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NEAR EAST

Iraq:

Humanitarian Concerns in a Conflict [redacted]

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Saddam's response to conflict with the US could turn the side effects of war into a humanitarian disaster. The greatest concern is that Saddam might use chemical and/or biological agents in a way that increased civilian fatalities and population displacement far beyond what a conventional war would cause.

— In case of widespread CBW use against civilian targets in Kurdish or Shia areas, for instance, panic could force hundreds of thousands of people from their homes. Saddam's use in 1988 of chemical weapons against Kurds in Halabja—a town with 80,000 inhabitants—killed 5,000, injured 10,000, and caused 40,000 to flee.

— Just the perception of a CBW attack would have much the same effect as an actual attack. As word of chemical attacks spread after the Halabja attack, Kurdish villagers elsewhere began to flee in anticipation of CBW attacks on them. [redacted]

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— Iraq's neighbors probably would seal their borders in the aftermath of a CBW attack, fearing contamination carried by the refugees. Those escaping to remote areas or crossing unmonitored borders would be cut off from medical help, potable water, sanitation services, food supplies, and shelter. [redacted]

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[redacted] expects a Baghdad-centered military operation would displace some 500,000 persons internally and make 225,000 refugees, [redacted] If Saddam withdrew his forces into major cities in an attempt to use the populace as "human shields," both civilian casualties and civilian flight could be much larger.

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[redacted] worst-case scenario—based on a protracted conventional war fought in major cities—some 200,000 Iraqis might flee to Kuwait, 200,000 to Saudi Arabia, 20,000 to Syria, and as many as 1,000,000 to Iran.

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— Iran, for example, would be even less willing to host Iraqi refugees than it was in 1991, mainly because it has had to deal with some 2-3 million Afghans in eastern Iran. [redacted]

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11 October 2002

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More than 50 percent of Iraqis now depend on the government-distributed ration basket supplied by the UN oil-for-food (OFF) program as their main source of food. *The UN says OFF-related food shipments will be suspended if hostilities occur, and the country then will have approximately six months' worth of stored food, based on the UN-verified food supply currently in Iraq.*

— Saddam might redirect some of this food to his security forces, military units, and loyal tribes, or destroy it as part of a "scorched earth" tactic. [redacted]

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Loss of electrical power in the course of the conflict would degrade the availability of potable water and health services, worsening sanitation and denying injured civilians medical care [redacted] access to water is now relatively good in urban areas, while less than 50 percent of households in rural areas have direct access to clean water.

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— None of the country's 13 sewage treatment plants functions properly, and raw sewage often is dumped into rivers and other bodies of water.

— [redacted] most of Iraq's medical facilities are more than 20 years old, have been neglected since the Gulf war, and lack emergency backup generators. [redacted]

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The few humanitarian aid agencies likely to stay in Iraq after hostilities begin would be unable to offer adequate assistance. US and coalition forces would be expected to take the lead in dealing with the immediate humanitarian crisis, including provision of food and medicine and rebuilding civilian infrastructure.

— US forces are pre-positioning some 3 million humanitarian daily rations in the region, roughly the same number that were dropped in Afghanistan between October and December last year. [redacted]

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Iraq:

Lobbying for Political Support [redacted]

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Saddam is stepping up efforts to win international backing and to bolster domestic support. Saddam in the past month dispatched senior officials to more than a dozen regional states—including Iran, Turkey, Syria, the UAE, Libya, and Egypt—to stress the negative effects of war on the region and to attempt building a consensus against a US attack.

[redacted]

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Saddam also is currying local support to enhance security. In a bid to build loyalty in a troublesome sector of the population and present Iraq's elections and political system as free and fair, the Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council issued a decree this month allowing citizens of the Kurdistan autonomous region to cast their votes for President of Iraq in any governorate,

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