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XVI. IRAQ'S THREAT TO REGIONAL STABILITY AND SECURITY

A. Background

(U) Prior to Iraq's 1991 defeat in Kuwait, Saddam Hussein's regime had built the largest and most capable conventional military force in the Persian Gulf region. He began a war with Iran that ran through the 1980s and resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths between the two countries. He used chemical weapons against Iranian forces and then turned them against his own Kurdish population in retribution for their sympathy toward Iran during the war. He again used military force against Kuwait in 1990, and as the war ensued, he authorized the firing of Scud missiles toward Saudi Arabia and Israel. Misjudging the Coalition's determination to eject him from Kuwait, he pushed his military toward destruction.

(U) After 1991, Saddam Hussein brutally repressed the Shia in the south, the Kurds in the north and any source of potential opposition to his regime. He obstructed United Nations (UN) inspection efforts and internationally directed requirements to destroy his weapons of mass destruction (WMD). His military and security forces fired on Coalition aircraft patrolling the no-fly zones, and both harassed and physically attacked inspectors who were implementing the will of the international community. He deployed his military forces in threatening manners in the direction of Kuwait, into Kurdish regions and in the western districts of Iraq toward Jordan, Syria and Israel.

(U) It is against this history of aggression, unpredictability and resistance that Committee staff reviewed thousands of pages of documents covering the full scope of the Iraqi threat in the aftermath of the first Gulf War in 1991 through the period just prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) in 2003. Leaving aside the magnitude of the WMD issue, which is being covered in detail in other parts of the Committee's report, the Intelligence Community's (IC) task of tracking and characterizing the Iraqi threat to regional stability and security was immense and complex. For instance, over the 12-year period between the two wars, analysts and intelligence collectors focused their efforts on describing: the dimensions of the threat; what Saddam was doing with his military forces inside Iraq and around the region; Saddam's intentions to use force in the region; and, how regional governments understood and reacted to the Iraqi threat.

(U) At the IC's inter-agency level, the National Intelligence Council (NIC) produced documents that the entire IC considered to represent the most authoritative analyses. These IC-level documents included National Intelligence Estimates (NIE), Intelligence Community

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Assessments (ICA) and Sense of the Community Memoranda (SOCM). Their analytical authority was based on coordination and consultation among IC agencies, resulting in consensus judgments about the particular topic under review in the document. Intelligence consumers had a clear understanding of what the IC judgment was.

(U) The review of intelligence related to regional stability and security was unlike the review of other issues examined in the Committee's full report – such as WMD and international terrorism. In the case of WMD, Committee staff evaluated the quantity and quality of intelligence that described WMD capabilities. In the case of international terrorism, Committee staff evaluated the quantity and quality of intelligence that addressed the Iraqi regime's ties to such terrorism. In the case of regional stability and security, however, the analysis amounted to a characterization of how the IC monitored, understood and described the Iraqi threat in the region over more than a decade. At the agency level, for instance, there was no conflict among analysts that Saddam had attacked his neighbors in the past, that he continued to have the largest conventional force in the region, that he had the capability to conduct another attack if he chose, that he had attacked the Kurds, and that he had taken threatening actions toward Kuwait. At the IC-level, as well, analysts showed the same consensus in their coordinated assessments—such as in NIEs, ICA's and SOCMs – about Iraq's conventional capabilities and its aggressive military actions taken from 1991 - 2003. Because analysis at the agency level and at the IC level did not indicate analytical variance, the Committee focused attention primarily on the most authoritative level of analysis, which was at the IC level (i.e., the NIC).

(U) In the case of Iraq's threat to regional stability and security, the Committee also discovered that there was no single IC-level assessment, which Committee staff could use to evaluate IC analysis and intelligence collection.⁵⁶ There was no document that explained in one place how the IC consolidated its assessment of all the aspects related to Iraq's post-1991 performance and what it meant for the overall security and stability of the region. Committee staff were forced to review a broad range of assessments from 1991 - 2003 that touched on the many aspects of the Iraqi threat. In a major assessment of Iraq's conventional forces completed in 1999, analysts agreed on Iraq's conventional capabilities and Saddam's actions in the region.

⁵⁶ (U) The National Intelligence Council communicated with Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) staff through CIA's Office of Congressional Affairs on 23 January 2004. According to the NIC, the IC did not produce an IC-level assessment (for example, an NIE) that addressed the range of issues comprising Iraq's threat to regional stability and security between 1991 and 2003. The IC produced analysis on individual topics that it monitored over the period. For example, the IC agencies produced assessments of conventional military forces or violations of No-Fly Zones.

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This assessment was based on what analysts described as adequate and reliable technical collection.

(U) Clearly, the issue of Saddam's *intentions* to use force against his neighbors and U.S. and Coalition forces was a high-interest matter, and, unfortunately, the main area where the IC was least confident about its analysis. That left IC analysts in the position of speculating⁵⁷ about the range of possible actions Saddam Hussein could have taken at any point in the future. This was a consistent theme among analysts after 1991, and this section will demonstrate that the IC identified lack of human intelligence (HUMINT) as the main reason for the uncertainty.

(U) The task of judging regional neighbors' perceptions about Iraq was equally difficult, and it suffered from an additional problem – the complexity of assessing all the separate considerations any one country or group of countries could have had in conducting their relations with Iraq. For instance, well over ten separate countries in the Persian Gulf region had reason to be concerned about Iraq. The Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council both struggled, as well, with the complicated issue of how to interact with Iraq within the parameters of UN sanctions.

(U) Analysts were able, though, to describe the various steps that regional countries had taken toward Iraq. For example, Jordan, Syria and Egypt sought better trade relations. Turkey attempted to reestablish an intelligence liaison relationship and security cooperation in northern Iraq. However, analysts were not able to say with certainty why a country would choose any particular course of action. The array of attitudes, perceptions and actions of regional neighbors amounted to a complex back-drop for analysis of the Iraqi threat in the region.

⁵⁷ (U) Speculation – or informed judgment – was common in the body of analysis over the entire period. Analysts were in the position of trying to understand what Saddam had done and then predict his intentions for the future by laying out a series of options from which he would likely choose. For example, after Iraqi forces deployed to southern Iraq in October 1994, analysts debated whether he had planned to attack Kuwait or was conducting a training exercise. They later speculated about his willingness to actually attack Kuwait in the future – given his other concerns that included his efforts to have sanctions dropped and the likelihood of a devastating response from Coalition forces if he attacked. Speculation usually included use of caveats, such as “probably,” “might,” “could,” etc.

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B. IC Analysis on the Iraqi Threat

(U) Assessing the threat level from Iraq was a problem for the IC in the years after 1991. Analysts were certain that Saddam was capable of threatening and destabilizing the region, as he had done when he attacked Iran and invaded Kuwait. They also believed he retained components of his WMD programs. For example, he used chemical weapons against Iran and the Kurds in the late 1980s, and he fired Scuds toward his neighbors when he invaded Kuwait. After 1991, though, analysts believed that Iraq's conventional forces were less capable in all readiness categories—to include logistics, manning and training.⁵⁸

(U) The Committee reviewed approximately 400 analytical documents – spanning 1991 until early 2003 – which focused on various dimensions of Iraq's conventional military threat to the region. There was no controversy among IC analysts concerning the degraded status of Iraq's military forces, concerning the facts surrounding Iraqi actions against internal opposition groups, nor concerning the Iraqi regime's resistance to no-fly/no-drive zone restrictions.

(U) Taken as a complete body of documents, the IC showed that by 2003 it had thoroughly assessed Iraq as a conventional threat to regional stability and security. For example, the IC produced analyses that concentrated on Saddam's efforts to reestablish control of his military and on his steps to stabilize Iraq's internal security environment. Analysts also focused on lingering Iraqi threats to Kuwait, Saddam Hussein's efforts to undermine UN sanctions, his aggression toward the Kurds, and interactions with Iran, Turkey and other neighbors.

(U) Analysis of the Iraqi threat was strongest in the areas of conventional military capabilities (also known as "order of battle") and Iraq's military or security actions inside the country. Both of these issues were measurable, that is susceptible to technical collection methods [REDACTED]. On the other hand, the IC was not confident about its analysis concerning Saddam's intentions for use of force or about the possible intentions of regional governments in their relations with Iraq. Both of these areas relied heavily on HUMINT, which the IC claimed was not reliable enough or sufficient in quantity for accurate assessments. Over this 12-year period, analysts made a clear distinction

⁵⁸(U) The size and operational capabilities of Iraq's conventional military forces sharply declined after the 1991 defeat, and this trend continued all the way through 2002. Still, by 2003 Iraq's conventional forces were the largest in the region.

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between military capabilities and regime intentions. This distinction will be highlighted in the Committee's review of analysis documents later in this section.

C. Agency Level Papers and Current Intelligence Products

(U) Analysts produced hundreds of documents on the Iraqi threat to regional stability and security both at the agency level and at the IC's inter-agency level. The key agency level producers of analysis used for this review were the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR).

(U) Based on the documents provided to the Committee by the IC, analysis of Iraq's threat to regional stability and security at the individual agency level did not show signs of disagreement among analysts about the extent of Saddam Hussein's threat after 1991. The analysis at different agencies, such as the CIA and the DIA, was based heavily on monitoring of the actions and the composition of Iraq's conventional forces. [REDACTED]

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When Iraqi forces deployed from their barracks, they were monitored. When they exchanged artillery fire with Iranian forces or fired anti-aircraft missiles at Coalition aircraft in the No-Fly Zones, the IC was able to monitor what happened. The CIA and the DIA's Defense HUMINT Service also received HUMINT reporting that corroborated or added to intelligence monitoring by technical means.

(U) From 1991 through 2003, the majority of all analysis that was concentrated on the Iraqi threat was either in the category of agency level analysis documents or in the category of shorter Defense Department current intelligence reports, which typically focused on breaking events. Overall, there was a significant amount of overlap in the topics that IC agencies analyzed. For example:

(U) The CIA often focused on WMD and the evolving political-military situation inside Iraq and in the region;

⁵⁹ [REDACTED]

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(U) The DIA often focused on WMD, military capabilities and breaking events, such as violations of the no-fly zones or events related to the Kurds in northern Iraq and the Shia in the south; and,

(U) The INR often focused on the evolving political-military situation and its impact on decision making, for example in resisting (United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) inspections and in relations with other regional states.

D. Key Analysis Topics in Agency Level Documents

(U) The topics in the below table represent the major analytical themes that Committee staff summarized from the IC's agency level analysis covering 1991 until 2003.

Topics	Comments
WMD capabilities	This complex topic appeared often in agency level analysis products and was the focus of coordinated IC-level assessments.
History of aggression & use of WMD in the region	These topics received little analytical emphasis over the entire period of 1991 through 2003, but still appeared to be an important consideration in threat assessment for all IC analysts.
Conventional capabilities	This received significant analytical attention and focused on numerous issues, such as the impacts of UN sanctions and Coalition containment actions on military capabilities.
Provocative actions inside Iraq, against regional states and ethnic groups	Analysts focused heavily on issues that included violations of No-Fly/No-Drive Zones, Kurdish infighting and Iraqi & Iranian support for opposition groups.

Topics	Comments
Provocative actions against regional states	This topic received uneven attention following 1996 and full implementations of Northern & Southern No-Fly and No-Drive zones.
Reaction of neighbors	Analysts periodically assessed attitudes of Iraq's neighbors, indicating their wariness about Iraq and their dependence on U.S. forces as a security guarantor. Analysts also highlighted attempts by neighbors to improve relations with Iraq.

E. Review of IC Level Assessments

(U) As late as 2002, the IC had not produced a coordinated NIE – as it had done with the October 2002 NIE on Iraqi WMD – that summarized the disparate pieces of agency level analysis and made a comprehensive judgment on the level and immediacy of the conventional Iraqi threat. Committee staff had to piece together a picture of how the IC understood the Iraqi threat as depicted in assessments and analyses over the 12-year period.

(U) The IC's understanding of the Iraqi threat to regional stability and security evolved from the end of the first Gulf War in 1991 until early 2003, but the assessments came to the same general conclusions that Saddam Hussein: was unpredictable and aggressive; retained the capability to strike militarily in the region; and, would probably not choose to use force against neighbors as long as U.S. and Coalition forces were in the region. The body of assessments showed that Iraqi military capabilities had steadily degraded following defeat in the first Gulf War in 1991. Analysts also believed those capabilities would continue to erode as long as economic sanctions remained in place.

(U) To illustrate the evolution of thought among IC analysts, Committee staff elected to organize assessments chronologically in an attempt to reconstruct the IC's understanding of the Iraqi threat. Interagency treatment of the Iraqi threat produced approximately 40 coordinated community assessments and NIEs focused narrowly on various topics related to regional stability and security. For example, assessments covered – among many other topics – conventional

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military capabilities, repression of opposition groups and threatening deployments of Iraqi ground forces. Analysts judged that Iraq's conventional military capabilities were significantly diminished after its 1991 expulsion from Kuwait, although they were uncertain about Saddam Hussein's willingness to use his remaining forces against neighbors and Coalition forces.

(U) The Committee grouped IC assessments for organizational convenience and ease of review and reading. But, the grouped documents coincide with significant events related to Iraq. For example:

(U) 1991-1994: This period coincides with the end of the first Gulf War and Saddam Hussein's deployment toward Kuwait in October 1994;

(U) 1995-1998: This period covers Iraq's incursion into Kurdish regions in the north, and the departure of UN weapons inspectors;

(U) 1999-2003: This period includes assessments produced after *Desert Fox* Coalition strike in December 1998 and ends in early 2003 prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom.

(U) To characterize how the IC assessed the broad range of topics related to the Iraqi threat to regional stability and security, the Committee will present key text extracts from a body of IC-level assessments produced from 1991 - 2003.

1. Summary of Assessments 1991 - 1994

(U) This period includes six selected assessments concerning the beginnings of Coalition efforts to contain the defeated Iraq. Analysts believed the critical variables in the assessment of Iraq's threat to the region included the presence of U.S. forces, the capabilities and political will of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the reconstitution of Iraq's military logistics, improvements in the morale and readiness of the Iraqi military, and the absence of economic sanctions. The body of analysis indicates that Iraq would remain effectively constrained as long as measures to control Saddam Hussein remained in place. Analysts also considered scenarios that could confront the U.S. and regional players. They concluded that Iraq would probably attempt to rebuild its military force to prewar levels if allowed.

(U) Analysts also concluded that Iraq's ability to project power was severely diminished by Desert Storm and that UN sanctions impeded Iraq's efforts to reconstitute this capability and prevented him from importing weapons. Analysts assessed that Iraq could conduct only limited

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offensive cross-border operations and that it would have great difficulty supporting forces far from logistic nodes within Iraq. Analysts judged that air defense forces were heavily damaged in Desert Storm and were only slowly recovering. The air force had also lost more than half of its best inventory, and the navy was not capable of conducting operations.⁶⁰

(U) Analysts concluded that Saddam Hussein was unlikely to conduct other offensive operations similar to his invasion of Kuwait because he would have had great difficulty supporting forces far from logistic nodes within Iraq. Analysts assessed that Iraq's military remained one of the largest in the Middle East and retained sufficient capabilities to mount simultaneous operations against the Kurds in the north and Shia in the south. But, the dual impacts of defeat in Kuwait and UN sanctions had impeded Iraq's efforts to reconstitute its conventional capabilities. The IC's confidence in these judgments was tempered by lack of reliable intelligence about Iraqi intentions.

(U) The above summary is based on the following documents. Key text extracts are shown below.

(U) Assessment A – *The Gulf Crisis: Implications of War, A Peaceful Solution, or Stalemate for the Middle East*, Senior National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) 36/39-91, January 1991.

(U) An Iraq whose military power survives under Saddam Husayn or a successor government would be undeterred from its goal of regional supremacy and would pose a threat to moderate Arab States and to Israel While the Gulf countries would expand military cooperation among themselves, they would look to the United States as the ultimate guarantor of their security If Saddam emerged intact from the crisis, his continued political and military clout would be a major concern of moderate regimes.

⁶⁰The IC believed the Iraqi navy retained Seersucker anti-ship missiles that could be used to attack shipping in the Persian Gulf.

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(U) Assessment B – *Iraq's Ground Forces: An Assessment*, (NIC M 91-10003, May 1991).

(U) Iraq's ground forces currently do not constitute a regional threat and are capable only of small-scale offensive operations beyond Iraq's borders. Baghdad's military could pose a threat to Kuwait if all coalition forces and United Nations units were withdrawn Even after the UN embargoes are lifted, however, the devastation inflicted on the Iraqi economy and the drain of reparations make it unlikely that Baghdad would be able to rebuild its ground forces' combat power to prewar levels until the latter half of the decade at the earliest.

(U) Assessment C – *Iraq: Saddam Husayn's Prospects for Survival Over the Next Year*, (SNIE 36.2-91, September 1991).

(U) Iraq will have only limited capabilities to endanger US interests during the next year. Nonetheless, the United States will be challenged to monitor and, if necessary, contain the actions of Saddam's regime, particularly with respect to weapons of mass destruction and treatment of opponents at home and abroad If Saddam remains in power, the United States will face challenges to . . . support Saddam's neighbors who participated in Desert Storm . . . at the same time, manage what are likely to be divergent policies as some regional states fear chronic turmoil in Iraq and may take measures to resume contact with Iraq.

(U) Assessment D – *Saddam Husayn: Likely to Hang On*, (NIE 92-7, June 1992).

(U) Pressure to reestablish normal relations with Iraq and to resume economic ties is likely to build the longer Saddam remains in power. A rearming Iran is a further complication, placing Iraq's Gulf neighbors under cross-pressures to decide which state poses more of a threat to their interests: Iran or Iraq.

(U) Assessment E – *Prospects for Iraq: Saddam and Beyond*, (NIE 93-42, December 1993).

(U) Throughout this Estimate, we assume that Saddam Husayn will not alter his basic domestic and foreign policy goals: to maintain his hold on power by any means necessary, to reimpose full control over the country, to rebuild Iraq's

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military might – including weapons of mass destruction programs – and to make Iraq the dominant regional power Our ability to estimate prospects for Iraq is hindered by the dearth of solid information about the activities and intentions of major players in Iraq.

(U) Assessment F – *Iraqi Military Capabilities through 1999*, (NIE 94-19, July 1994).

(U) Despite an impressive military reconstitution effort under difficult circumstances since Desert Storm, Iraq's armed forces retain critical weaknesses. Baghdad will be unwilling and probably unable to engage in significant military operations outside the country as long as UN sanctions remain in place and working. Iraq's leadership perceives a strong US military capability and commitment to maintaining regional stability; and Iraqi forces are occupied with internal security duties – including countering the Kurds, suppressing the Shia, and protecting Saddam's regime. Nevertheless, Iraq will remain a source of immediate concern and a potential long-term threat to U.S. strategic interest in the Persian Gulf for the rest of this decade. Saddam . . . will hold to the objectives of reasserting Baghdad's authority over all of Iraq, regaining domination of Kuwait, and achieving regional supremacy. A strong military is critical to all these goals.

(U) It is unlikely that Saddam would order the use of unconventional weapons to attack Iraq's neighbors outside of a general war scenario as long as UN weapons monitoring continued. Such attacks would expose Iraq's noncompliance with UN resolutions and would risk the reimposition of economic sanctions.

2. Summary of Assessments 1995 - 1998

(U) This period included eight selected assessments that collectively focus on Iraqi conventional military capabilities, as well as Saddam Hussein's options and intentions for using them to confront U.S. and Coalition forces.⁶¹ Analysts were also uncertain in their judgments about the possibility of Iraqi conventional military attacks on Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. They considered Saddam Hussein's efforts to increase his influence and leverage among regional

⁶¹ (U) The issue of UN sanctions was a key concern in this period, and analysts speculated about Saddam Hussein's maneuvering to force an end to the sanctions.

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neighbors while diminishing the influence of the U.S. against him. Analysts believed that most Arab states in the region favored ending the UN sanctions and improving diplomatic, political and economic ties with Iraq.

(U) The Intelligence Community assessed that Saddam Hussein would create crises over various UN measures. Those crises could have included, for example, suspending the oil-for-goods program, actively encouraging "sanctions-busting" with other countries, withdrawing from the UN or intervening in Northern Iraq to press for a settlement among Kurdish factions.

(U) Analysts believed other actions could have included resisting Coalition forces in the no-fly zones and moving militarily in the south—including moving forces to the Kuwait border or an attack on Israel. But it concluded that Iraq would probably decide that the costs of such actions would outweigh any gains.⁶²

(U) The above summary is based on the following documents. Key text extracts are shown below.

(U) Assessment G – *Iraqi Military Capabilities through 1999*, (U/M NIE 94-19, January 1995). This assessment states:

(U) Because Saddam has not altered his fundamental goals, Iraq remains an immediate source of concern and a long-term threat to U.S. strategic interests in the Persian Gulf.

(U) The State Department's INR, though, stated in the same document that:

(U) . . . it is impossible to predict with confidence whether Saddam will choose confrontation or opt for a period of quiescence and cooperation sufficient to obtain an easing of sanctions by the end of 1995.

(U) Later in the same document, military intelligence analysts stated that:

⁶²(U) One assessment, in particular, was notable for the range of speculation in the IC about Saddam's intentions related to ending UN sanctions. At the time, the IC was reacting to the late 1994 move of Iraqi forces toward Kuwait and was unwilling to rule out any surprises from Saddam. See Assessment G, *infra*.

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(U) The military intelligence community believes Iraq has at least some chance of quickly mounting a multi-division attack that could successfully penetrate deep enough into Saudi Arabia to damage oil facilities in the Al JubayalDhahran area The force would strike a political and economic blow against the [Gulf Cooperation Council] and the West.

(U) Given Saddam's record of unpredictability, no agency is willing to completely rule out his attempting another high-risk military confrontation. On the other hand, no agency disputes the evidence presented in [a previous] NIE and in this Update Memorandum regarding Iraq's severe military shortfalls.

(U) Finally, military intelligence analysts agreed with State Department analysts that Baghdad probably would pursue a more cooperative diplomatic policy in the near term in an effort to get relief from UN sanctions. They pointed out, however, that as the pressure on Saddam continued to mount, he was more likely to resort to confrontation. To add a final caveat to their analysis, the military analysts noted that: "It is important to distinguish between perceptions of Saddam's intentions – about which we are always uncertain – and Iraqi capabilities."

(U) Assessment H – *Iraq: Likelihood of Renewed Confrontation*, (SE 95-8, 27 June 1995).

(U) While confronting the United States directly seems less likely, Saddam's aggressive actions last October underscore his unpredictability and his proclivity for dramatic and rash behavior. Options against the United States include: launching terrorist attacks against US (and UN) personnel in northern Iraq; taking tougher military action against the Kurds in northern Iraq; moving Iraqi troops south of the 32nd parallel; challenging the no-fly zones or trying to shoot down US aircraft, including a U-2 reconnaissance jet.

(U) Assessment I – *A More Confrontational Saddam? – Iraqi Intentions and Options*, (NICM 95-33, 02 November 1995).

(U) The August defections [of Saddam's sons-in-law] and Baghdad's subsequent revelations about its weapons-of-mass-destruction programs have set back Saddam's hopes for sanctions relief, but Iraqi expectations for relief probably will rise again as of January 1996. If Saddam decides he can wait no longer, his

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options range from accepting UNSCR 986 [oil for food/medicine exchange] to creating a crisis by acting against UNSCOM, the Kurds, coalition forces, or Kuwait Iraq has taken a number of steps to improve military readiness and performance in recent months, but on balance these measures afford no more than marginal improvements in capabilities due to the ongoing deleterious effects of sanctions We assess that, as long as sanctions remain in force, the capabilities of the Iraqi military will continue to gradually, but steadily, decline. Over the longer term, if sanctions were eased and leadership improvements sustained, Saddam's forces could improve markedly.

(U) . . . Short of a large, standing coalition military presence with significant U.S. participation, there is no guarantee that Saddam Husayn can be deterred from considering or employing military force if he believes it would ultimately be to his benefit.

(U) Assessment J – *Iraq: Refurbished Equipment South of 32 Degrees*, (NICM 95-37, 30 November 1995).

(U) Iraq's recent campaign to repair military equipment, and the movement of some of that equipment south of the 32nd parallel, only marginally improves Iraq's overall military capabilities and its ability to threaten Kuwait . . . based on deployment patterns, the regime appears to be trying to improve its internal security capabilities in the south.

(U) Assessment K – *Iraq: Regime Prospects for 1997*, (ICB 96-3C, 31 December 1996).

(U) Some governments interpret the return of Iraqi oil to the world market as a signal that Iraq is emerging from its isolation and that a crack in sanctions is emerging Some Arab states, such as Syria and Oman, are beginning to call for Iraq's reintegration into the Arab fold. Baghdad's relations with Ankara have improved considerably, with border traffic at the highest level since 1990 Baghdad has utilized Resolution 986 contracts to boost influence with Jordan and Turkey, especially useful as Saddam attempts to rebuild relations with Amman following the Husayn Kamil debacle and to secure Ankara's support on northern Iraq.

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(U) . . . Although UN sanctions alone probably are not sufficient to bring down the regime, their maintenance is key to keeping pressure on Saddam and frustrating his ambitions for regional hegemony. For now, all Security Council members agree that sanctions cannot be altered until UNSCOM certifies that Baghdad has eliminated all traces of its WMD programs.

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(U) Assessment M – *US Position Eroding Sharply in the Middle East*, (NIC 1783-98, 20 March 1998).

(U) A conviction among Arabs that the threat from Saddam has already been contained and a widespread belief that the United States is responsible for the suffering of the Iraqi populace have made the US show of force especially unwelcome. The pro-Saddam aspect of rioting last month in Jordan and the West Bank, anti-US demonstrations in Egypt, and nearly unanimous Arab refusal to support US military operations against Iraq underscore growing regional opposition to US policies.

(U) Assessment N – *Iraq: Prospects for Confrontation*, (ICB 98-21, 17 July 1998).

(U) We assess that Saddam has three primary, and interrelated, goals: maintaining power, having sanctions lifted as soon as possible, and, over the long term, reasserting Iraq's regional dominance.

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(U) . . . He is determined to retain elements of his WMD programs so that he will be able to intimidate Iraq's neighbors and deter potential adversaries, such as Iran, Israel, and the United States . . . We lack specific intelligence information on many issues pertaining to Baghdad's strategic thinking. Much of our analysis, therefore, is based on past patterns of Iraqi behavior.

3. Summary of Assessments 1999 - 2003

(U) This period included seven selected assessments that focused on the condition of Iraqi conventional military forces and Saddam Hussein's possible calculus for launching a conventional attack against U.S. forces or his neighbors in the region. Additionally, this period includes an assessment of neighboring nations' perceptions of and relations with Iraq. Analysts concluded that Saddam Hussein's conventional forces were in poor condition and continued to degrade under the effects of economic sanctions. They believed that Saddam would not choose to risk a confrontation in the region because of the presence of U.S. forces. Analysts also pointed out their lack of certainty about Saddam's intentions to use force, citing poor HUMINT reporting.

(U) The IC assessed that Saddam's determination to compel an end to sanctions could lead to an attack on Kuwait. It also noted that the condition of all Iraqi military branches was poor. For example, the air force showed dramatic erosion, and analysts believed they detected weaknesses in the air defense forces.⁶³ Analysts judged that Iraqi naval forces were incapable of defending Iraq, but that they could potentially damage – even sink ships – with a residual Seersucker missile force. Finally, ground forces, though degraded, were the most capable of all branches of the military.

(U) The above summary is based on the following documents. Key text extracts are shown below.

(U) Assessment O – *Iraq: Saddam's Next Moves*, (SOCM 99-4, 2 March 1999).

(U) The risk is increasing that Saddam Husayn will act impulsively to score a victory – at least a symbolic one – against his enemies, to regain initiative and

⁶³Coalition aircraft considered Iraqi air defense systems a threat to No-Fly Zone patrols. They frequently took defensive actions against ground fire and attacked Iraqi forces in response.

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attention, and to spur Iraq's supporters to act more forcefully on his behalf
In addition, Iraqi frustration is mounting over unmet demands for lifting UN
sanctions and uncertainty over the outcome of UN review panels.

(U) . . . Iraq's actions and various intelligence reports suggest Saddam is
contemplating the use of terrorism in and beyond the region, sabotage and
subversive activities in Kuwait and/or Saudi Arabia, and limited military strikes
against these states and regionally-based US forces.

(U) . . . Baghdad's request that UN Panel Chairman Amorim visit Iraq in his
ambassadorial capacity shows that Saddam has not abandoned diplomacy and
suggests he will await the UN panel results . . . before he decides whether to
temporarily pull back from confrontation or to raise the ante. Saddam's options
for escalating the crisis with the United States would invite devastating retaliation,
a consideration that in the past has led him to settle for tactical political gains in
lieu of a strategic breakthrough on UN sanctions.

([REDACTED]) Assessment P – *Iraqi Military Capabilities through 2003* (NIE 99-04/II, April
1999).⁶⁴ Concerning the quality of intelligence the IC collected and used for its assessments of
the Iraqi threat, analysts stated that the value of HUMINT reporting lagged behind technically
collected intelligence, [REDACTED]. For example,
the IC assessments were strongest and most credible when focused narrowly on conventional
military capabilities. The IC used several [REDACTED] collection methods to monitor key Iraqi
indicators [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

([REDACTED]) [REDACTED]

⁶⁴(U) According to NIC comments in a document delivered to SSCI staff on January 23 2004, the views in
this assessment were "generally held by the IC until well into 2002 with some views carried over into [an NIE
entitled *Saddam's Military Preparations for War: Intentions and Capabilities*, NIE 2002-17HC, October 2002].
Committee staff did not include this NIE in its review because the title presupposes regional instability based on
potential war with Iraq at some point after October 2002.

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(U) The same report, however, noted that HUMINT reporting was the least reliable source of information on the status and intentions of the Iraqi military. For instance, the IC had assessed in August 1996 that HUMINT reporting was incorrect about Saddam Hussein's intentions prior to his deployment of military forces toward Irbil from their garrisons. Those forces eventually attacked the Kurds. Analysts also concluded that HUMINT reporting concerning the movements of the Republican Guard Forces in southern Iraq or near Kuwait from the mid-to-late 1990s was unreliable.

(U) Reading Saddam's intentions is difficult. He can be impulsive and deceptive; critical factors important in shaping his behavior are largely hidden from us But there are two fundamental guideposts that drive our calculus of his actions. First, we judge that Saddam would be careful not to place his regime's survival at risk. Second, he probably believes that a re-invasion of Kuwait would provoke a Coalition response that could threaten to destroy his regime.

(U) Iraq's military capabilities have deteriorated significantly as a result of UN sanctions and damage inflicted by Coalition and US military operations. Its military forces are even less well prepared for major combat operations than we judged in the National Intelligence Estimate . . . of July 1994 and in an Update Memorandum published in January 1995 They remain more capable than those of regional Arab states, but could not gain a decisive military advantage over Iran's forces Iraq's military capabilities will continue a slow and steady decline as long as both economic sanctions and the arms embargo are maintained. Smuggling and other efforts to circumvent the embargo will be inadequate to halt the trend Saddam probably realizes that a reinvasion of Kuwait is now more likely to provoke a Coalition military response that could destroy his regime.

(U) . . . Saddam might conclude that an invasion of Kuwait, however risky, was the only hope of averting disaster. By threatening or actually unleashing a major military attack against Kuwait, most likely accompanied by threats to use weapons of mass destruction, Saddam might believe he could bargain for full sanctions relief in exchange for an Iraqi pullback or an agreement to stand down his forces We judge that Saddam continues to believe that Iraq needs WMD and long-range missiles to: 1) counter Israeli and Iranian capabilities. . . ; 2) deter military attacks, including by Coalition forces; 3) achieve regional preeminence.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) The assessment continues with the statement that since the 1994 NIE:

(U) . . . Saddam's belief is likely to have been reinforced by advances in WMD and missile capabilities by Iran, Pakistan, India and other countries.

(U) Assessment Q – *Stability of the Iraqi Regime: Significant Vulnerabilities Offset by Repression*, (ICA 2002-02HC, April 2002).

(U) We judge that Iraqi military morale and battlefield cohesion are more fragile today than in 1991. Reporting since the 11 September attacks on the United States suggests that Saddam's regime is increasingly concerned about the military's willingness to fight.

([REDACTED]) Assessment R – *Iraq: Evaluation of Documents Provided by the Iraqi National Congress*, (NIC 1770-02, 09 August 2002). The limitations of the HUMINT available to the IC were addressed again in a 2002 NIC document that evaluated a stream of HUMINT reporting from the Iraqi National Congress (INC). According to the NIC, the IC reviewed the 300 pages of documentation that the INC provided in 2002. The IC believed the INC used a variety of its own members, its clandestine agents and other contacts to prepare the materials for the U.S. However, similar to other cases in which HUMINT from various [REDACTED] sources was deficient, the INC's HUMINT was also of limited value.

(U) The written material provided to the [IC] by the [INC] contains little of current intelligence value. Overall, the order of battle information throughout the documents was generally accurate—matching existing IC holdings that are based on all-source reporting. In some significant areas that information, although correct, is out of date and no longer useful The intelligence value of almost all the data provided by the INC is diminished by our inability to assess the origin and authenticity of the documents

(U) . . . The order of battle data provided for the Republican Guard, Iraq's most important military service, is four years out of date. The data provided reflects information prior to a 1998 rotation of units. There are also several errors in the numbered brigades and the documents place several division headquarters in the wrong locations The documents mis-identify the structure and equipment holdings of key Republican Guard divisions

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Assessment S – *Regional Consequences of Regime Change in Iraq*, (ICA 2003-03, January 2003). Analysts considered influences at work on Iraq's most important regional neighbors. The report indicated that by early 2003 Saddam had succeeded in reestablishing a web of relationships in the region based on commercial interests and sympathy for the Iraqi people, whom regional states perceived as suffering under economic sanctions. IC analysts believed that Arabs would draw a distinction:

(U) . . . between a reversal of Iraqi aggression against another Arab state and a war initiated by the United States . . . 12 years of sanctions against Iraq have reinforced perceptions that Washington is anti-Arab Unlike in 1991, when key Arab states including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Syria openly supported military action to expel Saddam from Kuwait, none of these states is calling for or willing to directly participate in a U.S.-led attack against Baghdad.

(U) Assessment T – *Principal Challenges in Post-Saddam Iraq*, (ICA 2003-04, January 2003). The IC defined the negative impact on regional stability and security from Iraq under Saddam as “a major cause of regional instability and enmity by twice launching wars of aggression against his neighbors” Conversely, the removal of Saddam would:

(U) . . . offer the prospect of enhancing and stabilizing Iraq's relations with other states in the region A [new] government in Baghdad also would attempt to build on the relatively stable modus vivendi that Saddam has achieved with his neighbors over the past 10 years.

(U) Assessment U – *Key Warning Concerns for 2003*, (ICA 2003-05, January 2003).

(U) Saddam probably will not initiate hostilities for fear of providing Washington with justification to invade Iraq. Nevertheless, he might deal the first blow, especially if he perceives that an attack intended to end his regime is imminent.

[REDACTED]

(U) Conclusion 108. Subject to the limitations described in conclusions 106 and 107, the Intelligence Community (IC) objectively assessed a diverse body of intelligence regarding Saddam Hussein's threat to regional stability and security, producing a wide range of high quality analytical documents on various topics. The IC's judgments about Iraq's military capabilities were reasonable and balanced, based on three factors: the size and capabilities of its military forces in relation to neighboring countries; its history of aggressive behavior prior to the first Gulf War; and, its patterns of behavior between 1991 and 2003.

(U) [REDACTED]

(U) Conclusion 109. The Intelligence Community should have produced a National Intelligence Estimate-level assessment of the overall threat posed by Iraq in the region prior to the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Such a document would have outlined – in one place and in a systematic fashion – the complete range of factors comprising Iraq's threat to regional stability and security.

(U) [REDACTED]

(U) [REDACTED]

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