

[Redacted]

Central Intelligence Agency

DATE 10/17/86 File

DOC NO LDA M 86-20017

OIR 3

P & PD 1



Washington, D.C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

**Iraq's Taha Yasin Ramadan:
Potential Successor to the President** [Redacted]

25X1

Summary

First Deputy Prime Minister Taha Yasin Ramadan is the Revolutionary Command Council member who we believe can run Iraq in wartime and preserve Ba'th Party rule should President Saddam Husayn leave the scene unexpectedly. He has the respect of senior Ba'thists, a broad network of loyalists in the government, important support in the military, and proven managerial talent. His personality is well suited to Iraq's authoritarian political system. As president, Ramadan would probably continue moderate, pro-Western trends in Iraqi policy, including expansion of US-Iraqi economic ties, although he would maintain relations with the USSR. He would also improve the country's military performance against Iran by allowing senior officers a freer hand in operations, and he might work toward reconciliation with Syria. [Redacted]

25X1

This memorandum was prepared by [Redacted] Office of Leadership Analysis. Information available as of 14 October 1986 was used in its preparation. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, South Asia/Persian Gulf Branch, LDA, [Redacted]

25X1

25X1

LDA M 86-20017

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

25X1

25X1

Secret

25X1

Although Saddam Husayn sets overall policy in Iraq, most decisions arise from collegial debates within the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), the country's highest policymaking body. We know [redacted] that few decisions are made without significant input from First Deputy Prime Minister Taha Yasin Ramadan. Ramadan, who is Iraq's "economic czar," has the most influential voice in economic debates; moreover, he formulates the national economic plan and ensures its implementation by overseeing the economic ministries. Ruthless and fearless, he seems to have emerged from Iraq's turbulent politics relatively unscathed and with an extensive network of supporters in the party, the government, and, to a lesser extent, the military. [redacted]

25X1

25X1

The assassination of President Saddam is currently the most likely scenario for a leadership change in Iraq. Despite Saddam's tight political control and extensive private guard, there have already been numerous attempts on his life, [redacted] Continued military and economic reversals would increase the likelihood of assassination. [redacted]

25X1
25X1

We believe that, should an assassination attempt succeed, the succession process would be peaceful. The Constitution requires the election of a new president by the Revolutionary Command Council within seven days of a vacancy. Although constitutional procedures have not always been followed, a violent succession is unlikely, given the Ba'th Party's pervasive control. The RCC has held ultimate authority since the Ba'th regime took power in 1968, and Ba'thists view its decisions as legitimate. Iraqi leaders probably also realize that a succession crisis in the current wartime environment would leave Iraq vulnerable to Iran. [redacted]

25X1

Ramadan as Party Man

Ramadan has built his support in the ruling Ba'th Party through his participation in its early struggles and his rise within its ranks. A member since at least 1958, he was elected to the party's highest body, the Regional Command, in 1966, while the party was still underground. Two years later, he participated in the coup that brought the regime to power, further establishing his reputation as a key Ba'th leader. In 1969 then President Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr appointed Ramadan, his protege, to the newly formed RCC, of which Saddam became Vice Chairman. [redacted]

25X1

Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, Ramadan's responsibilities increased. As director of the Military Bureau during 1969-70, he was charged with ensuring loyalty by controlling appointments, transfers, retirements, and promotions. As head of the

Secret

25X1

Secret

[Redacted]

25X1

Baghdad Branch Command in the early 1970s, he influenced critical appointments and activities in the capital, [Redacted] In addition, he has commanded the Popular Army, the party's militia, since 1975. Although the Popular Army is carefully monitored by Saddam loyalists and its aging recruits have performed poorly against Iran, support from Ba'thists in the militia would marginally augment Ramadan's endorsement as a potential successor. [Redacted]

25X1

25X1

Ramadan as Political Operator

In addition to his party following, Ramadan can draw on extensive contacts and personal connections made during his 15 years in government. By ensuring the implementation of his directives, his bureaucratic network enabled him to continue to develop the economy in the early years of the war and, more recently, to avert economic collapse. Ramadan's team would help him and the RCC minimize disruptions associated with succession, a critical consideration given Iraq's poor military and economic situation. [Redacted]

25X1

25X1

As Minister of Industry and Acting Minister of Planning in the early and mid-1970s, Ramadan filled his departments with his loyalists, many of whom still hold government positions. The current Minister of Industry is his protege, according to Embassy officials. As chairman of the powerful Foreign Economic Relations Committee since 1979, Ramadan carefully monitors the Ministry of Trade. He frequently sends his subordinates to important trade negotiations with foreign leaders, undercutting some of the authority of the Trade Minister, a senior RCC member and longtime Saddam associate. [Redacted]

25X1

Several well-placed or high-ranking government officials and military officers come from Ramadan's hometown of Mosul. The Ministers of Oil and Finance are Mosul natives (Moslawis) who enjoy his patronage, say Embassy officers. These officials also note that in 1983 Ramadan engineered the Finance Minister's appointment. Ramadan would probably enjoy the support of senior Moslawi military officials such as the Armed Forces Chief of Staff, the Minister of State for Military Affairs, and the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations. [Redacted]

25X1

25X1

Ramadan as Manager

Ramadan's organizational talents and success in managing the economy are also likely to influence the RCC's consideration of him as a succession candidate. Given the recent military and economic reversals suffered by the regime, we think he could appear indispensable to the RCC.

Secret

[Redacted]

25X1

Secret

25X1

- In his economic management positions during the 1970s, he was instrumental in channeling increased oil revenues into economic development programs that largely succeeded in raising living standards and, therefore, his stock in the party and government.
- He has kept Iraq's economy afloat despite heavy wartime expenditures. In 1983, to stabilize the economy, he successfully managed a huge deflation, reducing imports by about 50 percent, according to US officials.
- He has presided over the soon-to-be-completed upgrading of Iraq's oil export capacity to compensate for revenues lost by closure of the Iraq-Syria pipeline and two key export terminals on the Persian Gulf and by falling oil prices,

[Redacted]

25X1

Underscoring the respect accorded Ramadan in economic issues, party leaders recently persuaded Saddam to return to him the economic decision making authority Saddam had assumed from him early this year. Since then, Ramadan has improved Iraq's economic position by rescheduling accumulated debt, extracting large financial aid pledges from Iraq's Arab allies, and formulating the delayed 1986 budget, which slashed imports and cut waste, according to Embassy officers. [Redacted]

25X1

Ramadan the Man

Ramadan, who is about 48, is well suited to the turbulent politics of Ba'thist Iraq. US diplomats say he is ruthless, incorruptible, and fearless. The tough Ba'th system rewards such qualities; any leader perceived as soft could easily lose his grip on the party and, in turn, jeopardize the party's grip on power. Action oriented, Ramadan is extremely demanding of his subordinates. He has refused to use his position to shelter family and friends from military service. Despite his lack of charisma and dour demeanor, Ramadan is the most publicized Iraqi next to Saddam and therefore a familiar authority figure. He is also the only RCC member willing to stand up to Saddam. As a protest of Saddam's increased involvement in economic policy earlier this year, he initiated his "work to rule" campaign, refusing to implement economic decisions without specific orders and thereby slowing the economy, say Embassy officers. [Redacted]

25X1

Hurdles Ramadan May Face

Although we believe Ramadan's assets make him the probable successor to Saddam, he faces several obstacles. He has powerful rivals, including Saddam. Tensions between the two began in 1969 when then President Bakr, Saddam's rival, appointed Ramadan to the newly formed RCC. [Redacted]

25X1

[Redacted]

25X1

[Redacted] In 1984 Ramadan refused to attend Saddam's lavish birthday celebration, believing that it glorified Saddam at the expense of the party, according to the Embassy. Embassy officers believe

25X1

Secret

25X1

Secret

25X1

Saddam holds Ramadan responsible for encouraging the RCC in early July 1986 to challenge the President's centralization of authority. These recurring tensions--coupled with Ramadan's powerful position--have led some US diplomats to speculate that Saddam may again try to undercut his authority by delegating some of his responsibilities to other RCC members. [redacted]

25X1

There is a possibility that Ramadan would fail to win the RCC's endorsement. Fearing his toughness, some of its members may suspect that he would purge any among them he considers disloyal--and most owe their positions to Saddam. Should their fears carry the day, RCC members would probably select an interim candidate, such as the ill and weak Vice Chairman Izzat Ibrahim, whom they believe they can manipulate. Although our knowledge of internal RCC politics is limited, we think these apprehensions are misplaced, at least in the near term. [redacted] the RCC is a highly collegial body; all its members, including Ramadan, have worked together successfully throughout Saddam's presidency and probably realize that infighting could end Ba'th Party rule as it did in 1963. [redacted]

25X1

25X1

Members of Saddam's extended Tikriti family (natives of Tikrit), who hold key positions in the military and security services, would probably resent Ramadan's selection. They dislike him and view him as an outsider who does not depend on them for support, [redacted] However, Embassy officers report that the Tikriti clan does not form a cohesive power bloc and probably could not unite to thwart his succession. Nevertheless, clan members would probably resist efforts to reduce their control over the military and security apparatus. [redacted]

25X1

25X1

Implications

Ramadan's undisputed, RCC-endorsed succession to the presidency would not have an immediate major impact on Iraq's policies. A product and a victim of the consensual decisionmaking process of the RCC, Ramadan probably would not deviate from its policy endorsements--at least initially--and would continue to fight Iran, whose leaders have demanded the removal of the Ba'th regime as a precondition for ending the war. In the longer term, however, to solidify his control of the country and place his own stamp on policy, he would probably:

- Promote his loyalists to key positions.
- Continue to expand the US-Iraqi relationship, especially in high technology. He and his technocratic staff realize that US trade is vital to Iraq's healthy economic performance and development, say Embassy officers. They add that, in keeping with a general improvement in US-Iraqi relations, his attitude toward the United States has warmed markedly over the past two years.
- Preserve Iraq's ties to the USSR. He needs Soviet military equipment to continue the war with Iran. In addition, his experience in the Ba'th Party and in managing a centrally planned economy has undoubtedly caused him to identify with the Soviet system, which is the model for both.


Secret

25X1

Secret

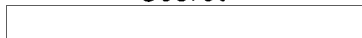


25X1

- Improve military performance by allowing field commanders a freer hand in the planning and execution of operations. According to the Embassy, military officers think that Saddam's micromanagement hampers their ability to defend Iraq. To win their support, Ramadan, who never advanced beyond the rank of captain and does not pretend to possess tactical expertise, would have to allow them more authority. Nevertheless, we do not expect him to delegate overall military decision making authority to senior officers or to shift to a predominantly offensive strategy. Like Saddam, he probably fears potential coup plotting by an overly independent military and the political costs of increased battlefield casualties.
- Increase the prospects for Iraqi-Syrian reconciliation. A large part of the rift between the two countries is due to enmity between Saddam and Syrian President Hafiz al-Assad, say US officials. Ramadan might be more forthcoming in negotiations with Syria if he believed that he could persuade Assad to decrease his support for Iran. 

25X1

Secret



25X1

[Redacted]

25X1

SUBJECT: IRAQ'S TAHA YASIN RAMADAN
POTENTIAL SUCCESSOR TO THE PRESIDENT [Redacted]

25X1

LDA M 86-20017
DISTRIBUTION:

EXTERNAL:

- 1-Howard Teicher, NSC
- 1-Dennis Ross, NSC
- 1-Ronald St. Martin, NSC
- 1-Morton Abramowitz, STATE
- 1-Richard Murphy, STATE
- 1-Marion Creekmore, STATE
- 1-George Harris, STATE
- 1-Peter Burleigh, STATE
- 1-Greg Berry, STATE
- 1-Richard Armitage, ISA
- 1-Robert H. Pelletreau, ISA
- 1-Roger Pajak, TREASURY
- 1-James Kelly, COMMERCE

[Redacted]

25X1

INTERNAL

- 1-DIR/DCI/DDCI/EXEC STAFF
- 1-DDI
- 1-NIO/NESA
- 1-DDO/NE [Redacted]
- 1-C/NID
- 1-C/PDB
- 6-CPAS/IMD/CB
- 1-D/NESA
- 1-DD/NESA
- 2-PPS/NESA
- 1-C/NESA/AI
- 1-C/NESA/IA
- 1-C/NESA/SO
- 1-C/NESA/PG
- 1-C/NESA/PG/I
- 1-D/LDA
- 1-C/AN/LDA
- 1-C/LE/LDA
- 1-C/UE/LDA
- 1-C/RS/LDA
- 1-C/PPD
- 1-OIR/OSD
- 1-C/VIP
- 1-C/PSB/RS/LDA
- 1-[Redacted] LDA/AN/SAPG

25X1

25X1

[Redacted]

25X1