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(b)(3)

Iraq: South Especially Vulnerable to Humanitarian Crisis

Iraq: Confluence of Factors Contribute to Humanitarian Crisis in South

Poverty and inadequate food distribution put the 8.5 million predominantly Shia Iraqis in the south at particular risk in the event of hostilities, with the displaced being the most susceptible to immediate food insecurity.

- December rations probably will last until late next month,

In the Kurdish-controlled north, that access to food, education, and health care is acceptable, and that the child malnutrition rate of 11 percent is about one-half the rate in the south. In central Iraq, most of the elite--particularly those associated with Saddam's regime--live around Baghdad and have access to services.

The southern Shia have long been a target of Saddam's wrath, and an Iraqi-induced catastrophe against advancing US forces in the south--such as CBW use, oil well fires, or destruction of dams--would add to humanitarian problems. A suggests that Baghdad is planting explosives next to oil wells, and Iraq's contingency plans to release floodwaters from the Al Qadisiyah, Tharthar, and Razazah reservoirs--presently at low levels--could displace Iraqis in Karbala, An Najaf, As Samawah, and An Nasiriyah if water levels rise significantly,

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