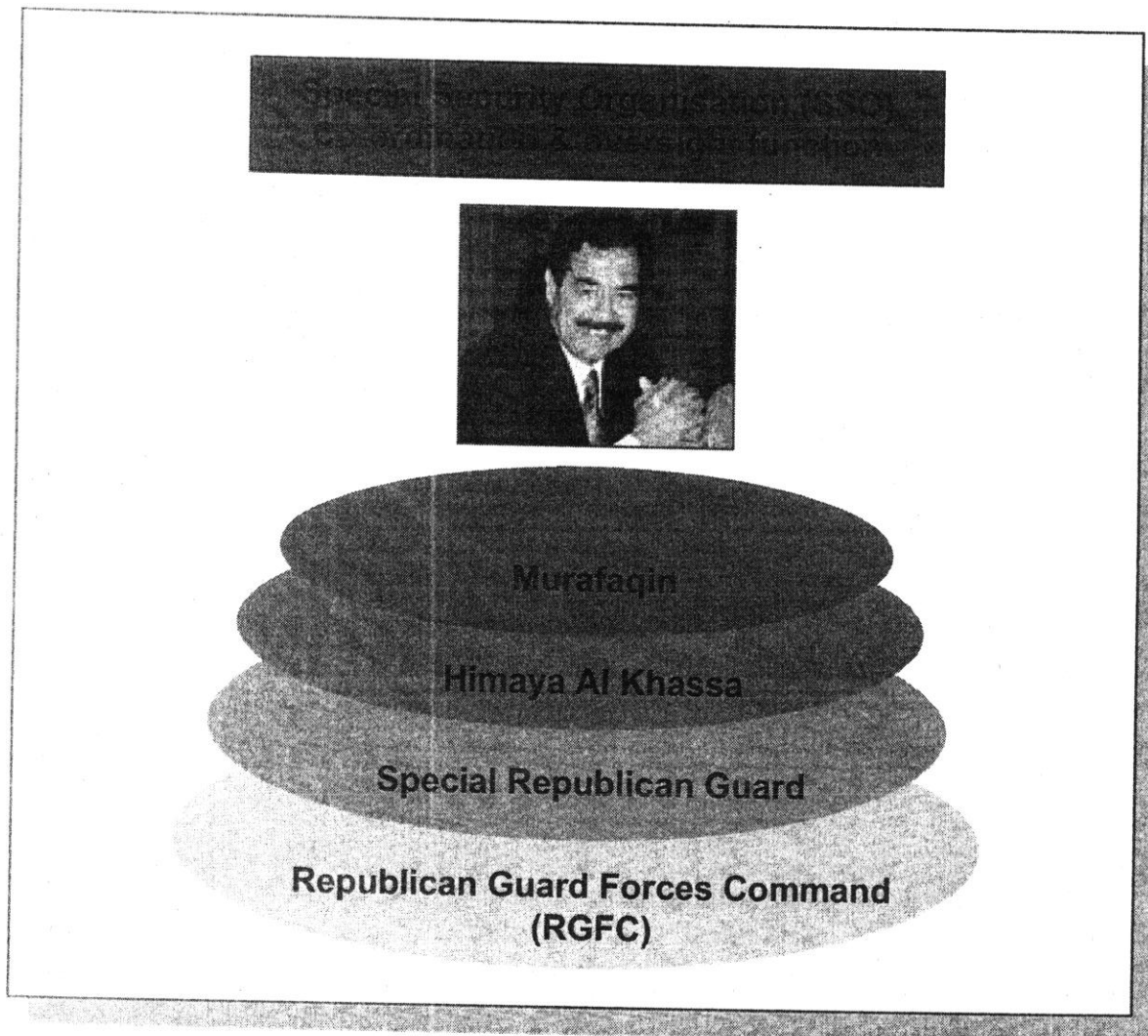
II - HOW SECURE IS SADDAM AND HIS REGIME?

The Sunni

Regime security is the central organising principle and chief activity of the Iraqi state. The formal security structure is composed of concentric and mutually suspicious organisations. Staff are heavily vetted and typically tied to Saddam through the Sunni tribal network. Their loyalty is re-inforced through the judicious use of patronage. Saddam's access to funding has increased considerably since 1996, when regime finances reached a critical point.

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Nevertheless there are significant tensions even within the Sunni heartland of the regime. Some tribal elements are mistrusted and the Iraqi officer class (both in the RGFC and the Regular Army (RA)) are closely monitored. But **there is no organised Sunni opposition to Saddam and it has been frequently shown that coup plotting within the armed forces or security organs is unsustainable.**



Saddam's Security Rings

Alongside this formal security structure Saddam has co-opted large sections of the Sunni population into the regime. Saddam has positioned himself as the key defender of the collective interests of this group against the political aspirations of the anti-regime Sunni tribes and most importantly Iraq's majority (60%) Shia population. Hence Saddam, for all his revolutionary pretensions, represents a rather conservative tradition in modern Iraqi politics – Sunni hegemony. Saddam ensures that key Sunni tribal groups are represented within the security, military and political structures and are the chief beneficiaries of state patronage. However, Saddam is also wary of tribal influences. The Sunni tribal network represents a potentially alternate loyalty structure and coup plotting has, at times, been tribally based. Hence significant security assets are devoted to monitoring tribal developments.

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Saddam has proved himself ruthlessly efficient in managing the tensions within the Sunni core of the regime. We assess that, **under current conditions, a successful coup or assassination by elements of the Sunni elite is highly unlikely to succeed.**

Saddam's Personal Security

Saddam's personal security apparatus is constructed precisely to counter assassination. He relies upon concentric rings of security, staffed by heavily vetted individuals. Those closest to him (Personal Security - *Himaya Al-Khasa*) are personally selected. The Special Security Organisation (SSO) oversees and investigates all personal security staff, as well as those administrative staff (drivers, cleaners, cooks, doctors etc) with access to Saddam. He even employs a specially selected food taster. Outside of his personal security detail knowledge of his whereabouts is restricted to a handful of key individuals (perhaps only his son, Qusai and his private secretary, Abd Hamud Mahmud). He moves locations frequently and periodically purges his security detail.



Saddam and Abd Hamud

_____ in the past two weeks, Saddam has been sleeping in locations in the Baghdad suburbs in preference to the Presidential Palaces. In addition he has entirely replaced a section of the *Himaya Al-Khasa* due to doubts as to their loyalty. In conclusion we have _____

In addition we assess that it is highly unlikely that US intelligence has assets in place within Saddam's personal security detail. We assess that **assassination or direct targeting of Saddam is unfeasible.**

The Kurds and Shia

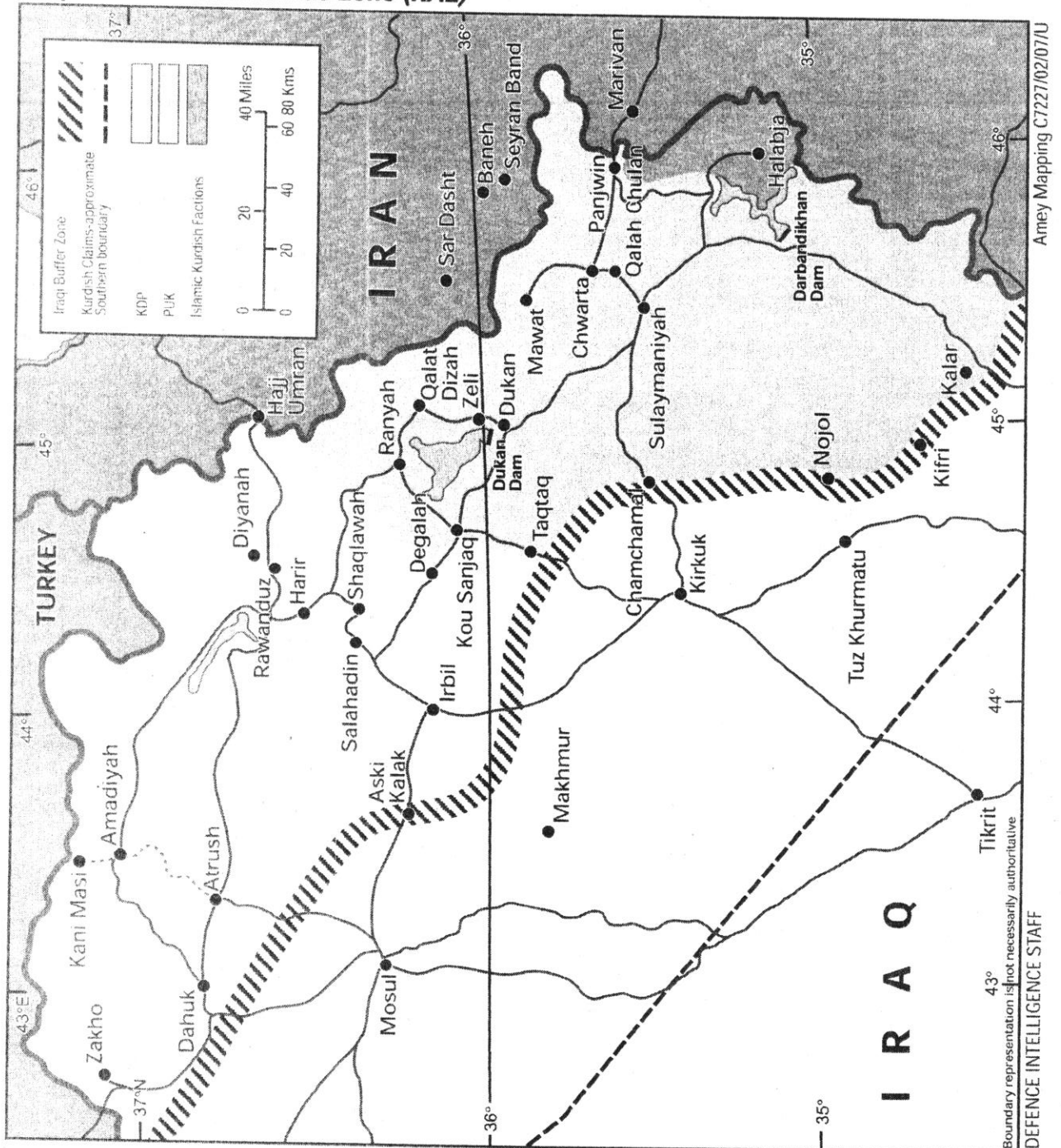
Significant anti-regime sentiment exists within the Iraqi Kurdish population (centred in Northern Iraq) and the Shia (centred in the South). Both groups have engaged in insurgency of varying scale and intensity throughout the 1990s, but neither have repeated the widescale insurgency of 1991. **Currently the activities of the Kurdish and Shia opposition represent no significant threat to regime stability.**

Iraqi Kurdish politics is dominated by two old-established parties – Masud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union Of Kurdistan (PUK). Both parties control their own distinct territories within the Kurdish Autonomous Zone, have access to considerable independent income and control standing armed forces. They have a history of mutual distrust and have at times conducted bitter internecine fighting (though there are at present no hostilities between them).

Their long term aspirations seem to extend to little more than defending their own territory and interests and ensuring autonomy from Baghdad in most affairs. Their commitment to an independent 'Kurdistan' is doubtful and both leaders frequently describe themselves as Iraqi. Indeed Barzani and Talabani have a long history of dealing with Saddam. Both parties have significant areas of economic co-operation with Baghdad

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Iraq: Kurdish Autonomous Zone (KAZ)



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and use third parties and back channels for political talks with the regime. The KDP have on occasion co-operated militarily with the regime in order to further their own ends. Neither group has forces capable of defending the KAZ from determined Iraqi assault. Only the threat of coalition retaliation prevents the Iraqis from re-occupying the KAZ.

Saddam views widespread **southern Shia insurgency** as the greatest single domestic threat to his security. Saddam would most fear a repeat of March 1991: a simultaneous eruption of large-scale unrest in the major cities of southern Iraq. Currently there is a low-level insurgent campaign in southern Iraq. Insurgent forces are a mixture of Iranian backed infiltrators and their cell-based support networks and local, tribal based groups. The Iranian backed groups (chiefly the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, SCIRI and its military wing, Badr Corps) are relatively capable with a presence in the Shia cities. Activities consist of hit and run ambushes and terrorist style attacks (car bombings, assassinations). They have also managed to mount operations in Baghdad, which has a significant Shia population (in the slums of the Madinat Saddam). But intimate association with Iran and the Iranian regime hampers the popularity of such groups and the attraction of revolutionary, theocratic doctrine to the Iraqi Shia population is questionable.

Shia Tribal (Marsh Arab) Groups have, in recent years, come to play a more significant role in anti-regime activities. However, the relationship of the Shia tribes with the regime is complex - some clans are bitterly opposed to the regime, others are co-opted. The influence of such groups outside their tribal areas is doubtful. Most of their activities involve attacks on local government representatives or police units. They show no real sign of co-operation with each other or ability to counter Iraqi RA units.

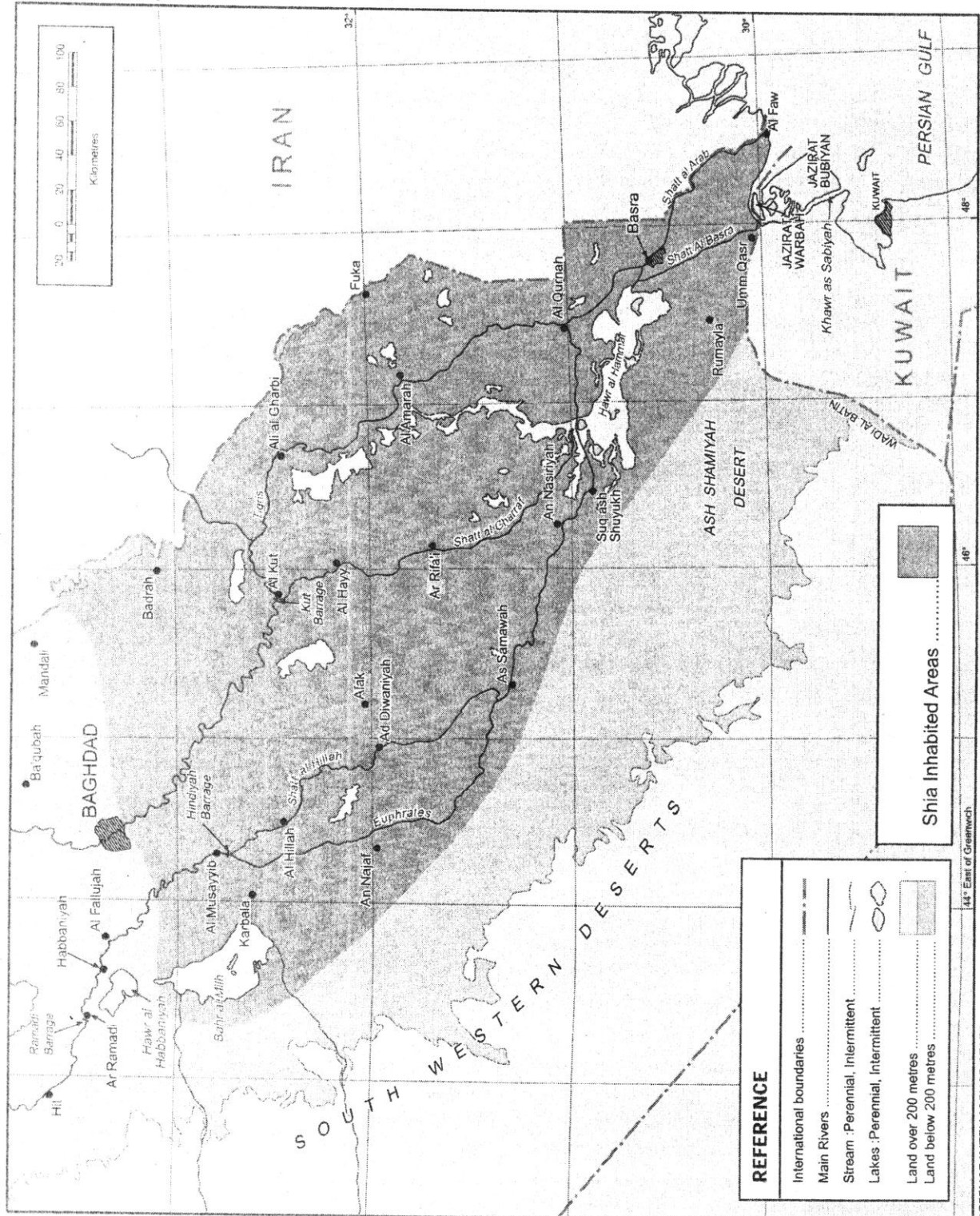
In fact **the current level of Shia insurgency is easily contained by the regime**. While Shia theocratic structures offer a potential leadership for the Shia populace brutal Iraqi repression (e.g. the assassination of leading clerics) has curtailed the emergence of such a figure. In the countryside RA units and provincial security organisations successfully contain the insurgency. Urban unrest is ruthlessly repressed. Under current conditions we assess little chance for widespread Shia revolt to erupt on the regime-destabilising scale of 1991.

Opposition in Exile

There are a number of Iraqi opposition movements based abroad. **The Iraqi National Congress (INC), based in London, remains the main umbrella opposition grouping.** Both Kurdish factions (KDP and PUK) are represented along with various monarchist and independent Shia factions. SCIRI is not a member. The INC has no military forces of its own and has had no presence on the ground in Iraq since 1996. Current INC 'leader' Ahmad Chelabi is a London based, Iraqi Shia who is mistrusted by regional powers and many within his own movement - he has little credibility in Iraq. Chelabi's prominence owes much to his success in handling the US media, Republican politicians
see him as a credible opposition figure and CIA have not been engaged with the INC since

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Southern Iraq: Shia Inhabited Areas



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1996. Indeed as it is currently organised the INC is less than the sum of its parts. **We assess it would have a nugatory role in any regime change scenario** – US are well aware that the INC (and other exile groups) are completely penetrated by Iraqi Intelligence.

The Iraqi National Congress - Membership

Chelabi is Chairman of the Executive Council of the INC, on which other groups are represented. As an umbrella organisation the INC has no military forces, nor any real cadre membership. It must draw on the strength of its constituent members. Chelabi is unusual among the INC leadership in that he represents no other organisation than the INC itself. The other six INC council members are:

- Sharif Ali Bin Hussein (Constitutional Monarchist and pretender to the Iraqi throne)
- Riyadh Al Yawir (a Sunni Liberal)
- Zubari (KDP)
- Latif Rashid (PUK)
- Muhammad Muhammad Ali (Independent Shia Islamist)
- Ayad Alawi (Iraqi National Accord – moderate Ba'athists with some connections to the regime)

III - MILITARY ACTION TO REMOVE SADDAM'S REGIME

We have assessed precision targeting of Saddam and senior regime leadership as unfeasible. We see three broad options for military action:

- A sustained bombing campaign alone.
- A sustained bombing campaign combined with internal opposition forces and US covert action/SF. No ground invasion.
- A sustained bombing campaign and insurgency combined with a ground invasion.

For any of these options to be successful, perception of US intent will be critical. Domestic opposition forces will be loath to engage regime forces unless they are convinced of US determination to remove Saddam. Equally for the Sunni security apparatus to begin to fracture key individuals and units will have to be convinced that Saddam is no longer the guarantor of, but obstacle to, their continuing hegemonic position in Iraqi politics. And furthermore that by removing Saddam they will ensure the continuance of that dominant status. Hence, the US might be able to create the conditions in which significant groups in Iraq openly move against the regime – but those groups will have very different (and perhaps mutually exclusive) motivations for doing so and very different ideas about the structure of a post-Saddam Iraq.

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• **A sustained bombing campaign alone.**

Use of airstrikes and PGMs to attack Iraq would not require significant deployment of troops and would expose a minimum of personnel to danger. Iraqi air defences (AD) are a fraction of their 1991 size and its strategic missiles largely obsolescent. Iraq is attempting to improve its Integrated Air Defence System (IADS), using fibroptics and extending the network into the Northern and Southern No Fly Zones. But while the AD system is capable of providing protection in central Iraq, it is unable to withstand a modern and technologically advanced air force.

For any attack to have a destabilising effect on the Iraqi regime, it would have to be large-scale and intensive, probably of at least one month's duration, initially to destroy air defences then other regime C2, military, government and suspected WMD targets. We doubt Saddam would be significantly troubled by airstrikes - Iraq has been subjected to air attack at intervals since 1991 and survived. The Iraqi regime and people are used to air attacks and are able to deal with them. The regime has alternative locations for primary government departments, not all of them known. Industry, especially the Military Industrialisation Commission, have well-practised plans for dismantling key elements of factories and moving them to safety. The armed forces have dispersal plans, which are practised regularly. Many of these dispersal sites, for government, industry and the armed forces, are in heavily populated areas - attacking them increases the risk of heavy collateral casualties. Dispersal plans have already been implemented, along with the re-institution of the Regional Commands and the nomination of an Alternative Government under Qusai. Given the preparedness of Iraq for air strikes and the uncertainty of being able to find and accurately hit re-located regime targets, **air strikes alone are unlikely to topple the Iraqi regime.** Such an approach is unlikely to convince the Iraqi population of a real intent to remove Saddam. Neither Kurdish nor Shia groups are likely to increase their current levels of insurgency. Nor will it place significant pressure on regime security forces.

• **A sustained bombing campaign combined with internal opposition forces and US covert action/SF. No ground invasion.**

Large-scale and intensive air strikes in conjunction with internal dissent could place the regime under significant pressure.

Kurdish activity would depend upon perception of the likely success of such an undertaking and prospects for a post Saddam Iraq. Given the overwhelming superiority of Iraqi forces deployed opposite the KAZ the Kurds would need significant support even to forestall an Iraqi occupation of their own territory, let alone make a positive military contribution. Even if the Kurds were able to mount some offensive outside of their territory we doubt they would do more than occupy the (nominally Kurdish) strategic cities of Mosul and Kirkuk. **The Kurds already have much of what they want and will not risk the gains they have made over the last decade if they are not wholly convinced of the success of any regime change scenario.** Post Saddam structures will also be important - while they may accept another Sunni dominated regime in Baghdad they will want guarantees of their continued autonomous status.

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Turkish Military Locations in Northern Iraq

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Kurdish participation in any regime change plan will have to take account of **Turkish sensitivities**. The Turkish General Staff considers Northern Iraq to be strategically vital and [] are currently engaged in anti-PKK operations within Iraqi Kurdistan. Turkey will be wary of any regime change plan that encourages or creates the conditions in which Kurdish separatism may grow in strength. Their ambition is to see a stable, unitary and secular Iraq. Turkish support for regime change will depend upon these pre-conditions. A Turkish move in strength into Western (KDP controlled) Kurdistan cannot be ruled out if there were intense instability in Iraq.

Shia participation in regime change activity would depend upon the condition of local Iraqi security forces, Shia assessment of the likely success of any enterprise and the proposed make up of any post-Saddam regime. For Iranian backed groups Tehran's attitude will be crucial.

In 1991 Shia revolt spread throughout the southern countryside and into the key Southern cities. Encouraged by outside calls for regime overthrow and with military units in disarray Shia insurgents (joined by deserters and Iranian volunteers) and the local populace took control (however loosely) of Amarah, Basra (where the insurrection began), Diwaniyah, Hillah, Karbala, Najaf, Nasariyah and Samawah. Crucial to regime success in suppressing insurrection was the ability to re-deploy intact RGFC units. Given the damage to the transport infrastructure Iraqi mobility was significantly improved by the use of helicopters. Ba'ath Party security forces and other intelligence elements were also important in mopping up operations, but RGFC elements were the key to regime success. Any successful Shia insurgency on the scale of 1991 would therefore rely upon significant disruption of RGFC capability.

The attitude of RA units in the south is difficult to determine – unlike the officer class, the majority of rank and file Iraqi soldiers are Shia. There could be significant desertions from some units. However in 1991 some RA units (e.g. 51 Mech. Div in Basra) remained loyal to the regime and fought the insurgents.

The attitude of SCIRI and its military arm the Badr Corps towards regime change will depend upon Tehran's position. []

[] Tehran will fear, as in Afghanistan, a (as they perceive it) US backed government installed in Baghdad. Co-operation between SCIRI forces and US SF/ [] on the ground could therefore be problematic. Tehran may encourage participation in regime change in order to ensure a degree of influence if the regime falls. They may then call for significant participation by Shia oppositionists (in particular SCIRI) in any new government and will be loath to accept another Sunni military officer in power in Baghdad. There is potential that Iranian backed Southern oppositionists could cause significant instability in Iraq for any post-Saddam government.

Tribal based Shia oppositionists may be more willing to participate with US forces. The size of such forces is difficult to determine, but most groups are relatively small (the largest numbering no more than 300-400 fighters). Their agendas are varied, but most are opposed to Saddam due to his repression of the Shia faith and interference in Shia tribal affairs. Many independent tribal leaders are suspicious of Iranian involvement with the Shia cause and view themselves primarily as Arab (and Iraqi) tribal leaders. They make accept a

Iraq: Cities Controlled by Shia During Uprising - March 1991



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SCIRI/BADR CORPS

The Badr Corps is the military wing of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). SCIRI was formed in Iran in 1982 as a Shi'i resistance opposition organisation in the wake of Iraq's attack on Iran. It is currently headed by Ayatollah Mohamad Baqir Al Hakim, the son of the late Grand Ayatollah Muhsin Al Hakim, spiritual leader of the Iraqi Shia between 1955 until his death in 1970. Since the end of the Iran-Iraq war SCIRI has continued to operate with the aim of toppling the regime of Saddam Hussein. The Badr Corps is reported to comprise between 3,000-5,000 soldiers and is believed to consist of three infantry units, an artillery unit and a reserve force. At its core are approximately 1000 former Iraqi officers and soldiers who defected from the Iraqi army. The bulk of the corps is made up of Iraqi refugees and ex-prisoners of war. Although SCIRI and the Badr Corps publicly distance themselves from Iran and claim to be independence organisations, the Badr Corps is heavily dependent on the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps for weapons and training. The Badr Corps continues to conduct successful guerrilla operations against Ba'ath party, government and military targets in Iraq.

Sunni dominated government in Iraq if tribal rights and freedom of religious expression are guaranteed.

However, limited Kurdish and widespread Shia revolt are unlikely in themselves to topple Saddam's regime. What they may do, combined with a clear perception of US determination to remove Saddam, is to fracture the Sunni core of the regime. Elements of this regime may no longer see Saddam as a guarantor of, but an obstacle to, their survival (both personally and as ruling Sunni elite). For Sunni elements to move against Saddam US targeting will need to be centred upon organisations like the SSO and the SRG, which exist primarily to prevent a move against Saddam by other regime forces. With them removed we might see rebellion by elements of the RGFC or Sunni officers within the RA. There are powerful and well placed figures within these organisations who could command support in the Sunni heartland of Iraq. US targeting may therefore seek to avoid destruction of those elements within the RA or RGFC that might be thought capable of moving against Saddam. The US may also attempt to covertly communicate support for a move against Saddam by elements of the security structure.

This strategy is feasible, but does not guarantee success. It has within it a large number of variables, not least managing the competing aspirations of the various groupings. Much will depend upon perception of US intent. Hence, even if not employed, the US must have a credible ground force option in place. In the event that airstrikes plus opposition activity does not suffice, it would have to use them.

• **A sustained bombing campaign combined with a ground invasion.**

Commitment to a full-scale air and ground war is the scenario Saddam fears most. He will be aware of what Coalition forces could have achieved in 1991 had they chosen to continue the ground campaign.

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The Iraqi Air Force has approximately 300 combat aircraft, of which 179 are considered operational to a degree. Training is poor and infrequent and morale is very low. Standards of training and experience are far short of those in the West. In short the Iraqi Air Force does not pose a credible threat to Western air forces. The US would be able to achieve air superiority in less than 24 hours and supremacy shortly thereafter.

The Iraqi navy was destroyed during the Gulf War. It remains in a parlous state, but is still capable of nuisance mining the northern Gulf. Its anti-ship cruise missiles present a credible threat to shipping in the northern Gulf area.

Iraqi ground forces are among the best-trained and experienced in the region, easily capable of defending themselves against their neighbours. But their equipment is obsolescent or obsolete and suffers from a shortage of spare parts and maintenance. Morale is assessed as generally poor, especially in the RA. Operation DESERT STORM/GRANBY confirmed the qualitative superiority of Coalition equipment and there is no evidence that the gap has done anything other than widen. Iraqi ground forces are broken down into:

Republican Guard Force Command	- 75 000 troops in 6 divisions
Regular Army	- 300 000 troops in 17 divisions
Special Republican Guard	- 15 000 troops in 4 brigades

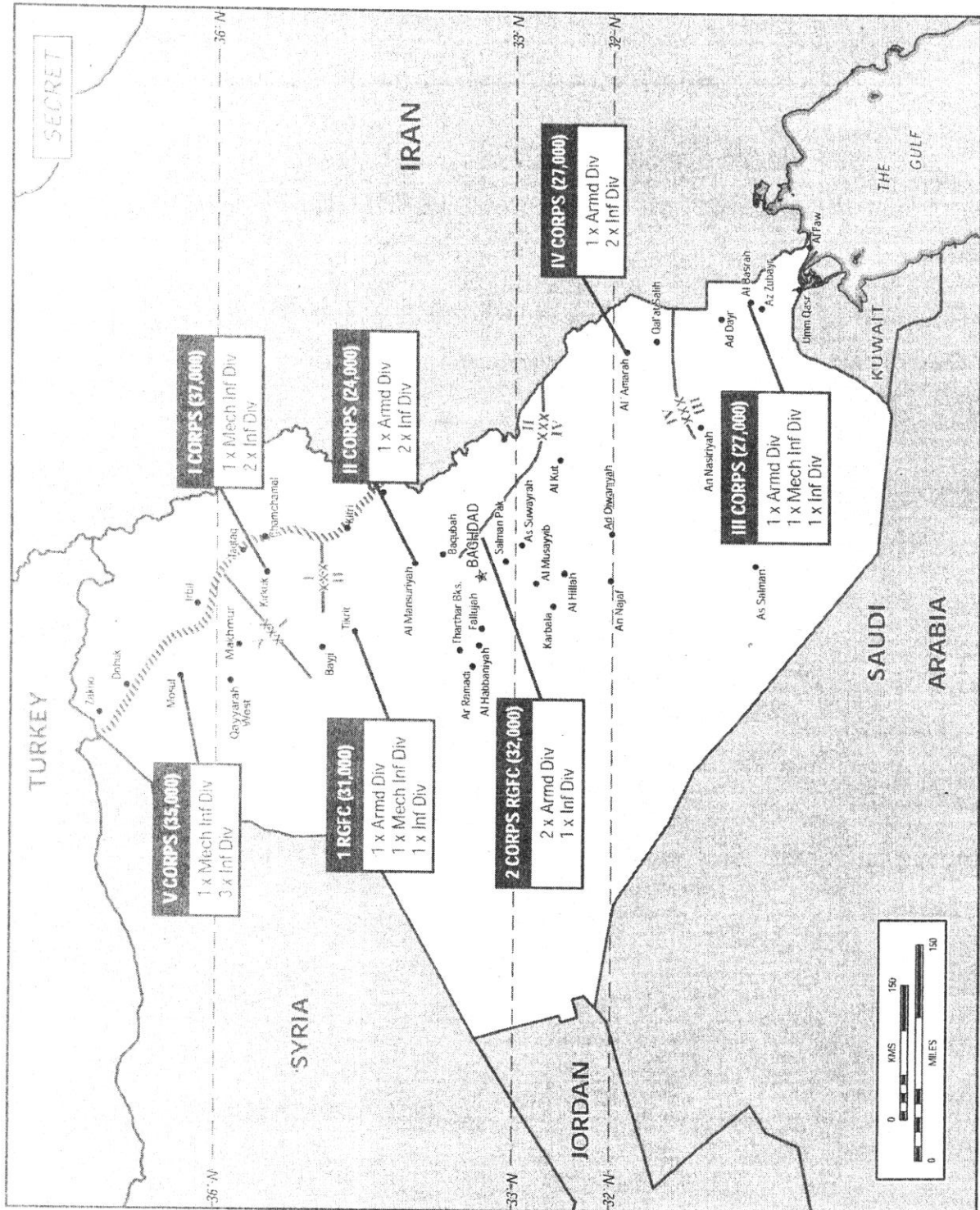
Ground force strength is less than half that of 1991:

Iraqi Force Strengths	JAN 1991	DEC 2001
Soldiers	1,000,000	400,000
Divisions	70	23
Tanks	5700	2700
APCs	5100	3100
Artillery	3830	2055
Combat Aircraft	750	179

The disposition of these troops is defensive, focussed on the KAZ, Baghdad and the South. The RA troops along the KAZ are prepared for a Kurdish assault. They have combat experience, albeit in recent years against the Kurds, and are used to fighting in this terrain. The same applies in the south, where the RA in particular has been fighting Shia insurgents and, though unpractised in high-intensity combat, is nevertheless familiar with the terrain. The RA are seen as the weaker element of the Iraqi ground forces, but in the south are some of the better RA units and in the north, the RA appeared to acquit itself well during the 1996 invasion of the Kurdish City of Irbil. If softened by an air campaign, and facing US ground forces their collapse could be as swift as it was in 1991, particularly given the lack of a viable air force. The regime would quickly lose

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Iraq: Troop Locations and numbers



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control of the South as in 1991. And the Kurds could make gains in the North as outlined previously. Domestic insurgency could be widespread. In that situation the regime could fall quickly, even before significant engagement with US ground forces. Sunni elements might move against Saddam. However, as outlined above, they would do so only to preserve their hegemonic status. Should the RA and the RGFC decide that they are defending the Iraqi homeland and Sunni dominance rather than just Saddam Hussein, then they are more likely to offer a tenacious and protracted resistance, requiring a deployment of US/Coalition troops much more in line with doctrinal norms. Much will depend upon perception of US intent and US ability to manage the divergent aspirations of opposition groups and the Sunni security/military structure of Iraq.

Iraqi WMD

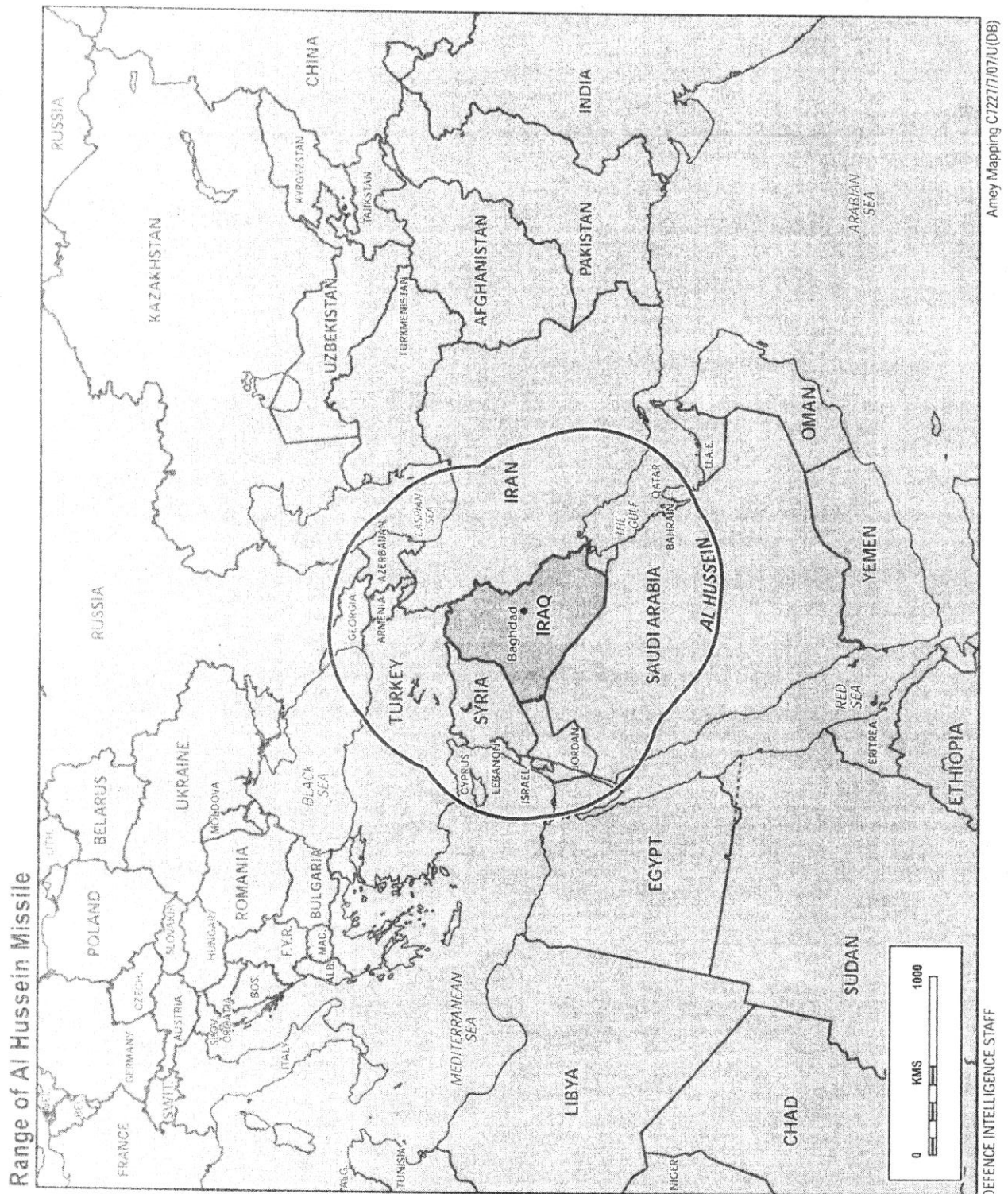
Iraq continues to attach importance to the development of weapons of mass destruction. Iraq's ballistic missile programme continues apace and intelligence indicates that design work for systems beyond the UN limit of 150km is underway. Iraq is assessed to retain 10-20 Al-Hussein missiles (range 650km) capable of hitting Israel. Iraq also continues with its chemical and biological warfare (CBW) programmes and, if it has not already done so, could produce significant quantities of BW agents within days and CW agents within weeks of a decision to do so. These can be delivered by a variety of means. Methods of ensuring survivability of CBW production facilities from attack are a high priority. There are also indications that Iraq is continuing with a nuclear weapons programme, although its current status is unclear. We have no definitive intelligence on Iraqi WMD concepts of use. Iraq did not employ WMD against coalition forces during the Gulf War, nor against the subsequent internal uprisings. We judge that Saddam wished to avoid regime-threatening retaliation from the coalition. Hence, use of WMD will be linked to perception of regime survivability. Were the regime in danger of imminent collapse Saddam might consider use of WMD against internal opposition, US forces or Israel.

US Forces

Operations in Afghanistan have depleted some aspects of US readiness levels. Air operations and logistics against the No Fly Zones have continued and there is pre-positioned ground force equipment deployed in a number of the Gulf states. Basing issues will be problematic – Kuwait alone is unlikely to suffice. Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar will be the additional locations of choice. To accept additional US forces, these countries would need to be convinced that US intent is unequivocal. Iraq is well aware of this and current Iraqi diplomatic initiatives are aimed, at least in part to persuade regional governments to refuse US basing rights.

Additional equipment and personnel to those already in the Gulf would be necessary. In addition to the airborne divisions in the US, the United States has forces distributed from Europe to Afghanistan (See Map). Ground forces in Europe are some 8 brigades, numbering about 53 000 men and there are some 150 combat aircraft in the Gulf region. This is insufficient to start a full-scale campaign and so the US would need to move troops, aircraft and equipment into the Middle East from outside of the Europe/ME theatres. This will take time. In addition, the US will probably have to re-

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equip and re-arm post-Afghanistan. Preparation for OP DESERT STORM took some 4 - 5 months. Although deployment will probably be on a smaller scale to 1991, it is still likely to take some 3 to 4 months before a capable force is assembled and ready for combat.

It is conceivable that the US could be ready to begin the first phase air campaign in May (when the UN is next due to review Iraq). But late summer would be better, not least to avoid ground operations in the summer heat.

IV - AFTER SADDAM

The UK intelligence community has consistently assessed that **the only viable, long term successor to Saddam will come from within the Sunni security/military structure**. Much will depend upon the nature of Saddam's demise. Saddam's son Qusai Saddam Hussein is assessed as the most likely immediate successor if the regime still retains a degree of control of the process. But there are many other capable and ruthless candidates from within the regime, including several notable figures within the RGFC. Several of these individuals could command significant support within the Sunni officer class and among key Sunni tribes. But none of them would be likely to command any support among the majority Shia populace or among the Kurds. As a result **they would be forced (and probably inclined) to run Iraq along autocratic lines similar to Saddam, with repression as a key tool**. Were the Kurds and Shia (in particular) to have played a significant role in regime removal they will be loath to accept such a figure. There might be significant instability as a new Sunni regime attempts to repress a Southern insurgency and the Kurds. Much will hinge upon the acceptability of such a figure (and continued Sunni dominance) to the US. Regionally (Iran aside) a Sunni 'hard man' could be welcomed and there would be intense pressure for any ongoing US military campaign to halt. Iraq could be very quickly re-integrated into the international community.

We assess that despite potential instability Iraq will remain a unitary state. But many of Iraq's structural problems will remain. Sunni hegemony, the position of the Kurds and Shia, enmity with Kuwait, infighting among the elite, autocratic rule and anti-Israeli sentiment will not disappear with Saddam. We should also expect considerable anti-Western sentiment among a populace that has experienced ten years of sanctions.

A US attempt to create a more equitable long-term distribution of power in Iraq would require massive and lengthy commitment. Modern Iraq has been dominated politically, militarily and socially by the Sunni. To alter that would entail re-creation of Iraq's civil, political and military structures. That would require a US directed transition of power (i.e. US troops occupying Baghdad) and support thereafter. Ten years seems a not unrealistic time span for such a project.

[none]

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