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Iraqi Intelligence and Security Forces and Capabilities for Popular Warfare

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Iraq does not have a history of much success in mobilizing its population or the Ba'ath Party for militias and popular warfare. The Popular Army that Iraq tried to create during the Gulf War was formed with large cadres of Ba'ath Loyalists, but it was one of the few forces to break in battle, and was much less effective than low-grade infantry forces in the regular army that had largely Shi'ite manpower. The roughly 100,000-man "Jash" militia that Iraq formed out of supposedly loyal Kurds during the Iran-Iraq War either turned on the government or fled during the Kurdish uprisings, creating a temporary security vacuum in the north.

This does not mean, however, that some Iraqis will not present a problem in urban or rear areas during any invasion of Iraq. The regime also has strong cadres of intelligence and security forces that can serve in paramilitary roles. These forces have a strong vested stake in the regime, as do the Republican Guards and Special Republican Guards. They also have much to fear from the population and any new government in Iraq once Saddam is gone.

While it is unclear whether Saddam Hussein's regime can count on any significant contribution from popular, it is unrealistic to assume that the US can count on popular uprisings and defections. It is equally unrealistic to assume that the US will only have to deal with resistance in the areas most loyal to Saddam. Iraq is a well structure tyranny whose internal security structure has evolved over decades. It is scarcely perfect, and repeated internal purges, arrests, and executions show this. At the same time, no analysis of a possible war that only focuses on Iraq's military forces can portray the risks involved, and any discussion of a postwar structure for Iraq's government must take explicit account of the need to deal with the civil security forces and the impact of efforts to create force for popular warfare.

The following analysis attempts to cover these issues, but is highly speculative. Many of the details of Iraq's capabilities are simply unknown. It draws heavily on the work of Amatzia Baram, Sean Boyne, Ibrahim al-Marashi, Kanan Makia, and reporting in Jane's Special Reports.

Creating Regional Commands

While the areas around Baghdad and Tikrit may be the main centers of Saddam's power, he does have other options. Saddam set up four regional commands at the time of Desert Fox in 1998, each of which was placed under one of his most dedicated supporters. These regional commands are likely to reappear in some form in the course of any US-British attack. They included:

- The Southern Region, which included the governates of Basra, Dhikar, Misan, and Waset under Saddam's cousin General Ali Hassabn al Majid.
- The Northern Region, which was under Qusay, and covered the three Kurdish governates of Sulaimaniya, Arbil, and Dohuk plus the northern governate of Mosul.
- The Central Euphrates Region, which was largely Shi'ite and included Kerbala, Babylon, Najaf, Quadisiya, and Muthanna. It was commanded by Muhammed Hamza al Zubeidi, an RCC member and Deputy Prime Minister.
- The Central Region including Baghdad, Saladin, Anbar, and Diyala, under Defense Minister Ahmed Sultan.

Saddam not only is likely to create similar regional commands, he is likely to use the civil intelligence and security forces to attempt to hold on to each major urban area and region. Saddam must know that even limited local resistance could help force the US to disperse its

forces, while successful urban resistance in a number of areas could confront the US with much more serious problems in urban warfare. He also must know that large elements of the Iraqi Army might not be loyal if he did not maintain control over the key regions and towns and cities as long as possible.

Popular Mobilization

It is unlikely that Iraq can mobilize the Iraqi people in mass, even in "loyal" areas, but Iraq probably can mobilize significant elements to supplement its military forces, and it may be able to use them to create serious problems in terms of urban warfare.

These popular forces include an unknown number of Ba'ath Party loyalists. Almost all of these loyalists and officials are required to receive reserve military training, and many have had annual field training for some time.

Saddam has a significant tribal base, including his own al-Bu Nasser tribe, and citizens from the towns of Tikrit, Dur, Sharqat, Huwayja, Bayji, Samarra and Ramadi. They are located in what Ibrahim al-Marashi calls the Sunni Arab Triangle. Other major Sunni tribes and families that have a record of loyalty to the regime, and which play a key role in the intelligence and security forces, include the Dulaym, the Jubur (mixed Shi'a/Sunni) and the 'Ubayd tribes. There are also loyalist factions in the Duri and Samarrai families. Some tribes, like the Jubur (Juburi) seem to have received arms and there are convincing reports of rising gun sales. Many of these tribal elements now live in Iraqi cities.

In addition, there are a number of popular forces that the regime might use:

- Fedayeen Saddam (Saddam's Men of Sacrifice): A force of up to 40,000 men formed by Uday in 1995 -- very young men who border on a youth gang with thugs of age 16 and up, but under a real Lt. General. All urban and centered in Baghdad.
- Lions of Saddam (Eshbal or Ashbal Saddam): A Hitler Youth-tlie paramilitary training structure called the for ages 10-16. No one knows how real this force is or what role it might play, but it cannot be totally dismissed. Young men are often loyal and all have Saddam as the leader during their entire lives.
- National Defense Battalions (Kurdish Jash or Militia Forces): Although it is scarcely the most loyal force, there are still elements of what used to be a massive force of some 100,000 men in 250 battalions. There are still 1,000 man elements from two tribes with ties to Saddam, and which may have much to fear if the other Kurds take over: the Zibar and Herki
- Jerusalem or Al Quds Brigades: This is intended to be a mass volunteer force, and has female as well as male units. It is usually dismissed as a showpiece force used for propaganda purposes, but may have youth and other elements that would be loyal to Saddam in some areas.
- Youth (Civil Defense) Force: There are reports that a so-called youth army was formed in 1999 to defend the cities, supposedly out of youths ages 12-17. It is unclear that such a force exists, but some Iraqi media coverage does show youths and adults being training and possibly armed for such a role.

- Great Retaliation Force: Once again, this force may be more a matter of propaganda than real. It was supposedly formed in November 1999 under Qusay to deal with the problem of the Kurdish threat and to limit any entry into non-Kurdish areas, but many reports indicate that this is a military contingency force using regular army units and Republican Guards, and has only limited armed popular forces – including some Christian Arabs.

There are other popular forces like the various tribal militias. These are less disciplined and well-structured, but they cannot be ignored, both in terms of urban warfare and rear area security.

The Security Services and Popular Forces

It is dangerous to assume that US and British forces can count on uprisings, defections, and being treated as liberators. This may happen in some areas, but Iraq has a 100,000-man security service and a 40,000-man police force which can help maintain loyalty and be used both to fight on their own and compel Iraqi civilians to do so.

The security, intelligence, and police forces that could affect the outcome of a war include:

- National Police: Some 40,000 personnel that have elements of paramilitary forces with light weapons and light armored vehicles.
- Frontier Guard: 30,000-man mobile force, largely equipped with cross-country trucks.
- Special Security Service (SSS) or Amn al Khass: Controlled by Saddam's son, Qusay, and is an ultraloyal force recruited from loyal tribes around Tikrit, Hawuija, and Samarra and headquartered in Palestine Street in Baghdad. According to some reports, it is the key security force and plays a major role in controlling the actions of the Republican Guard and the Special Republican Guard. It is also reported to be in charge of the surveillance of General Intelligence, Military Intelligence, Military Security, and General Security. It is the most critical and powerful security agency.

Its Security Bureau has a Special Office, to assure loyalty in the SSS, and there is an Office of Presidential Facilities that guards such facilities through the Jihaz al-Hamaya al-Khas (The Special Protection Apparatus). It is responsible for guarding the Presidential Offices, Council of Ministers, National Council, and Ba'ath Party Regional and National Command of the Ba'ath Party, and provides bodyguards for Iraq's leaders.

It seems to be responsible for arms and WMD component smuggling from abroad and for concealing Iraq's WMD efforts.

It was a key target in Desert Fox, is believed to control the weapons of the Chemical Corps, manages recruiting for the Republican Guard, and manages key secure aspects of Iraq's military industries. It has about 5,000 men, and an Operations Unit and Special Branch that often execute those suspected of disloyalty.

It runs the National Security Council or al-Majlis al-Amn al-Qawmi. This body is headed by Saddam and coordinates Iraqi intelligence. It has a Special Operations Room in the Presidential Palace, and has a brigade that works closely with the Special Republican Guard.

- General Intelligence Directorate (GID) or Iraqi Intelligence Service (IID) or Mukhabarat: This is the unit Saddam used to take control over the Ba'ath Party and

eventually the Iraqi state. It is currently directed by Tahir 'Abd al-Jalil al-Habbush. It provides security in the Ba'ath Party, monitors all organizations, monitors foreign embassies and studies, has counter-espionage elements, and has heavily infiltrated most Iraqi opposition groups. It also conducts operations against Syria, Iran, Kuwait, Jordan, and other states, and could be a key source of operations against US and British forces or direct or proxy covert attacks on the US and Britain.

It has some 4,000 to 8,000 men, according to sources. They are carefully screened to be ultra-loyalists, and now with strong ties to Qusay and a series of internal security Directorates plus Directorate 14 which is in charge of covert operations overseas and might organize any CBRN or "terrorist" attack outside Iraq. It manages Iraqi support of the coordinating operations with the Iranian opposition group, the Mojahedin-e Khalq and National Liberation Army elements based in Iraq. It was the key service to infiltrate the INA and defeat CIA efforts to use it in a coup, and worked with Mas'ud Barzani's Kurdish Democratic Party in planning the Iraqi Army advance into the Kurdish areas in 1996 and its purge of the PUK and INC elements in the Kurdish security zone.

It tracks and sometimes kills students and exiles abroad, and manipulates journalists. It is blamed for the April 1993 Iraqi attempt on President George Bush's life. Its role in assassinations is the reason its headquarters were struck by US cruise missiles in June 1993.

There are district commands in Basra (South), Mosul (north), Ramadi (West), Karbala (East). It has a light brigade with light armor and heavy weapons. The details of the internal structure of the GID are uncertain. According to work by Ibrahim al-Marashi and Jane's Periscope, it is organized so that the following directorates might have an impact in ensuring popular loyalty or play some role in wartime:

- Directorate 3: Surveillance directs the surveillance of suspected traitors and key personnel.
- Directorate 4: Secret Service: Places agents throughout the government in various agencies and is present in virtually every Iraqi embassy and many cover firms overseas. Has offices deal with each major country in the world. Analyzes signal intelligence from the Al Hadi Project (See below).
- Directorate 5: Counterintelligence: Focuses on foreign intelligence operations like the US and Israel, but also on neighboring countries like Syria.
- Directorate 6: GID security: Handles internal security in the GID.
- Directorate 7: Detention and interrogation.
- Directorate 8: Forensics.
- Directorate 14: Special Operations: The unit is located near Salman Pak, about 20 kilometers south of Baghdad. It is responsible for covert operations abroad and is one of the largest elements of the GID. Agents are highly trained, with language and cultural training, and given training in cover attacks ranging from the use of bombs to assassination. Is believed to carry out joint operations against Iran with elements of the People's Mujahideen.
- Directorate 18: Iranian Affairs.

- Directorates 21 through 26 are responsible for monitoring various regional districts in Iraq.
- Directorate 21, the residency located in Baghdad, is in charge of security issues in the capital as well as issuing residence permits to foreigners in Iraq.
- Directorate 23, the Southern District based in Basra, conducts operations in the south of Iraq.
- Directorate 24, the Northern District, does the same in northern Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan. Based in Mosul, with an office in Kirkuk, it is responsible for infiltrating the opposition in Iraqi Kurdistan.
- Directorate 25, the Western District, is located in Ramadi and maintains a network of informants in Syria and Jordan.
- Directorate 26, the Eastern District, operates in the Karbala Governate.
- Directorate 28: MIO Security: Located at Palestine Street and responsible for the security of the Military Industrial Organization, and overseas security for both the overt operations of the MIO and individuals involved in covert purchasing and probable some aspects of Iraq's WMD programs.

It has shown it can enforce loyalty in various urban areas with consummate ruthlessness.

- The General Security Services (GSS) or General Security Directorate (GSD) or Amn al Amm: It used to be part of the Ministry of Interior but now is an independent agency that reports directly to the Presidential Palace. It has about 8,000 men who monitor daily life in every town and village and has elements in every police station. It is headquartered in the al Baladiat area of Baghdad.

It is the key force monitoring the day-to-day activities and loyalty of ordinary Iraqis. It is also a key force in terms of wiretapping, surveillance, tracking families and foreigners, and watching UN inspectors and virtually all press movements. It hires countless informants, and any media in Iraq will become acquainted with the GSS, either under the cloak of the Ministry of Information, as a helper, or often as a translator or apparent dissident. Many hotels used by foreigners have both GID and GSS staff.

It has, however, played an active paramilitary and covert role in helping to enforce security and run intelligence operations in Kurdish areas, and seems to have played a role in hiding WMD and missile components.

- Al Hadi Project or Project 858: A small agency of about 800 that is unlikely to be actively involved in military operations, but which will monitor cell phones, and particularly any signals activity throughout Iraq.
- Murafaqin or Companions of Saddam (also called the Special Protection Apparatus (Jihaz al-Himaya al-Khasa in other sources): A small, tribal, elite group of bodyguards at the Presidential Palace, most of whom have some kind of family relationship. Most are members of Saddam's tribe, the al-Bu Nasir. The Special Location Group protects Saddam in all of his homes and his family. The Salih or Mobile Group protects him while moving.

- The Ministry of Information: Its operations are fully integrated into Iraqi intelligence operations, including all contacts with the foreign media and press. It has many trained agents that appear in front of TV cameras or are trained to act like independent or semi-opposition voices in dealing with foreign reporters.
- The Ba'ath Party or Socialist Arab Resurrection Party or Hizb al-Ba'th al-'Arab al-Ishtiraki: It is not a security service as such but uses its large group of members who hold positions in government, the military, virtually every profession and throughout the legal profession, and in communities and most educational institutions to monitor Iraqis, carry out propaganda activities, and use various benefits to tie Iraqis to the regime. It has a security element called the Amn al-Hizb (Party Security), to maintain party loyalty.
- Emergency Force of the governates: Each of the 15 governates still under Saddam's control is reported to have its own light brigade of roughly 1,000 men for internal security missions.
- National Liberation Army or Mojahedin-e Khalq (MKO or MEK): A force of Iranians based in Iraq under the command of the People's Mujahideen, which in the past was a violent left-wing Marxist movement in Iran and assassinated US personnel and officers. Its strength is unclear, but it has some 4,000-8,000 personnel, and Iraq has trained and equipped it to use some 250 T-54/T-55, and Chieftain tanks, other armored vehicles, and artillery.

It is important to note that such civil forces will interact with the Republican Guards and Special Republican Guards, and with the Military Intelligence Service or Al Estikhbarat al Askariyya. The Military Intelligence Service has some 4,000-6,000 men. Its special branch ruthlessly enforces security in the military and has branch for dealing with every neighboring country and the US as a threats.

There is also a four brigade Military Security Service (MSS) or Al Amn al Askariyya that reports directly to the Presidential Palace and is headquartered in the Aladhamia area of Baghdad. It has been powerful enough in the past to arrest members of the Republican Guard for even a hint of disloyalty. It also has a special flying squad or brigade to enforce loyalty.

Summing Up

No one should exaggerate the size and effectiveness of Iraq's popular forces, but it is dangerous to ignore them, and particularly to ignore how pervasive and effective the Iraqi intelligence and security forces are, and how much control they may be able to exert over urban and populated areas. Iraq may collapse relatively quickly, but Stalin and Hitler demonstrated that pervasive security structures and years of propaganda can also be effective. As a result, popular warfare and the security forces cannot be dismissed.