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Outline for Briefing
for General Bin Shakir

13 December 1983

Iran-Iraq

Fighting in the north has stabilized, and deteriorating weather conditions there are likely to preclude a resumption of major operations during the coming months. The seemingly endless war and the deteriorating economic situation in Iraq increase the likelihood that Baghdad will carry out its plan to break the stalemate by attacking Iranian oil facilities in the Persian Gulf.

- o Iran's offensive near Panjwin last month captured several hundred square kilometers of Iraqi territory and resulted in heavy casualties on both sides.
- o Iraq's foreign exchange reserves are now less than \$5 billion. It has had to slash imports, arrange \$5 billion in deferred payments with foreign suppliers, sell gold, and cut combat pay.
- o Despite military and financial problems and a recent purge of his half-brothers, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is in no immediate danger of falling from power.

Baghdad may be close to implementing plans for escalation of the war in the Gulf.

- o Baghdad apparently has nearly completed preparations for massive air strikes against Khark Island.
- o The Super Etendard fighter aircraft, delivered to Iraq in October, may have been moved to southern Iraq and [redacted] they are now ready for combat. 25X1
- o Baghdad also has moved additional MIG-23 fighter-bombers and surface-to-air missiles to southern Iraq.
- o The Iraqis are attacking merchant ships en route to Iranian ports more frequently. Two were hit late last month, and Baghdad claims to have sunk six more last week.
- o With some 450 fighter-bombers, Iraq has air superiority on every front, including the northern sector of the Persian Gulf.

Iran has threatened to close the Gulf if its oil exports are seriously disrupted.

- o Tehran has increased reconnaissance activity near the Strait of Hormuz but has not yet significantly upgraded its military forces near the strait.
- o Iran has the capability to mine or blockade the Strait of Hormuz but is more likely initially to choose less drastic options.

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