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[Redacted] **Saddam's Military Preparations  
for War: Intentions and Capabilities**

APPROVED FOR RELEASE [Redacted]  
DATE: 10-11-2011

NIE 2002-17HC  
October 2002

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*NIE 2002-17HC*

[redacted] **Saddam's Preparations for War:  
Intentions and Capabilities**

[redacted] **This Estimate was approved for publication by the  
National Foreign Intelligence Board under the  
authority of the Director of Central Intelligence.**

[redacted] *Prepared under the auspices of Major General John R. Landry USA (ret),  
National Intelligence Officer for Conventional Military Issues.  
Inquiries may be directed to the NIO [redacted]*

*October 2002*

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## Scope Note

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[redacted] This National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) responds to a request from the Director of Central Intelligence to examine Saddam's near-term military objectives, strategy, and capabilities in a war against the US and Coalition forces. The Estimate also assesses what Saddam probably knows about and how he probably would respond to US/Coalition preparations for war. It considers the expected response of key regional states.

[redacted] This Estimate does not cover specific weapons of mass destruction (WMD) or ballistic missiles but does examine Iraq's likely incorporation of biological and chemical weapons and ballistic missiles into military operations during a war.



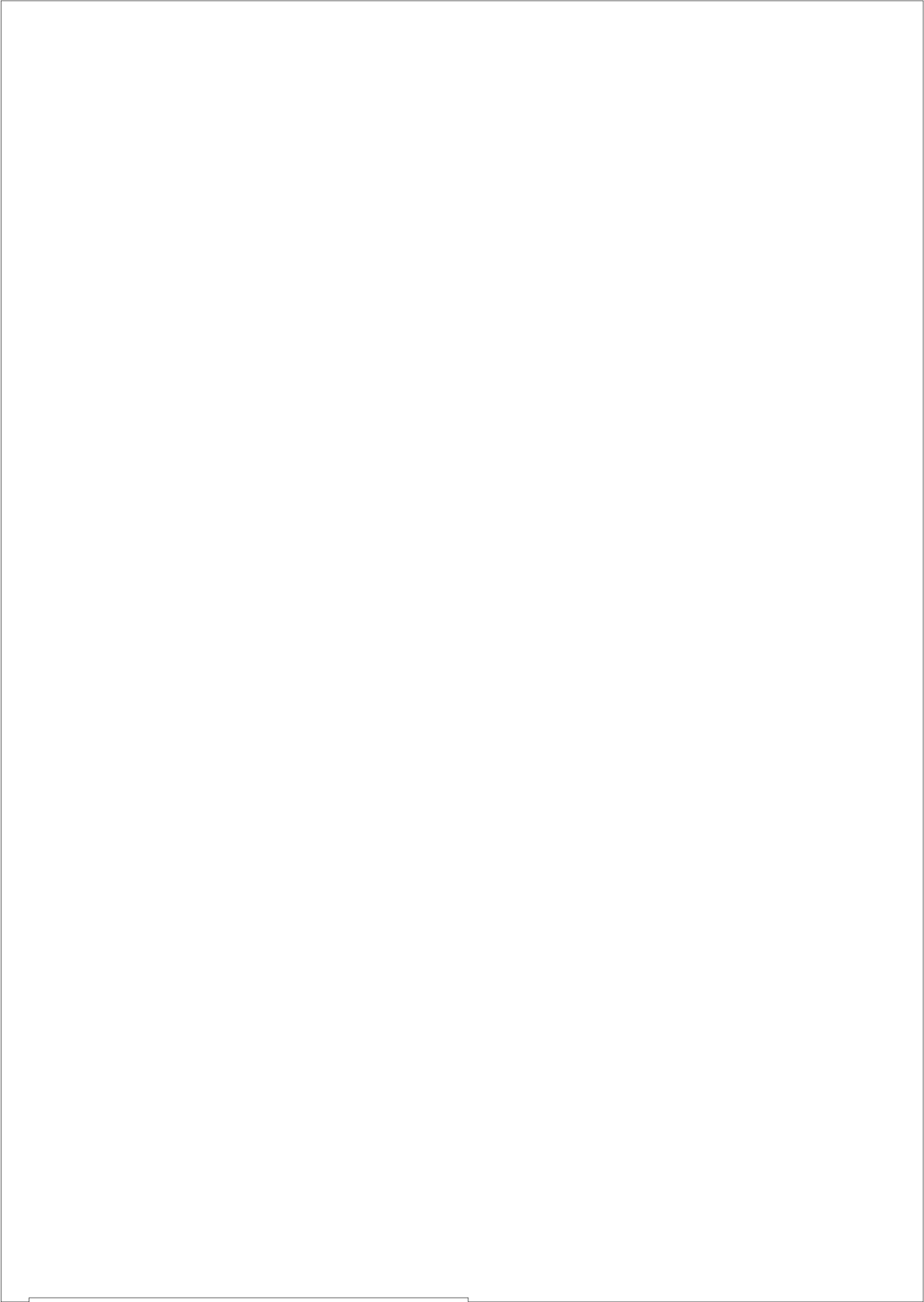
**What Has Changed Since Our Last Estimate On Iraq's Military**

The assessments and projections in our last estimate, (U) *Iraqi Military Capabilities Through 2003 (NIE 99-04)*, ~~SECRET~~/ [redacted] which covered the period between 1999 and 2003, were generally accurate and, in terms of depicting the systemic strengths and weaknesses of Iraq's conventional military, remain largely true today.

- The Iraqi military remains less capable than the force the Coalition faced in 1991, though it is still among the region's largest.
- Weaknesses in personnel and procedures continue to hamper Iraq's military capability. Military morale and battlefield cohesion remain Iraq's Achilles heel.
- Iraq's military equipment consists primarily of older models; much is obsolete by Western standards. Sanctions have continued to limit Saddam's ability to upgrade and modernize the bulk of his inventory.

Over the last four years, Saddam has had more success in ignoring and undermining UN-imposed sanctions than we anticipated in the 1999 NIE, allowing Iraq to stem a precipitous decline in military readiness evident at low points in 1995 and even in 1999. Saddam's forces have begun slowly recovering some capabilities over the past several years, particularly since the Oil-for-Food program was implemented. Saddam nevertheless will find it tough to sustain a high intensity conventional conflict.

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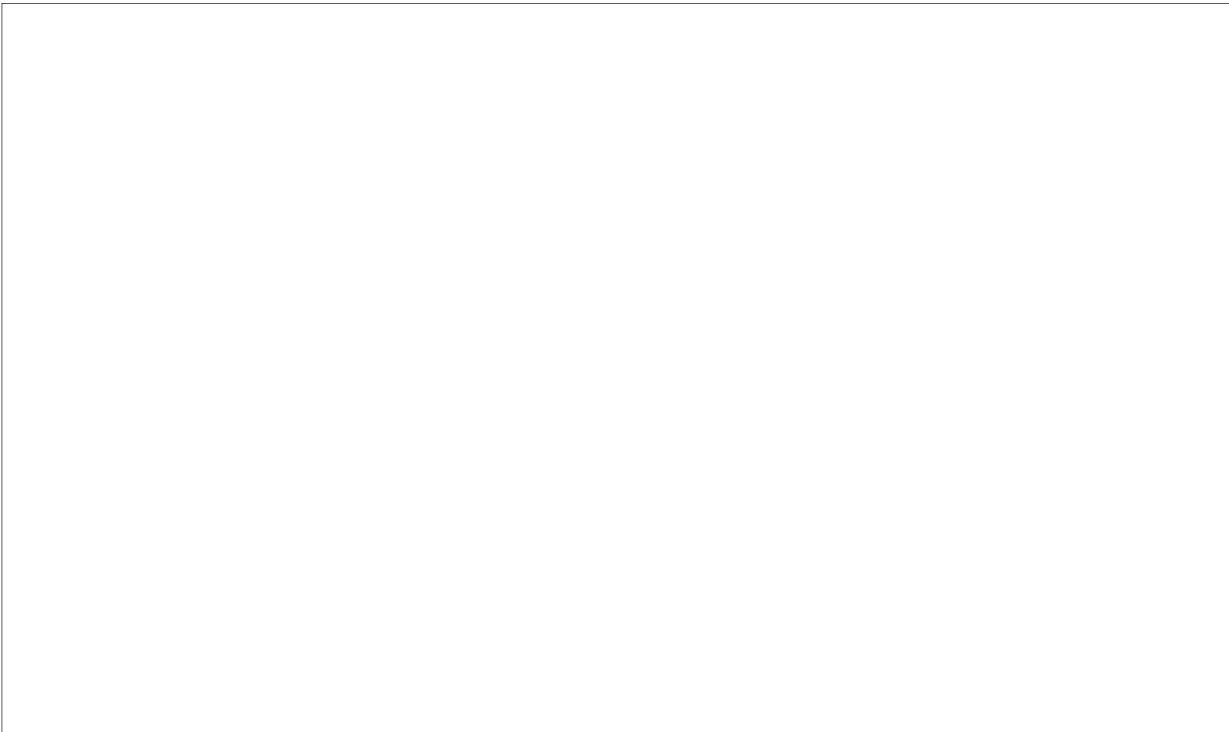


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## Key Judgments

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### [REDACTED] **Saddam's Preparations for War: Intentions and Capabilities**

[REDACTED] **Saddam is preparing for war while also trying to delay or prevent an attack by manipulating the UN and the international community to apply pressure on the United States.**

- War preparations include protecting key elements of the regime from external attacks and internal revolt, concealing and shielding critical national infrastructure, and readying the military for combat.
- Iraq's diplomatic and information campaign includes economic incentives and threats; bribes designed to secure favorable media support, particularly in Europe; attempts to exploit the Palestinian *intifadah*; and portraying US operations as a war against the Arabs.

### [REDACTED] **How Saddam Will Fight**

[REDACTED] **Saddam's aim will be to prevent the regime's destruction and to terminate a war with as many of his forces intact and as much of his territory under his control as possible.** He probably will seek to limit the damage from air and missile operations and defend-in-depth in urban and other restricted terrain, particularly flooded areas along the Tigris and Euphrates river basins, with final defenses arrayed in and around Baghdad. Saddam's intent will be to delay defeat, inflict as many casualties as possible, and encourage international intervention to stop the war before he is destroyed.

- The Iraqi military probably is preparing to flood the lower Tigris and Euphrates river basins and is preparing to drop bridges in front of advancing US and Coalition forces.
- Preparations reportedly are underway to destroy power stations, oil wells, food supplies, and other civil infrastructure in front of advancing US forces, to create a humanitarian emergency and slow the attack.
- Iraqi leaders probably are planning to intensify and publicize US collateral damage. Some options might involve deliberate Iraqi attacks on civilians, possibly with chemical or biological weapons, disguised to appear as the result of US operations.
- The Regime reportedly is attempting to enlist individuals to conduct suicide missions, coordinated by the Iraqi Intelligence Service.

**Iraq's Forces and Equipment Inventories as Compared to Other Regional Powers<sup>a</sup>**

	Iraq	GCC	Iran	Syria	
<b>1994</b>	Manpower <sup>b</sup>	400,000	215,000	345,000	315,000
	Tanks	2,700	1,300	1,300	4,600
	APC/IFV	4,300	5,200	1,300	5,100
	Artillery	2,100	700	2,300	2,100
	MRLS	220	100	700	500
	Combat Aircraft	340	400	190	480
<b>1999</b>	Manpower	350,000	248,000	350,000	215,000
	Tanks	2,600	1,900	1,700	4,800
	APC/IFV	3,300 <sup>c, d</sup>	7,200	1,500	5,300
	Artillery	2,000	1,233	2,600	2,000
	MRLS	210	200	900 <sup>d</sup>	500
	Combat Aircraft <sup>f</sup>	310	440	360	450
<b>2002</b>	Manpower	375,000	320,000	350,000	215,000
	Tanks	2,400 <sup>e</sup>	2,100	1,750	4,800
	APC/IFV <sup>d</sup>	3,400 <sup>e</sup>	8,100	1,900	5,900
	Artillery	2,000 <sup>g</sup>	900	2,650	2,000
	MRLS	210	150	900	500
	Combat Aircraft <sup>f</sup>	300	520	430	470

<sup>a</sup> This includes only personnel on active duty.

<sup>b</sup> Ground forces personnel only.

<sup>c</sup> Includes some command vehicles that were not included in 1994 Iraqi totals.

<sup>d</sup> Includes reconnaissance vehicles that were not included in 1994 Iraqi totals.

<sup>e</sup> Equipment totals represent inventory for total weapon holdings, including some equipment not in service or not assigned to units.

<sup>f</sup> Fighter/fighter-bombers.

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Iraq probably is preparing conventional preemptive options against US forces staging in Kuwait, Turkey, or other regional bases; to attack in the north against the Kurds if US forces move into the area or begin training opposition forces there; and to strike Israel, hoping to provoke an Israeli response that would inflame Arab publics.

Iraq's preemptive conventional attacks could include raids with SOF forces or Iraqi Ground Force units or attempts to launch conventional air strikes or short-range ballistic missile attacks against US forces building up in Kuwait or in other areas contiguous to Iraq's frontiers.



[REDACTED] We judge that Saddam probably would withhold such attacks until he concluded that his diplomatic options to prevent war had vanished and that a US attack was inevitable and imminent. Saddam's conventional preemptive attacks are not likely to succeed significantly in delaying or damaging US/Coalition operations except in the north where Iraqi attacks could produce panic, significant refugee flows, and obstruction of Coalition operations.

[REDACTED] **We have low confidence in our ability to assess when Saddam might use WMD.**

- Saddam could decide to use chemical and biological warfare (CBW) preemptively against US forces, friends, and allies in the region in an attempt to disrupt US war preparations and undermine the political will of the Coalition. The Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research believes that such an action is highly unlikely.
- Saddam might use CBW after an initial advance into Iraqi territory, but early use could foreclose diplomatic options for stalling the US advance.
- He probably would use CBW when he perceived he irretrievably had lost control of the military and security situation, but we are unlikely to know when he reaches that point.
- Saddam historically has maintained tight control over the use of WMD; however, he probably has provided contingency instructions to his commanders to use CBW in specific circumstances.

[REDACTED] **Will The Iraqi Military Fight And For How Long?**

[REDACTED] **Unit Cohesion, Troop Morale and Saddam's Wrath: Keys to Iraq's Staying Power.**

We assess that Saddam will have difficulty in maintaining the military's will to fight and that some Iraqi military units may defect or even turn against the regime.

- Many Iraqi Regular Army (RA) personnel reportedly are planning either to surrender or return home without fighting if the United States invades Iraq.

[REDACTED] Perceptions of US intentions for post-Saddam Iraq and the role of the opposition in a post-conflict Iraq are critically important, particularly within the Republican Guard (RG) and the Security Services, in determining how long and how hard Saddam's most elite units will fight. Fears that the United States intends to end traditional Sunni Arab preeminence could give the regime an opportunity to rally the support of key leaders to Saddam.

[REDACTED] Some of Saddam's military leaders probably will struggle with carrying out orders to use WMD. Their decision will hinge upon their assessment of the consequences of disobeying orders and facing Saddam's wrath versus the prospects for the regime's eventual collapse. Some of these leaders may choose not to carry out orders to use WMD, fearing possible personal consequences after a Coalition victory.

- Based on historical precedent, we expect Saddam to take hostage families of senior military, intelligence, and security officials to ensure they obey orders.

[redacted] **Iraq's Military Capabilities and Readiness to Fight**

[redacted] **Considerable Strengths.** Iraq's military remains larger than that of the combined Gulf Cooperation Council states and other Arab neighbors, has greater combat experience and logistical competence, and has proven able to implement technical and tactical innovations to overcome specific obstacles.

[redacted] **But Enduring Vulnerabilities.** Nevertheless, Iraq's military suffers from long-standing, endemic vulnerabilities that undermine troop morale, impair unit cohesion, hinder combat leadership, and limit Iraq's ability to exploit the full effectiveness of the relatively few modern weapons it possesses. Iraqi logistics constraints are significant.

[redacted] **Iraq's Ground Forces** are less than half the size of their 1990-1991 predecessors and less capable, but they are strong enough to overwhelm Kuwait and Saudi Arabia absent US/Coalition intervention.

- Iraq fields 23 divisions with 375,000 soldiers today compared to 70 divisions and over a million soldiers in 1991. Six divisions—the Republican Guard Forces Command—are the backbone of the Army, recruited from that part of the Iraqi population most loyal to Saddam.
- Republican Guard (RG) units almost certainly would provide greatest resistance to a US attack. Three RG armor divisions and one infantry division guard the outer perimeter of Baghdad; the two remaining RG divisions are deployed in the north. All Iraqi ground forces stationed in the south are less well-trained and equipped Regular Army units.

[redacted] **Iraq's Air Defenses: Limited Threat to US/Coalition Forces.** Saddam's air defenses were severely attrited during Desert Storm and subsequent operations against Coalition air forces in the No-Fly-Zones (NFZs). UN sanctions and arms embargoes have prevented significant improvements. Despite determined and persistent Iraqi refurbishment campaigns, changes in tactics, and some equipment modifications, Iraq's air defenses are far less capable today than in 1991.

- We judge that some Iraqi air defense commanders likely will adopt at the outset of a conflict a more aggressive posture than we have observed during most of 2000-2002, trading survivability to achieve potentially greater lethality. At the same time, others will emphasize mobility and reduced radar emissions where possible to limit damage, complicate US/Coalition operations, and restrict the operational freedom of air power for as long as possible.
- Iraq has stepped up efforts to acquire Global Positioning System (GPS) jammers in anticipation of US military action according to a variety of reporting. [redacted]

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[redacted] **We expect the Iraqi Air Force would not be a significant factor in a war with the United States.** Iraq has fewer than half the number of fighters today than during the Gulf war, and only about 260 of 300 aircraft in the Air Force are flyable. A small cadre of experienced pilots remain capable of executing core air defense, ground attack, maritime strike, and reconnaissance but would face severe challenges carrying them out in the presence of Coalition power.

[redacted] **The Iraqi Navy remains the smallest of Saddam's military forces and is incapable of defending Iraq's territorial waters.** Saddam has been able to maintain a small inventory of coastal defense cruise missiles (CDCMs) as well as possibly over a thousand contact and influence mines. Despite severe deficiencies, these capabilities could be directed at disrupting Coalition maritime operations; mines would pose the greatest challenge once deployed.

[redacted] **Regional Support for A US-Led War Against Iraq**

[redacted] Most Gulf Arab leaders quietly will provide support for US combat operations from Kuwait and Qatar to topple Saddam, even without UN or Saudi approval.

[redacted] **Regional Dynamics Once Military Operations Begin**

[redacted] Once hostilities are under way high civilian casualties broadcast on independent Arab media would put significant public pressure on US Arab allies to withhold all but the most clandestine support for US military operations. If the war is prolonged, these difficulties will increase.



[redacted] **Implications for US and Coalition Forces**

[redacted] **Potential Challenges to Coalition Cohesion.** Saddam almost certainly will seek to exploit vulnerabilities he perceives in the Coalition to disrupt operations, dissuade further deployments, or force early withdrawal of partners. We believe all potential US partners would respond favorably to a US commitment to revive the Arab-Israeli peace process, preserve Iraq's borders, and compensate neighboring states for economic losses from an invasion.

[redacted] **Humanitarian Requirements.** Even before the end of a war, US and Coalition forces will face enormous requirements to meet the humanitarian needs of Iraqi civilians. If Saddam adopted a scorched earth policy—and some intelligence reporting suggests he will—advancing forces will be confronted with large-scale destruction of oil and power facilities, the contamination of food supplies and other potential environmental devastation.

- We estimate that as many as several million civilians may need food, shelter, and medical assistance.
- Decontamination and medical requirements among civilian CBW casualties if Saddam employed WMD could produce enormous strains on US/Coalition logistics.

[redacted] **POWs and Hostages.** The Iraqi regime's actions related to the continuing DoD investigation of Navy Captain Speicher's fate suggest Saddam and his key leaders may try to use tactics and techniques learned from the Speicher case to deceive or confuse US or Coalition

efforts to fully account for missing, captured, or detained personnel during a conflict. Saddam would hope to extract value in return for the release of any personnel he might hold.

- Saddam also probably will use POWs—as well as other captives, hostages, or international guests—as human shields to protect him and the assets he values most.

[redacted] **Confidence Levels for Selected Key Judgments in the Estimate.**

[redacted] **High Confidence:**

- Saddam's preparation of Iraq for war while continuing to diplomatically delay or prevent a US-led attack against him.
- Saddam's aims: prevent the regime's destruction and preserve as many military forces and as much territory under his control as possible.
- The current status and readiness of Saddam's military.

[redacted] **Moderate Confidence:**

- Iraq's likely defensive orientation: defense-in-depth using urban areas and flooded river basins.
- Support the United States is likely to receive from Arab states and Turkey; expected reactions of Iran and Syria in the event of war.

- [redacted]
- The level of resistance that Saddam's military and security forces would mount against a US/Coalition attack.
  - Our ability to assess when Saddam might use WMD and whether Saddam's key military leaders would obey orders to use WMD.
  - Expected reactions of key regional states—and likely follow-on conflict dynamics—if Iraq used CBW weapons against Israel.



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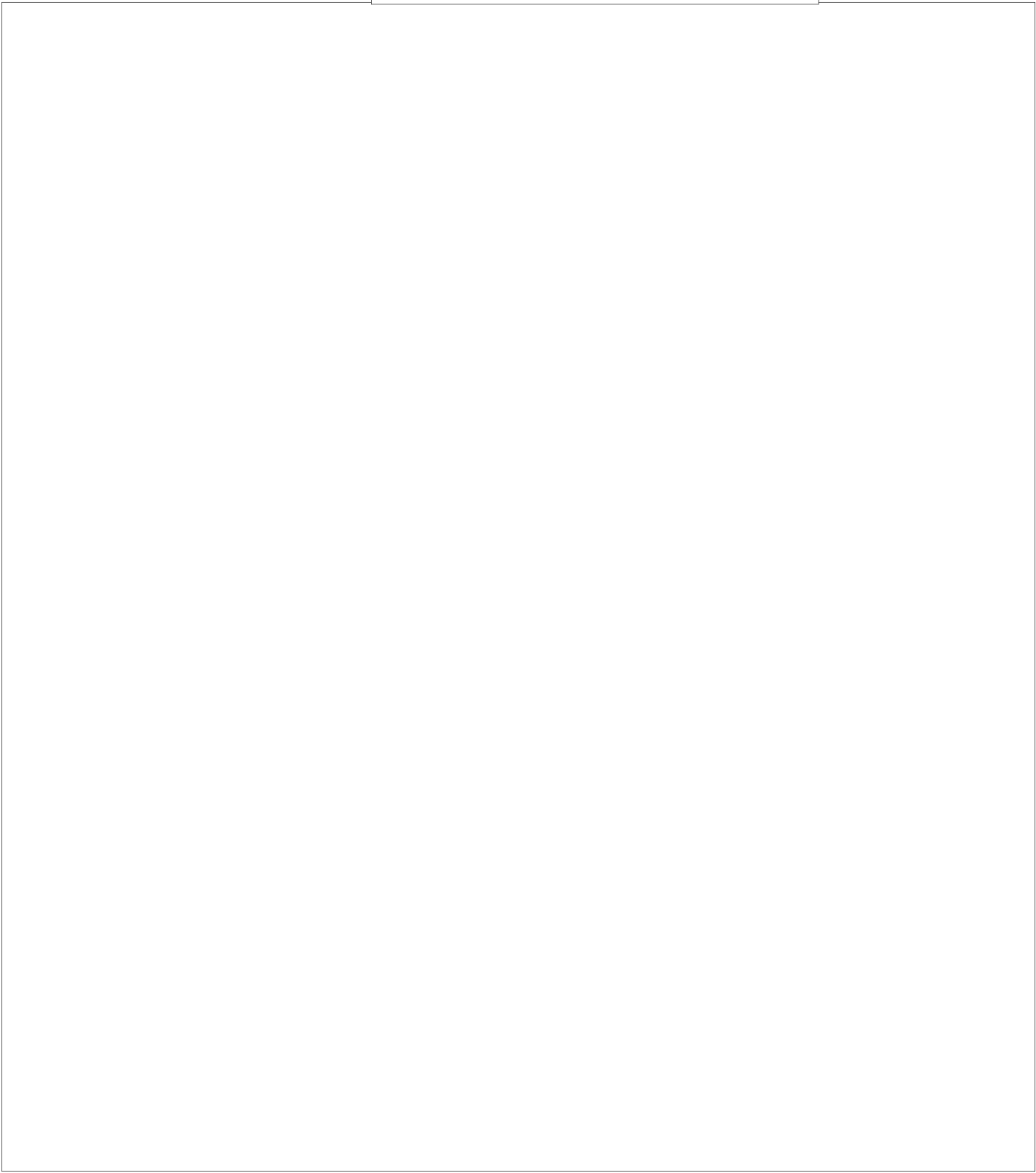
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