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**IRAQ**

**Tariq AZIZ**

(Phonetic: ahZEEZ)

*Deputy Prime Minister (since 1979); Member, Revolutionary Command Council (since 1977)*

*Addressed as: Mr. Minister* [Redacted]

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Tariq Aziz is one of President Saddam Husayn's most important counselors, particularly on international and political issues. He remains de facto Foreign Minister, a position he formally held during 1983-91.

[Redacted] as a member of Iraq's minuscule Christian community, he could not take power in Muslim-dominated Iraq, even if he so aspired. Posing no threat to Saddam, he retains a position of trust in the President's cabinet.

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**Demonstrating Diplomatic Élan** [Redacted]

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[Redacted] Aziz's mastery of English and cosmopolitan demeanor should not be construed as pro-Western sentiment. Aziz dominates Iraq's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the country's diplomacy.

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[Redacted] In the fall of 1996 it was Aziz who traveled through Democratic Party of Kurdistan (KDP)-held territory on his way to Turkey and to Russia to display the full extent of his government's alliance with the KDP.

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**A Closet Moderate?** [Redacted]

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Before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, [Redacted] viewed Aziz as generally advocating a moderate foreign policy. He was the official most closely associated with Iraq's attempt to improve its standing with the international community during 1988-90. Aziz consistently worked to mend relations with the United States before ties were officially reestablished in 1984. He was also a chief advocate of Egypt's reintegration into the Arab fold in the late 1980s. During that time, he supported a negotiated settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and urged the PLO to adopt moderate positions.

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From 1992-1994 Aziz advocated cooperating with the UN Special Commission to lift sanctions against Iraq.

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[Redacted] We believe that, although he probably still tries occasionally to present moderate views to the President, Aziz never pushes them too far and will support whatever decision Saddam makes, while dealing faithfully with the consequences of Saddam's actions.

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**Becoming More Hard-Line**

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Aziz's rhetoric has followed a decidedly harder line during the past two years:

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Press reporting indicated he once told UNSCOM Chairman Rolf Ekeus during a 1995 meeting that Iraq had fulfilled all of its UN-authorized requirements and that the lifting of the embargo was long overdue. Press and media accounts in 1996 quote Aziz as stating that UNSCOM and the US government are one and the same.

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According to

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press reports, other advisors to Saddam, including his son Uday, favored a confrontational approach to UN sanctions. Uday attempted to undermine Aziz's position by publicly lambasting the Deputy Prime Minister in Uday's newspaper, *Babil*, blaming Aziz for failing to lift the post-war sanctions. Aziz has little contact with Uday or Saddam's other powerful son Qusay

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**Background**

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Aziz is generally considered one of Iraq's most ardent Baath Party ideologues, and his party credentials are impeccable. He participated in the 1968 coup that brought the Baathists to power. During the 1970s, while serving first as Minister of Information and then as a member of the Revolutionary Command Council and the party's Regional Command, Aziz helped Saddam undermine former President Ahmad al-Bakr and to take his place in 1979. Saddam made Aziz Deputy Prime Minister.

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[Redacted] Aziz speaks excellent English [Redacted]

He

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and his wife, Violette, have two sons, Ziad and Saddam.

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LP 97-106686  
2 July 1997

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