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Director of Central Intelligence

DCI Red Cell

A Red Cell Report

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In response to the events of 11 September, the Director of Central Intelligence commissioned CIA's Deputy Director for Intelligence to create a "red cell" that would think unconventionally about the full range of relevant analytic issues. The DCI Red Cell is thus charged with taking a pronounced "out-of-the-box" approach and will periodically produce memoranda and reports intended to provoke thought rather than to provide authoritative assessment. Please direct questions or comments to the DCI Red Cell at [redacted]

How Saddam Might Draw Out a WMD-less Fight [redacted]

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Even in the face of widespread defections, Saddam may believe he can prolong a conflict—without using WMD—by shaping the battleground and retreating to the cities with a small number of Special Republican Guard personnel with nothing to lose and determined to make the US face what the Russians faced in Grozny. In developing such a strategy, Saddam can draw on lessons from his Iran-Iraq and Gulf wars, US and Western doctrine since the early 1990s, and Russian defeats at the hands of the Chechens. Several preemptive and real-time approaches might mitigate a Saddam plan to wage a "hyper-conventionalized" fight. [redacted]

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The Red Cell [redacted] offers a speculative assessment of how Saddam might protract the struggle and up its costs—without using WMD. [redacted]

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Could Saddam Be Thinking Outside his WMD Box? [redacted]

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We see three strategic premises that might guide Saddam's thinking about an avant garde, non-WMD war with the US and its Allies:

- **Saddam as Needle in Iraqi Haystack:** Saddam may see advantages in US angst over Usama Bin Ladin's inconclusive fate and from this sense an American allergy to any Iraq campaign that falls short of physically collaring him. In a calculation in which Saddam sees himself as his own best bait, he may script a fight that beckons the US to put boots on the ground whose mission is as much a "Saddam ghost hunt" as defeat of Iraqi military and security forces. (b)(3)
- **America's Grozny.** Saddam realistically recognizes US air supremacy and reckons that a mainstay of the Allied campaign will come from above. So, too, it is likely he sees Beirut, Mogadishu, and Mazar-e Sharif as evidence of Western reluctance to take on a ground battle in urban environs; as such, Saddam probably sees the Taliban's self exile from Afghan cities as a strategic blunder. Given his links to Arab terrorists and Russian military veterans, he may also find compelling urban-warfare lessons from Chechen tactics used in the First and Second Battles for Grozny.
- **Stewardship of the Battlescape:** Iraq successfully engineered its military landscape throughout the 1980s and 90s, whether in fighting with Iran, northern Kurds, or Shia marsh Arabs in the south. Baghdad adroitly flooded or drained vast expanses; built large-area earthen works; trenched and filled open areas to control insurgent habitat, attackers' avenues of approach, and cover and concealment; and bulldozed urban areas to open fields of fire and maneuver for loyal forces. (S//REL)

Saddam may also have convinced himself that once US ground forces enter Iraq, the US will be in a battleground he has had years to groom and on his terms. Saddam does have the potential advantage of learning from Taliban mistakes. [redacted]

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Even with robust defections among Iraqi troops, Saddam might believe he can call on elite units, who, like Hitler's SS, will fight to the death because they believe their fate is sealed. Taking advantage of a skilled combat engineering corps and then coiling residual forces in cities and applying ruthless tactics, Saddam (like Hitler) may convince himself he can prolong the fight and make the price of engagement so dear as to fracture the coalition against him and face the US with irresistible pressure to bargain with a battered but fundamentally unbowed dictator.

- Saddam might not need to personally hole up in a city. He might think he can keep vestigial command and control of some forces whilst on the lam, using US preoccupation with him to orchestrate Elvis-like sightings that are sufficiently enticing to draw a risky investiture of his cities if only to negate allegations of his presence.

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Taking it to the Streets, Groznyy Style

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Even decimated units retreating to city fighting—more likely, elite units held back from exposure to US power—could be exhorted to toe the line by coercion and propaganda built on claims of American unwillingness to take casualties in street fighting and fortified with shots of “successes” such as those Chechens enjoyed in Groznyy against better-equipped and -supplied Russians.

- Were Saddam able to cajole even limited numbers of well-supplied and desperate troops to dig into urban areas, inspired but ill-armed insurrection against him within the cities could be ruthlessly dispatched, allowing Saddam to claim to the Arab world and the US that he still represents the legitimate government of Iraq whatever defections occur elsewhere in the country, and that the world must bargain with him.
- In the wake of strategic retreat into the cities, it would be well within Saddam's historical pattern of behavior to inflict heinous abuses on cowed masses to throw humanitarian spanners into an allied advance, scripting disinformation along the way to tar the US with the stigma of causing humanitarian disaster.

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To hold in the face of determined assault, Saddam's fanatical remnant in urban areas could resort to guerrilla tactics taken from the Chechen playbook used with such effect against Russia:

- **RPG Weapon of Choice:** A Chechen weapon of choice was the rocket-propelled grenade. These offer the blast power to go through walls and are equally effective for small kill zones in flat-trajectory attacks or “lobbing” shots over buildings.
- **Hug thy Target:** Chechen urban guerrilla units operated as close as possible to Russian forces to minimize their advantages in standoff firepower. Such tactics might also be seen as degrading US advantages in command and control, and pushing critical tactical responsibility well down in the command structure in ways that would make it harder for Saddam's commanders to surrender larger units.
- **Gruesome Psyche:** Chechens decapitated Russian dead and prisoners, placing skulls along reinforcements' avenues of approach and hanging cadavers in street-level windows as screens from behind which guerrillas rained fires and through which Russians soldiers had to assail the enemy. Saddam might see this as an effective way to undermine international resolve and increase pressure to “negotiate at any price” rather than continue such fighting

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- **Improvisation and Knowledge of the Battlefield:** Chechens demonstrated the critical ability to improvise weapons—using RPGs as mortars, for instance—and to turn pagers, ad hoc TV stations, and the Internet into tactical communications gear. Chechens also made good use of their knowledge of the urban battlefield—fighting at, above, and below street level and establishing ambush points and escape routes.

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WMD: "Water of Mass Destruction"?

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Saddam might draw on Iraq's 5,000-year history of large-scale water-movement schemes. In 1983, Iraq inundated 250 square kilometers on the southern war front with Iran. Baghdad's combat engineers rapidly sculpted drains, canals, berms, levies, and dams and seasonally juggled militaristic floods with jury-rigged drainage. Then as now, water diversion schemes are abundantly fed in spring and summer, peak snowmelt season. Some analysts judge that Saddam already has sufficient reservoir capacity to flood Baghdad's western and southern flanks.

- Iraq might rapidly impede or even envelop advancing forces by linking or decoupling existing hydrological control features that manage flows between Al Basrah in the south and Baghdad to the north. We would expect Saddam to use water as a weapon early in the conflict; waiting too long gives the US and its allies the opportunity to degrade Saddam's ability to adjust water control schema to military purposes.

- Baghdad proper is hydrologically buffered between the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. The Tigris threads through the city and offers sufficient water year round to move and shunt flows in advance of an attacker and possibly to even frustrate a siege.

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Creative use of water might replace use of dirt in Saddam's war plans.

Given lack of

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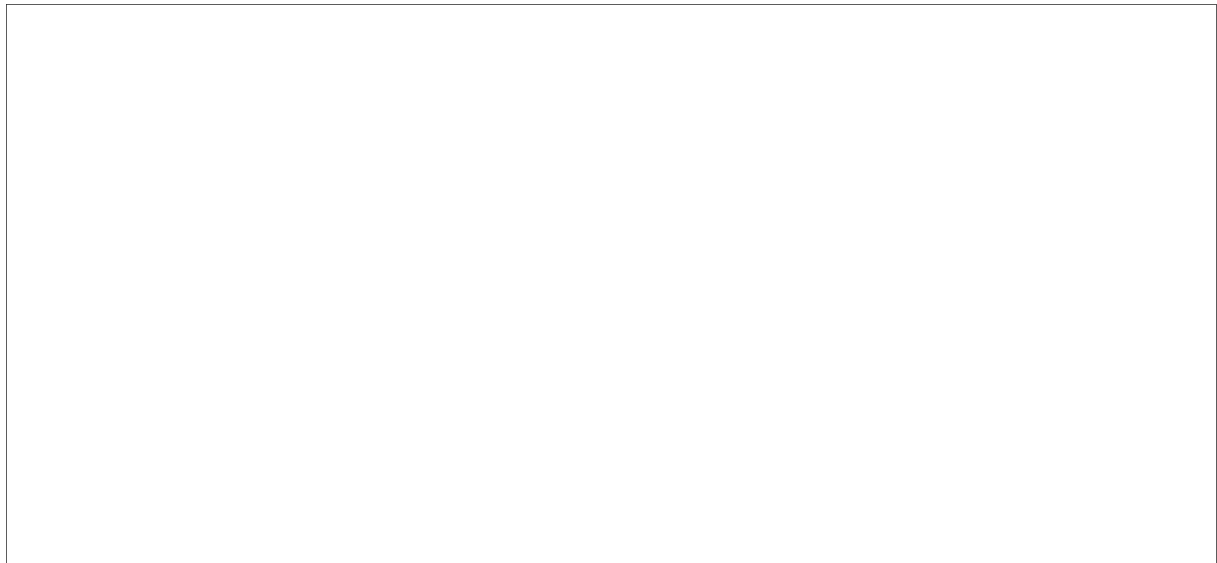
success with dirt barriers and traps during the Gulf war—Iraqi vehicles fell into them more often than did coalition vehicles—Saddam might see such efforts as offering little more promise this time. The qualitative edge of US mechanized forces might render such work feckless; cross-country movement might be hampered and canalized just as effectively by the manmade and natural landscape; and Saddam can play the "hydrological card" to greater effect with little or no up-front cost.

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Throwing Off Saddam's Urban Combat Plans

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Several pre-emptive and real-time moves might be a hedge against the advantages Saddam would see in hyper-conventionalizing the war:



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