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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

SPOT COMMENTARY

CIA/DI

SPCOM-SR-91-667

17 March 1991
1500 EST

IRAQ-KUWAIT: SITUATION REPORT #667

Shia Holy Sites Damaged in Karbala

[REDACTED] the Shia shrines in Karbala have been damaged in the fighting between forces loyal to the regime and opposition elements. [REDACTED]

Comment: The damage to the shrines is likely to provoke harsh condemnation from Shias in Iraq and abroad. Both sides of the fighting almost certainly will blame the other for the damage to the shrines, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] regime forces have used tanks, artillery, mortars, and helicopter gunships in their assault on the city, but the rebels also have mortars and possibly some tanks and light artillery pieces. [REDACTED]

Iran is likely to intensify its calls for the resignation of Saddam Husayn and may become more actively involved in the unrest. Tehran has publicly warned Baghdad to avoid damaging the shrines, two of the holiest sites of Shia Islam. If Iran decides to respond with more than rhetoric, it may announce that it will allow "volunteers" from the Revolutionary Guard to join the Iraqi resistance. Tehran probably will refrain from outright intervention in Iraq because it probably will not want to risk an accidental clash with coalition forces in southern Iraq. [REDACTED]

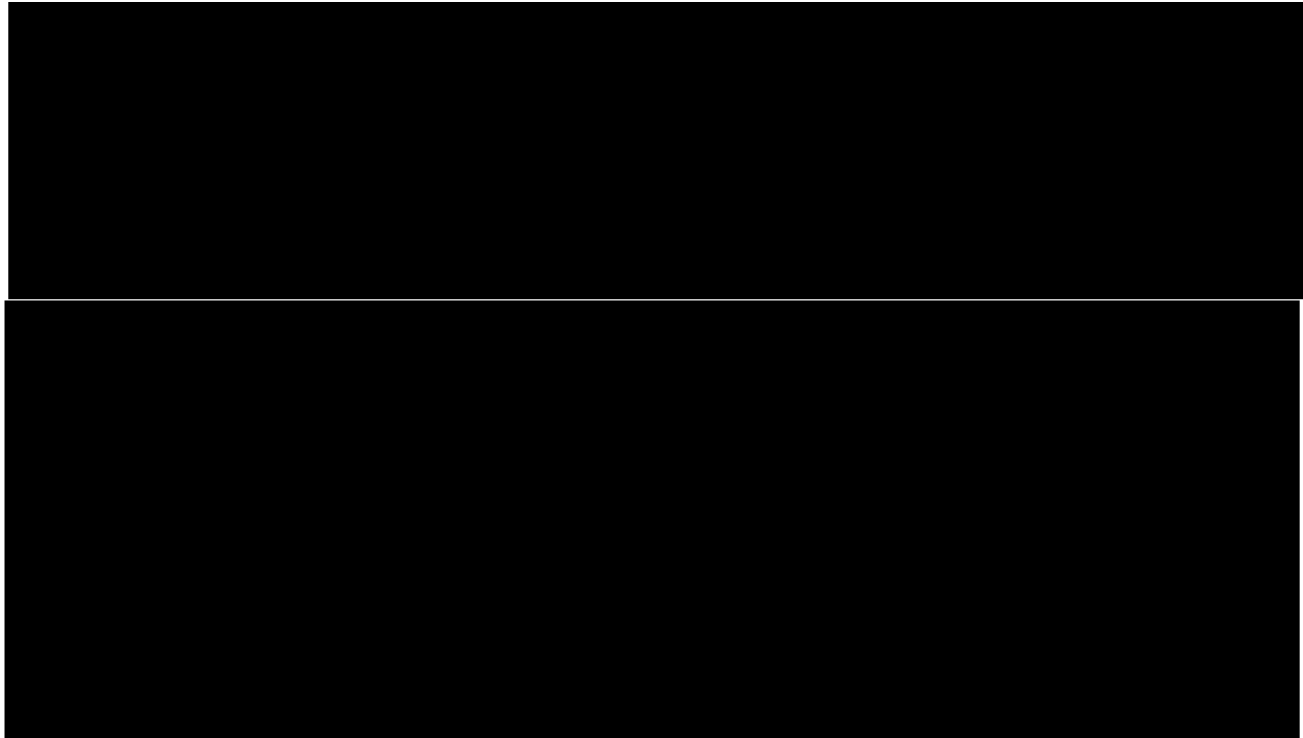
Fighting Intensifies in Kurdistan

Fighting between insurgents and regime forces has heated up around Kirkuk, [REDACTED] A small rebel force assaulted the city yesterday, [REDACTED]

Prepared by: [REDACTED]

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Reactions to Saddam's Speech

Damascus' domestic service today reacted to Saddam Husayn's 16 March speech with harsh criticism for the Iraqi leader. The commentary chastised Saddam for lacking the courage to take responsibility for Iraq's current predicament and accused him of planning new "massacres" against his people. Describing Saddam as "out of touch", the commentary applauded Iraqi citizens for turning against their leader. ■

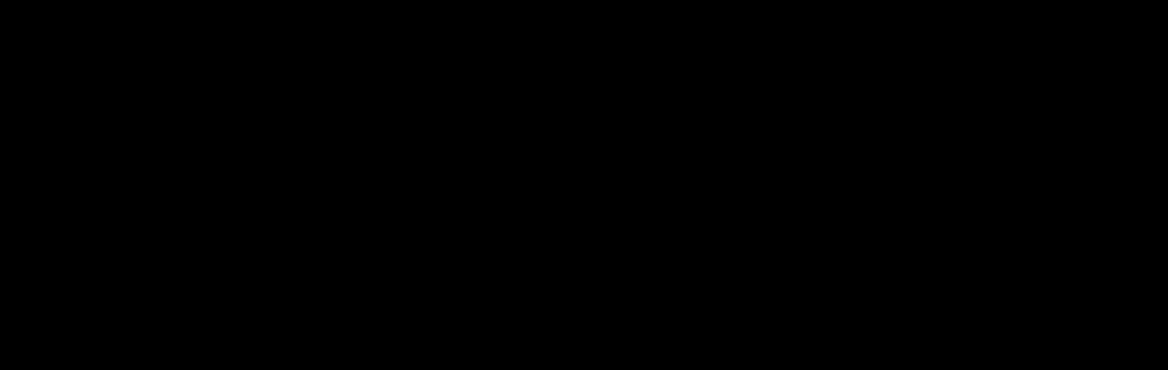
A similar message was carried on a clandestine radio station calling itself the "Voice of Rebellious Iraq." Characterizing Saddam as a tyrant, the commentator noted that despite government efforts to cover up the popular uprising in Iraq, Saddam's comments yesterday were the first acknowledgement ever of the existence of the popular revolt against him. ■

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