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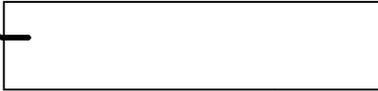
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Area Briefs

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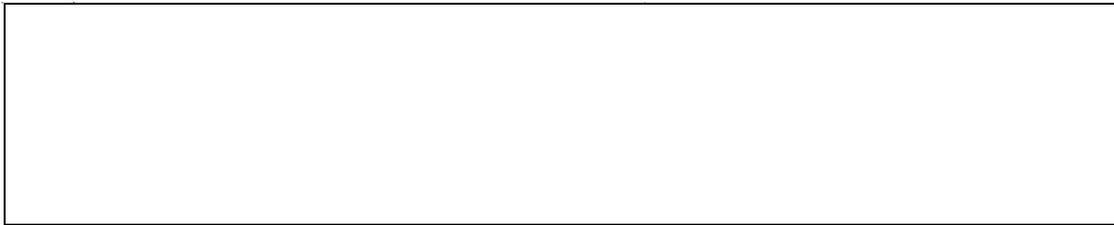
CONTENTS

page



5. Iraq: Political Situation

9



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5. IRAQ: ALTHOUGH WE DO NOT YET KNOW WHAT TOUCHED OFF THE CURRENT POLITICAL TURBULENCE IN IRAQ, OUR BEST ESTIMATE IS THAT PRESIDENT SADDAM HUSAYN OVERREACTED TO SUGGESTIONS BY OTHERS IN THE LEADERSHIP THAT HE HOLD OVERDUE BAAATH PARTY ELECTIONS TO LEGITIMIZE HIS SUCCESSION TO THE PRESIDENCY. WE HAVE NO HARD EVIDENCE POINTING TO AN ACTIVE PLOT OR COUP ATTEMPT. [REDACTED]

SPECULATION ABOUT SYRIAN BACKING FOR A CONSPIRACY AGAINST THE REGIME CONTINUES TO ABOUND IN BAGHDAD EVEN THOUGH THE GOVERNMENT'S OFFICIAL EXPLANATION STOPPED SHORT OF ACCUSING THE SYRIANS. A SECOND HIGH-RANKING SYRIAN VISITED BAGHDAD, REPORTEDLY EARLIER THIS WEEK; THIS WAS PROBABLY A FURTHER ATTEMPT BY SYRIAN PRESIDENT ASSAD TO ASSURE THE IRAQIS THAT HE HAD NO CONTACTS WITH THE ACCUSED. SOME DETERIORATION IN BILATERAL RELATIONS SEEMS INEVITABLE. UNLESS IT IS ARRESTED, IT COULD DISRUPT THE UNIFIED ARAB EFFORT TO ISOLATE EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT SADAT. [REDACTED]