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# Intelligence Report

Office of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Analysis

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## Iraq: Saddam Pressures Regional States through Military Intimidation [Redacted]

*Baghdad is attempting to intimidate and influence less militarily capable regional states through military display and implied threats of force. Saddam's use of intimidation reflects his confidence that Iraq's isolation is ending and that its return to a militarily preeminent Arab power will follow.* [Redacted]

*Saddam's recognition that progress on the international diplomatic and economic fronts is critical to the rejuvenation of his military tempers his aggressive behavior. Baghdad has refrained from publicizing recent military deployments as a show of force—attracting the attention of regional leaders without giving them cause to complain publicly about Iraqi aggression—while publicizing military parades that pose no immediate threat beyond Iraq's borders:*

- *Saddam took advantage of recent Arab-Israeli tensions to deploy military units to west-central Iraq in October and November but refrained from announcing the deployments in press.*
- *Baghdad has coupled pro-Palestinian rhetoric with the raising of a volunteer army to "liberate" Jerusalem and with massive military parades in November and December—none of which could be condemned by other Arab states as threatening their borders.*
- *The Iraqi press carries public predictions about anti-US terror activities to menace US allies without implicating Baghdad.* [Redacted]

*If Saddam missteps and threatens his weaker Arab neighbors directly, he will lose diplomatic support in his quest to end Iraq's international isolation. A lessening of Palestinian-Israeli tensions and/or more positive Arab perceptions of the US role in the peace process also would deprive him of opportunities for military activity.*

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**Saddam Pressures Regional States through Military Intimidation**

Saddam is attempting to intimidate and influence less militarily capable regional states—in particular, the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council and Jordan—through displays of military strength and implied threats of force.

Saddam recognizes that progress on the international diplomatic and economic fronts is critical to the rejuvenation of his military, which will temper aggressive behavior. Baghdad has refrained from publicizing recent military deployments as a show of force—attracting the attention of regional Arab leaders without giving them cause to complain publicly about Iraqi aggression—while publicizing military parades that receive the commendation of the Arab street but pose no immediate threat beyond Iraq's borders.

**Baghdad Quietly Deploys Forces in West-Central Iraq (U)**

Baghdad made an effort to use the military as a propaganda tool by taking advantage of ongoing Arab-Israeli tensions to deploy regular army and Republican Guard units to west-central Iraq in October and November but refrained from publicly announcing the moves. The deployments gave Baghdad the option to respond to potential Syrian requests for ground support in combat with Israel—in addition to providing Iraqi military planners with logistics experience—but they also served to remind neighboring Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait of Iraq's military presence.

- Saddam is aware that the US and its regional allies detect deployments to the area because of official US statements during the initial October deployments that warned Baghdad against military aggression.
- Baghdad publicly denies that it is pressuring its Arab neighbors but subtly drew their attention to the Iraqi military presence: responding to Kuwaiti remarks on Iraqi movements in late November, an Iraqi spokesman explained that Kuwait “considers every Iraqi... statement a threat” and asked, “[W]hat suspicious movements is this minister talking about?”

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**Peaceful Parades, Bellicose Messages** [redacted]

Baghdad conducted large military parades in November and December 2000 amidst calls for jihad, raising the military's profile and signaling to other Arab states that Iraq remains a regional military power. Saddam avoided giving neighbors grounds for complaint, however, because the parades did not threaten borders.

- The December 31 "Al-Aqsa Call" parade was the largest Iraqi military display since the invasion of Kuwait.
- The Iraqi press explained the December parade demonstrated the army has "the capability to defend the security of Iraq and that of the Arab nation at any time and place"; the parade was "a message to the US enemy and to the enemies who have ambitions in our territories that they should understand the capability and efficiency of this army." [redacted]

Palestinian-Israeli tensions provide Baghdad with the cover to display military power before a regional audience because concerns about the Arab street's strong sympathy toward the Palestinians constrains other Arab leaders from criticizing the moves. Baghdad conducted both the November and December parades in support of the Palestinians, where Saddam coupled anti-Israeli and pro-Palestinian rhetoric with the raising of a volunteer army to "liberate" Jerusalem, according to press reports.

- The thirteen-hour-long November 20 "Jerusalem Day" parade featured the procession of thousands of lightly-armed volunteers, and the December 31 parade was named for the most important mosque in Jerusalem. [redacted]

**Iraq Predicts Terrorist Attacks but Sidesteps Accountability** [redacted]

The Iraqi press carries public predictions about anti-US terror activities in the Middle East—especially terrorist activities in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait—to unnerve US allies without implicating Baghdad. Citing the potential for terrorism is another of Saddam's psychological devices designed to make neighboring states cognizant of Iraq's rising position.

- A recent Iraqi press report noted "commando" attacks in Yemen, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan against US and Israeli interests as evidence that "Arabian Gulf states" connected with the US "are likely to face explosions" in the near future.



- Iraqi news sources generally cite the anger of the Arab street at US allies' pro-US or pro-Israeli policies as the root cause of regional terrorism, implying that governments at odds with the US—such as Iraq—have no control over the violence. 

**Saddam Walks a Rhetorical Tightrope** 

Saddam's balancing act reveals his main vulnerability: the potential for losing the backing of supporters in the international community in his quest to end Baghdad's international isolation if he missteps and threatens less militarily capable Arab states directly.

- Iraq has avoided combining deployments and parades with rhetoric that its Arab neighbors would condemn as bellicose and has kept its military displays sufficiently distant from their borders. Saddam's record, however, suggests he will continue to push until he overplays his hand and suffers a regional diplomatic setback. 

A lessening of Palestinian-Israeli tensions or more positive Arab perceptions of the US role in the peace process also would deprive Baghdad of opportunities for military activity. Indeed, a sharp decline in Palestinian-Israeli violence would allow Saddam's regional critics to voice concerns over Iraqi belligerency without sounding "soft" on Arab-Israeli issues. 