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Page 29 - 33; 51, 52

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Worldwide Threat – Converging Dangers in the Post 9/11 World

Testimony of Director of Central Intelligence

George J. Tenet *Re: Iraq*

Before the

Senate Armed Services Committee

19 March 2002

[Redacted] Mr. Chairman, I appear before you this year under circumstances that are extraordinary and historic for reasons I need not recount. Never before has the subject of this annual threat briefing had more immediate resonance. Never before have the dangers been more clear or more present.

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[Redacted] The threats I will outline today demand our utmost response. We are at war. This requires vigilance, determination, and full mobilization of our resources. I want to assure you that the entire Intelligence Community has embraced this mission and is wholeheartedly devoted to it. As I address the various threats today, I will be telling you precisely what we are doing to meet the challenges that confront us.

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[Redacted] September 11 brought together and brought home—literally—several vital threats to the United States and its interests abroad that we have long been aware of, and long been warning. None of the threats I am going to outline for you is new. Nor is the convergence between them new. But it is this convergence that I want to emphasize up front, because this above all is what September 11 demonstrated to us.

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* Terrorists are threatening to use against us weapons of mass destruction and cyber warfare—things I have long cited as threats in themselves.

* Terrorists are also exploiting threats in other parts of the world that I have cited in past years as independent dangers to the United States. These include the slowdown in the world economy, our dependence on vital transportation and communications infrastructures, unstable or unreliable governments among our allies and friends, and resentment of US power in the developing world.

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[Redacted] Turning now to Iraq, Mr. Chairman: Saddam has been watching our operations in Afghanistan, and he is nervous. He is eager to stave off military action against his regime, and has mounted a political and diplomatic charm offensive to make it appear that Baghdad is becoming more flexible on UN sanctions and inspections issues.

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* Saddam told a gathering of Iraqi diplomats in January that keeping Iraq safe would require greater "openness" with Arab and non-Arab countries, and the possible return of inspectors.

* Last month Baghdad allowed the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights to visit Iraq, after having refused his visa requests for nearly a decade.

* Earlier this month, Iraq's Foreign Minister met with UN Secretary General Annan for the first time in over a year to discuss resolutions pertaining to Iraq, and agreed to meet again next month. Saddam then quickly dispatched senior officials to the region to drum up support for Baghdad.

* Iraq has allowed IAEA inspectors to examine stockpiles of low-enriched uranium—but not aspects of Iraq's nuclear weapons program.

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[Redacted] That said, Saddam is compromising neither his anti-US message nor his key goals of thwarting UN sanctions, carving out a leadership role in the Arab world, and pursuing weapons of mass destruction.

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* Baghdad's anti-American rhetoric remains virulent, and Saddam is one of the most vocal supporters of the Palestinian intifadah in the Arab world. Early this month he rejected a Saudi peace proposal and urged Arab countries to support the intifadah with money, men, and weapons.

* There is no sign that Saddam will accept the intrusive UN weapons inspections that we demand. His strategy appears to be to string out negotiations with the UN for as long as possible, hoping that in the meantime international support for military action against Iraq will dissipate.

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Saddam is focused on preserving his WMD capabilities in part because his conventional military capability has declined due to the UN arms embargo and damage inflicted by coalition military operations. Iraq's military today is less than half its pre-Gulf War size—down from 1 million to 350,000 troops.

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* Only about 60 percent of the Iraqi Air Force's 300 fighter aircraft are either fully or partially mission-capable because of inadequate spare parts and maintenance.

* Even these reduced forces, however, are more that sufficient to defeat opposition groups, which are more poorly equipped. Saddam's forces also remain large enough by comparison to overrun Kuwait absent Western intervention.

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[Redacted] Saddam maintains his grip on power through a layered and overlapping security infrastructure headed by his younger son Qusay. [Redacted]

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* Baghdad, however, has not faced major unrest from the majority Shia population since after the February 1999 death of prominent Shia leader Muhammad Baqr al-Sadr, and the northern Kurdish parties still pose no direct threat to Saddam's military and security services.

[Redacted] Saddam separately has been buoyed by the progressive decrease in Baghdad's international isolation. As the peace process spirals down and engaging Iraq commercially becomes more appealing, other states in the region appear to be losing the political will to support the sanctions regime.

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[redacted] Infighting in northern Iraq could give Baghdad an excuse to move against the Kurds. Saddam has harbored the goal of retaking northern Iraq since the Gulf War, and he undoubtedly intends to do so at a time of his choosing. That said, he appears to have adopted a measured approach that emphasizes exploiting intra-Kurdish tensions and maintaining ties with all regional actors, including Turkey and Iran.

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* Baghdad last fall probably struck a deal with the Kurds to reconnect Kurdish-controlled areas to the Iraqi electricity grid. It has also warned that it is ready to retake control of the north if the Kurds allow the US to use it as a staging ground for attacks.

[redacted] We continue to watch for any signs of Iraqi involvement in terrorist activities. Baghdad has a long history of supporting terrorism, altering its targets to reflect changing priorities and goals. Over several decades, Iraq has evolved from an indiscriminate sponsor of anti-Western terrorism to more narrowly focused efforts, targeting primarily Saddam's political opponents and local regional foes.

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* Although terrorism is one of many tools Saddam has at his disposal, his main focus recently has been on moving away from a foreign policy defined by UN sanctions and toward an agenda that centers on Iraq's reemergence as a dominant Arab player. Baghdad's strategy to isolate Washington in the region and in the Security Council would be severely undermined if the regime were implicated in terrorism against the West.

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[Redacted] Baghdad's connections to al-Qa'ida are tenuous, but they appear to have maintained a mutually wary relationship for nearly a decade.

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[Redacted] Mr. Chairman, I move next to Iran, where pressure for social and political change is building:

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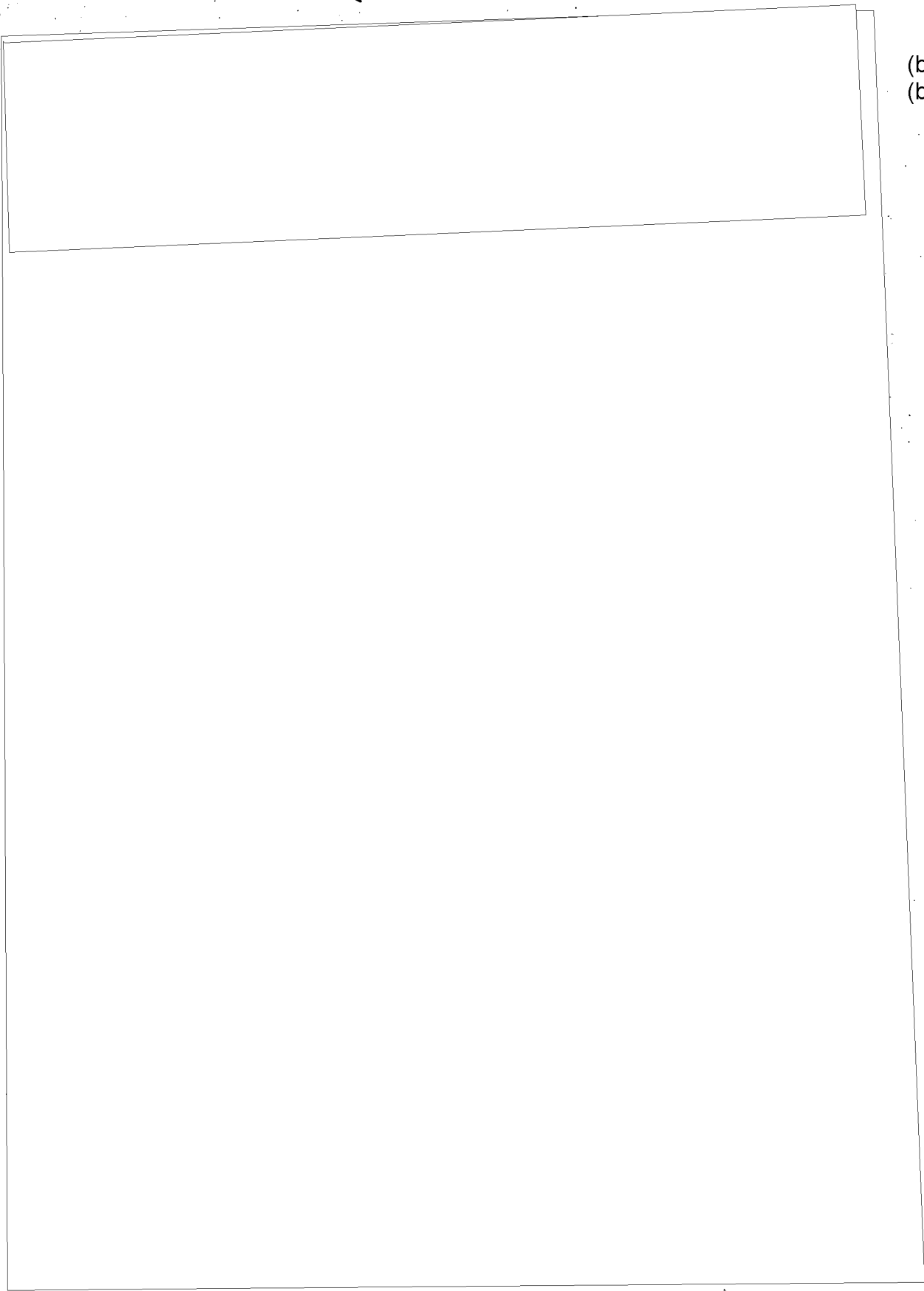
* Discontent with the current situation is widespread and cuts across the social spectrum. Complaints focus on the lack of pluralism and government accountability, social restrictions, and poor economic performance. Iranians—particularly the burgeoning number of educated youth—face grim economic prospects, including chronic unemployment, high inflation, and a

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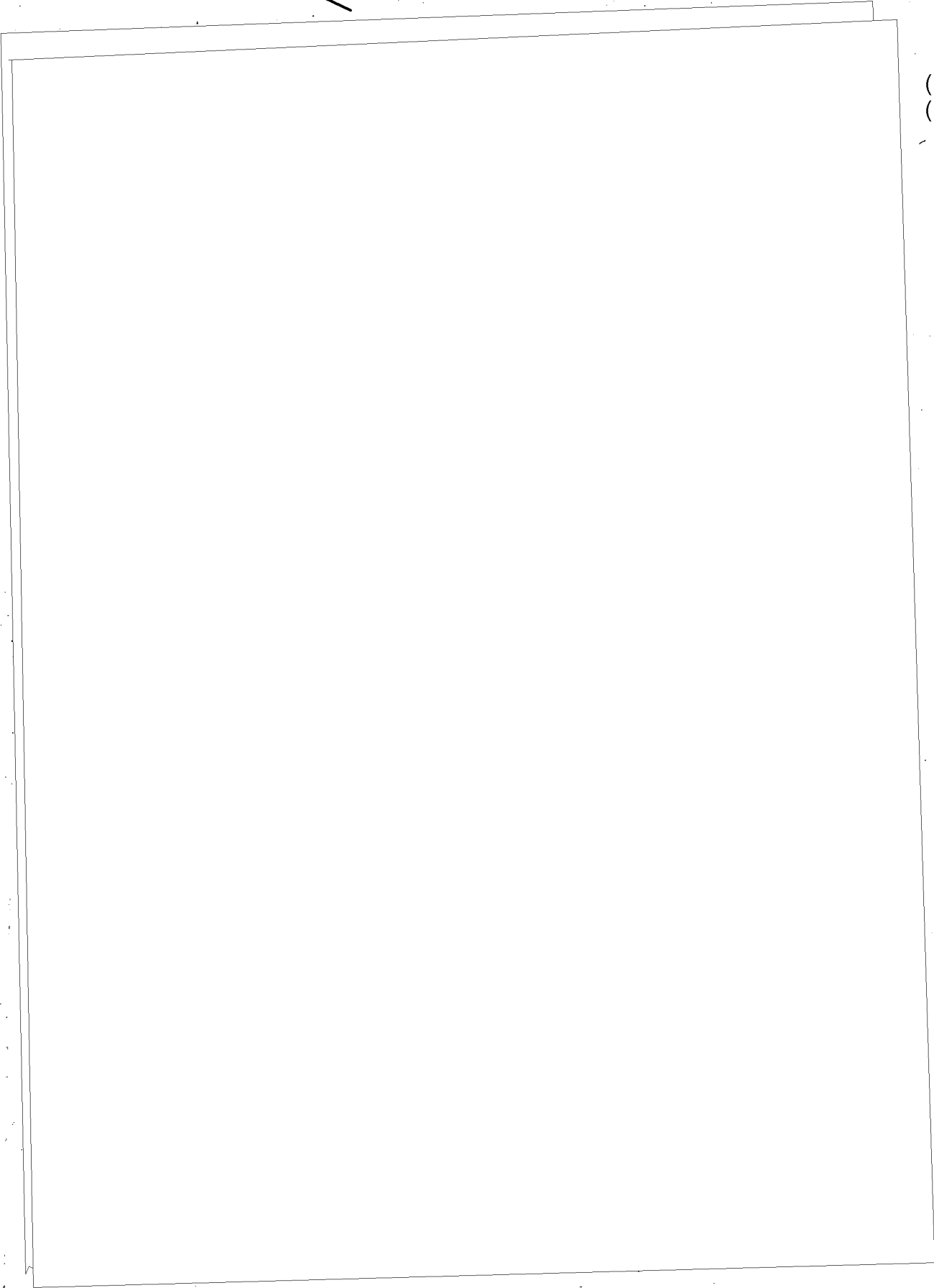


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