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Director of Central Intelligence

DCI Red Cell

A Red Cell Special Memorandum

14 February 2003

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]

If Saddam Escapes His Box [redacted]

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To escape from his predicament short of war, Saddam must bring enough pressure to bear that the US will pull back. The Iraqi dictator, notwithstanding his public bravado, is an experienced tactician and probably realizes he cannot make a frontal attack but must operate indirectly, making concessions that divide the US from its allies and raise the political and diplomatic price of war for the US to an intolerable level. [redacted]

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CIA's Iraq analysts were asked to assess how Saddam might try to slip a US-made noose and the implications if he did so. [redacted]

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How Saddam Might Play His Hand [redacted]

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Only a move that virtually all US allies, including the UK, cited as evidence of good-faith disarmament by Iraq would isolate the US diplomatically.

- Other measures—such as stepping down in favor of Qusay or someone else, faking his own death or making a spurious claim to possess nuclear weapons—are non-starters.
- Saddam would gain little leverage with US allies by exiling himself. The Allied goal is disarmament, not regime change, and disarmament can be achieved with or without Saddam's presence.
- Moreover, Saddam does not need to persuade the US that he is disarming. He needs only to persuade our allies that this is so and let them do the diplomatic heavy lifting for him. [redacted]

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We assess Saddam has two main options for pressing the US. Neither would require him to sacrifice all his WMD immediately, but either eventually might force him to do so. While we believe Saddam is most likely to make only slow, begrudging concessions to the UN that will not divorce our allies from us, we cannot exclude the possibility he will act more decisively, even at the risk of losing his WMD.

- **Saddam could disclose some or all of his WMD holdings**, revealing weapons, explaining the illicit uses for dual-use facilities, and emptying WMD arsenals, while reaping the public relations bonanza of explaining to the world that the prospect of a frightful, useless war had given him a change of heart.
- **Saddam essentially could endorse the Franco-German plan to strengthen inspections**, promising to do his part to make the system more robust by offering unrestricted access to Iraqi airspace, ordering Iraqi scientists to give UNMOVIC interviews outside Iraq, and requesting permission to issue an amended WMD declaration, in which he would document the destruction of the chemical and biological agents unaccounted for from the 1990s. [redacted]

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The full or partial disclosure option is the riskier of the two for Saddam; he would sacrifice at least some of his WMD stocks, and this option is less likely to isolate the US diplomatically. It would provide the proverbial WMD "smoking gun," which could be used to argue no one could trust anything the regime pledged or did in the WMD area.

- Moreover, the argument that UNMOVIC could not verify whether Saddam had come clean or was making only a token disclosure would gain credence because Saddam's previous WMD declarations would be shown as lies.

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Saddam would stand a better chance of success by piggybacking on the Franco-German proposal. In addition, this option would be more attractive to him because he might not have to sacrifice his WMD.

- Saddam probably believes he can allow unimpeded UNMOVIC over-flights or interviews with Iraqi scientists abroad with little immediate risk to his WMD programs. The Iraqis could speed up their shell game to defeat over-flights, and information divulged by scientists would be cold by the time UNMOVIC acted on it.
- Issuing an amended WMD declaration under the pretense of having "discovered" documentation accounting for missing CBW stocks might go a long way toward meeting a key UNMOVIC demand.
- A well-orchestrated Iraqi campaign to welcome additional inspectors, and even accompanying UN military forces, would give Saddam a public relations coup. The actual threat posed by these changes to his WMD denial and deception program, initially at least, would be quite limited. [redacted]

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Saddam probably would not assume the enhanced inspection program would be as ineffective as the current version. His goal would be to delay the discovery of WMD by inspectors as long as possible while dividing the US from its allies enough to delay an invasion month by month until summer arrives.

- At that point, Saddam might calculate that extended delays would force the US to throw in the towel. He probably sees us as unwilling to fight in the Iraqi summer and as reluctant to keep a quarter-million men and their equipment on call in the Kuwaiti desert for six months on the off chance that diplomatic conditions improve by the fall.
- Even if the inspectors pried loose some crumbs of Iraqi WMD, Saddam could explain away the evidence ("rogue elements", or "misplaced ordnance") and expect the US, consumed with other foreign policy issues and entering a presidential election year, to lack the political will to reassemble the anti-Iraq coalition on the basis of what probably would be relatively meager UNMOVIC WMD finds. [redacted]

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If Saddam Pulled It Off [redacted]

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Forcing Washington to jettison its battle plans would be a remarkable achievement for Saddam, the capstone to an extraordinarily crafty and flexible political and diplomatic response to the challenges of the post-9/11 world. ***We believe he would tread carefully in the first year or so after the abortive showdown for fear of recreating the***

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coalition against him. Saddam would focus primarily on consolidating his diplomatic gains.

- He would continue to try to strengthen ties to neighboring states, posing as the Arab/Muslim hero who faced down the imperialist/Zionist beast. His prestige with Arab and Muslim publics as the Arab leader who humiliated America would make it difficult for even skeptical regional states to reject his charm offensive.
- He would maintain and perhaps augment his financial, moral, and material support for Palestinian terrorism because he probably would read the US retreat as a green light to meddle in the Arab-Israeli conflict, as long as he did not introduce WMD into the equation.
- Internally, Saddam would reign supreme. The security services would wrap up anyone suspected of having cooperated with us, and the opposition would feel doubly downtrodden and betrayed: promised liberation twice—in 1991 and 2003—and both times left to Saddam's tender mercies. [redacted]

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Nevertheless, Saddam probably would not let Iraq become a status quo power.

His combative nature and desire that Iraq should lead the Arab world in a struggle against Western and Zionist influence argue against prolonged passivity. Moreover, Iraq's economy is likely to grow in this period, increasing Saddam's resources, as sanctions either are lifted because of seeming compliance with UNSCR 1441 or remain on the books but are ever more poorly enforced. Perhaps as soon as a year and a half to two years after facing down America, Saddam might begin to flex his muscles.

- Saddam's top priority would be regaining control of Kurdistan. He has never reconciled himself to losing a fifth of the land and population of Iraq.
- The incorporation could be peaceful and brokered through Kurdish leaders, who always have kept open contacts with Baghdad. They might conclude working with Saddam was better than futile resistance without US aid.
- Saddam might overrun the autonomous zone, perhaps under the pretext of countering the Ansar al-Islam.
- We also suspect Saddam's appetite for Kuwait would grow because of its collaboration with the US. Open Iraqi intervention—which, unlike an invasion of Kurdistan, Saddam could not justify as an internal matter—would be unlikely in the mid-term, but covert attempts to disrupt Kuwait's stability would be possible.
- In parallel with such maneuvers, Saddam would continue clandestine development of WMD programs, which could proceed rapidly if sanctions were lifted. Once he acquires nuclear capabilities, his reasons for restraint would vanish. [redacted]

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The implications of backing down from war for US global prestige and power projection are complex and difficult to analyze divorced from other world events. Nevertheless, some broad consequences would result under the most varied circumstances.

- America would face an uphill battle for years in gaining world support for non-UN-mandated use of force. Having seen America come so close to the brink and blink, potential US allies in any future confrontations with Saddam or anyone else would be more reluctant than ever, assuming that the US's talk of using force was bluster to force the UN or other multilateral bodies to act.

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- It would become harder for us to use the unilateral threat of force effectively, because potential adversaries, encouraged by Saddam's victory, would assume our threats were bluff. It might take several actual military interventions to re-establish the notion that the US military is more than an appendage to international multilateral diplomacy.
- Within the region, the US would lose virtually all credibility with Arab allies who, although fearing war's unintended consequences, privately have said they support quick, decisive action to remove Saddam.
- Washington would gain plaudits in some quarters for having shown "maturity" and allowed the UN to accomplish the job of allegedly disarming Iraq. These would be short-lived if and when it became clear that Saddam had merely pulled the wool over everyone's eyes.

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