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CDI 2/25

28 Feb 03

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**IRAQ RED TEAM - REGIONAL RESPONSES TO CONFLICT IN IRAQ AND THE AFTERMATH**

Reference:

A. CDI 2/25 dated 25 Feb 03 (Iraq - Red Teaming in the DIS).

1. As described at Reference A, please find enclosed a bullet brief from the DIS Iraq Red Team on Regional Responses to Conflict in Iraq. The brief has drawn on a variety of sources inside the Allied intelligence community and from a panel of regional experts assembled on our behalf by Kings College, London; this has enabled the Team to take as wide a view as possible and obtain fresh insights.
2. The brief concludes with recommendations for Information Operations themes inside Iraq.
3. Any comments or questions would be welcomed and should be directed to Lt Col  
on MB or BRENT (CHOTs: ).

*[signed on CHOTS]*

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MB

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## REGIONAL RESPONSES TO CONFLICT IN IRAQ AND THE AFTERMATH

A Bullet Brief by DIS Red Team

This brief has been grounded on information derived from sources inside<sup>1</sup> the Allied intelligence community, but has deliberately looked wider to a variety of outside<sup>2</sup> sources to seek fresh insights. It is intended to provoke thought rather than to provide authoritative assessment.

1. **Aim.** To assess the aspirations/fears and possible actions of regional actors who have the potential to impact on the success of a coalition operation, either positively or negatively.

### **Key Judgements:**

- In the immediate aftermath there will be an internal security vacuum in Iraq in which widespread reprisals could take place. To avoid other internal or proxy forces stepping in, coalition forces will have to assume immediate responsibility for law and order.
- The majority of the Iraqi population will initially view coalition forces as a liberating, rather than occupying, force. But this support is likely to erode rapidly unless the interim administration is acceptable to the population *and* they can see a roadmap toward a pluralist and representative Iraqi-led administration.
- 
- Any final solution for an Iraqi government will have to resolve the dilemma of granting regional representation whilst alleviating the concerns of neighbours over a devolved administration.
- Failure to resolve the above considerations will give AQ fertile ground it can use to exploit the presence of US/UK forces in post war Iraq and further its own aim of removing the Western presence from the Gulf region and establishing a modern Islamic Caliphate. In particular it will:
  - Seek to create conditions that reinforce their argument that the West is engaged in a 'crusade' against Islam by discrediting US/UK forces so they are seen as an alien 'occupying power'.
  - Undermine Western will to maintain forces in Iraq by imposing unacceptable casualties on the large US/UK target set in post war Iraq.

<sup>1</sup> Including JIC papers, DIS and DIA papers, DIA Red Team papers and open sources.

<sup>2</sup> Views were sought from a panel of regional experts assembled by the Centre for Defence Studies (CDS) at Kings College, London. Panel members are listed at Annex A.

## 2. Common Themes.

- Iraq is a very complex society and any attempt to analyse it in neat categories based on religion, ethnicity or tribe will almost certainly be over simplistic<sup>3</sup>. In particular, compartmentalisation into Shia, Sunni and Kurd is unhelpful because it risks overlooking complicated tribal, religious, and ethnic relationships.
- A period of reprisals is likely in the immediate aftermath; initially it is likely to be directed against Ba'ath officials but it may degenerate into general score settling on tribal/religious/ethnic grounds. The Sunni Arab population who have been transplanted by the regime to 'Arabise' the North may be particularly vulnerable.
- There is a broad consensus amongst external and internal state actors to retain a unitary Iraqi state secure within its current borders<sup>4</sup>. The credibility of the coalition's position that it too supports this goal is undermined in the eyes of many regional and internal actors by the US/Turkish arrangement to allow a substantial Turkish force to be based in N Iraq. This has the potential to ignite a destabilising Turk/Kurd conflict inside Iraq.
- There is near universal support across the ethnic and religious spectrum within Iraq for regime change and there will be goodwill toward the coalition forces that deliver it in the immediate aftermath, provided that humanitarian needs are met and law and order is established. This support is likely to evaporate rapidly, however, if:
  - The Interim Administration is judged to be unrepresentative, arbitrary or partial in its dealing with any one group.
  - The Shia majority, in particular, are not given a clear roadmap toward a pluralist and representative form of government in the foreseeable future. It will require fine judgement to meet the Iraqi peoples' desire for a representative government (which implies regional representation) with the insistence of outsiders (Turkey in particular) that devolved government is not acceptable.

<sup>3</sup> The previous British mandate in Iraq relied heavily on political advisors, such as Gertrude Bell, who had an intimate knowledge of the intricacies of tribal, ethnic and religious politics. This was essential to allow administrators to make informed judgements and to arbitrate in a society where blood feuds can be maintained over generations. By comparison, our understanding of Iraqi society today can be shallow.

<sup>4</sup> Important for Iraq's neighbours, who fear any 'Balkanisation' of Iraq could spill over into their own countries.

<sup>5</sup> The Turks will also be unhappy with any form of devolved government in Iraq as, in their view, it will encourage secessionist groups in Turkey (including the PKK) and threaten the viability of a unitary Turkish state.

- The roadmap fails to indicate how coalition forces will transfer responsibility for internal security to an Iraqi force of some description. It may be prudent to identify early who might command this force<sup>6</sup>.
- It is critical we get the post war structures right, both interim and final. It must be representative of the various ethnic, religious, tribal and social groups and can be regionally based. However:
  - A US led interim administration will be unwelcome. A UN-led administration, however, will be even less desirable<sup>7</sup>.
  - Iraqi exiles, including key Iraqi National Council members, are not trusted and are unlikely to last as long term members of the ruling elite<sup>9</sup>.
  - A federal endstate will not be welcome internally or externally as it will invite the 'Balkanisation' of Iraq.

### 3. Internal Actors.

- **Arab:**
  - **Shia** (75% of Arab population<sup>10</sup>): a regime change represents a historic opportunity to achieve a representative government<sup>11</sup>. Will require a leading role in a successor regime and will not accept continuation of a Sunni dominated regime, even in the short term. There is a danger that SCIRI and/or the Badr Corps will foment unrest if they perceive this aspiration will not be met<sup>12</sup>.
  - **Sunni:** fear becoming a persecuted minority. Therefore, they require *immediate* reassurance they will be incorporated into a unitary Iraq with a representative government.

<sup>6</sup> Preferably a Shia; it would be helpful to identify a commander with 'nationalist' (as opposed to Ba'ath) credentials. There are believed to be a number of possible contenders amongst senior Army commanders who are Shia, but are respected for their performance in the Iran/Iraq war and have since been disgraced.

<sup>7</sup> The Iraqi population desire a strong and fair Interim Government and the UN does not have a good track record in this department. Regionally, however, governments would prefer some form of UN endorsement of the administration in order to alleviate unrest in the 'Arab Street'.

<sup>9</sup> Few exile groups have any credibility inside Iraq, most of them have been in exile for upward of 30 years and are viewed as being out of touch.

<sup>10</sup> 60% total population.

<sup>11</sup> Denied in 1920 when the San Remo Conference awarded the Iraq mandate to Britain, with the Sunni Hashemite monarchy acceding to the throne in 1921. Iraqi Shia regard this as a historic wrong.

<sup>12</sup> Although widely regarded as Iranian proxies SCIRI has its own dynamic and is capable of independent action.

- **Ba'ath Party** (Sunni and Shia):
  - Saddam and inner core of the regime: perhaps only 500 strong. Universally hated and will be dealt with summarily by the populace; will fight if unable to flee.
  - The remainder: fear retribution and alienation. A "Truth and Reconciliation" process is required to allow '2<sup>nd</sup> Tier' regime members to reintegrate back into Iraqi mainstream life - if they are not to fight or flee.
- **Kurds:** aspire to protect their hard won autonomy, but are pragmatists and will view post-war Iraq in terms of opportunities and threats:
  - See a once-in-a-generation opportunity to consolidate and build on their gains of recent years; therefore will accept a pluralist and representative solution provided it gives them security and autonomy within a unitary Iraq.
  - Will oppose a post war structure that threatens their autonomy and may threaten their revenue from smuggling/sanction busting, therefore *may* take the opportunity to foment insurrection in Kirkuk<sup>13</sup> and/or Mosul to ensure access to oil, if future access is in doubt.
  - Fear any Turkish attempt to extend sphere of influence in N Iraq - with potential to dislocate any post war settlement.
- **Turkoman**<sup>14</sup>: desire to be recognised as a minority with protected rights<sup>15</sup> and may seek the direct support of Turkish forces to achieve this

#### 4. External Actors.

- **Turkey:** wishes to avoid anything which exacerbates the problems they have with their own Kurdish population. Arguably Turkey has most to lose from establishment of a semi-autonomous Kurdish region within a unitary Iraqi state<sup>16</sup> and may intervene on pretext of safeguarding interests of the Turkoman minority<sup>17</sup>.
- **Iran:** fears she is 'next on the US list' and encirclement by unfriendly states<sup>18</sup>. This perception would be reinforced by an over aggressive coalition force posture

<sup>13</sup> The so called 'Kurdish Jerusalem' and the desired capital of a Kurdish state. Access to the Kirkuk and/or Mosul oilfields would also guarantee revenue in the event of the collapse of a unitary Iraqi state.

<sup>14</sup> Perhaps 5% of the population.

<sup>15</sup> Turkey insists on this.

<sup>16</sup> Would increase pressure from the PKK for a similar arrangement in Turkey. Would threaten viability of the Turkish State if other minorities were to follow.

<sup>17</sup> Since Turks first offered opportunity in 1991 the majority have taken up dual Iraqi/Turkish citizenship.

<sup>18</sup> US forces in Afghanistan and Turkey, Western leaning Pakistan, US basing rights in the 'Stans' and, now, US forces in Iraq.

toward Iran during the operation. Iran aspires to having a more stable, but weaker Iraqi neighbour. Wishes to achieve influence on any settlement to ensure:

- Shia majority's interests are protected (and will use SCIRI/Badr Corps proxies if this is judged to be beneficial).
- The MeK (Mujaheddin-e-Khalq) is neutralised (possibly by the use of force inside Iraq, if there is a post war breakdown of security and the opportunity presents itself).
- Provided Iran's own national security is not compromised, it will broadly accept US wishes; this factor will act as a brake on sponsored use of the Badr Corps. Will also be concerned about Turkish influence expanding in the North.
- **AQ:** seeks removal of Western presence/influence from the Gulf and wants to see the US/UK operation go badly. AQ are currently in some disarray<sup>19</sup> but will wish to take the opportunity presented by the US/UK operation to re-establish credibility and encourage widespread anti Western activity in the region. However:
  - Initially AQ shares a common goal with the coalition: regime change. Once completed, goals will diverge rapidly and UK/US forces will present a rich target set for terrorist attack.
  - AQ fears the establishment of a pluralist, representative Iraq government as it undermines their argument that Muslims can only achieve self determination in a unitary Islamic theocracy. They could deliberately cause civilian casualties to undermine the coalition's position.
- **Russia:** seeks to maintain its valuable economic interests in Iraq. If reassured they should be compliant, but we should not discount the potential for a maverick 'Pristina moment'.
- **Palestinians:** are probably the only grouping who wish to see Saddam retain power<sup>20</sup>. That said, a representative Iraqi administration will strengthen the hand of the PA at the expense of PIJ/Hamas<sup>21</sup> and will boost the prospects for more active engagement of the US in achieving a Palestinian State<sup>22</sup>. On balance, the Palestinians will be unlikely to intervene directly but extremists may wish to contribute by increasing the scale of operations against Israel. Israeli security measures, however, are likely to be effective in controlling this.

<sup>19</sup> Having suffered a tactical setback in Afghanistan, where they misjudged US reaction to 9/11.

<sup>20</sup> He is a valuable source of moral support in the Islamic world and, for PIJ and Hamas, a source of funding and welfare support for the families of 'martyrs'.

<sup>21</sup> Conversely, the failure of a pluralist post war solution will reinforce the argument of the extremists that Western models of government are inappropriate and a regional accommodation with Israel is unachievable.

<sup>22</sup> Signalled by the US President on 26 February 2003.



- **Israel:** shares US aspirations, but if operation does not go well and if Israel is attacked by Iraq may consider protecting its regional credibility<sup>23</sup> more important than maintaining restraint - in which case may feel need to take mil action vs. Iraq.
  - **The 'Arab Street':** characterised by deep anger based on a feeling of impotence in the face of unrepresentative Arab regimes across the region and the perception of a Western 'crusade' against Islam. The anger is not well organised, but it is very emotional and is likely to lead to widespread demonstrations and anti US/UK activity, particularly in the event of a US-led interim 'military government'.  
However:
    - More could be made in the Information Campaign of church opposition and mass demonstrations in the West to undermine the 'crusade' argument.
    - The support for the coalition of fragile regimes in the region will continue to be muted for fear of a backlash in their own countries. In the longer term also fear a pluralist, representative Iraqi government could provide a role model and undermine their own positions internally.
  - **Others:** other actors across the region, including Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia were examined. Although there are deep divisions across the Arab world over how to react to a US/UK operation and it fears the instability that may result; it is assessed that none of these countries is likely to take action that will influence the course of the operation. The one thing that might change this is an overly violent Israeli clampdown on the Palestinians.
5. **Information Campaign.** It is clear from the above that Information Operations in Iraq will be vital to the success of any campaign. Themes might include:
- The aim of the operation is to eliminate the threat of Iraqi WMD and liberate the Iraqi people from an oppressor.
  - Iraq will be maintained as a unitary state secure within its borders. An interim administration will maintain law and order in a firm but fair way and will hand over to a representative, Iraqi led, government as soon as possible.
  - There will be a place for all ethnic and religious groups in the new Iraq and the human rights of minorities will be protected.
  - There will be a process, acceptable to all parties, to reintegrate middle and lower ranking Ba'ath officers and officials into legitimate national life.

Annex:

- A. Centre for Defence Studies, Kings College, Iraq Expert Panel Members.

<sup>23</sup> Many Israelis, particularly on the right (now in power) felt in 1991 that bowing to US wishes and not reacting to Iraqi SCUD strikes damaged their credibility as a robust regional power that would not shy away from protecting their interests.

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ANNEX A  
TO CDI 2/25  
DATED 28 FEB 03

**CENTRE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES, KINGS COLLEGE, IRAQ EXPERT  
PANEL MEMBERS**

1. Panel members were:
  - a. Professor Sir Lawrence Freedman (Kings College).
  - b. Ambassador Ghayth Armanazi, ex Ambassador League of Arab States (Syrian).
  - c. Dr Basil Mustafa, Centre for Islamic Studies Oxford (Sunni).
  - d. Mr Hazhir Teimourian, Journalist (Zoroastrian Kurd)
  - e. Mr Yahia Said, LSE (Iraqi).
  - f. Mr Hilel Cohen, CDS (Israeli).
  - g. Professor Michael Clarke, Director International Policy Institute.
  - h. Dr Paul Cornish, Director CDS.
  - i. Dr John Mackinlay, CDS.
  - j. Mr Bill Park, JSCSC.
  - k. Ms Laura Sandys, CDS.

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