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Director of Central Intelligence

A Red Cell Report

Number 102

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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 [redacted]

## What Happens if Saddam "Goes Missing"? [redacted]

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**Defying his "die in the bunker" image, Saddam could try to spoil a US victory by pulling an UBL-type disappearance to prearranged bolt holes and leading a WMD terror war from the shadows. Saddam's aims in such a war would include personal survival, revenge, raising the cost of a US occupation, and, by making Iraq ungovernable without him, eventually returning to power. Armed with biological and chemical weapons and dismissive of Iraqi casualties, Saddam and terrorist allies could lay waste to villages and harass coalition troops with far greater lethality than renegade Afghan warlords or Taliban.** [redacted]

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The Red Cell was asked to consider the implications of a Saddam gone missing. [redacted]

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## Could Saddam Reprise Usama? [redacted]

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Many observers anticipate that a Saddam flushed from Baghdad and fleeing for his life will meet his end like Mussolini, captured by fellow countrymen and left to swing by his heels from a lamppost—or worse. However, Saddam's instinct for self-preservation, decades in power, and early experience as an underground revolutionary suggest that he has planned escape routes and safe havens inside Iraq—and possibly in neighboring states—where he could go to ground. Coalition forces might be surprised by a host of factors that could help Saddam slip the noose. [redacted]

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- Gaps in coalition understanding of tribal dynamics and loyalties might lead to mistakes that alienate tribal leaders and cause them to look the other way or clandestinely support Saddam or his cronies. Beneficiaries of Saddam's rule who fear they would suffer under US occupation would be especially prone to mischief.
- Bribes, inbred antipathy toward US occupiers, local politics and economics, and family and tribal ties could all prompt selected individuals to provide aid or safehaven to regime remnants. Greater fear of a Saddam-on-the-loose with WMD than of US occupiers might also figure in calculations.
- Although Iraqi terrain is not as conducive to prolonged hiding as are the mountains and caves of the Afghan/Pakistan border, there are pockets of favorable landscape and anonymous enclaves in the Sunni center of the country where Saddam could remain at large. Because coalition forces cannot cover every square inch of Iraq, success at capturing him would depend upon active cooperation from locals.
- Hoping to tie down the US and prevent action against them, elements in Iran and Syria might quietly offer a fugitive Saddam clandestine refuge, allowing his followers to nip across the border to inflict non-attributable pain on occupying forces. Although the political leadership in Damascus and Tehran might be cowed by an overwhelming US presence on their border, intelligence and security personnel already supporting terrorism—particularly in Iran—might relish the chance to hit US forces so conveniently close to home.

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- Saddam is known for his use of doubles and has access to plastic surgeons. He could alter his appearance and disappear for a considerable period, perhaps planning to reemerge later. [redacted]

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### **Saddam On The Loose: Sendero Luminoso with WMD** [redacted]

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While a Saddam not in command of his military forces is a Saddam who has lost the war, a Saddam who escapes capture could still cause serious problems for the US and its allies. Relying on pre-established safe havens and support networks, weapons caches and secure communications, Saddam could launch a surprisingly resilient effort to crash the coalition victory party.

- Drawing upon lessons from the failure of al-Qa`ida and Taliban remnants and various Afghan warlords to make significant dents in coalition control of the Afghan battlescape, Saddam might squirrel away enough WMD to make hit and run attacks from his roving thugs significantly more painful than the improvised conventional strikes ongoing in Afghanistan.
- Saddam might apply tactics Sendero Luminoso used in Peru, brutally striking civilians in remote villages to showcase the inability of US forces to be everywhere at all times to protect the innocent. Because Saddam has utter contempt for Iraqi citizens and many bitterly despise the dictator, there would be no limit to his ruthlessness—calculated not to return Saddam to power right away, but to embarrass the US and raise the costs of occupation.
- The mobile BW labs and small caches of chemical weapons that confound arms inspectors could make it easier for Saddam to project lethal force even while on the run. His cronies could spread powdered anthrax or other WMD contaminants to deny coalition forces and their Iraqi allies access to certain spaces, such as government buildings, airports and oil facilities.
- If some SCUDs remained undiscovered—perhaps hidden in barns, warehouses, or wooded areas—Saddam might be able to arrange their launch even after the coalition achieved a general military victory. [redacted]

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### **Terrorist Collusion for WMD Chaos** [redacted]

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If Saddam planned to abandon Baghdad and lead an underground terror war, he would have strong incentives to supply WMD materials to a variety of terrorist groups to conduct attacks outside Iraq—and make this known to attract extremist support for his cause. Saddam would hope a wave of terrorism abroad would impel the US to divert forces.

- With the general battle for Iraq lost and much of his WMD arsenal either spent, suppressed or subject to discovery by occupying troops, Saddam would have few incentives to refrain from distributing some of his remaining WMD materials to terrorist groups like al-Qa`ida and Palestinian extremists—or even to the Iranian Qods force or Syrian conspirators in exchange for safe passage.
- Encouraging al-Ansar and al-Qa`ida to unleash their WMD-armed fighters in northeastern Iraq could provoke fighting with and between Kurdish factions leading to intervention by Turkey, with the US forced to play peacemaker. The anti-Iranian MEK might also benefit from Saddam's WMD largesse to provoke destabilizing Iranian reactions. [redacted]

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In addition to motives of revenge and spite against those who aided the US, Saddam might see trying to stay one jump ahead of US forces and unleashing WMD attacks as allowing him to cut a more romantic figure as a "rebel for Islam," and thus gain support from violent extremists that he could not command as a secular tyrant.

- Saddam, like the jihadists, would be out of power, on the run, and an underdog against an overwhelming enemy. His goals might begin to look more like those trumpeted by Islamic extremists—driving the Crusader infidels from Muslim lands.

• [redacted] If Saddam were to escape the US blitzkrieg and transform himself into a revolutionary folk hero, he could attract a steady stream of jihadist recruits for a long war. [redacted]

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### **Without Saddam's Body, A Propaganda War Against the US** [redacted]

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As long as Saddam is thought to be on the loose, the hunt for the disappearing dictator risks overshadowing coalition accomplishments in Iraq, much as UBL's flight allows critics to question the success of the Afghan campaign. We would expect foreign detractors to personalize the failure to capture Saddam and UBL as a competition between the US President and his two nemeses, with scores kept unflatteringly as 0-2.

- Doubts about US ability to "finish the job" might accompany recriminations harkening back to the first Gulf war about whose fault it was that Saddam escaped this time. Terrorists would draw encouragement, perceiving that the US might be good at overthrowing regimes, but is bad at apprehending individuals.
- Iranian and Arab audiences disposed to conspiracy theories might even suspect a US "secret deal" to facilitate Saddam's disappearance. [redacted]

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More serious commentators would wonder about the uneasy effect a missing Saddam might have on efforts to rebuild Iraq. They would ponder what mischief Saddam might make, question where the loyalties of second-tier military and government men really lie, and assess Saddam's chances of a Phoenix-like rise from the ashes.

- Saddam has been in exile before, and his successful escape would raise fears that Iraq had not seen the last of him. Iraqis cowed by two decades of his brutal tyranny might need a long time to be certain he would not reappear, undermining coalition efforts to exert political control.
- As long as proof of Saddam's demise were lacking, surviving sons or lackeys could use uncertainty about his fate to raise questions about the legitimacy of a US-installed successor regime, perhaps drawing on bank accounts and other resources hidden abroad to fund opposition activities. [redacted]

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