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Central
Intelligence

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NOFORN NOCONTRACT
ORCOST

CIACPOS.../NID-88-429JK...

(M)

National Intelligence Daily

Tuesday
5 April 1988

RELEASE IN PART
EXEMPTIONS: (b)(7)
(D) (1)
DATE: SEP 2001



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IRAN-IRAQ: Missile War Resumes

Iraq fired a missile at Esfahan yesterday, and reportedly one today at Qom, in retaliation for an Iranian missile attack on Kirkuk. Iran said its strike was in response to the Iraqi air raids on the refineries at Tabriz and Esfahan on Sunday. Baghdad had announced earlier that it would rely on airstrikes to continue the war of the cities, but an Iraqi spokesman later said Iraq would retaliate for Iranian missile strikes with "massive missile attacks," according to US Embassy and press reports. Iraqi Foreign Minister Aziz repeated Baghdad's conditions for ending the missile war—an end to Iranian missile, air, and ground attacks and no response to Iraqi airstrikes on economic targets.

Comment: The exchange of missile strikes is likely to continue over the near term, although possibly at lower levels. Iraq's intention to rely more on its Air Force suggests that Baghdad is concerned about its diminishing missile inventory. The Iraqis may have hoped that an Iranian missile response to their air attacks and Iran's likely rejection of Baghdad's hardline conditions would shift to Tehran some of the blame for the continuation of the missile war. Tehran probably would like to end the missile exchanges but apparently is unwilling to accept

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Special Analysis

IRAN-IRAQ:

The Chemical Warfare Issue

Recent fighting in northeastern Iraq has underscored the regular, recurring use of chemical weapons in the Iran-Iraq war and suggests that such activity will continue to increase. Chemical attacks on either country's major cities are unlikely under current circumstances, but the risk is growing that smaller population centers might be attacked with chemical weapons. If such attacks failed to evoke international sanctions, the chance of chemical strikes on larger cities would increase significantly.

The Iraqis have the largest stockpile of chemical weapons in the region, including mustard and nerve agents that can be delivered by air or artillery strikes.

Battlefield Use Increasing

Baghdad and Tehran apparently believe chemical weapons are tactically useful and effective. The increasing availability of chemical munitions and experience in their use are likely to encourage both sides to employ chemicals more frequently and on a wider scale.

Prospects for a Chemical War of the Cities

Neither side is likely to initiate a chemical war of the cities in the near term. There is no evidence that either Iran or Iraq has developed chemical warheads for Scud missiles, but that possibility cannot be ruled out. Baghdad's success in developing chemical bombs and

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artillery shells suggests it could produce a crude chemical warhead for its Scuds, and Tehran might have obtained foreign assistance in producing chemical warheads for its surface-to-surface missiles. Each side has the capability to conduct chemical airstrikes against major cities [REDACTED]

A strategic breakthrough by Iran in the ground war would be the scenario most likely to drive Iraq to chemical attacks on Iran's major cities. Such attacks might provoke Iran to retaliate in kind against Baghdad or Kerkuk, but Tehran probably would refrain from doing so initially—hoping for widespread international condemnation of, and possible sanctions against, Iraq [REDACTED]

Iraq probably would use chemical weapons in a battle for a major Iraqi city such as Al Basrah or As Sulaymaniyah if Baghdad believed Iranian forces were on the verge of seizing control. Unless residents were evacuated or fled, large numbers of civilians could become victims of chemical agents. [REDACTED]

In the near term, civilian chemical casualties probably will rise as a result of the gradual increase in the frequency and intensity of chemical attacks on smaller cities close to major battles or military targets [REDACTED]

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