

Report for Congress

Received through the CRS Web

Iraq: Potential U.S. Military Operations

January 13, 2003

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Iraq: Potential Military Operations

Summary

While a very active debate continues over whether military force should be used against Iraq, military contingency planning is underway. This report focuses primarily on these contingency preparations, notably potential military options available and the military preparations that have been undertaken. It addresses elements of the over-arching political debate only when immediately relevant to military planning. (For further information, see CRS Report RS21325, *Iraq: Divergent Views on U.S. Military Action*) Iraq's chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons programs, together with long-range missile development, and alleged support for terrorism are the justifications put forward for military action. Though initial emphasis was on the ouster of Saddam Hussein, the Administration has more recently pointed to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) disarmament as its prime objective. The report of the U.N. arms inspectors, due January 27 to the United Nations Security Council, is being viewed as a key element in any decision to initiate military action.

News reports have indicated that the military options under discussion varied in their assumptions about Iraqi military capabilities, the usefulness of Iraqi opposition groups, the attitude of regional governments, and the U.S. resources that would be required. A "heavy" option would involve 250,000 troops (ashore and afloat), and would combine an air offensive with four or more armored and mechanized divisions. This option is dependent upon the cooperation of regional nations for staging areas/airbases and could require months to deploy the necessary forces. A "lite" option would entail extensive use of special operations forces in cooperation with indigenous Iraqi opposition forces, coupled with an intense air offensive to destroy Hussein's most reliable Republican Guard units, command & control centers, and WMD capabilities. This approach assumes that the regular Iraqi army will prove unreliable, once it is clear that defeat is imminent. Both "heavy" and "lite" options were reportedly set aside in the Fall of 2002, and news reports began to indicate that the plan of choice was a blend of the two. Involving perhaps 100,000 + U.S. personnel, this option appears to focus upon the diversity of units attacking (armor, airmobile, special operations), and close coordination of air and ground attacks. Indigenous forces would not play a large role, though some effort would be made to gain their cooperation. Though these elements appear to remain at the core of DOD's planning, early 2003 press reports began to indicate that force strengths closer to the "heavy" option would be deployed.

Key arrangements for the use of regional military facilities are reportedly in place with Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman. Negotiations continue with Saudi Arabia and Turkey. The extent of cooperation may, however, depend heavily upon the results of the UN arms inspections and Security Council action. The United Kingdom and Australia remain the only nations committed to contribute forces. Though costs remain very difficult to predict, several estimates have been put forward, ranging from \$50 billion to \$1.2 trillion depending on the factors included (e.g., occupation costs, economic consequences).

This report will be updated as events warrant.

Contents

Background	1
Military Options Considered	2
Large-Scale Invasion	2
Special Operations/Indigenous Forces	2
The “Middle” Option	3
Factors for Consideration	4
Roles and Attitudes of Other Nations	4
Improved U.S. Military Technology	6
Iraqi Military Capabilities	7
Conventional Forces	7
Chemical and Biological Weapons	8
Post-War Requirements	9
Other U.S. Military Resource Requirements	10
Costs	11

Iraq: Potential Military Options

Background

Iraq's chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons programs, together with Iraqi long-range missile development, and support for terrorism are the primary justifications put forward by the Bush Administration for military action. Although the Administration has voiced strong skepticism of efforts to resume United Nations weapons inspection in Iraq, it negotiated the drafting and passage of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1441, which returned inspectors to Iraq. The resolution requires the inspectors to provide an initial report on their findings by January 27, 2003.¹ Since Iraq ended cooperation with U.N. inspectors in 1998, there has been little information on the state of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) arsenal, however Administration officials are convinced that Iraq has reconstituted significant capabilities. Initially, leading Administration officials, most notably Vice-President Cheney, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, and his Deputy Paul Wolfowitz, stressed that "regime change" or the removal of Saddam Hussein from power by force, was the only way to eliminate the threat of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.² Later in 2002, WMD disarmament was emphasized as the primary objective. Expanding on this theme, President Bush, in his speech before the United Nations on August 12, specified the following conditions that the Administration believes Iraq must meet to forestall military action against it:

- Immediately and unconditionally forswear, disclose, and remove or destroy all weapons of mass destruction, long-range missiles, and all related material.
- End all support for terrorism and act to suppress it.
- Cease persecution of its civilian population.
- Release or account for all Gulf War missing personnel.
- End all illicit trade outside the oil-for-food program and allow United Nations administration of its funds.³

While a very active debate continues over whether military force should be used against Iraq, military contingency planning is underway. This report focuses primarily on these contingency preparations, notably potential military options available and the military preparations that have been undertaken. It addresses

¹For more information, see CRS Issue Brief IB92117, *Iraq: Weapons Threat, Compliance, Sanctions, and U.S. Policy*.

²Vice-Presidential speeches, August 26 and 29, before the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Veterans of the Korean War. [<http://www.whitehouse.gov/vicepresident/>]; Deputy Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, Associated Press interview, September 10, 2002; Secretary Rumsfeld, BBC interview, September 13, 2002.

³President Bush's Address to the U.N. General Assembly, September 12, 2002.

elements of the over-arching political debate only when immediately relevant to military planning.

Military Options Considered

The Department of Defense has officially released little information concerning war planning or preparations against Iraq. There have been, however, frequent and significant news leaks which provide a range of details. News reports have indicated that the military options that have been under discussion varied significantly in their assumptions regarding Iraqi military capabilities today, the usefulness of Iraqi opposition groups, the attitude of regional governments, and the U.S. military resources that would be required.

Large-Scale Invasion

This option, often called the “Franks Plan”, after Army Gen. Tommy Franks, the U.S. Central Command commander who first briefed it to the President and White House Staff calls for a large-scale ground force invasion. Reportedly, this option would involve 250,000 troops, and would combine an air offensive with up to four armored, mechanized, and/or Marine divisions. In essence, it would be a smaller version of the 1991 Desert Storm operation, with the smaller force reflecting an assessment that Iraqi armed forces are neither as numerous nor as capable as they were ten years ago, and that U.S. forces are significantly more capable. This option is greatly dependent upon the cooperation of regional nations for substantial staging areas/airbases and could require months to deploy the necessary forces. It is generally considered to offer the greatest certainty for a rapid victory against even significant Iraqi resistance, and is in keeping with the so-called “Powell Doctrine’s” concept of overwhelming force. It also would result in substantial forces in place to maintain the occupation of Iraq until such time as a new government was established.⁴

News reports indicated, however, that this “heavy” approach did not receive the support of the DOD civilian leadership or White House advisors. Questions over the reliability of the regional support that would be necessary for staging areas and the length of time required for deployment were the major concerns.⁵

Special Operations/Indigenous Forces

This option involved the smallest number of U.S. ground troops. It was reportedly put forward by Army General Wayne Downing (Ret.), then an anti-terrorism advisor on the National Security Council. It would entail extensive use of special operations forces in cooperation with indigenous Iraqi opposition forces, coupled with an extensive air offensive to destroy Hussein’s most reliable

⁴ “Iraq War Plans IV: Desert Storm II”, STRATFOR.com September 12, 2002.[<http://www.stratfor.com/corp/>]

⁵“The Iraq Build-up, II”, *National Journal*, October 5, 2002. p. 2866.

Republican Guard units, command & control centers, and WMD capabilities. This approach assumed that the regular Iraqi army would prove unreliable, and could even join opposition forces once it is clear that defeat is imminent. To encourage this, significant emphasis would be placed on an intensive psychological warfare or “psyops” campaign to undermine the morale of Iraqi soldiers and unit commanders, persuading them of the hopelessness of resistance. This approach was used effectively in Afghanistan against the Taliban government forces, when special operations forces teamed with existing Northern Alliance opposition military units to both guide and exploit U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy air attacks.⁶

While having the advantage of not requiring large staging areas (though some regional air basing would be required) or months to prepare, this is generally considered the riskiest approach. The weakness of Iraqi opposition military forces and their competing political agendas place their effectiveness in question, and predicting the behavior of regular Iraqi Army units under attack is problematic. This option also does not address the possibility of stiff resistance by Republican Guard units in the environs of Baghdad, nor the troop requirements of a post-conflict occupation. Consequently, it is reportedly no longer under active consideration by the Bush Administration.

The “Middle” Option

Current news reports indicate that the Administration’s plan of choice appears to be a blend of the two options. Involving at least 100,000 U.S. troops (ashore and afloat), this option appears to focus not on the size of the U.S. force, but rather upon the diversity of units attacking (armor, airmobile, special operations, marine), and very close coordination of air and ground attacks. Indigenous forces would not necessarily play a large role, though some effort would be made through Central Intelligence Agency teams and special operations units to gain their cooperation. Particular efforts may be made to isolate and neutralize key Iraqi leadership. Targeting would still emphasize command & control centers, WMD capabilities, Saddam Hussein’s palace complexes, and Republican Guard units. Again “psyops” would be carried out to persuade regular Iraqi army units that resistance would be futile. There would be very heavy reliance upon air power, particularly in the initial phase. This would require some regional basing for Air Force tactical aircraft and aerial-refueling tankers, in addition to greater reliance upon strategic bombers and Navy cruise missiles and carrier aircraft. Armor/mechanized ground forces would move in from Kuwait in the south, and airmobile forces possibly from Turkey in the north. Airborne and helicopter air assault troops may be used to seize high-value targets deep within Iraq, and there has also been discussion of a seaborne assault by the U.S. Marine Corps from the Persian Gulf as an integral element of this option.⁷

⁶“Timing, Tactics on Iraq War Disputed; Top Bush Officials Criticize Generals’ Conventional Views”, *Washington Post*, August 1, 2002. p. 1

⁷“Number of U.S. Troops in Gulf is Expected to Nearly Double”, *Wall Street Journal*, December 19, 2002.

Factors for Consideration

Roles and Attitudes of Other Nations

It appears that, unless there are major shifts in the international political scene, U.S. military action against Iraq will not be in the context of a large coalition similar to that formed for Desert Storm in 1991. To date, only the United Kingdom and Australia have offered their armed forces' participation. In 1991, 28 nations contributed military units. Also, the cooperation of Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the Gulf States provided extensive staging and transportation facilities, and multiple fronts from which to launch attacks. Egypt, a 1991 coalition member, expedited passage of naval forces and transport shipping through the Suez Canal. Aside from their military force contributions, European allies also permitted use of U.S. airbases in their countries and granted overflight rights. Though some European allies (notably France and Germany) appear to be less opposed to military action than previously, the extent and conditions of possible assistance remain unclear. Depending upon how international events play out – particularly the report of U.N. arms inspectors and the actions of the U.N. Security Council, this type of cooperation may or may not be available.

Considerations such as these, particularly in a fluctuating international political environment, confront military planners with complex challenges. It has been suggested that some nations' public opposition to military action against Iraq does not reflect the nature of "private" diplomatic conversations which indicate a greater willingness to support U.S. policy. If true, this could result in unacknowledged or covert assistance, or perhaps overt cooperation after an attack has begun and a U.S. victory appears assured.

Saudi Arabia, a previous opponent of military action, has now expressed some willingness to permit the United States use of its facilities, upon condition of a United Nations resolution authorizing the use of military force against Iraq. Saudi cooperation would provide a very significant boon to military planners, though there may be some concern over what role in military decision-making the Saudi government would play once an operation is underway.⁸

Knowing that U.S. facilities in Saudi Arabia may not be available for operations against Iraq, the United States has been establishing defense agreements, and expanding or upgrading airbase and logistics facilities in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates – countries whose support of U.S. policy in the region is judged the most reliable.⁹ Each of these countries has permitted use of airbases to support U.S. military operations in Afghanistan, while Saudi Arabia allowed only the use of the air operations command center on its territory. Given the range of facilities and prepositioned U.S. equipment in these countries, their

⁸“Saudi Arabia Said to Have Assured U.S. on Use of Bases”, *New York Times*, December 29, 2002. p. 1

⁹ For further information, see CRS Report RL31533, *Persian Gulf: Issues for U.S. Policy*, 2003.

cooperation would be crucial to a military offensive against Iraq. As with the European allies, the extent of cooperation from these nations will probably great depend upon the results of U.N. arms inspections and the actions of the U.N. Security Council. If they insist upon a second U.N. resolution specifically authorizing military action against Iraq as a condition for their full cooperation, there are concerns that this could delay operation beyond April, which is considered the latest date to avoid having to conduct desert operations in the heat of the Iraqi summer.

The United States and Bahrain have a defense cooperation agreement regarding repositioning war materiel. The U.S. Navy 5th Fleet headquarters is in Bahrain, and the Air Force currently has use of Bahrain's Shaikh airbase. Since the Gulf War, the United States has maintained a presence of 4,000-6,000 troops in Kuwait, rotating ground force units in and out on training exercises, and has pre-positioned at least a brigade's equipment. Construction is nearly complete on a new, expanded U.S. staging facility. Recent press reports indicate that the U.S. troop level has increased to over 10,000. The U.S. Air Force has use of two Kuwaiti airfields – Ali al Salem and Ali al-Jabiru. In Oman, through a cooperative agreement, the Air Force has access to four airbases – al-Musnanah, Masirah, Seeb, and Thumrait – which it has been upgrading to handle a full range of air operations. Qatar has developed a very close cooperative defense relationship with the United States, permitting the repositioning of enough equipment for three U.S. Army brigades and the construction of an operations command center at al-Udaid airbase comparable to that located at Prince Sultan airbase in Saudi Arabia. This facility has been extensively used to support operations in Afghanistan, and 600 personnel from Central Command Headquarters deployed there in mid-September, 2002. DOD described this deployment as a training exercise, though most believe it to be connected to preparations for an Iraq offensive. In the United Arab Emirates, the U.S. Navy has access to port facilities and the Air Force is using the al-Dhafra airbase.¹⁰

The attitude of the Turkish government towards U.S. military action against Iraq is a very important consideration for U.S. military planners. Currently, the U.S. Air Force is carrying out the “no-fly zone” enforcement operation Northern Watch from Incirlik airbase in Turkey under a detailed agreement which limits flights and the number of U.S. aircraft that can be stationed there. There have also been press reports that Turkey has facilitated U.S. upgrading of airfields located inside northern Iraq. After a significant delay, Turkey has now allowed a U.S. Air Force survey team to begin evaluating additional airfields inside Turkey. Aside from permitting air operations from Incirlik, Turkish cooperation could also provide a northern front for U.S. ground operations. Though very difficult, mountainous terrain presents challenges in this area, if the United States intends to coopt the indigenous Kurdish opposition forces as part of its attack strategy, access to northern Iraq through Turkish territory would be crucial. Complicating this issue are Turkish concerns about Kurdish opposition groups' desires for autonomy which could encourage Kurd separatist groups in western Turkey, and the Iraqi Kurds' objections to any increase in the number of Turkish troops in their region. Press reports have indicated that airmobile operations out of Turkish airbases are being considered, with units such as

¹⁰ “Current U.S. Order of Battle”, Global Security.Org
[http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq_orbat_030120.htm]

the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) “hopscotching” through en route to Iraq. This approach could alleviate the Turkish concern about a large U.S. troop presence in Turkey, and avoid the geographical bottleneck posed by the mountainous terrain on the Iraq-Turkish border. With press reports varying from day to day, it still remains to be seen whether the Turkish government will eventually endorse a northern ground offensive.

Improved U.S. Military Technology

Significant technological advancements, particularly in precision-guided munitions, have led DOD spokesmen to emphasize that an air campaign against Iraq would be considerably more efficient and more militarily devastating than Operation Desert Storm. In 1991 only ten percent of the aerial munitions used were precision-guided. That ratio could well be the inverse in an air campaign today. This would allow a greater number of targets to be destroyed far more rapidly, using fewer aircraft and with less chance of collateral damage. U.S. military planners have paid particular attention to the problem of Iraqi SCUD missiles. In 1991, the allied coalition was unable to locate and destroy any SCUD mobile launchers, and U.S. intelligence believes that Iraq still possesses at least 24 missiles, some possibly armed with chemical or biological warheads. Using new equipment, such as the Tactical Airborne Warning System (TAWS) and the PAC-3 air defense missiles, DOD hopes to be able to greatly reduce the time from missile launch detection to intercept, improving the chance of both destroying the launched missile and the missile launcher. Improvements in satellite reconnaissance, communications, and unmanned aerial vehicles now available to ground commanders are also seen as major advances over Desert Storm capabilities.

The greater availability of precision-guided munitions (PGMs) bodes well for attacks against stationary targets, and moving targets in open terrain. There have been some question raised about the level of PGM inventories after the Afghanistan campaign, but DOD has insisted they remain adequate for operations against Iraq.¹¹ Military operations in an urban environment would, however, limit the effectiveness of air power and armor units. Timely targeting information, rules of target engagement, and avoidance of “friendly fire” casualties will remain prime concerns. There is also, of course, the separate issue of the distinctive requirements of “building-to-building” urban warfare.

Cyberwarfare is an area where U.S. technology could be brought to bear, but still has unresolved policy issues. DOD is recommending penetration of Iraqi computer networks to degrade communications and air defense capabilities, however the inter-agency policy group that must approve military attacks against computer networks has yet to grant such authority.¹²

¹¹“The Tools Of War Expecting a rerun of Gulf War I? Think again, thanks to high tech and smart bombs”, *Time*, October 21, 2002.

¹²Fulgham, David. “War Preparations Reveal Problems”, *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, December 9, 2002. p. 29

Iraqi Military Capabilities

Conventional Forces. There is little disagreement that Iraqi armed forces are significantly degraded from their condition during the Persian Gulf War in 1991. Manpower stands at roughly 50% or less of its 1991 level or about 350,000-400,000. Unclassified estimates put equipment levels at about 2,000-2,600 tanks, 3,700 armored vehicles, and 300 combat aircraft.¹³ A number of factors are believed to hamper Iraqi military effectiveness. A decade of arms embargo has resulted in much equipment now being obsolete or inoperable. Many of Iraq's regular army divisions are undermanned and all comprise mostly conscripts. Large unit and combined arms training is lacking, and combat experienced non-commissioned officers and commanders are relatively few. Logistical support is not robust, and is vulnerable to air interdiction.

Saddam Hussein's fear of internal coups has served to make regime security a paramount concern, which could have a detrimental effect on Iraq's military effectiveness. The best equipped and most reliable troops, the Republican Guard, are kept near Baghdad for regime protection. The officer corps is subject to intense scrutiny for loyalty and subject to unpredictable purges. The distribution of weaponry and supplies is curtailed among regular army units to forestall attempts to overthrow the regime. There also exist tensions, to some extent purposely encouraged, between regular and Republican Guard units, which could hamper coordination.¹⁴

These considerations notwithstanding, the Iraqi military still presents some significant challenges for U.S. military planners. One area where Iraq has reportedly been able to enhance its capabilities in the last decade is air defense. Smuggled equipment has enabled an improved command and control system. "Lessons learned" from both the Gulf War and from experience with the U.S. overflight operations in northern and southern Iraq may have improved Iraqi abilities in this area. Given that any U.S. military offensive operation will depend heavily upon "control of the skies", U.S. planners must ensure that Iraqi air defenses are neutralized early. Press reports have noted that U.S. and British pilots in the overflight Operation Southern Watch have recently stepped up attacks on Iraqi air defense sites. DOD maintains that these attacks have been solely in response to hostile fire, though some have speculated that they represent a "softening up" of Iraq's southern air defenses.¹⁵

It cannot be assumed that a ground campaign would be simply a replay of 1991's Operation Desert Storm. After that experience when Iraqi units deployed in the open desert were subjected to devastating air attacks, Iraq's military leadership may choose

¹³ For a detailed examinations, see Cordesman, Anthony. *Iraq's Military Capabilities in 2002*, Center for Strategic and International Studies. September 2002.; and *The military Balance 2002-2003*. International Institute of Strategic Studies, October 2002.

¹⁴ See also, CRS Report RL31339, *U.S. Efforts to Change the Regime*, January 8, 2003.

¹⁵ "Airstrikes in Iraq Southern No-Fly Zone Grow", *Washington Post*. January 15, 2003. P.

an urban strategy to reduce the effectiveness of U.S. airpower. By choosing to defend only urban centers, Iraq would force the United States to commit troops to urban combat – one of the most difficult types to conduct – and simultaneously constrain U.S. Air Force targeting because of concerns over collateral damage and casualties. The Iraqi government has shown no hesitation to locate military facilities in civilian areas to exploit this concern. Republican Guard units in the environs of Baghdad, as part of their regime protection mission, have trained for urban combat, and could provide significant resistance mingled with Baghdad's population of 4 million. There have been reports of underground tunnel systems in urban centers specifically designed to facilitate urban defense.¹⁶

Chemical and Biological Weapons. Though not yet judged to have developed a nuclear weapons capability, Iraq is believed to have probably retained chemical and biological (CB) stockpiles from before the Persian Gulf War, and may have continued covert CB development and/or production since. Some CB facilities that were destroyed during the Persian Gulf War reportedly have been re-built. Iraq is known to have produced blister agents (“mustard gas”) and both persistent and non-persistent nerve agents (VX and Sarin). Biological agents produced include anthrax, aflatoxin, and the toxin agents botulinum and ricin. Though unconfirmed, it is possible that Iraq may also possess the smallpox virus cultured from natural outbreaks of the disease in Iraq prior to its world-wide eradication in the early 1970s. Iraq is known to have developed a variety of means to disseminate CB weapons, including bombs, artillery shells, missile warheads, mines, and aerial sprayers for both manned and unmanned aircraft. There have been some questions about the effectiveness of these delivery systems, but they remain unanswered.¹⁷

Though Iraq did not use CB weapons in the Persian Gulf War, many believe that Saddam Hussein's restraint in this regard will be not repeated. This view is based on the assumption that, given that the U.S. objective would now be the destruction of his regime rather than the more limited objectives in the Persian Gulf War, Hussein would have “nothing to lose” by their employment. The actual use of these weapons will rest ultimately, however, upon the military commanders who control them, and U.S. planners are focusing on ways to persuade these officers that using CB weapons would be suicidal. In addition, known CB weapons sites will likely be very early targets regardless of which invasion strategy is chosen. In attacking CB facilities – particularly those with substantial amounts of munitions – military planners will have to consider the possible effects on U.S. personnel and Iraqi civilians of the inadvertent release of CB agents.

Given that Iraqi employment of CB weapons remains an open question, U.S. forces must be prepared to operate in a CB contaminated environment. Though perhaps better prepared than any other military to deal with CB warfare, U.S. forces have not actually encountered the use of CB weapons since World War I. U.S.

¹⁶ “Iraqi Strategy Centers on Cities”, *Los Angeles Times*, August 8, 2002. p. 1

¹⁷ *Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Net Assessment*. Center for International and Strategic Studies. September 2002.

Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs. Central Intelligence Agency. October 2002.

planners will have to ensure that there are adequate supplies of protective and decontamination equipment for an invasion force, and will again be confronted with the problematic issue of vaccinations and prophylactic pharmaceuticals that has led to the “Gulf War illnesses” controversy. Indicative of this latter problem, even though production of anthrax vaccine has been restored, DOD has still not re-instated its service-wide vaccination policy. This concern may be compounded with the smallpox vaccine. In October 2002, the General Accounting Office reiterated its concerns over “serious problems” in the adequacy of the armed forces CBW training, availability of specialist personnel, and defensive equipment inventories¹⁸

One of the unique qualities of CB weapons is that the employment of even a small number or amount can have an effect significantly out of proportion to the casualties actually inflicted. Trace amounts will force military units to “suit up” and can severely degrade their performance. Logistics facilities (e.g. ports), often staffed by unprotected civilians, could be shut down by relatively small amounts of persistent nerve agent because the workforce refuses to return. Civilian ships chartered for military transport are particularly vulnerable to threats of chemical or biological attacks and, as occurred in the Persian Gulf War, civilian crews may refuse to enter the war zone. In short, the psychological effects of these weapons could prove just as disruptive as their physical effects.

Another concern is the possibility of Iraq employing biological or toxin agents as retaliatory terror weapons against the populations of cooperating countries, Israel, or the United States itself. The spread of a contagious disease such as smallpox could be the most devastating to civilian populations, though if used regionally, the use of a contagious disease would run the risk of its re-introduction into the Iraqi population.

The Bush Administration’s announced policy of possible nuclear retaliation if WMD are used against U.S. forces may serve as a deterrent, as more veiled references to nuclear force were felt to forestall their use in 1991.¹⁹ On the other hand, the U.S. emphasis upon ousting Hussein could induce a “nothing to lose” attitude conducive to using CB weapons.

Post-War Requirements

In testimony before the House Armed Services Committee on September 18, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld declined to speculate upon what might be the military requirements for the United States in post-war Iraq, assuming Saddam Hussein’s ouster. This reflects the great difficulty in predicting what the political and military situation would be in a post-war Iraq, and how long a U.S. military presence would be required before an acceptable and stable Iraqi government could be established. The reaction of the Iraq population is the key element, and will depend upon a variety of factors, such as the nature and extent of war damage and casualties, the demands

¹⁸ General Accounting Office. *Chemical and Biological Defense: Observations on DOD's Risk Assessment of Defense Capabilities* GAO-03-137T, October 1, 2002

¹⁹ *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction*, December 2002. p. 5 [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/12/WMDStrategy.pdf]

of ethnic and religious minorities, and the speed with which a credible government can be established. Though a short-term post-war occupation may be a possibility, it is likely that a continued deployment of substantial military ground force will be necessary for several years. For comparison, in the relatively benign environment and considerably smaller areas of Bosnia and Kosovo, NATO currently maintains a deployment of about 60,000 troops. It is possible, however, that some nations unwilling to participate in military action against Iraq may be willing to contribute to a post-war stabilization force, thus alleviating some of the burden on U.S. forces.

Other U.S. Military Resource Requirements

Aside from the deployments in the Balkans where the United States has about 12,000 troops, operations continue in Afghanistan where U.S. troops number about 7,000. DOD has not released information on the current deployment situation for U.S. Air Force units: however many air assets could possibly respond to operational requirements for either Iraq or Afghanistan from their current bases, if aerial refueling is possible. While the Department of Defense could meet the overall manpower requirements of an Iraqi invasion, an issue of particular concern is whether sufficient “low density-high demand” assets can be made available. These include assets such as the EA-6B aircraft used to engage air defense radars, the AWACS and JSTARS reconnaissance/air control aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles, Combat-Air-Search and rescue (CSAR), and all special operations forces (SOF). Demands on special operations forces have been particularly high over the last year. Most notably in Afghanistan, but there have also been training/advisory missions in the Philippines, Georgia (Graze), and Yemen as part of a world-wide antiterrorism campaign, in addition to anti-drug operations in Columbia. And, recently Secretary Rumsfeld indicated that he intended to increase further the SOF commitment to the war on terrorism.²⁰ It is in this context, that some have suggested that an invasion of Iraq would detract from the resources available to continue efforts to pursue the world-wide war on terrorism, which they view as currently a greater threat to U.S. security than Iraq.²¹

North Korea’s decision in December 2002 to resume its nuclear weapons program has raised tensions in that region, and brought attention to the question whether the United States would and/or could take military action there, in addition to a campaign in Iraq. Secretary Rumsfeld has asserted that U.S. military resources are sufficient to fight in two theaters simultaneously, though some observers have strongly disagreed, citing shortages of strategic air/sealift and active duty personnel.²² At a minimum, the situation on the Korean Peninsula may mean that Pacific Command forces that may have otherwise deployed to the Persian Gulf will have to

²⁰ See CRS Report RS21048, *U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress*.

²¹ Fulgham, David. “War Preparations Reveal Problems”, *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, December 9, 2002. p. 29

²² Scarborough, Rowan. “U.S. Ability to Fight Two Wars Doubted”, *Washington Times*, December 25, 2002. p. 1.

remain in the Pacific region. Meanwhile, the Bush Administration has stressed it is seeking a diplomatic rather than military resolution to the North Korean situation.

Costs

Predicting the cost of military operations is a task that DOD did not undertake prior to the peace-keeping deployments to the Balkans, and remains a highly conjectural exercise. Methodologies tend to be relatively crude and based upon historical experience, i.e. “the last war”. Secretary Rumsfeld has expressed his opinion that “it is unknowable what a war or conflict like that would cost.”²³

Nevertheless, some estimates have appeared. Michael O’Hanlon of the Brookings Institution, has pegged a 250,000-strong invasion at between \$40-\$50 billion with a follow-up occupation costing \$10-\$20 billion a year. Former White House economic advisor Lawrence Lindsay has estimated the high limit on the cost to be 1-2% of GNP, or about \$100-\$200 billion. Mitch Daniels, Director of the Office of Management and Budget subsequently discounted this estimate as “very, very high”, and has stated that the costs would be between \$50-\$60 billion, though no specific supporting figures were provided for the estimate.²⁴ In response to a request from Senator Conrad and Representative Spratt, members of the Budget Committees of their respective chambers, the Congressional Budget Office prepared a cost estimate with supporting documentation that divided the costs into three segments: force deployment – \$9 to \$13 billion; combat operations – \$6 to \$9 billion per month; and post-conflict occupation – \$1 to \$4 billion a month. This CBO estimate includes only “incremental” costs, i.e. those over and above DOD’s normal operations and maintenance costs.²⁵ The American Academy of Arts and Sciences has published a more wide-ranging report which covers the possibility of an extended occupation, in addition to potential long-term economic consequences and concludes that potential costs could range from \$99 billion to \$1.2 trillion.²⁶ For comparison, the cost to the United States of the Persian Gulf War in 1990-91 was approximately \$60 billion, and almost all of this cost was offset by international financial contributions.

²³“War Could Cost More Than \$40 billion”, *Knight-Ridder Wire Service*, September 18, 2002

²⁴ Bumiller, Elisabeth. “Budget Director Lowers Estimate of Cost of War”, *New York Times*, December 31, 2002. p. 1

²⁵ Congressional Budget Office. *Estimated Costs of a Potential Conflict with Iraq*. September 2002. <http://www.cbo.gov/showdoc.cfm?index=3822&sequence=0>

²⁶ *War with Iraq: Costs, Consequences, and Alternatives*. American Academy of Arts and Sciences. December 2002. http://www.amacad.org/publications/monographs/Iraq_Press.pdf