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Talking Points for the DDI

How Can the United States Help Iraq?
22 July 1986

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The United States can do little militarily--short of direct combat intervention--that would improve Iraq's military position against Iran. Increased US political and economic support would strengthen Baghdad temporarily but would not overcome Iraq's main weakness--Saddam Husayn's mishandling of the war. Even a change of leaders would not necessarily improve the situation because Saddam's successors are likely to continue the same policies in the near term.

Baghdad's meddling in military matters and its unwillingness to use its forces effectively undermine Iraq's overwhelming superiority in firepower and equipment.

- Iraq has no shortage of modern military equipment and has the largest army in the Arab world. Baghdad's fear of casualties and equipment losses hinders Iraq's use of such forces--especially its air force.
- Baghdad has never allowed Soviet advisors among combat units and is unlikely to allow US advisors in Iraq. Iraq has competent commanders, but they are prevented from fighting effectively.

Increased US political support would improve Iraqi morale only temporarily. Strong US pressure on countries to limit or reduce their political and economic support for Iran would be needed to offset the growing view that Iran will win the war.

- Direct US expressions of support and pressure on Arab countries to maintain or increase their political and economic aid would shore up flagging Iraqi civilian morale. Without an improvement in the military situation, however, civilian support for the regime and the war will continue to erode.

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- Pressure from Arab leaders--President Mubarak and King Husayn of Jordan--might persuade Baghdad to alter its battlefield tactics.
- Maintaining the arms embargo against Iran remains crucial in limiting Tehran's military capabilities against Iraq. A weakened embargo may give Iran just enough ammunition or new artillery to launch an offensive that would cause Iraq's defenses to crumble.

US economic support would help reduce current Iraqi economic difficulties that are likely to add considerably to a decline in Iraqi morale.

- US approval of Exim Bank financing would encourage other countries to provide Baghdad with additional credit to buy imports.
- Additional purchases by US firms of Iraqi oil would slightly improve Baghdad's foreign exchange situation.

IRAQ-IRAN MILITARY FORCES

| | <u>Iraq</u> | <u>Iran</u> |
|--------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| Ground Forces Manpower | 800,000 | 800,000 to 1,000,000 |
| Armored Vehicles | 7,000 | 500-600 |
| Artillery | 2,400 | 900 |
| Operational Combat Aircraft | 550 | 50 |

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