

~~SECRET//NOFORN//X1~~

INFORMATION PAPER

21 March 2002

Subject: How Long Will Iraq's Military Fight (S)

1. ~~(S)~~ Purpose. To provide an assessment of how long Iraq's military will fight against a US/Coalition attack.

2. (U) Key Points.

- ~~(S//NF)~~ The length of resistance will likely be situation-dependent and vary from unit to unit and individual to individual within units. It is assessed Iraq will be unable to maintain determined resistance once directly engaged by US-led Coalition forces. Iraqi morale and unit cohesion will probably erode in a manner similar to 1991.
- ~~(S//NF)~~ In a conflict with a U.S. led Coalition, an Iraqi military collapse is a virtual certainty. When that collapse will occur, however, is impossible to predict. The military's performance will not necessarily parallel its effort in 1991. In fact, 1991 may be a poor comparison to make.
  - ~~(S//NF)~~ In 1991 only two years had passed since the end of the Iran-Iraq War. Conscripts, whose morale was poor after having their service repeatedly extended for that war, found themselves extended or recalled to fight. The morale issue was addressed by conscription and reservist reform in the last five to six years. Former Iraqi Chief of Staff Ribat held meetings in each of the Iraqi provinces assuring reservists their call-ups would only last 90 days in accordance with the law. This apparently halted the open-ended recalls which previously existed in Iraq.
  - ~~(S//NF)~~ With the exception of favored units such as the Republican Guard, Iraqi forces are probably less capable than those of 1991, when many Iraqis were veterans of previous conflicts. Many Iraqi soldiers, especially the officer corps, still possess combat experience obtained from the Iran-Iraq or Gulf Wars or more recently from counter insurgency operations. Overall, however, ground forces have not been in sustained combat since the end of the Gulf War.
  - ~~(S//NF)~~ The issue in 1991 was Kuwait, not the overthrow of Saddam. The average Iraqi had no ill will towards America. When the regime was threatened by the uprising which followed the war, the military responded and restored order despite the defeat the army had just suffered. Some Iraqis will fight out of a sense of nationalism believing the impending conflict, if Saddam were to lose, could result in an Iraq split by religion and ethnicity. Propaganda over the last ten years blaming the U.S. for sanctions resonates with a portion of Iraqis, compelling them to resist with greater intensity.
- ~~(S//NF)~~ As defeat becomes apparent, Iraqi resistance will quickly collapse, except those elements who believe their fate is directly intertwined with Saddam's.

Classified by: Multiple Sources  
Declassify on: X1

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2002-03-21, JS Paper, How Long Will Iraq's Military Fight. p. 1, IDB

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- ~~(S//NF)~~ Iraqi ground units are not expected to sustain a fight if directly engaged by US/Coalition ground forces. RGFC units would probably perform better than their Iraqi Army counterparts, but they too would be unlikely to resist for very long once they were directly engaged in ground combat. The tactics, techniques, and procedures that limited Iraqi combat effectiveness in 1991 are still evident in Iraqi units today.
- ~~(S//NF)~~ A few Iraqi air force pilots may initially resist a US-led air campaign, as during the first few days of the Gulf War. However, poor pilot morale and fear of the US tactical and technical dominance will very likely lead to the rapid collapse of the Iraqi Air Force. All source data obtained during the Iraqi air force's challenges of the No-Fly Zones following operation DESERT FOX seem to confirm this assessment.
- ~~(S//NF)~~ Iraq's air defense system would be quickly overwhelmed when targeted as part of a sustained campaign. It cannot maintain a significant challenge to Coalition aircraft operating at medium and high altitudes. Iraqi air defense capabilities could remain relatively effective against low-flying aircraft, however, even these low-level defenses are vulnerable to disruption and destruction at any given point of attack. All source data collected throughout the 11 years of No-Fly Zone enforcement support this assessment.

Prepared by: J2 Iraqi Working Group and RAM-4, (b)(6)

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