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Background

Executive Summary

No. 1161

February 27, 1998

THE ANATOMY OF CLINTON'S FAILURE IN IRAQ

KIM R. HOLMES AND JAMES PHILLIPS

The United States faces a looming disaster in Iraq. United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan's recent deal with Iraq represents a major victory for Saddam Hussein and a significant setback for U.S. diplomacy and credibility. Although Saddam has promised to permit U.N. inspectors unfettered access to suspected weapons sites, he has made (and repeatedly broken) such promises before. Saddam also has gained important concessions from the United States and the U.N. that will both strengthen his power and undermine the Clinton Administration's containment policy and standing in the region. Even worse, Saddam has raised the cost of any future use of force against him.

Since manufacturing a crisis last October, Saddam has had five months to build and conceal weapons of mass destruction while obstructing inspections by the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) charged with disarming Iraq. Instead of being punished for his systematic attempts to thwart UNSCOM, Saddam has been rewarded with the new agreement brokered by Annan. This agreement is flawed because it:

- **Erodes UNSCOM's mandate.** By stipulating that UNSCOM "respect the legitimate concerns of Iraq relating to national security, sovereignty and dignity," the agreement provides Iraq with a convenient pretext for obstructing future weapons inspections.
- **Undermines the effectiveness of UNSCOM.** The agreement establishes an oversight body within UNSCOM, the Special Group, for inspecting eight "presidential sites" to which UNSCOM inspectors had been denied access. "Senior diplomats" will accompany weapons inspectors on their visits to the presidential sites. This could compromise information relating to UNSCOM inspections and provide Iraq with another pretext for constraining access to the sites.
- **Bolsters Iraqi propaganda.** Establishing the Special Group and recognizing the "special nature" of the presidential sites legitimizes Saddam's claim that his presidential palaces are qualitatively different from other suspected weapons sites and reinforces the notion that Saddam had a right to challenge access to them in the past.
- **Bolsters Baghdad's claim that the U.N. sanctions against Iraq should be lifted.**

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The agreement states that “The lifting of sanctions is obviously of paramount importance to the people and Government of Iraq and the Secretary General undertook to bring this matter to the full attention of the members of the Security Council.” This weakens the position of the United States and other countries that believe sanctions should not be lifted until Iraq complies fully with U.N. resolutions.

In his agreement with Annan, Saddam merely has promised what he has promised repeatedly in the past: to comply with UNSCOM disarmament inspections. If Saddam reneges, the Clinton Administration, with its diminished military credibility and diplomatic leverage, will be hard-pressed to mobilize American public opinion and U.S. allies to confront him.

Each time the showdown with Iraq is postponed, Saddam becomes stronger, the United States becomes weaker, and the long-term price for rectifying the problem goes up. President Clinton and Congress need to rethink U.S. strategy toward Iraq. Specifically, this means:

- **Developing a comprehensive long-term strategy to overthrow Saddam.** The ultimate goal of U.S. policy should be to oust Saddam, not just contain him. Washington should help unify and rebuild the Iraqi opposition, which was weakened severely by Saddam’s August 1996 invasion of the Kurdish enclave in northern Iraq. The United States should work closely with Turkey to cement an alliance between Kurdish groups and the Iraqi National Congress, an umbrella group of democratic Iraqi opposition forces, and should help this coalition to set up an alternative government in northern Iraq, broadcast its appeals over a Radio Free Iraq, and lobby for international recognition.
- **Preparing for the next standoff.** Considering Saddam’s track record, it is unrealistic to expect him to abide by U.N. resolutions. The U.S. goal in the next crisis provoked by Saddam should be to attack and undermine his

base of power, punish him for his transgressions, and reduce his ability to threaten his neighbors and his own people. Toward these ends, the United States should prepare to unleash a robust and sustained air campaign as part of a long-term strategy to build up Iraqi opposition forces and oust Saddam from power. Under the right circumstances, perhaps in support of an internal uprising, the United States should consider even using ground troops to finish the job of toppling Saddam.

- **Retrieving control of U.S. policy on Iraq from the U.N.** A foreign policy based exclusively on enforcing U.N. resolutions subordinates U.S. national interests to those of Russia, France, China, and other Security Council members. The United States should focus instead on working with Saddam’s neighbors, which face the most immediate threat, and working with Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, Bahrain, Israel, and even Iran to build a credible military deterrent to Iraqi aggression and support Iraq’s opposition in a long-term effort to oust Saddam. If Iraq provokes another crisis, and the United States concludes that it must take military action, it should be prepared to act in a swift and decisive manner. It should not let the Security Council stop or constrain U.S. military action that the President and Congress have deemed necessary.

The United States needs to take firm, consistent, and systematic action to rebuff Saddam’s “cheat-and-retreat” provocations, undermine his brutal regime, and undercut his ability to threaten his neighbors and repress his own people. Rather than subcontract its foreign policy to the U.N., the United States should treat the cause and not the symptoms of the Iraqi threat. This means working for Saddam’s overthrow.

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Backgrounder

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United Nations (U.N.) Secretary General Kofi Annan's recent deal with Iraq represents a major victory for Saddam Hussein and a significant setback for U.S. diplomacy and credibility. Saddam has promised to allow U.N. inspectors unfettered access to suspected weapon sites, but he has made such promises in the past and then broken them, repeatedly and with impunity. More important, the Iraqi dictator has gained important concessions from the United States and the U.N. that give him a political triumph that will strengthen his power and enhance his ability to undermine the Clinton Administration's containment policy and standing in the region. Even worse, he has raised the cost of any future use of force against him.

Consider the facts. After manufacturing a crisis last October, Saddam now has agreed to let U.N. weapons inspectors back in Iraq to do their job. But he had five months to build and conceal weapons of mass destruction while he obstructed those inspectors. There is no way to know what Saddam has done to develop these prohibited weapons or to make their detection more difficult for future inspectors. What is more, Saddam has forced the U.N. to agree to let diplomats accompany U.N. inspection teams—some of whom could tip off Baghdad about impending inspections. This concession implies that Saddam had legitimate grounds for his suspicions about past U.N. inspection teams. Annan has added to the legitimacy of

this viewpoint by characterizing some U.N. inspectors as “cowboys” who supposedly have behaved irresponsibly inside Iraq. Now that the U.N. has recognized Saddam's criticisms implicitly, he is sure to try other means to test the limits of the inspection regime.

But that is not all. Saddam forced Annan to establish a new oversight body within the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM), called the Special Group, for inspection of eight “presidential sites.” This is an important change. This new arrangement creates a separate bureaucratic line of authority for inspecting the presidential sites. By recognizing the “special nature” of these sites, the agreement both legitimizes Saddam's claim that his presidential palaces are qualitatively different from other suspected weapon sites and reinforces the notion that Saddam had a legitimate right to challenge access to these sites in the past. This impression is strengthened further by a clause that restricts UNSCOM's

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mandate: "In the performance of its mandate under the Security Council resolutions, UNSCOM undertakes to respect the legitimate concerns of Iraq relating to national security, sovereignty and dignity."

In addition, this Special Group probably will be more susceptible than UNSCOM to outside political pressures. Violating a specific guideline given to him by the Security Council, Annan made concessions that undermine the operational control of the chairman of the existing inspection commission, Richard Butler, over the inspection process. Annan will select the members and chairman of this new inspection entity, and it—not UNSCOM—will be responsible for writing its own reports to Butler. Because Annan already has demonstrated his sympathy for Saddam's complaints, it is not unreasonable to conclude that the Special Group can be expected to produce reports that are less objective than those of UNSCOM. This will set up internal U.N. pressures to water down the intrusiveness and effectiveness of inspections. As former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Charles Lichenstein remarked to the authors,

This new inspection regime has the pretense of being intrusive, but it is not intrusive. To be effective, inspections have to be intrusive; they have to be annoying and even embarrassing. You need "cowboys" to get the job done. This new deal will allow Saddam to maintain the pretense of intrusiveness and declare victory. Once this is done, the international community will argue that it is time to get off Saddam's back, to sign off on inspections, and to lift the sanctions.

The agreement also puts Annan in a tight spot that is certain to benefit Saddam. As David Kay, the former chief nuclear weapons inspector in Iraq for the International Atomic Energy Agency, asserts, "[In making this agreement, Annan] takes on two incompatible roles: bail bondsman for Mr. Hussein—vouching for his adherence to the inspection agreement—and leader of the international

coalition to make Mr. Hussein abide by the inspection agreement."¹

The agreement, signed by Annan and Iraq's deputy prime minister, Tariq Aziz, has bolstered Baghdad's claim that the U.N. sanctions on Iraq should be lifted, and soon. The agreement states that "The lifting of sanctions is obviously of paramount importance to the people and Government of Iraq and the Secretary General undertook to bring this matter to the full attention of the members of the Security Council." By recognizing the "paramount importance" of lifting sanctions and requiring the secretary general implicitly to make Iraq's case before the Security Council, the agreement weakens the position of the United States and other countries that argue that sanctions should not be lifted until Iraq complies fully with U.N. resolutions. Moreover, it gives Saddam a convenient pretext for tearing up the agreement at a later date if the Security Council fails to appease Iraq on the sanctions issue.

Now that Annan has agreed to carry Iraq's water at the Security Council, the likelihood is that he will be less concerned with assuring Iraq's full compliance with Security Council resolutions than with finessing those resolutions to preserve the fragile diplomatic artifice he has created. This, in turn, is likely to encourage the self-serving efforts of Russia and France, which are posturing as champions of the suffering people of Iraq to enhance their influence in Iraq and the Arab world, win contracts with Saddam's regime, and ensure the repayment of billions of dollars owed to them by that regime.

Annan and others who hail the agreement with Iraq as a great victory imply that the situation has reverted to what it was before the crisis began. This is impossible: It already was too late for that. As Peter Rodman, director of National Security Programs at the Nixon Center for Peace and Freedom, has argued,

This cannot be a return to the status quo ante, the situation before the

1. David A. Kay, "Kofi Annan's Flawed Agreement," *The New York Times*, February 25, 1998, p. 29.



confrontation started last October. Saddam has had five months to do God knows what in developing his bacteriological and nuclear programs. That lost ground in holding him back can never be recovered.²

In his agreement with Annan, Saddam merely has promised what he has pledged repeatedly to do in the past: comply with UNSCOM disarmament inspections. If he reneges on his promises, as he is likely to do in the near future, the Clinton Administration's diminished military credibility and diplomatic leverage will leave it hard-pressed to mobilize American public opinion and U.S. allies to confront Saddam. And after being rewarded for flouting U.N. resolutions for five months, Saddam will be less likely to back down without pocketing similar rewards for "resolving" future crises.

The United States faces a looming disaster in Iraq. When the next crisis occurs, the United States will have fewer options. Each time the showdown with Saddam is postponed, the Iraqi dictator becomes stronger, the United States becomes weaker, and the long-term price for rectifying the problem goes up.

THE PRICE THE UNITED STATES PAID: SETBACKS AND EMBARRASMENTS

Some may argue that these concessions to Iraq are a small price to pay to avoid a military conflict. But who is to say that a military conflict has been avoided? It is more likely that conflict merely has been postponed, to erupt in the future at Saddam's convenience when circumstances for using force are far less favorable to the United States than they are now.

Few experts believe this crisis is over. Saddam has learned that his "cheat-and-retreat" strategy gradually wears down, isolates, and undermines the United States, divides the coalition against him, and raises his stature in the Arab world. To

postpone action is not a victory for U.S. policy; it simply is a pause in a long downward spiral of diminishing U.S. credibility and influence. The United States is not finished with Saddam, and Saddam is not finished with challenging the United States.

The next time Saddam provokes another confrontation, the embattled Clinton Administration will be weaker and more isolated. President Bill Clinton's credibility has been weakened, and his ability to act constrained, by a flawed foreign policy and a succession of domestic scandals surrounding the White House. A loss of confidence in the Clinton Administration already has led Saudi Arabia, one of the foremost U.S. allies in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, to improve relations with Iran as a counterweight to Iraq. Russia also is poised to accrue greater diplomatic capital in the region as Saudi Arabia and other countries seek to take out insurance policies against Iraqi aggression by improving bilateral relations with Moscow, which can claim to be a restraining influence on Baghdad.

Saddam has compelled the United States to pay a steadily mounting price for taking the lead in containing him. He has forced the United States to expend more than \$600 million to deploy new forces to the region. He has whipped up anti-American hysteria in the Arab world, stirred up antiwar sentiment inside the United States, put the Clinton Administration on the diplomatic defensive, isolated the United States at the U.N., exacerbated declining U.S. relations with coalition members, and undermined the confidence of moderate Arab states like Saudi Arabia in U.S. leadership. And Saddam has done this while buying time to conceal his weapons of mass destruction, strengthening the credibility of those most favorably disposed toward him (Russia, France, and the U.N. Secretary General), scoring points in the Arab world by alarming Israel, boosting his propaganda campaign alleging Western responsibility for the plight of the people of Iraq, and

2. Quoted in Martin Sieff, "Allies get maneuvering room, but Saddam looks the winner," *The Washington Times*, February 24, 1998, p. A14.



putting the issue of U.N. sanctions at the forefront of the diplomatic debate.

Even more troubling, in the zero-sum geopolitical game in which he and other rogue leaders operate, Saddam will have shown the world that defying the United States pays dividends. Instead of being punished for his past transgressions, Iraq's people and other rogue states will see that he has benefited, and even has been strengthened. Moreover, Saddam has learned he can force Washington to accept compromise by turning the U.N., Russia, France, the People's Republic of China, and much of the Arab world against the United States.

It matters little that the compromises entailed in Annan's deal seem small, or that Iraq has agreed to comply with UNSCOM inspectors again. Forcing any compromise at all was a victory for the Iraqi dictator. Forcing the United States to back off in any way, particularly in light of all the trouble and expense Washington had to go through, is the beginning of the end of the sanctions regime. It strengthens Saddam's argument that time is on his side and that, inch by inch, the United States will be forced to succumb to pressures to lift sanctions on Iraq.

Saddam does not believe that the Annan mission has resolved the issues. For him, the crisis is not over—it is only temporarily defused. Now that President Clinton has blinked and accepted compromise, Saddam will bide his time, probably until U.S. forces in the region are drawn down again, and provoke another showdown in the hope that it will break the back of the U.N. coalition and erode the resolve of the United States entirely.

THE ANATOMY OF FAILURE

How did Saddam maneuver President Clinton into this box? Why was the United States so alone in trying to pressure Iraq? And how did the United States lose control of the negotiating process? Indeed, how did it happen that a U.S. President would come to depend on a U.N. official to negotiate an end to a crisis in which U.S. military forces are deployed as the main enforcers? The U.S. military would do most of the fighting and dying in any military action against Iraq; it therefore seems

reasonable that, at the very least, a negotiator from the United States should be sitting across the table from the Iraqis, not one from the U.N.

Perhaps the most important question of all is: How did President Clinton allow himself to be maneuvered into a position in which the United States could choose only from a set of bad choices? President Clinton could strike Iraq, but it would trigger worldwide opposition; or he could refrain from striking and leave Saddam free to develop weapons of mass destruction; or he could hold out for a U.N. deal, which is what happened in the end. This course of action would serve only to postpone the day of judgment, probably to a time at which it will be more difficult to resolve, and result in another major setback for U.S. diplomacy and a victory for Saddam.

The causes of this debacle are rooted in a series of mistakes by the Clinton Administration:

Mistake #1: President Clinton's negligence and missteps contributed to a crisis that may have been avoidable. Iraq's latest provocation is a consequence of an aggressive dictator's perception of U.S. weakness. The Clinton Administration has conveyed an image of weakness and indecision over the past five years in defense and foreign policy matters, particularly with regard to Iraq. Bill Clinton came into office severely underestimating the threat posed by Saddam.

While campaigning, Mr. Clinton proclaimed that he was "not obsessed with Iraq," as if bilateral tensions were a product of George Bush's personal pique with Saddam. The Clinton Administration initially softened U.S. policy toward Iraq and dropped the Bush Administration's insistence that Saddam must be ousted before the United States would agree to lift the U.N. embargo on trade with Iraq.

When Iraq launched a failed attempt to assassinate Bush in Kuwait in April 1993, the Clinton Administration equivocated before retaliating with cruise missile attacks against the Baghdad headquarters of Iraq's secret police on June 27, 1993. This attack was a mere slap on the wrist for such a brazen terrorist plot against a former U.S.



President. The limited size and symbolic nature of the U.S. reprisal—24 missiles fired at an empty building in the middle of the night—probably did little to strengthen U.S. deterrence against Saddam's aggression.

More recently, the Clinton Administration has responded feebly to other Iraqi provocations. Since 1991, Baghdad repeatedly has blocked the efforts of U.N. arms inspectors to monitor compliance with Iraq's obligations to dismantle its nuclear, chemical, biological, and long-range missile programs. Yet the Clinton Administration has done little except to pass the problem off to the listless U.N. Security Council.

The Clinton Administration put Iraq on the back burner and allowed itself to be distracted by interventions—motivated by humanitarian concerns rather than vital strategic interests—in strategic backwaters like Somalia, Bosnia, and Haiti. The United States also neglected its ally Turkey, an important pillar of efforts to contain Iraq as well as Iran, and failed to provide adequate support for the Iraqi opposition.

Iraqi opposition leaders reportedly warned U.S. officials in May 1996 that the situation in Iraqi Kurdistan was deteriorating and required urgent attention from the United States. But the Clinton Administration was asleep at the switch and failed to act diplomatically to resolve the growing tensions between Kurdish factions that erupted in open warfare that summer. One of these factions, the Kurdish Democratic Party, in despair over its failure to receive significant material or diplomatic support from Washington, went so far as to ally itself with Saddam, who has ordered the deaths of thousands of Kurds. In August 1996, Iraqi military forces invaded the Kurdish enclave and seized the city of Irbil, executing hundreds of Iraqi opposition members and forcing the United States to evacuate hundreds more.

Saddam has probed for U.S. weakness aggressively and repeatedly, and the Clinton Administration supplied it by showing too much restraint. What was at stake in the August 1996 crisis was not just the future of Iraq's Kurds, but the ability of the United States and its allies to deter future

Iraqi aggression. Yet the Clinton Administration did little except to launch symbolic pinprick air strikes against Iraqi air defense facilities in southern Iraq and extend the southern no-fly zone a few miles to the north.

The current standoff between Iraq and the United States is the result of the Clinton Administration's failure to obtain any satisfactory resolution of a crisis provoked by Saddam last October, when he barred Americans from UNSCOM inspection teams. Saddam's aim was to gut the UNSCOM inspection regime and eventually secure the lifting of U.N. economic sanctions without surrendering his cherished weapons of mass destruction. During the ensuing confrontation, the Clinton Administration unwisely acquiesced to the cosmetic diplomatic efforts of Russia's foreign minister, Evgenii Primakov, a longtime personal friend of Saddam. Primakov brokered a face-saving diplomatic exit for Saddam in November despite his obstruction of UNSCOM inspections. Although Saddam pledged to allow UNSCOM teams, including Americans, to re-enter Iraq, it soon became clear that he would not permit them to inspect "presidential" and other sensitive sites in which Iraq's clandestine programs to develop weapons of mass destruction are believed to be concealed.

Since October, Baghdad once again has had the opportunity to work clandestinely to build chemical and biological weapons. The longer this situation lasts, the more dangerous Saddam becomes. But the Clinton Administration has chosen to seek to preserve a lowest-common-denominator consensus in the U.N. Security Council that has stretched out the crisis and dissipated any momentum for forcefully rebuffing Saddam's provocations. The lack of determined U.S. leadership left a vacuum that Russia and France sought to fill.

Mistake #2: President Clinton framed the issue merely as one of compliance with U.N. resolutions. By making the main goal of diplomacy Iraqi compliance with U.N. resolutions, President Clinton surrendered the initiative in the crisis to Saddam. Saddam already had broken his



pledges to the U.N. by interfering with inspectors and by refusing further access. Thus, he already was in violation of U.N. resolutions. The issue should have been how to punish Saddam for these transgressions and how to ensure the destruction of his weapons capability, not whether he should be allowed to establish new terms for the re-entry of U.N. inspectors. Once the issue was defined as compliance, he could decide when and under what circumstances to end the crisis. This gave him time not only to hide his weapons programs, but to play out his diplomatic game.

Mistake #3: Clinton should not have let the U.N. negotiate on behalf of the United States.

By blessing Secretary General Annan's trip to Baghdad, President Clinton lost control of the negotiating process. This was a serious error. The President of the United States—the country that would be the main enforcer of any U.N. agreement Annan reached—was reduced to waiting passively for word from a U.N. official on whether Americans would or would not have to go to war. The result was not merely an agreement that was less than satisfactory; it was also a significant diminishment of U.S. influence, independence, and prestige. Annan's agreement shows that the U.N. can negotiate as an independent agent on behalf of a U.S. administration, and that it can do so even to the detriment of U.S. interests and policy.

By turning over the negotiating process to Annan, President Clinton showed very poor political judgment. Put simply, he played right into the hands of Saddam. No matter how tough the U.S. ambassador to the U.N., Bill Richardson, may have been in outlining the limits of U.S. policy, once President Clinton endorsed Annan's trip he signaled his willingness for a compromise. The pressure on President Clinton to accept a way out was enormous. Even some Clinton Administration officials were losing confidence in the military option. The very idea of dispatching a U.N. envoy to Baghdad under these circumstances was a sign that something was about to give. The fact that the Clinton Administration is not completely happy with the fine print of the agreement, even though it has pledged to be bound by it, shows the hazards of this kind of diplomatic approach.

By allowing the U.N. to negotiate on behalf of the United States in this manner, President Clinton has set a precedent that will come back to haunt both him and future U.S. Presidents. It emboldens Iraq's interlocutors on the Security Council, particularly Russia and France, and significantly increases the prestige of Annan and the U.N. as an independent force. In the future, this will make it even more difficult to challenge Annan or the Russians when they advance proposals that are at odds with U.S. interests and policy. The United States will be put even more on the defensive, taking most of the responsibility in terms of backing diplomacy with the threat of force, but at the same time losing influence over the outcome of a U.N.-made policy that directly affects U.S. security.

OUT OF THE IRAQ TRAP

President Clinton and Congress need to rethink U.S. strategy toward Iraq. The current strategy clearly is not working. To change course, and to prepare for the next round in the showdown with Saddam, the United States should:

- **Develop a comprehensive long-term strategy to overthrow Saddam.** The ultimate goal of U.S. policy should be to oust Saddam, not merely to contain him. Washington should seek to help unify and rebuild the Iraqi opposition, which was weakened severely by Saddam's August 1996 invasion of the Kurdish enclave in northern Iraq. The United States must broker a renewed alliance of Iraq's rival Kurdish factions, lift the ill-considered U.N. embargo against territory that the Kurds or other Iraqi opposition forces control, give them greater economic and political support, and guarantee them air support against any future ground attack Saddam may launch against their strongholds.

The United States should work closely with Turkey, the most dependable of Iraq's neighbors, to cement an alliance between Kurdish groups and the Iraqi National Congress, an umbrella group of democratic Iraqi opposition forces. Washington should help this coalition to set up an alternative government in



northern Iraq, help it broadcast its appeals over a Radio Free Iraq, and help it lobby for international recognition. Saddam's rule should be delegitimized, and he and his chief lieutenants should be indicted as war criminals. The United States should work to give the opposition government access to frozen Iraqi bank accounts and encourage international oil companies to negotiate with the opposition rather than Saddam's regime, as is now the case. Over time, many Iraqis would defect to the opposition government if they were convinced that the United States was serious about supporting it and protecting it from military attack.

- **Prepare for the next round in the simmering standoff against Saddam.** So long as he clings to power, Saddam will pose a threat to U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf area. Not only does his vindictive nature lead him to seek revenge on the leader of the crumbling U.N. coalition that defeated him in the Persian Gulf War, but his domestic political weakness prompts him to provoke foreign confrontations to shore up his internal base of support, strengthen his claim to leadership of the Arab world, and distract Iraq's military officers from any thoughts of a coup.

Considering Saddam's track record, it is unrealistic to expect him to abide permanently by U.N. resolutions. Therefore, the U.S. goal in the next crisis Saddam provokes should be to attack and undermine his base of power, punish him for his transgressions, and reduce his ability to threaten his neighbors and his own people. Toward these ends, the United States should prepare to unleash a robust and sustained air campaign to (1) destroy Iraq's stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, along with the facilities to produce them and means of delivering them; (2) reduce Iraq's ability to project military power by targeting Iraq's air force and elite Republican Guard; and (3) weaken the repressive internal security apparatus that keeps Saddam in power. Because Saddam will pose a dangerous threat to U.S. interests so long as he rules in Baghdad, this

air campaign should be conceived as part of a long-term strategy to build up Iraqi opposition forces and oust Saddam from power. Under the right circumstances, perhaps in support of an internal uprising, the United States should consider even committing ground troops to finish the job of toppling Saddam's regime.

The air strikes should aim to punish Saddam decisively, not just to slap his wrist with pinprick attacks as the Clinton Administration has done in the past. Washington also should consider extending the no-fly zones to cover all of Iraq. A firm U.S. military response that clearly leaves Saddam worse off for having challenged the United States can discredit his leadership and encourage further defections from his narrow base of support. Combined with the relentless application of economic sanctions and patient support for the Iraqi opposition, a strong military riposte can help create the necessary conditions for Saddam's final downfall.

- **Retrieve control of U.S. policy on Iraq from the U.N.** The United States cannot afford to sacrifice its national interests on the altar of U.N. multilateralism. A foreign policy based exclusively on enforcing U.N. resolutions would require subordinating U.S. national interests to those of Russia, France, China, and other Security Council members. If the United States had subordinated its Cold War-era efforts to contain the Soviet Union to its U.N. policy, Soviet communism would be flourishing today. Baghdad essentially has obtained near-veto power over U.N. Security Council actions by cultivating Russia, France, and China.

Instead of trying to contain and overthrow Saddam by working with these powers that lack any sense of threat from Baghdad, Washington should work closely with Saddam's neighbors, which face the most immediate threat from his aggressive regime. The United States should work with Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, Bahrain, Israel, and even Iran to build a credible military deterrent to Iraqi aggression and support the Iraqi opposition in



a patient, long-term effort to oust Saddam. If the United States cannot work out some form of ad hoc cooperation with Iran, which fought a bloody eight-year war with Iraq, then it is unlikely that it will be able to cooperate with Iran on anything else in the near future.

If Iraq provokes another crisis in the future, and the United States concludes that it must take military action, it should be prepared to act in a swift and decisive manner. It should not let the Security Council stop or constrain U.S. military action that the President and Congress have deemed necessary. The security of the United States should not be forfeited to suit the national economic and geopolitical interests of Russia, China, France, or any other member of the Security Council. Nor should it be diminished in any way to suit the political interests of Annan and the U.N.

CONCLUSION

The United States needs to take firm, consistent, and systematic action if it is to rebuff Saddam's "cheat-and-retreat" provocations, undermine his brutal regime, and undercut his ability to threaten

his neighbors and repress his own people. In responding to the immediate crisis, the United States needs to maintain a steady focus on two long-term goals: (1) forcing Saddam's downfall and (2) diminishing Iraq's threats to regional stability and the flow of oil.

It makes no sense for the United States to pull its military punches at Saddam in a misguided effort to preserve a U.N. coalition that will not support military action anyway. Rather than subcontract its foreign policy to the U.N., the United States should seek to protect its national interests through close cooperation with Saddam's neighbors, which are most threatened by his behavior. The goal should be to treat the cause and not the symptoms of Iraq's threatening behavior. This means working for Saddam's overthrow, not vainly trying to convert him into a compliant observer of U.N. resolutions.

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