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SENIOR EXECUTIVE INTELLIGENCE BRIEF
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Iraq: Humanitarian Challenge in the South [redacted]

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A focus by coalition forces on reaching and securing Baghdad could lead to populations in unsecured towns in southern Iraq facing a situation of chaos with little access to basic services and relief. Authority broke down in the south in 1991 as Iraqi military forces were rapidly evicted from Kuwait and spontaneous uprisings in major cities led to widespread upheaval. Fast-moving battlefield developments would threaten the region with a similar power vacuum affecting local services.

- *Conditions could rapidly deteriorate in a matter of days.* Shortages of running water during the Gulf war prompted many Iraqis to use polluted water from rivers or canals, and loss of electric power because of damage during hostilities could immediately shut down water treatment plants. [redacted]

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Humanitarian needs would build after the onset of a conflict. While virtually all of the 8.5 million Iraqis in the south rely on oil-for-food program rations, many would not immediately need additional food because the regime since December has provided them double food rations that possibly could last weeks. [redacted] presumably to bolster morale and help compensate for shortfalls during a conflict.

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- About half of those receiving food rations probably will have sold at least a portion of their rations to earn cash, however, and would have little food in reserve, and [redacted] [redacted] new food deliveries would stop once fighting began because UN workers would be evacuated.

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- The World Food Program plans to pre-position 4,000 metric tons of food--enough to feed about 700,000 people for one week--in Iran and Syria but lacks trucks to distribute food in southern Iraq. The Iraqi military's conscription of vehicles would add further serious impediments to aid distribution.

- Efforts to replenish food stocks from sources outside Iraq would depend on keeping open Umm Qasr port, the entry point for more than 90 percent of humanitarian aid, and reopening Al Basrah port, major portions of which remain obstructed from the Gulf war.

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Most Iraqis in the south are likely to remain in place because Kuwait, as well as Iran, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, have announced they will not accept refugees, and as a result the UN estimate that 50,000 Iraqis will head to Kuwait may be too high. Many Iraqis probably would leave their homes temporarily after a conflict began, sleeping in rural areas and returning

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to their homes when it seemed safe.

-- Thousands of Iraqi elites and their families probably would flee southern cities and head to Baghdad to avoid revenge killings. [redacted]

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