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Chapter Two

Iraq and Anbar Between the Wars: Desert Shield to OIF, 1990-2003

(U) *Introduction: As a result of its invasion of Kuwait, Iraq was subjected to Desert Storm, United Nations sanctions, trade embargoes, searches for weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and military actions in the northern and southern no-fly zones as well as Operation Desert Fox. In his weakened state, Saddam Hussein searched for ways to keep the population loyal. He altered policies towards the tribes to reinforce their loyalty, emphasized religion, and stressed the connections between religion and the State. Anbar's loyalty to Saddam was exemplified by the number of Army recruits and officers from there. In return, Anbar was rewarded. The government supported Anbar industries to insure employment. While minor revolts occurred, they can be mostly attributed to tribal honor. Anbaris for the most part were satisfied with their status. As Saddam began to emphasize religion in the 1990's, Anbaris too, became more publicly religious, open to new and radical ideas and influences. While the whole of Iraq suffered from Desert Storm and Desert Fox, on the eve of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, Anbar remained fairly well off by Iraqi standards.*

(U) **Desert Storm, Weapons Inspections, UN Sanctions, Oil-for-Food Program, and Military Action Effects on Anbar from 1991-2003¹**

(U) **Desert Shield/Desert Storm (August 1990-February 1992) and Its Aftermath:**

(U) After the long, bloody, and costly eight-year war with Iran, Iraq's economy was crippled. Inflation and unemployment were high and the national debt insurmountable. In an effort to increase income, Saddam pushed the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to raise the price of oil through new restrictive quotas. He also asked Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to declare their \$40B war loans to be gifts and to provide major contributions to Iraq's economic reconstruction. When these countries failed to comply, Saddam decided that he would take over Kuwait.

(U) On August 2, 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait and "annexed" it within 24 hours. Saddam immediately claimed Kuwait as its 19th Province, a claim he traced back to the 1920s when Britain established the states of Kuwait and Iraq from the Ottoman Empire.

(U) **Desert Storm:** The UN Security Council condemned the invasion and demanded Iraq's unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait by January 15, 1991. Saddam refused. On January 16th, 1991, Desert Storm began. In over five weeks of aerial bombardment, a great deal of civil infrastructure was destroyed along with military targets. The massive allied ground offensive began on February 24, 1991. Four days later, Saddam asked for and received a cease-fire agreement.

(U) **Saddam's Reality Check:** Seeing the apparent weakness of the Saddam Regime, President Bush called for the Kurds and Shi'a to overthrow Saddam. Ad hoc uprisings broke out in the Kurdish north and the Shi'a south. During these revolts, Saddam quickly lost control of 15 out of

¹ Derived from the following primary sources: a) *Comprehensive Report of the Special Advisor to the DCI on Iraq's WMD*, 30 Sep 04, Charles Duelfer, b) *A History of Iraq*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, Charles Tripp, c) R. Lee, *The History Guy: Issues: Iraq Crisis*, www.historyguy.com/issues_iraq_crisis.html; (no-fly zone) d) *Arms Control Today*, Jan-Feb 2006, *Report Confirms Iraq Used Sarin in 1991*, e) <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/world/iraq/index.html>, and f) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraq_disarmament_crisis_timeline_1990-1996.

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the 18 provinces in Iraq. Notably, Anbar did not revolt. To ensure his regime's survival, Saddam immediately turned his Republican Guard on both the Shi'a and the Kurds.

(U) **1991: The Shi'a Revolt:** In the south, the Republican Guard crushed uprisings in Basra, 'Amara, Nasiriyya, Najaf, and Karbala. They even used Sarin-filled bombs against Shiites on March 7th near Karbala. The brutal action by the Republican Guard units forced the revolts' most prominent supporter, Ayatollah Abu al-Qasim al Khoe'i, to declare support for Saddam and end the rebellion on March 21, 1991. The Shi'a subsequently claimed Saddam killed over 100,000 Shi'a in suppressing the revolt. Many Shi'a blamed the United States for first inciting the revolt and then allowed Saddam to crush it so brutally. For the Sunnis, their fears of a Shi'a-Iranian connection were reinforced when fighters from the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), headed by Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, poured over the border from Iran to support the failed rebellion.²

(U) **The Islamic Da'wa Party (Da'wa).** Da'wa was formed in Iraq by Shi'a in the late 1950s to combat secularism, communism and the Sunni government. Dawa became a family tradition for the al-Sadr family. One of its early leaders was Muhammad Baqr al-Sadr, Muqtada al-Sadr's uncle. (Muqtada al-Sadr became a prominent political figure in 2003.)

(U) During the 1970s, Da'wa began an armed campaign against the Ba'athist regime in an effort to create an Islamic state. In response, Saddam imprisoned or killed many of its members. In 1979, Da'wa supported the Iranian Revolution and Ayatollah Khomeini's seizure of power, although the group did not believe that clerics should control the government.

(U) In 1980, Saddam executed Muhammad Baqr al-Sadr. In response, Da'wa attempted to assassinate Saddam in 1982. Saddam persecuted Da'wa, and its surviving members were forced to flee to Iran. In February 1999, Muqtada al-Sadr's father, Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Sadeq al-Sadr and his other sons were killed in Najaf by Saddam. (In 2003, Da'wa returned to Iraq and became the dominate power in Nasiriyya. The party participated in the 2004 elections.)

(U) **The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI)** is Da'wa's main Shi'a competition. It was formed in 1982 after Da'wa was weakened by Saddam's repression. Although it too is a Shi'a group dedicated to the creation of an Islamic state, unlike Da'wa, SCIRI supports Khomeini's vision of a state run by Islamic clerics. After Saddam's regime fell, SCIRI also returned to Iraq, led by Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim. (In August 2003 al-Hakim was assassinated by a car bomb in the city of Najaf. His brother took over in his place. In 2004, SCIRI participated in the election process. It also maintains an armed militia called the Badr Corps.)

(U) **1991: The Kurds Revolt Seeking Autonomy:** The Kurdish rebellion in the north was also crushed by March 29, 1991. Better organized, the Kurdish rebellion started well, but Saddam's use of chemical weapons cause it to rapidly collapse.

² <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/religion-shia2.htm>

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(U) Northern Watch No-Fly Zone and Operation Provide Comfort:

In response to Saddam's brutality, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 688 in April, which called on Iraq to end repression of its own population. But the use of chemical weapons had already caused a mass exodus of Kurds. Tens of thousands were living outdoors in snow and rain. The original northern no-fly zone, declared by the US in early April 1991 (with British and French support and involvement), was to protect coalition aircraft during the airdrops of aid to Kurdish refugees on the Turkish border. By mid-April, the US put ground troops from 10th Special Forces Group, the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, and the 3/325th Airborne Battalion Combat Team into Northern Iraq. They were joined by British forces in their efforts to deal with the humanitarian crisis in Operation Provide Comfort.



(U) No explicit endorsement in the form of a Security Council resolution was obtained for either Operation Provide Comfort or the no-fly zone. When coalition ground troops were withdrawn, the no-fly zone was left in place to protect the Kurds and the international humanitarian workers based in the north. As a result, the Iraqi government decided, in October 1991, to withdraw its ground troops -- and all funding -- from the three Kurdish governorates. In effect, the region became an independent state controlled by two major Kurdish groups -- the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). These two Kurdish parties subsequently fought each other in a civil war from 1995-1998. In 1998, they arranged a truce and have cooperated well in ruling the Kurdish areas of Iraq as part of the current Iraqi government.

(U) Southern Watch No-Fly Zone: On August 2, 1992, members of the Gulf War coalition announced the establishment of a second no-fly zone south of the 32nd parallel, on a line just to the north of Najaf and Amara. Too late to stop Saddam's massacre of the Shi'a who revolted in 1991, the immediate trigger for action was Saddam's ongoing efforts to wipe out the largely Shi'a population of the southern marshes. Although the no-fly zone prevented some aerial attacks on the southern marshes, it did not prevent Republican Guard artillery and armed helicopter attacks. Nor were civilians protected from ground attack in either zone. Since it prohibited only the use of fixed wing aircraft, the southern no fly zone did little to protect the Shi'a.

(U) Anbari Loyalty to Saddam Increases: All the available data indicates Anbari loyalty to Saddam only increased after the Shi'a revolt. They had looked into the abyss of a successful Shi'a revolt and all doubts about Saddam disappeared. They believed that a Shi'a revolt (with Iranian help) would mean the demise of the Sunni Anbari tribes. Saddam understood these fears well and warned the Iraqi people that if they allowed a revolt to succeed, Iraq would become like Lebanon, split into warring factions where chaos ruled.

(U) In such a civil war, the Anbaris believed the Sunni Arabs would be the big losers. They had ruled Iraq for 500 years, repeatedly brutalizing the Kurd and Shi'a populations and could expect no mercy if the Sunnis lost power. Retired army officers from Anbar and other Sunni Arab provinces

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volunteered to lead troops against the Shi'a revolt. Despite crushing the Shi'a revolt quickly, Saddam could not simply return to the status quo.³

(U) **Inspections and Destruction of WMD:** As part of the cease fire agreement and UN Resolution 687, all long-range missiles and WMD (nuclear, biological- and chemical-weapons and their delivery systems) were to be destroyed by Iraq. In May 1991, the first United Nations Special Commission on Disarmament (UNSCOM) teams began their work in Iraq. They quickly realized that the nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons programs were much more extensive than originally thought. At this point, years of Iraqi denial, deception, and obstruction began.

(U) Initially, the regime appeared to cooperate by providing an inventory of all remaining CW and BW to the UN inspectors. This inventory became the focus for destroying caches, factories and research and development activities. At the same time, Saddam engaged in an extensive effort to deceive UN inspectors about the true status of his program.

(U) Fallujah in Anbar Province became a focus for inspections due to the CW and dual-use chemical plants in the area. Among the WMD sites in Anbar Province was the former RAF Habbaniyah airbase near Fallujah. Before the first Gulf War, the regime used it as a chemical and biological weapons (CW/BW) storage area, a CW training site, and possibly a nerve agent production facility.

(U) From 1991-1997, Hussein continuously engaged in attempts to obstruct, deceive, or expel inspectors looking for Iraq's WMD program, while simultaneously taking measures to have sanctions lifted and no-fly zones removed. He also used a series of air defense confrontations, UN inspection confrontations, and international lobbying for humanitarian empathy toward this goal. It was not until after the invasion that the United States was able to determine that Saddam had in fact shut down his programs although he continued using information operations to convince the world he still had a covert program.

(U) **Operation Desert Fox:** In response to Saddam failure to comply with UN Security Council resolutions, the United States and United Kingdom conducted a four-day campaign of air and missile attacks from 16 - 19 December 1998.⁴ The mission was to "strike military and security targets in Iraq that contribute to Iraq's ability to produce, store, maintain and deliver weapons of mass destruction," with mission goals of :

- degrade Saddam Hussein's ability to make and to use weapons of mass destruction
- diminish Saddam Hussein's ability to wage war against his neighbors
- demonstrate to Saddam Hussein the consequences of violating international obligations⁵

(U) President Clinton called Saddam a threat to his people and to the security of the world, offering: "The best way to end that threat once and for all is with a new Iraqi government -- a government ready to live in peace with its neighbors, a government that respects the rights of its people."⁶ Operation Desert Fox came less than two months after President Clinton signed into law the Iraq Liberation Act (ILA). It came one month after the President identified regime change as an official

³ Iraqi Perspective Project, p. 44.

⁴ www.Defenselink.mil/specials/desert_fox

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "Clinton: Iraq has abused its last chance," CNN.com, December 16, 1998

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component of U.S. policy toward Iraq. And, during Operation Desert Fox, President Clinton specifically stated that his administration would work with Iraqi opposition forces but stopped short of calling for another uprising.

(U) At its conclusion, the United States publicly announced the campaign met its military objectives. General Anthony Zinni, CINC Central Command (now referred to as Commander, Central Command), indicating there was no need to continue into Ramadan (which began on the 19th of December) as this would represent “bombing for bombing’s sake.”⁷ The operation did not, however, result in a new Iraqi government. The government withstood the strikes. Saddam remained in power. And, the regime’s resistance only increased, with further UN inspections refused. The inspections would not resume until 2002.

(U) **Oil for Food:** To alleviate some of the hardships caused by its sanctions, the UN offered the Iraqi Government the opportunity to sell oil to pay for food and medicine as early as 1992. Saddam refused. Despite the suffering of his people, Saddam did not agree to begin the Oil-for-Food (OFF) program until May of 1996. Even then the program was manipulated for profit over the next five years by officials within Iraq, the UN, and other countries (most notably Russia and France). Still OFF had a mixed impact on the Anbar Province. It helped the overall humanitarian situation but hurt agriculture and altered the nature of many smuggling operations.

(U) **Public Distribution System (PDS):** The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) developed a food distribution system that provided a standardized food package to each Iraqi.

(U) Despite concerns that sanctions may have worsened the humanitarian situation, the Oil for Food program appears to have helped the Iraqi people. According to the United Nations, the average daily food intake increased from around 1,275 calories per person per day in 1996 to about 2,229 calories at the end of 2001. In February 2002, the United Nations reported that the Oil for Food program had considerable success in several sectors such as agriculture, food, health, and nutrition by arresting the decline in living conditions and improving the nutritional status of the average Iraqi citizen.



(U) The Public Distribution System run by Iraq’s Ministry of Trade was the food portion of the Oil for Food program. The system distributed a monthly “food

⁷ Tom Clancy with General Tony Zinni (Ret) and Tony Koltz, *Battle Ready* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s and Sons, 2004)

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basket” that normally consists of a dozen items to all Iraqis. About 60 percent of Iraqis relied on this basket as their main source of food. The basket included: wheat flour, rice, vegetable ghee (semi-fluid clarified butter used for cooking), pulses (edible seeds of various leguminous crops, such as peas, beans, or lentils), sugar, tea, salt, milk, infant formula, weaning cereal, soap, and detergent.⁸

(U) During the sanctions, Saddam did little to help the average Iraqi. Iraq developed into a society highly dependent on oil-for-food welfare, smuggling, and tribal affiliations. The overall economy and health situation in Iraq continued to deteriorate. However, Anbar, as a favored Sunni-dominated province suffered much less than the Shi'a-dominated provinces.

(U) **Impact of Economic Sanctions on Anbaris:** As a reward for their loyalty during the revolt, Saddam insured the Anbaris were among the least affected by the sanctions. During the years of the embargo, public servants, army officers and career soldiers received extra food rations, government cars, special shops with luxury goods, plots of lands for home, subsidized loans and even loan forgiveness after the birth of their second or third child. Saddam's belief in the value of tribal fighters from rural areas was as strong as ever and Anbaris experienced consistent upward social mobility. In fact, the security system was even happy with young men who failed high school studies. Knowing that the private market would not take them, such men were sure to be very grateful and intensely loyal.⁹

(U) The sanctions also made smuggling even more profitable. The Anbaris strong transnational tribal relationships allowed them to cross the borders at will. They smuggled out scrap metal, sheep and oil; products that were very cheap in Iraq but expensive in Jordan and Syria. They smuggled in cigarettes, alcohol, and electric appliances, mainly from Jordan.

(U) There was even tacit complicity by Saddam's family. Uday Saddam Hussein became the single largest sponsor of contraband merchandise sales in Baghdad. When some merchants tried to compete with him, selling smuggled goods in Shorja Market, he hung about forty of them on the door frames of their own shops. However, Saddam still did not allow the Anbaris to attack convoys or individual cars crossing from Amman to Baghdad.

Saddam Shores Up His Power Base

(U) After Desert Storm, Saddam was greatly weakened. He saw a need to create as much support for his regime and policies as he could. He increased security, changed tribal policies and emphasized religion. He even affected an image of himself as a pious man.

(U) **Fedayeen Saddam:** The post-Desert Storm uprisings unnerved Saddam so much he formed a paramilitary organization, the Fedayeen Saddam, that would be unwaveringly loyal.¹⁰ The Fedayeen

⁸ Source: UN FAO
<http://www.un.org/Depts/oip/food-facts.html>

⁹ Interview With Harith al-'Anni, Washington, DC, June 1999. Husayn Kamil defected in ****, was de-briefed by U.S. officials on Saddam's weapons of mass destruction, and on re-defecting back to Iraq with a promise of amnesty was killed

¹⁰ Iraqi Perspectives Project, p. 52

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were positioned in areas prone to anti-regime activity, to include potential coups by the Iraqi Army. Formed in October of 1994, the Fedayeen grew to between 18,000 and 40,000 members before the war. Their mission was to immediately suppress anyone who challenged the Regime and control the situation until the Special Republican Guard could arrive to destroy the revolt.

(U) One reason for an individual Fedayeen member's devotion was the benefits. The monthly salary for a Fedayeen fighter was 40,000 dinars, twice the typical state-employee salary. Veteran fighters could earn up to 100,000 dinars.¹¹ Training for the Fedayeen soldiers also differed greatly from the regular army. These units focused on small arms, small-unit tactics, sabotage techniques, military surveillance and reconnaissance tasks.¹² With Saddam's support and Uday Hussein's involvement, the Fedayeen received both superior personnel and material.¹³ The need for immediate reaction meant the Fedayeen and their weapons were widely distributed around Iraq. This tactical distribution provided an ideal base to start an insurgency.

(U) **Anbaris in the Ba'ath Party Hierarchy during the 1990s.** Anbari fortunes followed their success in the Ba'ath party hierarchy. While the number of Anbaris at the very top levels decreased after 1995, they held by far the highest percentage of mid-level positions. Even Tikritis, Baghdadis and Mosulites, who came second, had a far lower representation.

(U) This relative success in the party meant that mid-level Anbari party officials could promote their own tribesmen and regional neighbors. A typical senior ex-Ba'athi who escaped from Iraq would say: "I joined the party as a part of the tribe. This was done automatically; you didn't really feel that you had joined the party. The family is sweeping you with it when [as a collective] it becomes Ba'athi."

(U) On the individual level, if a young man wanted to join the Air Force, attend the Military Academy, or even join the Faculty of Education at Baghdad University, he needed a recommendation of good character, or an "attestation of integrity" (*tazkiya*) from a middle level or senior official in the Ba'ath or in the government. Coming from a town in Anbar made it quite easy. Such a young man also had to be a party member.¹⁴ The Anbaris had no reason at all to complain. They were highly privileged. Even school drop-outs had opportunities based on their origin in Anbar Province.¹⁵

Ups and Downs of Saddam's Tribal Policy

(U) In the 1990s, after the Shi'a revolt, Saddam realized that he needed even more support from the Sunni tribes and their sheikhs. He was willing to change long held Ba'ath Party policy to gain that support. In the 1970s, the Party had forbidden members to mention their tribal or even regional

¹¹ Ahmed S. Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2006)

¹² Iraqi Perspectives Project, p. 53

¹³ *ibid*, p. 53

¹⁴ Interview With Harith al-'Anni, Washington, DC, June 1999

¹⁵ This was a tradition from the first years of Ba'ath rule. The Ba'ath in Anbar, under the guidance of RCC member 'Izzat Mustafa (1969-1977), who was born and bred in 'Anna, recruited young men who dropped out of high school and took them to Baghdad where they entered as students in the Preparatory Police School that was run by the Ministry of the Interior. When they graduated they became Deputy Officers in the police. After a period of time, the young men received the rank of police officer, and from there they could be integrated into the internal security system. In fact, this was the career trajectory of General Hussein Kamil (Kamel), Saddam's cousin and son-in-law.

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origins. Even, Saddam, who usually had the title “al-Tikriti” after his name and sometimes also “al-Nasiri,” deleted both titles. Now, however, members of the party were allowed to return to the older system of naming and to indicate the towns and tribes from which they came.

(U) Saddam began giving full media coverage to his visits to tribal areas, meeting with local sheikhs and inviting them to visit him in the Republican Palace. He demanded that when the sheikhs came to see him, they should bring with them their rifles and tribal flags to do their tribal war dances for him. This legitimized and gave prestige to tribal culture and made it a part of the Iraqi national culture. The press publicized Saddam’s monetary gifts and land grants to tribesmen and their sheikhs. The press also reported when tribes were given weapons and ammunition to include heavy weaponry like howitzers, heavy machine guns and armored troop carriers. These measures proved most necessary in the Shi’a south, because Saddam’s smaller army could no longer effectively patrol the long border with Iran, and Sunni tribes were paid to do it for the regime.

(U) On December 2, 1992, Saddam made a stunning declaration: “*al-Ba’ath ‘ashirat kull al-‘asha’ir*” (“the Ba’ath [party is] the tribe of all the tribes”). By this he meant that the ruling party would from then on incorporate the tribes without, however, dissolving them. In other words: rather than a one-to-one relationship between each individual Iraqi and his government, a new system was put in place under which many Iraqis would legitimately be represented by their sheikhs and through their tribal affiliations. This was nothing short of an ideological revolution.

(U) Insofar as Anbar was concerned, however, Saddam’s tribal policy had one great disadvantage for the sheikhs. The UN sanctions regime meant that tribal leaders, despite sizable revenue from smuggling, were more dependent on the government for handouts—which they passed on to their fellow tribesmen. This helped the tribes to survive, but it made the sheikhs government officials rather than genuine sheikhs. Saddam also replaced some of the sheikhs, whom he did not consider real allies, with more docile and collaborative members of their families or even of other tribes. This created an estrangement between some sheikhs, though clearly not all of them, and their tribes.

(U) **The Tribal Bureau:** This bureau, also referred to as the Directorate of Tribal Affairs, became an important contact point between Saddam and the tribal sheikhs. Whenever an important sheikh died, the bureau would send a senior representative, sometimes a member of Saddam's own family, to participate in the funeral and convey the president’s condolences. Such visits were given great publicity, demonstrating how important the tribe (or the sheikh) had become. Saddam’s divided the sheikhs into two categories: “A” and “B”. The category determined the individual’s importance and the salaries that the government would pay him.

(U) **Support for Saddam:** Saddam’s reliance on the tribes meant the tribes of Anbar benefited even while the rest of Iraq suffered. In Anbar, employment was high; as was the social status of many Anbaris due to their jobs in the security apparatus and other government positions. According to reports by United Nations of the embargo on Iraq during the 1990s, children’s malnutrition and, in all likelihood, mortality were low, potable water supply was reasonable, sewage treatment was not a serious problem.¹⁶ However, the economy was failing and the middle class was losing ground. Yet in Anbar, there were many rich families because Saddam provided contracts to his supporters, salaries to the sheikhs and occasional money handouts to the tribes. In short, when comparing their status with that of most other Iraqis, the Anbaris knew they were doing well.

¹⁶ For details see Amatzia Baram, "The Effect of Iraqi Sanctions: Statistical Pitfalls and Responsibility", in *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 54, No. 2 (Spring 2000), 194-223.

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(U) But there was much more that explains Anbari support for Saddam. Had the regime disintegrated, the Sunnis knew the Shi'a majority would confront them. Chaos meant Shi'a rule. Their traditional sense of superiority, distrust of Shi'a and hate for Iran meant they could not tolerate such a prospect. To be ruled by Shi'a mullahs seemed to them the deepest degradation. Only Sunni knew how to rule Iraq. In their view, the Shi'a were uneducated and incapable of running a state and the mullahs, the leaders of the Shi'a community, were inept. In short, while Saddam was not widely loved, he was preferable to the alternatives.

(U) **Another Reversal of Saddam's Tribal Policies:** Saddam's policy of empowering sheikhs and their tribes did create some problems for his regime. Some tribes took advantage of their new status to impose their will on state institutions, including the police and security forces. They even attacked police stations where their own men were held in custody. They attacked schools and teachers who rebuked students belonging to the tribe and even clashed with army units that tried to prevent smuggling.¹⁷ Yet Saddam only made a few minor modifications to his tribal policy, rather than radically altering it.

Taking Advantage of Saddam's Perceived Weaknesses

(U) As a result of grievances arising from perceived regime abuses, a number of Anbari tribes revolted during the 1990s.

(U) **The 1995 Albu Nimr Revolt:** In Ramadi, during the summer of 1995, the Dulaym confederation's Albu Nimr sub-tribe carried out armed attacks against local government forces and offices, until Saddam sent in the Republican Guard and the Saddam Fedayeen to restore control. This was the first trial by fire for the Fedayeen and the place where they established their unsurpassed ferocity. Within a few days, the revolt was crushed with hundreds of people killed or imprisoned. Following the defeat of the rebels, tribal sheikhs from Dulaym, including a few from Albu Nimr, sent letters of admiration and support to Saddam.

(U) **A Matter of Honor:** While some analysts thought the revolt was a sign the regime's hold on the tribes was weakening, the revolt had nothing to do with relations between the tribe and the regime. Rather, it was a result of the Saddam's execution of an influential member of the Albu Nimr tribe. To avenge his death became a matter of honor for the tribe. They knew that they were taking a huge risk and the chances of success were not good. But they felt that if they did not revolt, they would be seen by everybody in Anbar as weak and cowardly. What probably made it easier to decide on a revolt was the fact that, by June 1995, Saddam's regime seemed to be nearing an end, due to the international embargo and the political impasse into which it had maneuvered itself. Once the revolt ended, Albu Nimr rejoined the rest of Anbar in collaborating willingly with Saddam. But they still had unfinished business with the regime.

(U) **Other Revolts.** In August of 1999, the Albu Nimrs, Albu Fahds and Albu Alwans attacked regime forces in Anbar. Members of these tribes were also involved in the assassination attempt of Uday Saddam Hussein in 1996 in retaliation for the arrest and execution of a leading sheikh from the Dulaym federation.

¹⁷For the original article that appeared in the US, see Amatzia Baram, "Neo-tribalism in Iraq: Saddam Hussein's Tribal Policies, 1991-1996", in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29 (1997), 1-31, mainly 18-23.

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(U) The key factor in both revolts was tribal honor. Despite the near certainty of defeat, the specific tribes felt they had to fight to recover their honor. Honor is so fundamental to Sunni tribesmen that they must restore it even at the risk of death. And of course, in keeping with their values, family members are required to fight alongside those dishonored.

(U) **The 1993 Faith Campaign and its Consequences.** As these events were transforming tribal relations in Anbar, Saddam announced another policy that would change the face of religion in Iraq. He pushed Iraqis to become more religious.

(U) The first group to become more religious in Iraq was the Shi'a. With the rise of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran during February 1979, the Iraqi Shi'a masses became transfixed by the power of religion. Many, perhaps the majority, hoped to see a similar Islamic [Shi'a] Revolution in Iraq. They hoped an Iraqi Khomeini would emerge and deliver them from Sunni rule. The man everyone had in mind was Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr. The Shi'a even tried a series of uprisings in 1979. But by early 1980, the regime had suppressed the Shi'a disturbances and executed Sadr.

(U) During the eight-year Iran-Iraq war that followed, the Iraqi soldiers and, through them, the population at large was impressed with the enthusiasm and readiness for sacrifice shown by the Iranian troops. People identified religiosity more and more with state power, rather than the quieter versions of Islam traditionally practiced in Iraq. Even Sunnis started to frequent the mosques more and gradually showed more Islamic piety. This process worried the ruling party a great deal, since Ba'athism was explicitly secular. At first, the regime came out against religious revival unequivocally. However, by the early 1990s the regime realized they could not beat the growing Islamic sentiment and decided to join it. In 1993, Saddam saw religion as a way to shore up his regime and inaugurated his Faith Campaign (*al-hamla al-imanīya*).

(U) The first sign of the Campaign was when bars, pubs and many entertainment places began to be closed down. One could still buy spirits in shops, but it could no longer be consumed in public. This is in line with traditional Islamic views of alcohol and other intoxicants as sinful. Then Saddam initiated a nation-wide campaign of teaching the Qur'an. More than five million copies of the text were printed and given away free. Qur'an classes became compulsory at all school levels, including in the universities. Even party members were forced to study the Qur'an.

(U) Saddam next spent large sums on new mosques, mainly in the Sunni triangle and Baghdad. 'Ulama' and other mosque staff (imams, preachers, and others) were given high salaries and provided with new services. Mosques, which had been relatively neglected in the previous decades, became the site of state-sponsored Qur'an classes for children and adults. This turned mosques into a crucial social nexus in Anbar.

(U) The social status of clerics was elevated as never before, especially in the Sunni areas. Before the Faith Campaign, Sunni imams and 'ulama' had never enjoyed high prestige. Now, however, clerics became local leaders, competing for social influence both with the traditional tribal sheikhs and party officials. There was no animosity in Anbar between the three categories, but there was certainly a degree of competition. The moment the Ba'ath regime collapsed, and party officials were gone, the clerics became important key leaders.

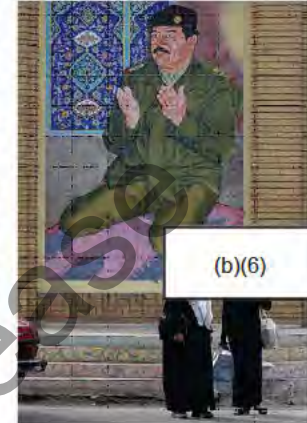
(U) **Islamic Clerics.** Within Sunni Islam, the term "imam" means any leader, but especially the prayer leader in a local mosque. Imams are chosen by their congregation (in the US) or by the state (in most Islamic countries). The word "ulama" (or ulema), which means scholar, is a general term for any Islamic cleric who has studied Islamic law or theology. A "faqih" (pl. fuqaha) is a member of the

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'ulama' who studies Islamic law and jurisprudence (in Arabic "fiqh") in particular, while a "mufti" is a member of the 'ulama' who is qualified to issue independent fatwas (legal opinions).

(U) **Saddam the "Pious":** Saddam even demonstrated to one and all that he had become very religious. Photographs of him praying in his palace started to appear in the daily press. In earlier years, anyone who showed up too often in the mosque was suspect, now such practice was encouraged. The sermons were still monitored by the regime, and often texts were provided and distributed to clerics. But, in the Sunni areas preachers, were allowed more freedom than ever before. Perhaps by itself this policy would not have made a great difference, but since it came together with genuine growing religiosity, both in the Sunni and Shi'a communities, the synergy was tremendous. Even party members who had not frequented mosques before now had to do so. It was not just recommended by the party, but insisted upon. Those party members who were inclined towards Islam beforehand now gave their inclination full expression.



(U) **Religion in Anbar:** Anbar had been a religious area even under the 1931-1958 monarchy. Religion there was moderate, a combination of orthodox and Sufi Islam. As Iraqis turned more to religion, the regime itself became more religious so one could still be a Ba'athi and yet a religious Muslim. Then, towards the end of the 1990s, even the Islamization of the Ba'ath party no longer sufficed for some Iraqis. Some became radical Islamists. The centrality of the mosques was unprecedented. They became the only public place where one could meet people of similar Islamic inclinations without risk.

(U) What served as a catalyst in this process was a growing sense, even inside the party, that Ba'ath ideology had lost its relevance. It dawned on people that the Ba'ath were just looking out for themselves. They had no inspiring vision to improve the lot of the Iraqi people. This ideological and intellectual crisis in turn became an emotional one. People need something to believe in and, when they could no longer believe in Ba'ath ideology, the fallback alternative was to return to Islam. Iraq, long regarded as a secular state, was joining much of the Middle East in its movement back to Islam.

(U) **Fallujah as Case Study**

(U) To illustrate the changes that occurred within Anbar because of Saddam's tribal policies and his Faith Campaign, as well as to explain why Anbar became a center of the 2003 insurgency, a closer look at one city—Fallujah—is in order. This description of Fallujah's society and the attempt to explain why it became such a stubborn insurgency center is representative of most other towns in Anbar.

(U) Fallujah is an ancient town. Its first name was "Anbar", which means "a storehouse" or "a magazine". In 750 AD, the Caliph al-Saffah made it his capital city. Later, when the Abbasids moved their capital to Baghdad, Anbar remained important as the center of a very fertile area bordering the desert.

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(U) Sometime in the late 9th century or early 10th century the town's name was changed to Fallujah, apparently borrowing its name from a geological fault or land rift in the area (the root in Arabic means crevice or fissure). About the same time, it lost its importance and became a marginal farming town for over 1000 years until the arrival of the British.

(U) **Modernization and Growth:** The British hoped for better things from Fallujah. In the 1920s, they modernized the old caravan road that ran through Baghdad to Damascus and in the process built the important Iron Bridge that connects Fallujah to the western bank of the Euphrates River. (This is the same bridge from which the mob hanged the bodies of the four Blackwater contractors in 2004.)

(U) Thanks to the combination of proximity to Baghdad, (and thus good health services and education), available government jobs, and now a major road through the town, Fallujah experienced a population explosion, growing from 4,300 in the late 1940s to about 300,000 by 2003.¹⁸

(U) **Social and Economic Structure:** Fallujah was more tribal than most provincial towns. Since much of its population lived in surrounding small villages, everyone had tribal kin. In fact, Fallujah was described as a center for cross-border smuggling in 2003.¹⁹ These tribal connections helped Fallujahns prosper during the international embargo, by providing ready-made routes for smuggling goods from neighboring countries.

(U) In addition to smuggling, Fallujah remained favored by the regime. The city was heavily industrialized before 2003 with the construction of several large factories, primarily state-owned enterprises (SOEs).²⁰ While operating well below capacity due to mismanagement, these tax subsidized facilities meant good jobs for Anbaris. In addition, the area surrounding Fallujah produced dates, sesame, millet and corn so that the community was self-sufficient in food production²¹

(U) Another major source of employment for Fallujahns was government service. Saddam's emphasis on hiring and promoting Anbaris meant that a large number of Ba'ath party members, army officers and internal security agents came from Fallujah. Following our invasion, tens of thousands, including army and intelligence officers, lost their jobs. They began looking for some way to redress the wrongs that they felt they had suffered.

(U) **Islam and Islamism in Fallujah:** As in the rest of Iraq, an old-new force—Islam—was introduced into the town by Saddam's Faith Campaign. Some tribal sheikhs complained that their authority was eroded under the Faith Campaign, which gave the clerics more influence. Fallujah has, however, always been a very conservative town. Some called it "The Town with One Hundred Mosques." There is some disagreement as to the actual number of mosques in Fallujah: some

¹⁸ 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Hasani, *al-Iraq Qadiman wa Hadithan* (Sidon, Matba'at al-'Irfan, 1948), pp. 241-242.

¹⁹Rosen, N., "Inside the Iraqi Resistance," 15 July 2004, www.atimes.com/atimes/Front_Page/FG16Aa02.html.

²⁰ See Footnotes 1, 2 and *Fallujah Recovers Its Sense of Everyday Life*, Solomon Moore, Los Angeles Times, October 17, 2005.

²¹ <http://www.answers.com/topic/fallujah>

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historians say there were between 50 and 100. In any case, during the 1990s they began to attract more people than ever before.²²

(U) **Sufism.** Sufism is a mystical and ascetic form of Islam that developed in what would later become Iraq in response to the worldliness of the Umayyads. Sufis practice a number of special rituals, such as whirling and the hypnotic repetition of God's name, and are organized into fraternal orders that are spread throughout the Islamic world. Sufis recognize numerous saints and believe that these powerful mystics can perform miracles. Although Sufism is widely practiced by both Sunnis and Shi'a, the Wahhabis see them as heretics and persecute them.

(U) As a result, the line between tribal and religious duties blurred in Fallujah in the mid-1990s. To some, there was no line separating religion and politics; everything they did was service to God and decreed by the Qur'an.

(U) In the years just before the 2003 war, some of the young people of Fallujah started moving from the traditional tolerant version of Islam to fundamentalist Islamic movements. A number of *madrassas* (Islamic schools) were opened, while notable Sunni clerics like Ahmad Kubaysi and Sheikh 'Abd al-Aziz Al-Samarra'i preached radical sermons in the city.

(U) When the regime opened a cinema in the mid-nineties the Islamists blew it up along with music and video shops. The Salafi groups even bought TV sets simply to smash them in the main street. Men began to wear long beards and religious attire, while women covered themselves as they never had in the past.

(U) Rather than confront this religiosity, Saddam tried to contain it by providing more services and employment. He continued support for the *madrassas* and did not punish those who attacked the shops and cinema. He only closed one mosque where the more radical elements met. Once Saddam's Faith Campaign started, almost all limitations on religious fundamentalist teaching disappeared. Some young men started spending all their time in the mosque. This was allowed, even though Saddam's security apparatus watched them carefully. But because it was so heavily dependent on Anbar, the regime did not move against the Islamists. The result was that Islamism was allowed to flourish in Fallujah in a way that it could not elsewhere in Iraq.

(U) While Fallujah is representative, a description of the other major cities in Anbar Province is found at Appendix C.

(U) **The Military and Security Conditions in Anbar Prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom (2002-2003)**

(S) The military presence in Anbar Province on the eve of Operation Iraqi Freedom was relatively low key. Most major Iraqi Regular Army units were deployed in the south or along the Iranian border. Aircraft had been buried for later use. Republican Guard units moved from garrisons in Anbar Province to concentric defensive circles around Baghdad. The only Special Republican Guard unit left in Anbar was protecting the Haditha Dam and other important regime sites nearby.

(U) Unfortunately, in October 2003, Saddam released up to 9,000 prisoners, many felons. A significant number of these found their way to Anbar province and in particular Falluja and Ramadi.²³

²² In 2004, US Marines counted 133 mosques, with 26 being used as fighting positions and weapons caches. Source: Briefing, MNC-I, *Operation Al Fajr Roll Up*, 28 Nov 2004. <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Dec2004/d20041203entire.ppt>

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(S) **Pre-OIF Iraqi Military Presence in Al-Anbar.** Prior to OIF, the Iraqi military maintained a sizeable presence in Al-Anbar made up of troops from the regular army and units from the Hammurabi Division from the Republican Guard (RG).²⁴ These forces, a mixture of infantry, mechanized infantry, anti-aircraft units, artillery, and armor, were located at major Iraqi military bases in Al-Anbar such as al-Asad and al-Taqaddum and around major population centers such as Fallujah, Habbaniyah, Haditha, and of course the provincial capital of Ramadi.²⁵ In many cases these population centers were themselves home to prominent military facilities such as the Habbaniyah Headquarters Air Base and the Fallujah Supply and Transportation Command.²⁶

(S) Among the notable Iraqi military units stationed in the province were the following:²⁷

- 121 Artillery Regiment of the Hammurabi Division (Habbaniyah)
- 15 RG Mechanized Infantry Brigade (Habbaniyah)
- 63rd Tank Regiment (Habbaniyah)
- 17th RG Armored Brigade (Fallujah)
- 3rd Mechanized Infantry Battalion (Ramadi)

(S) The majority of Al-Anbar's offensive missiles were focused in the so-called "Scud box" in the western desert near al-Asad, with the cities of Fallujah, Ramadi, al-Qaim, and Haditha all boasting a number of SAMs for us in anti-aircraft defense.²⁸ The Special Republican Guard unit based in Tharthar Dam also had access to offensive FROG (free rocket over ground) weapons.²⁹

(S) Additionally a sizeable amount of Iraqi air power was based at Al Asad, Taqaddum, and Habbaniyah, consisting of dozens of interceptor squadrons of aircraft in varying states of decline.³⁰ Saddam, however, had decided early on that the Iraqi Air Force would not participate in OIF so that he could preserve it for future need and ordered commanders to hide their aircraft.³¹

~~(S/REL TO USA, AUS, CAN AND GBR)~~ The Iraqi Border Forces (BF), which were responsible for defending Iraq's borders against foreign invasion, were present at all of its major border crossing and controlled directly by Border Forces Command Headquarters in Baghdad.³² While there were occasions in the past where BFs were reinforced by mechanized infantry or armor, in general they were neglected by the regime and suffered from low morale, substandard living conditions, and low pay in contrast to their counterparts on the Iranian side of the border.³³ This was due in part to the fact that the Anbari BFs were primarily made up of conscripts and were last in the line for fuel, ammunition, and equipment, making them easily susceptible to corruption and unwilling to taken any serious measures to interdict smuggling in the province.³⁴

²³ Barr, C., "Jailbirds Fly Free," *Christian Science Monitor*, 22 Oct 2002

²⁴ Iraq Republican Guard Units Line in Block Chart, October 8, 1998

²⁵ RT-1130-IZ-0001-99

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ RT-1330-IZ-0002-99

³¹ *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, p.40

³² NGIC-Crisis Assesment-0331

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

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(S/NF) The Saddam Fedayeen active in Al-Anbar fell under the responsibility of the Baghdad command, one of the four regional commands that had been established to manage the paramilitary organization and would later serve as the inspiration for Saddam's decision to divide Iraq into 4 military districts.³⁵ In Al-Anbar they numbered roughly 4,000 members under the command Iraqi military intelligence officers and were intended as much to ensure the political loyalty of units stationed in the area as to serve as a serious military challenge to the Coalition.³⁶

(S/REL TO USA, AUS, CAN AND GBR) The Special Republican Guard (SRG) was also active in Al-Anbar in the form of the 3rd Special Republican Guard Battalion located at Tharthar Dam (Habbaniyah Dam) that was assigned to defend Presidential Palace and VIP residential complex in the area.³⁷ While most of the SRG was recalled in and around Baghdad to defend the Iraqi capital during the run-up to OIF, the 3rd Battalion remained at the Dam because the Tharthar Lake Presidential Palace was one of Saddam's favorite retreats and he wished to preserve it against possible attack by the Coalition.³⁸

(S/REL TO USA, AUS, CAN AND GBR) In keeping with Iraqi military doctrine, Saddam's strategy for maintaining control in Al-Anbar consisted of forward deployments of infantry and armored units from the regular army's II Corps reinforced by elements of the Hammurabi Division from Habbaniyah and Fallujah.³⁹ The defense of Ramadi itself was left to a combination of two light infantry divisions and paramilitaries from the al-Quds Army.⁴⁰ The goal of this deployment strategy was to bolster the outer ring of Baghdad's western defense in order to better protect the capital.⁴¹

(S/NF) This forward deployment strategy was initiated in January 2003, when the 3rd Armored Division was deployed near Ramadi to join the 12th Armored Division together with the al-Mu'tasim Tank Battalion of the 3rd Armored Brigade, both of which had previously been located in Hit and Qara Tappah respectively.⁴²

(S/NF) The Iraqi deployments from Fallujah, which along with Habbaniyah maintained the largest concentration of RG forces in Al-Anbar, occurred in semi-chaotic fashion as RG armor, most of it in the form of T-72 tanks, was frantically concentrated in and around Baghdad during the run-up to OIF. This was apparently done in an effort to mount a protracted tank battle to prevent the Coalition from reaching the capital.⁴³ RG forces that had previously been stationed in Rutbah were also dispatched to assist in the defense of Baghdad.⁴⁴ Following the shift, the 22nd Brigade of the RG Nebuchadnezzar Division was deployed west of Ramadi in order to help ensure regime control of the western desert.⁴⁵

(S/NF) Following these redeployments, Ba'ath Party leaders in Fallujah undertook a major effort to inventory all cars, cargo trucks, and buses newer than 1990 for seizure and began issuing weapons to

35	NGIC	1.4c
37	NGIC	
39	NGIC	
42	TI	
43	TI	
44	TI	
45	TI	

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groups of 10-20 young men drawn from the civilian population in order to maintain control of the city once the Coalition invasion began.⁴⁶

(S/NF) In an effort to prevent the Iraqi security services that Saddam so heavily depended upon from being targeted by Coalition airstrikes on Baghdad, the General Security Directorate (Al-Amn Al-'Amm) and the Iraqi Intelligence Service (IIS, Mukhbarat) both relocated their respective headquarters to Abu Ghraib and al-Garma.⁴⁷ The relocation of these agencies coincided with a large number of Iraqi security officials taking refuge in Al-Anbar with their families.⁴⁸

(U) The reasons for these deployments may have been as much political as military. The regular army was considered least trustworthy by Saddam and for that reason was placed at the outskirts of his defenses, followed by the slightly more trustworthy Republican Guard.⁴⁹ This desire to ensure maximum political rather than military reliability was forced by Saddam's enduring obsession and paranoia with his own personal security and political survival at the expense of sound military planning and contributed significantly to the rapid collapse of the Iraqi military following the fall of Baghdad.⁵⁰

(S) In summary, the Iraqi military presence in Al-Anbar prior to OIF was made up of regular army units bolstered by elements of the Hammurabi Division of the RG. The province also housed a considerable (by Iraqi standards) air force presence and air defense network, though neither were successfully employed by the regime prior to OIF, as well as Saddam's ubiquitous security and paramilitary forces. The SRG's 3rd Battalion maintained a presence at Tharthar Dam, being one of the few SRG units that was not recalled to Baghdad to assist in the defense of the capital. During the run-up to OIF, Al-Anbar was home to far fewer RG and SRG forces as its northern or southern counterparts, but this should be viewed within the context of Saddam's "ring" strategy for defending Baghdad.

Summary

(U) On the eve of the Coalition invasion, the Anbaris were far better off than most Iraqis. Yet despite holding a privileged status, the Anbaris still retained two key characteristics that would influence Iraq's future. Anbaris continued to defy central authority and maintain a firm belief that only Sunnis could rule Iraq.

(U) The decade following the Gulf War also brought major changes to Anbar. The policy changes by Saddam, the Shi'a revolt that occurred immediately after the Gulf War and the sanctions regime set up by the international community combined to transform the province in unexpected ways. The new tribal and religious policies of Saddam created a province with stronger tribal ties, more loyalty to Saddam, and much more religious fervor. They had also reinforced the Anbaris' conviction of their right to power and privilege.

(U) The growing strength of radical Islam was having great impact. Although Anbaris had been religious in the past, their faith had been heavily influenced by Sufism and was rather moderate. The new Islamism was fervent and had views of jihad that traditional Islam does not support. Some Islamists envisioned an Islamic Caliphate which would unite the world's entire Islamic community.

⁴⁶ TD-
⁴⁷ TD- 1.4c

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, p.27

⁵⁰ *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, p.77

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(U) By the end of the nineties, even Ba'athist party members were turning to Islam in large numbers, creating a nexus between the supposedly secular party and religion that would be further strengthened after 2003.

(U) Equally important for later events was the Sunni expectation that they would retain their position in Iraq because the Anbari sense of privilege and entitlement went along with a deep-seated fear of the Shi'a. Indeed right up to Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Sunni-Arab elites feared pro-Iranian Shi'a subversion, defection, and treason. The Sunni pointed to the fact Shi'a religious leadership in Najaf and Karbala has many connections with the Iranian Ayatollahs, and several thousand of them actually fought alongside Iranian troops against the Iraqi armed forces during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988). In building this argument, the Sunni conveniently overlooked the fact hundreds of thousands of Shi'a fought and died in the Iraq Army to repulse the Iranian invasion of the south.

(U) The Sunnis were adamant that control of Iraq had to remain in the hands of the only true Iraqis—the Sunnis who had ruled the country since its founding. Many Sunnis also firmly believed that Sunnis were actually a majority in Iraq. They stated Sunnis made up over 50% of the total population and the Shi's and Kurds were distinct minorities.

(U) As always, Anbaris smugglers continued to thrive -- and the sanctions increased the profitability of their smuggling. Exploiting cross-border tribal ties, Anbaris slipped easily into Jordan, Syria and even Saudi Arabia to buy scarce goods and bring them back to Iraq. These ancient smuggling routes, used by Anbaris for centuries, would find other uses once the 2003 war with the Coalition began.

(U) This mix of ancient characteristics and recent Islamic fervor awaited the American forces that would move into the province.

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