

~~TOP SECRET~~ [redacted]

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SENIOR EXECUTIVE INTELLIGENCE BRIEF  
5 March 2003  
PASS SEIB 03-052CHX

**Iraq: Fire Trenches Difficult To Sustain** [redacted]

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*The more than 100 trenches the regime has built in and around Baghdad and in the Rumaylah and Kirkuk oilfields appear intended, when filled with oil and set afire, to obscure potential coalition targets and movements of Iraqi military assets.* Iraq used similar tactics in the Gulf war, when it torched oil wells in Kuwait.

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Windspeed would influence how long smoke clouds lingered over Baghdad. At night, stagnant winds would cause the smoke to hover over the city, reducing the effectiveness of electro-optically guided and laser-guided weapons. Stronger surface winds during the day would cause smoke to drift away, improving operating conditions.

- After the middle of next month, fire trenches would become less effective because shorter nights and warmer temperatures would increase windspeeds.
- The potential for the fires to spread to nearby structures would be substantial at any time.

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*The health hazards could be more significant than they were in Kuwait, where few long-term health effects were found.* Many more people would be subjected to the smoke and particulates from trench fires in greater Baghdad than were exposed to the 1991 fires, which were located at oilfields in the desert. Soot and ash particulates can cause coughing, shortness of breath, and asthmatic attacks and can contribute to heart problems.

- The high concentration of hydrogen sulfide in oil produced in the Kirkuk field is unlikely to be a problem because the gas normally is removed before the oil is piped to a refinery or for export.
- If Baghdad used crude oil or heavy fuel in the trenches, an accelerant probably would be needed to ignite the oil. During the Gulf war, Iraq apparently used a napalm-based accelerant [redacted]

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*Iraq's use of oil-filled trenches was ineffective in Kuwait.* The trenches there were built near the oilfields, where they readily could be replenished but were easily circumvented by coalition forces. In addition, airstrikes destroyed the key pump station supplying oil to the trenches.

- *The Iraqis could find it difficult to sustain fires in Baghdad.* Tanker trucks would have

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