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1504

*Chances of finding WMD evidence
slim before Baghdad falls and/or
regime collapses.*

IRAQ: UPDATE ON WMD

1. As the Coalition begins to establish control on the ground in Iraq, expectations are growing that it will uncover WMD. This note, which takes account of earlier intelligence, reviews what we should expect to discover, when and how.

Chemical Weapons

2. Iraq is capable of producing the chemical agents mustard gas, tabun, sarin, cyclosarin and VX. Exact quantities of agent available are unknown, but we judge it is likely to be between 10 and 100 tonnes (3.5 tonnes of nerve agent would fill 1,000 artillery shells). We continue to judge that Iraq has produced chemical agent since UNSCOM left in 1998, although intelligence suggests that agent production stopped prior to UNMOVIC's deployment last autumn. We do not know where this activity took place, but it is probable that it used dual-use chemical facilities. We know from intelligence that the regime expended a great deal of effort in cleaning up all WMD associated sites, and dispersing equipment and material in advance of UN inspections. We should therefore not expect too much from inspection of dual-use chemical facilities alone.

3. Details on chemical munition numbers are scarce. UNSCOM could not account for over 30,000 special munitions (both chemical and biological), although it is unlikely that all of these remain. We judge that the most likely delivery means are artillery and battlefield rockets. [reference to reporting of retention of shells] mustard filled artillery shells from a batch of 550 supposedly destroyed by Coalition air attack in 1991 (none of the 550 could be accounted for by UN inspectors). But more artillery shells are likely to be available. Other means of delivery include aerial bombs, sprayers and missiles. UNMOVIC could not account for 6,500 aerial bombs (which could be easily hidden in a large hangar). Despite some reports that such munitions have been deployed to Republican Guard units, we judge that they probably remain under tight central control, held mainly by the Special Republican Guard in the area of Baghdad. Coalition forces have yet to occupy these areas.

4. Over the last few days there have been a number of reports concerning chemical weapons, covering issues such as command and control, timing of use and production. But the nature of the sources makes the veracity of these reports

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difficult to judge. There have been a few reports from senior Iraqi security officials suggesting that Iraq cannot currently prepare or produce chemical weapons, that its stocks are dispersed, and that therefore such weapons will not be used. In assessing these statements it is necessary to take into account the limited access these individuals appear to have to military planning, their lack of technical expertise and accompanying comments which are less credible.

Biological Weapons

5. Iraq is capable of producing biological agents, including anthrax, botulinum toxin, aflatoxin and ricin. The exact quantities of agent and munitions available are unknown. We have no intelligence that biological munitions have been deployed. We do not know the location of Iraq's mobile biological agent production facilities but they are likely to be within areas tightly controlled by the regime.

Missiles

6. We assess that Iraq has up to 20 al Hussein missiles remaining. We are still unclear about their state of readiness/assembly or the numbers of launchers available. Some, or all, of these missiles could have been dismantled to aid concealment. While we believe Iraq retains the technical expertise to maintain and re-assemble al Husseins, the speed with which this can be achieved depends on the extent to which they have been disassembled, and the degree to which they might need access to specialised equipment.

7. We do not know where the al Hussein missiles are held, although they would have to be deployed to the West of Iraq to target Israel.

Sensitive Site Exploitation

8. There are mechanisms in place in theatre for Sensitive Site Exploitation (SSE). The resources are predominantly American, although the UK has a small contingent involved. The SSE process involves exploitation of sites, documentation and personnel associated with WMD. The process is currently restricted to visiting sites, which have been occupied by Coalition forces. The bulk of the sites which might yield results are located in the Baghdad area. But as stated above, most sites previously associated with WMD production have been cleansed over the last six to nine months.

9. We continue to judge that key documents on Iraqi WMD programmes have been dispersed. Following the find of sensitive documents at the home of a nuclear scientist in January.

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10. Given the recent Iraqi emphasis on clean-up, dispersal and concealment, the best prospect of exposing the full extent of the WMD programmes rests in free contact with the scientists, and other individuals, involved in the WMD programmes and the (extensive) concealment activity. Neither is likely to become available until the regime has fallen. Individual scientists should be able to provide details of their work, although assembling the various elements into a coherent whole could take time. Elements within Iraq's intelligence and security organisations will have information on the full extent of Iraq's concealment policy. Individuals from the leadership will be important sources of information about the overall WMD policy.

11. Short of this, the prospects of discovering WMD will increase as the Coalition moves closer to Baghdad. But it is likely that stocks of chemical munitions will continue to be held centrally - and presumably moved back as the Coalition advances - until after the regime authorises their use or collapses.



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