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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

SPOT COMMENTARY

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IRAQ-KUWAIT: SITUATION REPORT #593

SPECIAL SPOT COMMENTARY

Saddam Calls for War but Leaves an Opening for Talks

The complete text of Iraqi President Saddam Husayn's speech this morning confirms the preliminary judgment of Situation Report #591 that his mood is defiant and uncompromising. In a prerecorded speech that was unusually fatalistic in tone, the Iraqi leader virtually pleaded for the start of the ground war but left himself some room for diplomatic maneuvering in Moscow and elsewhere.

Most of Saddam's speech was a long and rambling account of the US-Israeli conspiracy he believes is being conducted to totally destroy Iraq. Kuwait, he claimed, was never the issue, and Iraq's withdrawal was never the solution. Saddam alleged that the "events of 2 August"--his allusion to the invasion of Kuwait--were part of a plot begun in 1986 by the US, the UK, Israel, and its Arab allies to destroy Iraq's military, its religion, and its culture. He placed blame for the failure of negotiation efforts and the continuation of the war on the United States and its "greedy allies," Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Saddam made other statements:

- o He accused the United States of rejecting his 12 August and 15 February proposals, even though the latter he claimed met Western requirements that Iraq withdraw from Kuwait. Instead, he charged, the US set new and "humiliating" demands which were impossible for Iraq to accept.
- o He implied that Iraq's claims to Kuwait were still valid--"Kuwait is part of Iraq"--and that any withdrawal would be under duress.

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- o He admitted that the 15 February offer of withdrawal based on UN Security Council resolution 660 was intended to "shake the nets of the enemy court," an athletic allusion, unusual in his speeches, to dividing the ranks of Iraq's enemies.
- o He called twice for the start of the ground war. He accused the US of avoiding one and attacking instead innocent civilians to "cover up its inability to confront" Iraq's army and force concessions.

Comment: Saddam signalled his mood today by launching Scud missiles against Saudi Arabia just before and after his speech. He seems prepared for a final struggle. He almost welcomed rejection of his 15 February proposal, which he noted is still on the table. In language that is both mystical and fatalistic, he talked of martyrdom and said Iraq has no other course except to fight, "after which there will be no bright sign in the sky or brilliant light on earth." After the battle, there "will be only a glorious conclusion, where a brilliant sun will clear the dust of battle, and where the clouds of battles will be dispelled to make room for a brilliant moon surrounded by a halo." (S NF)

The speech contains some small hints which could indicate Saddam is still looking for a withdrawal deal. His claims that Iraq was lured into invading Kuwait could be intended to prepare Iraqis for withdrawal with dignity. He says Tariq Aziz has carried "directions" to Moscow, a possible reference to efforts to continue the process of negotiating for more advantageous terms. He has other senior diplomatic envoys, including Deputy Prime Minister Sa'dun Hammadi, who is already travelling to Asian capitals to solicit support for an end to the fighting. It is more likely, however, that Saddam anticipates a US rejection of any proposal for withdrawal and hopes that any apparent Iraqi diplomatic flexibility will gain him Soviet, Iranian, and international support for a cease-fire more to his liking.

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