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## Failing to Prepare or Preparing to Fail?: the Iraqi and American Armies Between 1991 and 2003

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

FAILING TO PREPARE OR PREPARING TO FAIL?

THE IRAQI AND AMERICAN ARMIES BETWEEN 1991 AND 2003

By

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To C.W. and Louise Drury

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Iraqi and American armies made changes in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War, but they made those changes within the constraints imposed upon them by their political overseers and their own political cultures. Unlike other works regarding the conflicts between Iraq and the United States, which are often historical narratives of the wars themselves, this paper is a comparative analysis of the changes made and the effects they would eventually have on the two states' respective performances in 2003.

The Iraqi Army was badly hindered by Saddam Hussein's belief that they represented a threat to him. This suspicion caused the Iraqi dictator to form multiple rival services that competed with the Iraqi Army for men, equipment, and funding. Saddam also promoted on the basis of perceived loyalty, dismissing competent officers as threats to his power. Finally, the U.N.-imposed sanctions prevented Iraq from replacing destroyed or dilapidated weapons.

The United States Army, in contrast, engaged in an expensive effort to correct perceived flaws in its force structure. At the same time, due to budget cuts, the United States Army had to find ways to perform the same duties with fewer resources. It did so using two paths. First, it attempted to modify its equipment and force structure in order to provide soldiers with firepower that would previously have been available only to larger units. Second, it made increased use of private contractors in an effort to free uniformed soldiers for combat duties.

In the end, neither Iraq nor the United States was fully prepared for the war in 2003. Iraq's forces were designed with internal security in mind; repelling an external enemy as powerful as the United States proved to be beyond their capabilities. The United States Army was fully capable and prepared for the initial campaign against the Iraqi Army, but it found itself unable to control the subsequent outburst of civil strife.



# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

The American and Iraqi armies faced off for the first time in 1991. The Iraqi Army had invaded and occupied the neighboring country of Kuwait; the Americans and their allies had deployed to push them back out. The result was one of the most one-sided victories in modern military history. Although on paper the conflict looked relatively even, the Iraqi forces collapsed before the Americans' superior training, firepower, and discipline.

Twelve years later, the two armies again confronted one another. This time, Iraq had not invaded one of its neighbors; rather, the United States was invading Iraq. Once again, the Iraqis quickly fell to the American offensive. The Americans' success in the initial campaign was not indicative of their overall performance in the occupation, however, as Iraq began to disintegrate into violence and chaos.

Given that the Iraqi and American armies fought each other twice in 12 years, observers would expect each of them to have learned something about the other. The Iraqis, for instance, had the opportunity to adapt to the American emphasis on maneuver and firepower. For the most part, however, Iraqi forces did not do so. Similarly, the United States Army had fought several low-intensity conflicts in the time between the Gulf War and the invasion of Iraq; thus so it should have been able to handle the subsequent occupation.<sup>1</sup> Despite this, both sides were largely unprepared for what they faced.

The two sides *did* make changes, but those changes were not made in a vacuum. Both the U.S. and Iraqi armies prepared for the wars they thought they were most likely to conduct, and they made those preparations within the constraints imposed upon them by their political overseers and their own internal cultures. As will be shown, the Iraqi ability to adapt was sharply limited by Saddam Hussein's interference in the Iraqi Army's affairs and his interpretations of Iraq's security environment. Under his direction, Iraq's military tried to improve its effectiveness in an attempt to ensure that no one would be able to successfully threaten Iraq or the security of the Saddam Hussein regime again.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "Gulf War" is sometimes used to refer to the war between Iraq and Iran, and at other times describes the war between the U.S.-led coalition and Iraq, subsequent to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. For the sake of clarity, this paper will use the term "Iran-Iraq War" to refer to the war between those two countries. "Gulf War" will refer to the 1991 war between the coalition and Iraq. The 2003 war will be referred to as "the invasion of Iraq."

The United States Army faced a very different security environment and set of challenges. While the U.S. Army did not have to worry about crippling international sanctions or attacks by a global superpower, it was expected to carry out responsibilities throughout the world, and it had to do so with a shrinking budget. For the United States, the focus was on efficiency. In its own institutional thinking, the Army was already capable of doing its job, as demonstrated by the Gulf War; now it had to perform the same tasks with fewer resources.

### **Literary Review**

The conflicts between Iraq and the United States have produced an enormous amount of literature. One writer for *The Guardian* estimates that hundreds of books had been written about the 2003 American-led invasion of Iraq alone.<sup>2</sup> A search of Amazon.com suggests he may have underestimated the volume of literature. The Amazon.com search engine returns more than 8,000 hits in response to a query for “Iraq war.” Unlike many of those works, however, this paper focuses on comparing the armies of the United States and Iraq in the period between 1991 and 2003. Specifically, it examines the changes each side made in the wake of the Gulf War and the effects these changes produced in 2003. To provide the reader with some idea of the nature of the rest of the literature on the topic, a review of other works in the field follows.

After it invaded Kuwait in 1991, Saddam Hussein’s Iraq assumed a prominent place in American thought. The fascination began with Operation Desert Storm, in which the United States and its allies sent the Iraqi Army and its elite Republican Guard fleeing for their survival. Although the Americans’ efforts were ostensibly meant to drive back an ambitious despot, accusations to the contrary emerged. In addition to allegations that the war was conducted to protect American oil supplies, one theory claimed that the war against Iraq was meant to justify the U.S. government’s continued military expenditures.<sup>3</sup>

It may have been in response to such accusations that Rick Atkinson wrote his book *Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War*. Atkinson focuses on the individuals who took part in the war (almost entirely from the allied perspective), ranging from President George H. W. Bush to American soldiers and airmen. Atkinson draws much of his narrative from first-person accounts of the war. At least part of Atkinson’s apparent objective is the rebuttal of

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<sup>2</sup> Chris Power, “Reading the Iraq War,” *The Guardian*, March 20, 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/booksblog/2008/mar/20/readingtheiraqwar> (Last accessed: 2/12/2011).

<sup>3</sup> Phyllis Bennis, “And They Called It Peace,” *Middle East Report*, v. 215, Summer 2000, 5.

accusations that the war was solely an act of cynical imperialism on the part of the United States. Atkinson's work provides relatively detailed descriptions of individuals' experiences in the Gulf War but does not devote the same attention to purely military matters.<sup>4</sup>

Michael R. Gordon's and General Bernard Trainor's *The Generals' War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* takes a noticeably different stance. Gordon and Trainor examine the war four years after its end and conclude that the United States' gains in the war itself were largely squandered during the peace negotiations. They argue that the war was left unfinished, a particularly apt observation in light of later events in Iraq.<sup>5</sup> As the book's title suggests, their work focuses heavily on the senior American commanders and the interactions between them.

Kenneth M. Pollack's *Arabs at War, Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991* offers a much briefer overview of the war from a purely military perspective. Pollack's discussion, part of a larger examination of modern Arab military performance, is among the most detailed regarding military actions, but essentially ignores all other aspects of the war. Pollack finds that, while the Iraq Army was sufficiently competent to repel the attacks of a regional opponent, it was simply incapable of coping with the highly mobile, hard-hitting forces of the United States and Britain. He attributes this to a tremendous gap between the equipment, skill and numbers of the Coalition forces on one side and those of the Iraqi forces on the other.<sup>6</sup>

The literature surrounding the two services during the interim period is more fractured in that authors tend to focus on one side to the exclusion of the other. In the case of the Iraqi Army, one frequently cited work is Anthony Cordesman's *Iraq: Sanctions and Beyond*, published in 1997. This work provides a detailed examination of every aspect of Iraq under Saddam Hussein: its politics, formal and informal, domestic and foreign; its economy; its military assets, both conventional and unconventional; and the international community's options in dealing with it.<sup>7</sup>

In 2002, Cordesman followed this work with his book *Iraq's Military Capabilities in 2002: A Dynamic Net Assessment*. Whereas *Iraq: Sanctions and Beyond* covered a broad spectrum of topics, *Iraq's Military Capabilities* was both more focused and more pointed.

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<sup>4</sup> Rick Atkinson, *Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* (New York: Little, Brown and Company), 461.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 261.

<sup>7</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman and Ahmed S. Hashim, *Iraq: Sanctions and Beyond* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997).

Clearly written to influence the debate surrounding the invasion of Iraq, this work focuses solely on the threat of Iraq's military capabilities and the difficulties the United States and allies faced in eliminating them.<sup>8</sup>

Two other works fall into a category similar to Cordesman's books. *Iraq Strategy Review: Options for U.S. Policy*, edited by Patrick L. Clawson,<sup>9</sup> and Michael Eisenstadt's *Like a Phoenix from the Ashes? The Future of Iraqi Military Power* both examine Iraq's efforts to rebuild in the wake of the devastation of Operation Desert Storm.<sup>10</sup> They also both discuss the various options the United States had in its dealings with Iraq.

In the case of the United States Army, the literature is much more plentiful. Unlike Iraq, which did everything it could to conceal or distort information about its forces, the United States Army was quite public about its efforts to change. In some cases, governmental assessments provided the information for the purpose of Congressional oversight; these reports were then made public. One such example is *Military Transformation: Army Has a Comprehensive Plan for Managing its Transformation but Faces Major Challenges*, a GAO report to Congress regarding the Army's efforts to change. *Military Transformation* explains, in layman's terms, what the Army was attempting to do in order to improve its armed forces, but it also cautions that the Army may have underestimated the problems it faced.<sup>11</sup>

The Army also produced a good deal of literature that was essentially self-assessment and self-criticism. The members of the Army's officer corps had their own opinions regarding the attempted transformation of the U.S. Army, and they wrote about it extensively. One paper of this type is *Army Transformation: A View from the U.S. Army War College*, a compilation of Army officers airing their opinions on what the Army needed.<sup>12</sup>

After the invasion of Iraq, authors begin to discuss the 2003 war and its aftermath. Several authors examined the initial campaign from the perspective of the soldiers involved.

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<sup>8</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, *Iraq's Military Capabilities in 2002: A Dynamic Net Assessment* (Washington, D.C.: The CSIS Press, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> Patrick L. Clawson, ed., *Iraq Strategy Review: Options for U.S. Policy*, (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Michael Eisenstadt, *Like a Phoenix from the Ashes? The Future of Iraqi Military Power*, (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1991).

<sup>11</sup> Carol R. Schuster, Reginald L. Furr, Jr., Kenneth F. Daniell, Kevin C. Handley, M. Jane Hunt, and Leo B. Sullivan, "Military Transformation: Army Has a Comprehensive Plan for Managing its Transformation but Faces Major Challenges," United States Government Accounting Office, GAO-02-96.

<sup>12</sup> Williamson Murray, ed., *Army Transformation: A View from the U.S. Army War College* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2001), 161; Jeff Bryson, *Army Transformation to Expeditionary Formations* (master's thesis, Marine Corps University, 2008).

Typically, embedded journalists wrote these books, often taking a strongly pro-U.S. stance. Examples include Jim Lacey's *Takedown: The 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division's Twenty-One Day Assault on Baghdad*; Rick Atkinson's *In The Company of Soldiers*, and Karl Zinsmeister's *Boots on the Ground: A Month with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne in the Battle for Iraq*.<sup>13</sup>

Other authors focused on the buildup to war and the subsequent occupation. These books tended to focus on the American occupiers' failures in preparing for the war and its aftermath, as well as the poor decisions made after the end of the initial campaign. Examples of these books include *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*, by George Packer,<sup>14</sup> and *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace*, by Ali A. Allawi.<sup>15</sup>

The United States government also published several works in the wake of the war. One, *On Point: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom*, studies the United States' Army's participation in the war. Written by retired and current Army officers, this work is rather self-congratulatory, applauding the decisions the Army made in preparation for the war.<sup>16</sup> Examining the war from the other side's perspective, the United States government published the *Iraqi Perspectives Project: A View of Operation Iraqi Freedom from Saddam's Senior Leadership*. This work attempts to understand why the Iraqi government made the decisions it did, using captured Iraqi documents as sources.<sup>17</sup>

### **Primary Sources**

Reliable primary sources regarding the two wars in Iraq, and the 12 years between them, are somewhat scarcer than secondary sources. This is particularly true of the Iraqi government, which had a vested interest in maintaining an appearance of strength, due to its many enemies. The problem is complicated by Iraq's political environment, which encouraged positive news

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<sup>13</sup> Rick Atkinson, *In the Company of Soldiers* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004); Jim Lacey, *Takedown: The 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division's Twenty-One Day Assault on Baghdad* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2007); Karl Zinsmeister, *Boots on the Ground: A Month with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne in the Battle for Iraq*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003). Atkinson's and Zinsmeister's books constitute primary sources, as much of the narrative is taken from their personal experiences during their embedded period. Lacey, in contrast, draws largely from interviews with soldiers and the *Iraqi Perspectives Report*.

<sup>14</sup> George Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005).

<sup>15</sup> Ali A. Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Gregory Fontenot, E.J. Degen, David Tohn, *On Point: The United States Army In Operation Iraqi Freedom*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> Kevin M. Woods, project leader, Michael R. Pease, Mark E. Stout, Williamson Murray, and James G. Lacey, *Iraqi Perspectives Project: A View of Operation Iraqi Freedom from Saddam's Senior Leadership*, Joint Center for Operational Analysis, Institute for Defense Analyses.

over accurate reporting. That being said, some private Western organizations did publish information regarding Iraq's military preparedness, including those discussed below.

The United States government captured an unknown, but apparently substantial, number of Iraqi documents in the wake of the invasion of Iraq. Some of these documents have been translated and publicly disseminated. The Institute for Defense Analyses compiled some of these translations, and summaries of others, into a public report, *[The] Iraqi Perspectives Project: Primary Source Materials for Saddam and Terrorism; Emerging Insights from Captured Iraqi Documents*. This source provides some insight into the thinking and operating procedures of Iraqi officials.<sup>18</sup>

One particularly important source for scholars of Iraqi military capabilities is the International Institute for Strategic Studies' *The Military Balance*. This series of books, published annually, offers a detailed list of most states' known or suspected military assets. Although the level of detail provided in these lists varies from state-to-state and year-to-year, examination of multiple editions of *The Military Balance* can provide readers with a reasonably clear idea of a state's military capabilities. For researchers looking for information on Saddam Hussein's armed forces, this series is among the most accessible and widely trusted sources of information.<sup>19</sup> Another less-frequently used source is *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment*. Published by the highly respected Jane's Information Group, this series examines the security environment of multiple regions on a regular basis.<sup>20</sup>

The United States' Army's Intelligence and Threat Analysis Center (AITAC) published detailed summaries of Iraqi force structures, tactics, and doctrines.<sup>21</sup> AITAC also published handbooks to provide American soldiers quick access to information about their foes. Older editions of these works have been declassified and are available to the public.<sup>22</sup>

By contrast, information regarding the American armed forces is freely available. The United States Army provides fairly detailed technical information about its weapons' capabilities

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<sup>18</sup> Kevin M. Woods, project leader, Michael R. Pease, Mark E. Stout, Williamson Murray and James G. Lacey, *Iraqi Perspectives Project: Primary Source Materials for Saddam and Terrorism; Emerging Insights from Captured Iraqi Documents, Volume 3 (Redacted)* (Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> The author consulted multiple editions of this series in writing this paper. The specific editions are cited when used.

<sup>20</sup> *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment: The Gulf States* (Alexandria, VA: Jane's Information Group, 1999).

<sup>21</sup> United States Army Intelligence and Threat Analysis Center (AITAC), *The Iraqi Army: Organization and Tactics*. National Training Center Handbook 100-91, Jan. 3, 1991.

<sup>22</sup> United States Army Intelligence and Threat Analysis Center. *How They Fight: Desert Shield: Order of Battle Handbook*, United States Army Intelligence Agency, AIA-DS-2-90, September 1990.

on its website. It also makes information regarding its doctrines and goals freely available online. This does not even begin to include the various analyses published by the Army's staff colleges, consulting firms, magazines, and official journal. See the "Primary Sources" list for information regarding these sources.

### **Services Examined**

This paper limits its discussion to the American and Iraqi military services. In both cases, the discussion is limited to ground forces. The respective countries' air forces, the United States Navy, and the Iraqi air defense system are not included, as they fall outside the scope of this paper. On the American side, the discussion is confined to the United States Army for the sake of simplicity and focus. The United States Marine Corps is not discussed; it is a distinctly different service with its own ethos, traditions, methods, and doctrines. Similarly, the various services of the United States' allies are not discussed. This does not represent any slight against these armed forces or their capabilities; they simply lie outside the scope of this paper.

On the Iraqi side, the discussion is much broader, due to the fragmented nature of the Iraqi ground forces. In the period between 1991 and 2003, Iraq had multiple armed ground services. The Republican Guard was a check on the Iraqi Army, and the Special Republican Guard was a counterweight against the former. The Fedayeen Saddam, Popular Army, and Al-Quds Brigades were likewise used to counter the influence of their counterparts. The independence of these services varied. The Republican Guard, for instance, worked very closely with the Army. Eventually, the Guard came to serve as the Army's elite branch; the two services used similar doctrines, equipment, and organization. The Fedayeen Saddam, in contrast, had decidedly different training methods, doctrines, tactics, and purposes. Nonetheless, the political climate of Iraq meant that these services constantly affected one another. The interrelated nature of these services makes it difficult to discuss one without examining the others.

### **Notes on Weapons of Mass Destruction**

The existence of an Iraqi arsenal of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) is probably one of the most contentious topics in any discussion of the interaction between the United States and Iraq. To summarize, Iraq definitely possessed WMD prior to 1991. On July 1, 1988, Iraq admitted to using chemical weapons against Iranian forces, although the Iraqi government

accused Iran of being the first to introduce those weapons into the conflict.<sup>23</sup> Iraq also used chemical weapons against Kurdish civilians in its efforts to eliminate the Kurdish resistance.

That being said, the United Nations sanctions regime stipulated that inspection teams be allowed to search all of Iraq's suspected weapons facilities, and dismantle those that produced weapons of mass destruction. Critics frequently questioned the efficacy of these inspection regimes, and for good reason. In 1995, an Iraqi defector revealed that Iraq still had WMD stocks. The Iraqi government itself admitted to arming missiles with botulism and anthrax.<sup>24</sup> To its credit, the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM), the body charged with handling the inspections, immediately reassessed its procedures.<sup>25</sup> Eight years later, when the United States and its allies invaded Iraq and overthrew its government, they found no signs of Iraqi WMD.

In the intervening period, it is difficult to find definitive evidence in either direction. That no WMDs have appeared after more than half a decade of occupation suggests there were none left in Iraq. This begs the question of why Saddam did not allow inspection teams to search his facilities; doing so would have robbed the United States of its primary justification for invasion. The answer may lie in the nature of Saddam Hussein himself.

Saddam was secretive, paranoid, and deceitful. Fear was one of the pillars of his rule. It may be that he believed the fear of his WMD helped keep his many enemies, both domestic and foreign, at bay. It is also possible that Saddam was unwilling to be perceived as giving in to international demands created by his enemies, fearing that doing so would undermine his status. Post-war examination of Iraqi documents suggests that Saddam never believed the United States would invade, and even if it did, he was confident that French and Russian intervention would be able to stop the American attack. Perhaps Saddam felt that the price of compliance was more than he wished to pay, especially if he considered any negative consequences unlikely.<sup>26</sup>

Whatever Saddam's reasons, the fact remains that little is known about Iraq's WMD arsenal, and what information exists is frequently colored by the writer's personal views. Furthermore, the topic has been discussed extensively in other venues. Due to both the extent of

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<sup>23</sup> Serge Scheman, "Iraq Acknowledges its Use of Gas but Says Iran Introduced It in War," *New York Times*, July 2, 1988.

<sup>24</sup> Cordesman, *Sanctions and Beyond*, 310.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 327.

<sup>26</sup> Kevin M. Woods, project leader, Michael R. Pease, Mark E. Stout, Williamson Murray, and James G. Lacey, *Iraqi Perspectives Project: A View of Operation Iraqi Freedom from Saddam's Senior Leadership*, Joint Center for Operational Analysis, Institute for Defense Analyses, 15, 28.



existing literature on this topic, and the topic's extremely controversial nature, Iraqi WMDs are not discussed in this paper.

### **Organization**

This study devotes one chapter to each of the two armies discussed; each chapter is divided into three subsections. The first subsection in each chapter describes the relevant army (or armies, in the case of Iraq) in 1991; it examines their equipment, training, and doctrine. That state's performance in the first Gulf War is also analyzed.

The second subsection discusses the changes each army made in the period between 1991 and 2003. Both Iraq and the United States were affected by the events of the Gulf War, but other factors influenced them to an even greater extent. Therefore, this section also analyzes the reasons for the changes made to the two armies.

The final subsection in each chapter examines the relevant army's performance in 2003. The U.S. and Iraqi armies were facing each other for the second time in less than fifteen years, but both had changed since their previous confrontation. This chapter discusses the results of the changes made to the two states' armies. Were their adjustments effective? Did they function as anticipated? Were the changes beneficial or detrimental to the army's performance?

### **Significance**

Given the sheer volume of literature surrounding the two wars between the United States and Iraq, another examination of the topic may seem unnecessary. This paper attempts to offer certain unique qualities not found in other sources. First, few comparative works of the two primary combatants exist. Generally, sources focus on either the Iraqi armed services or the United States Army. This paper discusses both, comparing the different limitations and challenges each side faced, and the ways in which they responded to their assigned tasks.

Other sources are narrower in scope regarding their examination of the two wars. The works mentioned in the literature review frequently fall into one of three categories: histories of the Persian Gulf conflict; policy papers written in the interim period discussing ways of coping with Iraq; and histories of the invasion of Iraq and its aftermath. Despite the fact that American and Iraqi forces remained opponents for more than a decade, there has been little examination of the effects these frequent foes had upon one another.

This paper attempts to analyze the lessons the two sides took from the initial conflict and how they incorporated those lessons into their armed forces in the intervening period. Just as

importantly, the discussion of the invasion of Iraq offers some insight as to the success of the two sides' changes. Were their lessons from the Persian Gulf conflict applicable to future wars, or did the Americans and Iraqis simply interpret the events of Desert Storm to suit their own preconceptions?

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **IRAQI GROUND FORCES**

Iraq officially gained its independence from Britain in 1932.<sup>27</sup> In 1958, Iraqi Army troops under Abd al-Karim Qasim overthrew King Faisal II and executed the entire royal family.<sup>28</sup> That bloody coup seemed to set the precedent for the political transfer of power in Iraq. Qasim himself was overthrown by an alliance of Iraqi Ba'athists, Army troops, and Arab nationalists in 1963. The Ba'athist regime executed Qasim after days of fighting in the streets of Iraq.<sup>29</sup> Nine months later, the Iraqi president, Abd al-Salam Arif, launched a bloodless coup that overthrew the Ba'athists themselves. The military seized power once more after Arif died in a helicopter crash two and a half years later. In mid-1968, Ba'athists and dissident Army officers once again overthrew the Iraqi government, executing all who opposed them.<sup>30</sup>

Eleven years later, in July of 1979, Saddam Hussein manipulated his predecessor into retiring and seized power himself. After his ascent to power, Saddam increasingly molded the machinery of the Iraqi state to protect himself and satisfy his ambitions. The most obvious indication of these ambitions was his decision to invade neighboring Iran. The resulting eight-year war seriously depleted the resources of both states, with little to show for the hundreds of thousands of deaths.<sup>31</sup> The only area in which Iraq emerged stronger was its military capabilities; as will be made clear at a later point, Iraq used these enhanced capabilities to attack its smaller neighbor Kuwait in 1991.<sup>32</sup>

#### **The Iraqi Army in 1991**

The Iraqi Army in 1991 was a very irregularly organized force with widely varying levels of training, equipment types, and force structures. It was originally structured along British lines, based on the general staff model. Following Iraq's realignment during the Cold War, Soviet influence became clearly visible in the Iraqi Army as well. The clearest influence on Iraq,

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<sup>27</sup> Phebe Marr, "Republic of Iraq," *The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa*, edited by David E. Long and Bernard Reich (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2002), 106.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 112-113.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

however, was its eight-year war with Iran. This war had clear effects on Iraqi thinking; this is unsurprising, given the existential threat Iran posed to the Iraqi Ba'athist regime.<sup>33</sup>

## **Organization**

The Iraqi Army was extremely centralized, undoubtedly due to Saddam Hussein's desire to maintain a firm grip on the state's military power. The Iraqi General Headquarters (GHQ) rested at the peak of this organizational pyramid, integrating control of the Army, Air Force, Navy, Popular Army, and Republican Guard.<sup>34</sup>

GHQ issued its orders to the various corps located throughout Iraq. Each corps was responsible for a specific territory, and was typically commanded by either a major general or lieutenant general. He was directly supported by his chief of staff, typically a brigadier general or major general, and the Internal Security and Morale Officer.

Somewhat outside the military chain of command was the political officer. This officer monitored the corps' adherence to the Baath party line and the loyalty of the corps' personnel to Saddam Hussein. He worked closely with the Internal Security and Morale Officer, as well as the corps commander, to ensure the corps' reliability.

Subordinate to the chief of staff were two General Staff Officers (GSO1s). One of these officers was in charge of operations and intelligence, while the other was responsible for administrative and logistical matters. Other staff officers fulfilled various specialized functions for the corps commander and his subordinates.<sup>35</sup>

The corps itself might consist of as many as ten divisions, each of which was organized along specific lines. In the aforementioned ten-division corps, infantry units would probably comprise six of the ten divisions, two more would be mechanized divisions, and the remaining one or two would be armored. In smaller corps, these numbers might vary. Attached to the corps would be an approximately brigade-size unit of artillery and air defense artillery units. The corps would possess other assets of varying size, as well.

## **Doctrine<sup>36</sup>**

The Iraqi Army's interpretation of its mission was to protect the integrity of the homeland with minimal casualties; as this statement suggests, the Army's doctrine was decidedly defensive

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<sup>33</sup> United States Army Intelligence and Threat Analysis Center (AITAC), *The Iraqi Army: Organization and Tactics*, National Training Center Handbook 100-91. Jan. 3, 1991, 1.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>36</sup> For this paper, "doctrine" is defined as the basic institutional teachings of a given service.

in nature. It emphasized the importance of strong defensive positions, even at the cost of restricting its own ability to launch counterattacks.<sup>37</sup> This doctrine was probably the result of the prolonged Iran-Iraq War; in that war, the Iraqi Army, despite some initial offensive successes, quickly found itself reduced to desperately attempting to halt repeated Iranian incursions into Iraq itself. At one point, the Iranian military came within a few kilometers of the key Iraqi port of Basra. The Iraqi high command effectively rewrote its doctrine to survive, rather than win, against a much larger opponent.<sup>38</sup>

The Iraqi strategic and tactical doctrine that emerged after the Iran-Iraq War, and was apparently still in place during the Gulf War, minimized the role of offense. Attacks were usually intended only to recapture critical terrain or launch counterattacks.<sup>39</sup> What offensive doctrine existed emphasized the importance of limited objectives in launching assaults. Officially, this policy existed to boost morale, as Iraqi soldiers could take comfort in the knowledge that they would not be pushed too hard or too far. The United States Army's analysis suggested that the Iraqi stance was more likely a pragmatic response to a serious dearth of intelligence, poor fire support, and a lack of tactical initiative from Iraq's junior officers and non-commissioned officers.<sup>40</sup>

When Iraq did launch attacks, it extensively rehearsed them beforehand. When the attack finally occurred, commando<sup>41</sup> or armored forces typically led the assault,<sup>42</sup> with mechanized forces following within hours.<sup>43</sup> The Iraqi forces rarely attempted to pursue fleeing units.<sup>44</sup> The Iraqis preferred significant local superiority when attacking, with their preferred numerical superiority ranging from 2 to 1 to as much as 10 to 1, depending on the circumstances.<sup>45</sup> The Iraqis tried to avoid assaulting enemy strong points, instead hitting the enemy's rear via flanking maneuver or penetration. In keeping with its emphasis on minimal casualties, the Iraqi Army preferred the former tactic, as penetration generally proved too costly.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>38</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 223.

<sup>39</sup> AITAC, *The Iraqi Army*, 5.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 60.

The Iraqi Army's relatively underdeveloped and exceedingly cautious offensive doctrine almost certainly results from the Iran-Iraq War. Seriously outnumbered and thrown on the defensive, Iraqi units had to minimize their casualties and carefully hoard their resources simply to hold their positions. Accordingly, the Iraqis could not afford to expend men and resources conducting inherently more difficult and hazardous attacks. This would explain both the Iraqi emphasis on minimal casualties and the restriction of the attack to a supporting role.

Iraq's defensive doctrines and tactics were far more developed than their offensive counterparts. The Iraqi Army used stationary lines, consisting of one or more rows of defensive positions, supported by mobile reserves. Their engineers incorporated natural and man-made obstacles into the planning and construction of their defensive lines.<sup>47</sup> They frequently used minefields to channel enemy tanks and supplement Iraqi defenses.<sup>48</sup>

Iraqis also made heavy use of other defensive measures: ditches, both dry and water-filled; strong points; berms; barbed wire, and overlapping fields of fire. The primary problem with Iraqi doctrine lay in its extensive use of mines. Mines were often laid somewhat indiscriminately and without explicit planning. This created problems whenever a new unit was assigned responsibility for a given sector and had to take over control of previously established defensive positions.<sup>49</sup>

Iraq's relatively well-developed and complex defensive preparations, like their minimalist offensive doctrine, can probably be attributed to the Iran-Iraq War. As mentioned above, Iran's overwhelming superiority in resources and manpower meant Iraq had to rely on the inherent advantages of a defender to achieve victory. Furthermore, Iran's relentless attempts to destroy the Ba'athist regime meant the Iraqi Army had years of high-intensity warfare to hone its defensive doctrine.

## **Intelligence**

Arabic-speaking Iraq had a natural advantage in acquiring human intelligence. Of its six neighbors, four shared the language and ethnicity of most Iraqis,<sup>50</sup> as did the inhabitants of the borderlands of a fifth neighboring state.<sup>51</sup> As a result, infiltration and communication were

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>50</sup> Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, Syria.

<sup>51</sup> Iran.

relatively easy in these areas.<sup>52</sup> In spite of this advantage, Iraqi doctrine emphasized intelligence based on imagery and signals intercepts. Both of these fell under the control of Iraqi GHQ.<sup>53</sup>

The Iraqi Army's dependence on signals- and imagery-based intelligence makes little sense when viewed in isolation. Iraq's armed forces lacked technical sophistication, and they were unable to exploit their equipment to its fullest extent.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, the Iraqi Army probably deprived itself of valuable intelligence by pursuing technical solutions when human intelligence might have proven more useful.

As counterintuitive as it seems, this dependence makes more sense in light of the Iraqi Army's formative experiences as of 1991. At that time, the Iran-Iraq War had been over for only two or three years, and it undoubtedly had a powerful impact on the Iraqi Army's culture and doctrine. During that war, much of Iraq's intelligence came from the more technically sophisticated intelligence services of the United States.<sup>55</sup> The American intelligence community could exploit signals- and imagery-based intelligence much more effectively than Iraq, and it made its conclusions available to the Iraqi government during the Iran-Iraq War. The Iraqis grew accustomed to the availability and utilization of these resources. Perhaps just as importantly to the Saddam Hussein regime, the centralized nature of signals and imagery intelligence allowed the central government to maintain control of the information its units received. When the United States withdrew its support after the end of the Iran-Iraq War, the Iraqi armed forces never adjusted to their loss.<sup>56</sup>

In summary, the effects of the Iran-Iraq War on Iraqi doctrine were clearly visible in 1991. While Iraq enjoyed a few initial successes against Iran, the Iraqi Army spent most of that eight-year war desperately attempting to hold back the overwhelming Iranian forces. As a result, defense became the focus of Iraqi thinking, with the offensive subordinated to a supporting role. The effects of the grueling conflict are also clearly visible on Iraqi intelligence doctrine, as Iraq began to depend upon technical means to gather intelligence, methods its armed forces were poorly suited to exploiting.

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<sup>52</sup> AITAC, *The Iraqi Army*, 109.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>54</sup> Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 265.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>56</sup> Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 247.

## **Recruitment and Staffing Procedures**

While the Iraqi Army was organized in a manner similar to the British Army, a wide gap existed in their methods and quality. Saddam Hussein relied heavily upon the armed forces to maintain his control of Iraq, giving the services significant power. However, that power caused Saddam to deeply mistrust the armed forces, and pushed him to great lengths to prevent them from posing a threat to his rule. All too often, these measures undermined the ability of the Iraqi Army to fulfill its missions effectively.

First, Saddam regularly changed the Army's highest-ranking commanders to keep them from gaining too much power, thereby posing a threat to him. These men were often his most trusted associates, but Saddam was apparently unwilling to rely completely on his subordinates' loyalty. Generally, an officer's tenure in any position lasted 12 to 18 months.<sup>57</sup> At times, these officers were competent;<sup>58</sup> at other times, a familial relationship with Saddam was enough to win a position at the peak of the armed forces structure. As an example, General 'Ali Hasan Al-Majid, better known as "Chemical Ali," won the position of Minister of Defense; his status as Saddam's cousin and son-in-law<sup>59</sup> undoubtedly contributed to his promotion from a mere street thug.<sup>60</sup>

In 1991, the Iraqi Army was temporarily free of Saddam's disabling nepotism. The armed forces in general still enjoyed the effects of reforms undertaken in the Iran-Iraq War. During that war, Saddam dismissed hundreds of officers who had performed poorly and promoted competent officers to replace them. Saddam even recalled competent junior officers who had previously been dismissed due to doubts about their loyalty. These reforms led to such significant improvements that Saddam largely professionalized the Iraqi officer corps.<sup>61</sup> In 1991, Saddam's paranoia had not yet re-emerged, and the Iraqi armed forces retained their relatively professional approach to promotion.<sup>62</sup>

## **Equipment**

The Iraqi Army's equipment had also reached its qualitative peak. After the end of the Iran-Iraq War, Saddam Hussein went shopping for more and better weapons. Between 1987 and

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<sup>57</sup> Eisenstadt, *Like a Phoenix from the Ashes? The Future of Iraqi Military Power*, 86.

<sup>58</sup> Amatzia Baram, "Iraqi Armed Forces," *Conflict, Security & Development*, 1:2 (2001), 117.

<sup>59</sup> Eisenstadt, *Like a Phoenix from the Ashes*, 86

<sup>60</sup> Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide: the Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds*, (London: Yale University Press, 1995), 35.

<sup>61</sup> Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 208.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.



1991, Saddam purchased an estimated 1,000 T-62s and another 1,000 T-72s. The T-72, in particular, was a vastly superior tank, possessing greater speed, firepower, range, and reach than the older T-55, which had previously been the backbone of Saddam's armored units.<sup>63</sup> These augmented Iraq's existing stocks of T-54s and T-55s, bringing his total supply of main battle tanks to 5,500.

Despite Saddam's willingness to invest in new and better equipment, Iraq was unable to extract the maximum utility from even its best equipment. The country depended heavily on foreign technicians for its vehicle maintenance, as too few Iraqis had the necessary technical skills to properly maintain the vehicles. At least 20 percent of Iraq's Air Force was down at the time of the Gulf War, and its army suffered similarly low readiness rates.<sup>64</sup>

### **“Anti-Armies”**

As was evident from the brief history of Iraq at the beginning of the chapter, the Iraqi Army played a major role in overthrowing multiple Iraqi governments. The Ba'athists who seized power in 1968 apparently realized this, as they organized a new armed service, the Republican Guard (RG), to serve as a counter to the Iraqi Army. Saddam Hussein certainly recognized this pattern. An article in *U.S. News and World Report* wryly described Saddam's philosophy as: do not trust the military; build a clandestine security service; staff the service with loyalists; do not trust the loyalists.<sup>65</sup> Saddam created redundant security services to ensure his troops' loyalty. He tailored the Guard's policies to maximize its loyalty to him; he also formed other service branches to ensure he would not be overthrown by a military coup.

Ibrahim al-Marashi and Sammy Salama refer to these entities as “anti-armies.” These armies were intended to serve as counterweights and rivals to one another, dividing the various bases of power and reducing the chance that any of them would be able to overthrow Saddam.<sup>66</sup> Since this phrase aptly and succinctly describes the roles of these service branches, al-Marashi's and Salama's term will be adopted to describe them.

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<sup>63</sup> Global Security, “T-72 Medium Tank,” Global Security, <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/russia/t-72.htm>> (Accessed Oct. 28, 2010); Global Security (GS), “T54/T55 Series Tanks,” Global Security, <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/Russia/t-54.htm>> (accessed Oct. 28, 2010); Federation of American Scientists (FAS), “T54/T55 Series Tanks,” Federation of American Scientists, <<http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/sys/land/row/t54tank.htm>> (accessed Oct. 28, 2010).

<sup>64</sup> Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 257.

<sup>65</sup> Jay Tolson, “Ruthless and Ready,” *U.S. News and World Report*, April 14, 2003.

<sup>66</sup> Ibrahim Al-Marashi and Sammy Salama, *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 194.

## **Republican Guard**

The Republican Guard's policies prior to Saddam's seizure of power are somewhat unclear, but after he rose to power, the Guard became Saddam's personal protection force. Organized along the same lines as the Iraqi Army, with similar doctrine and tactics, the Republican Guard enjoyed better training, pay, equipment, and discipline than the conventional Iraqi Army. All Republican Guardsmen were volunteers; the Iraqi Army, in contrast, contained mostly conscripts. The Guardsmen also received subsidized housing and bonuses.<sup>67</sup> The Republican Guard recruited heavily from Saddam's hometown of Tikrit and other nearby cities in order to maximize the unit's loyalty to Saddam personally.<sup>68</sup> Finally, Saddam appointed his son Qusay as the Guard's overseer.<sup>69</sup> As a result, the Republican Guard was, by Iraqi standards, exceptionally loyal and competent; Saddam used them to guard against any additional coup attempts by the Iraqi Army.<sup>70</sup>

During the Iran-Iraq War, the performance gap between the Republican Guard and the Iraqi Army forced Saddam to expand the superior Republican Guard. The Guard's numbers fluctuated from its original size of two brigades to its peak of 28,<sup>71</sup> before finally stabilizing at twelve.<sup>72</sup> They also became Iraq's elite shock troops, as the Guard's commanders began drafting college students into the Guard and transferring in the finest enlisted men and officers of the Iraqi Army.<sup>73</sup> Inevitably, this resulted in an even more marked disparity between the Guard and the Iraqi Army, as the Army lost its best men to the Republican Guard.

## **People's Army**

The People's Army began as a means to provide Ba'athists with military training and, like all of Iraq's anti-armies, provide the party with a counterweight against the military. In theory, the People's Army consisted of 19 infantry divisions. Each of Iraq's 18 provinces was responsible for one division, and Baghdad was responsible for another. In practice, the three

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<sup>67</sup> British Broadcasting Corporation, "Fact File: Iraq's Republican Guard," *British Broadcasting Corporation*, April 2, 2003, <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/middle\\_east/2511765.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/middle_east/2511765.stm) (accessed Oct. 28, 2010).

<sup>68</sup> Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 219.

<sup>69</sup> Clawson, ed., *Iraq Strategy Review: Options for U.S. Policy*, 163.

<sup>70</sup> United States Army Intelligence and Threat Analysis Center. *How They Fight: Desert Shield: Order of Battle Handbook*, United States Army Intelligence Agency, AIA-DS-2-90, September 1990, 43.

<sup>71</sup> Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 219.

<sup>72</sup> Cordesman and Hashim, *Iraq: Sanctions and Beyond*, 236.

<sup>73</sup> Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 219.

Kurdish provinces never produced their divisions.<sup>74</sup> Though Saddam seemed to have immense faith in them, the existing divisions proved decidedly ineffective. The People's Army volunteers received only a few weeks of training before their mobilization,<sup>75</sup> and their duties were usually limited to security. Ba'athist indoctrination and mass mobilization, rather than military effectiveness seemed to be the primary goal of the Popular Army.<sup>76</sup>

Nonetheless, at the time of Operation Desert Storm, the U.S. Army regarded its Iraqi counterpart with considerable respect. The United States Army Intelligence and Threat Analysis Center (AITAC) handbook *How They Fight* described the Iraqi Army as among "the world's best equipped and most combat-experienced" armies in the world. The Iraqi Army was the eighth largest in the world;<sup>77</sup> it boasted nearly 1 million men, approximately 5,500 main battle tanks, 1,500 armored infantry fighting vehicles, and 6,000 armored personnel carriers.<sup>78</sup> In short, the Iraqi Army, for all of its flaws, was considered a formidable force.<sup>79</sup>

### **Changes in the Iraqi Army**

Although Saddam Hussein applauded the performance of his forces in the Gulf War, the conflict was, in reality, a humiliating defeat for the Iraqi Army.<sup>80</sup> When the dust settled, Iraq's army was devastated. Estimates vary on the exact quantity of Iraqi equipment lost during the Gulf War, but Iraqi postwar strength suggests that Iraq lost around 50% of its military equipment.<sup>81</sup> Immediately prior to the Gulf War, Iraq had an estimated 5,500 main battle tanks.<sup>82</sup> The *Military Balance* reports that, after the war, Iraq had only 2,700 main battle tanks, 900 infantry vehicles, and 2,000 armored personnel carriers remaining.<sup>83</sup> The Army's manpower strength dropped to 350,000<sup>84</sup> from its pre-war peak of 1 million.<sup>85</sup> Iraq's military strength was at its lowest point in years.

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<sup>74</sup>Global Security, "People's Army/Popular Army/People's Militia (Al Jaysh ash Shaabi)," Global Security, <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/militia.htm>> (Accessed Oct. 28, 2010).

<sup>75</sup> CNN, "War in Iraq: Forces:Iraq/Army," CNN.com, <<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2003/Iraq/forces/Iraq/army>> (accessed Oct. 28, 2010).

<sup>76</sup> Global Security, "People's Army/Popular Army/People's Militia (Al Jaysh ash Shaabi)."

<sup>77</sup> *How They Fight*, 43.

<sup>78</sup> IISS, *Military Balance, 1990-1991* (London: Oxford University Press, 1991), 105.

<sup>79</sup> *How They Fight*, 43.

<sup>80</sup> Eisenstadt, *Like a Phoenix from the Ashes*, 7.

<sup>81</sup> Cordesman, *Iraq: Sanctions and Beyond*, 234.

<sup>82</sup> IISS, *Military Balance 1990-1991*, 105.

<sup>83</sup> IISS, *Military Balance, 1995-1996* (London: Oxford University Press, 1996), 135.

<sup>84</sup> IISS, *Military Balance, 1995-1996*, 135; Cordesman, *Iraq: Sanctions and Beyond*, 236; *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment: The Gulf States* (Alexandria, VA: Jane's Information Group, 1999), 173.

<sup>85</sup> IISS, *Military Balance, 1990-1991*, 105.

## **New Anti-Armies**

Given this apparent vulnerability, Saddam's internal opponents, largely Iraqi Shi'a in the south and Kurds in the north, revolted. Unfortunately for them, Saddam's forces were capable of crushing the rebels, even after the losses inflicted by the United States and its allies. Iraqi military and security services badly outmatched the poorly-armed and poorly-trained Shi'a and Kurdish rebels.<sup>86</sup> Saddam had always been more inclined to trust his fellow Sunnis than the Shi'a majority or Kurdish minority of Iraq. Now he had visible evidence of Shi'a and Kurdish disloyalty to him. Saddam's security services had long worked to give the impression that Saddam's interests and those of Iraq were identical.<sup>87</sup> Saddam's behavior suggests he believed this himself; therefore, the Kurds and Shi'a were traitors to Iraq as well as to Saddam Hussein. In Saddam's mind, this provided ample reason to repress them. Although Saddam largely demobilized the embarrassingly incompetent People's Army,<sup>88</sup> he quickly began forming alternative security forces to help him maintain his hold on power.

### **Special Republican Guard**

In the wake of the Republican Guard's expansion, Saddam founded the Special Republican Guard (SRG). This "super-elite" force received the best pay and perks, including priority in acquiring food and prescription drugs.<sup>89</sup> While the latter might not seem like a significant benefit, such privileged access was a significant bonus due to the stringent UN sanctions placed on Iraq.

The Special Republican Guard was distinct from the Republican Guard for a number of reasons. Most significantly, the SRG was actually constructed from the beginning with the express purpose of serving as a counterweight to the Republican Guard.<sup>90</sup> At least initially, it appears that Saddam's paranoia must have been running rampant. The RG itself was, after all, formed to serve as a check on the regular military. Nonetheless, Saddam had legitimate reason to be concerned about the Guard's loyalty.

As mentioned above, the Republican Guard had been Saddam's protectors, responsible for defending him from the armed forces in the event of a coup. During the Iran-Iraq War, the

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<sup>86</sup> Tony Horwitz, "In Only a Month, Iraq's Shiite Uprising Went from Giddy Success to Utter Defeat," *Wall Street Journal* (Eastern Edition), Dec. 26, 1991.

<sup>87</sup> Jay Tolson, "Ruthless and Ready," *U.S. News and World Report*.

<sup>88</sup> Global Security, "People's Army/Popular Army/People's Militia (Al Jaysh ash Shaabi)."

<sup>89</sup> Global Security, "Special Republican Guard," Global Security, <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/intell/world/Iraq/srg.htm>> (accessed Oct. 28, 2010).

<sup>90</sup> Al-Marashi and Salama, *Iraq's Armed Forces*, 187.

Republican Guard's mission expanded, and they became the state's elite shock troops.<sup>91</sup> The Guard's increased size alone probably would have been enough to make Saddam suspicious of his one-time guardians. However, the RG's shift from praetorian guard to crack offensive force necessitated changes in its composition as well. The Guard's new emphasis on proficiency rather than loyalty, forced upon Saddam by the Iran-Iraq War,<sup>92</sup> meant that Saddam could no longer trust his elites completely. Furthermore, the economic hardships imposed by sanctions limited Saddam's ability to buy the Guard's loyalty. Guard pay and privileges declined after late 1993. The Guard's commanders had to begin recruiting outside the Takrit area, even going so far as to accept Shi'ites into the Guard's ranks.<sup>93</sup>

Finally, the RG began to exhibit genuine signs of disloyalty. Although the Iraqi government denied it, dissidents reported that Republican Guard forces made an unsuccessful coup attempt in 1992.<sup>94</sup> In reality, these tensions predated the Gulf War. In 1990, Saddam's security forces detected and crushed a plot within the Republican Guard to overthrow Saddam. One of the plotters was a Takriti brigadier general. Because of incidents like these, Saddam began losing his previously unshakeable faith in the Guard, even before its pay and privileges began to wane. When these perks began to decline, Saddam's fears must have mounted. For Saddam, at least, the old saying about being paranoid but still having enemies held true. Saddam therefore formed the SRG and placed his younger son Qusay in charge of it, adding to Qusay's already considerable power as head of the Republican Guard.<sup>95</sup> As the more stable of Saddam's sons, Qusay was entrusted with two of the most important levers of control Saddam wielded.

Once the SRG was formed, it proved to be very different from its predecessor. The SRG was the only military unit allowed in Baghdad proper, aside from the various security services' paramilitary units. The SRG was more lightly armed and equipped than the Republican Guard. For instance, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade of the SRG made heavy use of buses and civilian cars for its duties,<sup>96</sup> and the four brigades of the SRG had only 100 tanks between them.<sup>97</sup> This was

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<sup>91</sup> Global Security, "Republican Guard," Global Security, <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/Iraq/rg.htm>> (accessed Oct. 28, 2010).

<sup>92</sup> Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 219.

<sup>93</sup> Cordesman, *Iraq: Sanctions and Beyond*, 237.

<sup>94</sup> Martin Fletcher, "Saddam Forces 'Defeat Coup Attempt' – Iraq," *The Times* (London, England), July 4, 1992 (accessed Oct. 4, 2010).

<sup>95</sup> Global Security, "Special Republican Guard."

<sup>96</sup> Global Security, "3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade – Special Republican Guard (SRG)," Global Security, <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/intell/world/Iraq/3srg.htm>> (accessed Oct. 28, 2010).

<sup>97</sup> BBC, "Fact File: Iraq's Republican Guard"

apparently due to the SRG's duties, which were focused on more sensitive tasks than open combat.

Given their role as Saddam's palace guard, the SRG naturally provided escorts for Saddam and his family and protection for his palaces.<sup>98</sup> Other duties included protecting the roads to Baghdad and providing plainclothes patrols.<sup>99</sup> The latter explains, at least partially, the SRG's extensive use of civilian cars and light equipment. Heavy equipment and military vehicles would have been obvious indicators of the SRG patrols' affiliations, ruining their civilian cover.

The SRG was also responsible for security of various sites within Baghdad, sites that the UN inspection teams suspected were being used for research into the development of weapons of mass destruction. These units reportedly traveled frequently between various hiding places, changing the location of the suspected WMD research sites every few months.<sup>100</sup> In doing so, the SRG managed to keep the UN teams from successfully examining whatever those facilities contained. If their purpose really was to hide Saddam's WMD work from the UN, then civilian vehicles and light equipment would be more easily hidden, and less suspicious, than heavy equipment or armored vehicles. It is theoretically possible that the SRG had lighter equipment due to Iraq's inability to import new weaponry. It is, however, unlikely, as Saddam never showed any hesitation about taking equipment from less favored units in order to provide for his pet projects. Therefore, the SRG's differing equipment was probably due to its mission requirements.

### **Fedayeen Saddam**

The SRG was only one of the anti-armies created after the Persian Gulf War. Another major organization was the Fedayeen Saddam ("Saddam's Martyrs" or "Saddam's Men of Sacrifice"). Saddam's son Uday founded the Fedayeen Saddam as an internal security force in either 1994<sup>101</sup> or 1995,<sup>102</sup> although their duties proved somewhat broader in practice.

The Fedayeen did carry out internal security duties, largely by terrorizing Iraqi civilians. One Iraqi defector explained that the central theme in Fedayeen Saddam training was how to

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<sup>98</sup> Global Security, "Special Republican Guard."

<sup>99</sup> Global Security, "3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade – Special Republican Guard (SRG)."

<sup>100</sup> Global Security, "Special Republican Guard."

<sup>101</sup> Jim Lacey, *Takedown: The 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division's Twenty-One Day Assault on Baghdad* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2007), 38.

<sup>102</sup> Global Security, "Saddam's Men of Sacrifice ['Saddam's Martyrs']/Fedayeen Saddam," Global Security, <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/intell/world/Iraq/fedayeen.htm>> (accessed Oct. 28, 2010).

surround and subdue a restless city. The Fedayeen's methods of enforcement differed. Global Security reported female relatives of disloyal Iraqis were publicly beheaded, ostensibly for prostitution.<sup>103</sup> In another example, the Fedayeen held the wives and daughters of rebels hostage until the rebels surrendered. In still another instance, the Fedayeen rampaged through a town wearing chemical-protection suits. The civilians, well aware of Saddam Hussein's use of chemical warfare against Kurdish rebels, quickly became quiescent.<sup>104</sup>

Though the Fedayeen ostensibly performed patrols and anti-smuggling tasks,<sup>105</sup> Uday reportedly used the Fedayeen for other purposes as well. Fedayeen engaged in smuggling themselves, and Uday utilized them as his personal enforcers, staging attacks to torture and murder his political opponents,<sup>106</sup> including at least one attempt on the life of Ahmad Chalabi, the now-notorious Iraqi dissident.<sup>107</sup> The Fedayeen later became a tool of unconventional warfare; the ability of Somali and Palestinian guerrillas to drive off their American and Israeli foes reportedly fascinated Saddam Hussein. He therefore planned to use the Fedayeen in a similar manner.<sup>108</sup> The Fedayeen, already indoctrinated to be fanatically loyal, were trained in suicide bombing and urban warfare.<sup>109</sup>

In general, reports agree that the Fedayeen Saddam recruited young men, primarily from regions loyal to Saddam.<sup>110</sup> However, an article in *The New Republic* alleged that the Fedayeen had other sources of recruitment. At least initially, Uday Hussein recruited men from prisons and orphanages;<sup>111</sup> a report by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRBC) reported the same rumor about prison recruitment.<sup>112</sup> This rumor was at least partially corroborated by captured documents found after Operation Iraqi Freedom. These documents included letters from nine Iraq inmates, with sentences ranging from 3 to 20 years, offering to serve as suicide

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<sup>103</sup> Global Security, "Fedayeen Saddam."

<sup>104</sup> Ryan Lizza, "Secret Service," *The New Republic*, vol. 228, no. 14, 10-11, April 14, 2003.

<sup>105</sup> Global Security, "Fedayeen Saddam."

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Kevin M. Woods, project leader, Michael R. Pease, Mark E. Stout, Williamson Murray and James G. Lacey *Iraqi Perspectives Project: Primary Source Materials for Saddam and Terrorism; Emerging Insights from Captured Iraqi Documents, Volume 3 (Redacted)* (Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses, 2007), 262. (Designated IPP 3 in future references).

<sup>108</sup> Lacy, *Takedown*, 34-35.

<sup>109</sup> Lizza, "Secret Service."

<sup>110</sup> Fedayeen Saddam CFR, Global Security, "Fedayeen Saddam;" IRBC, "Iraq."

<sup>111</sup> Ryan Lizza, "Secret Service."

<sup>112</sup> Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, "Iraq: General Recruitment Practices of Fedayeen Saddam Paramilitary Organization, with Specific Information on the Organization's Recruitment of Prisoners," <<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3f7d4db11f.html>>, January 8, 2003. (accessed Oct. 29, 2010). (Designated "IRBC, 'Iraq,'" in future references).

bombers against Israel.<sup>113</sup> It is important to note that this information is anecdotal, and may not be indicative of a larger trend.

As it professionalized, the Fedayeen apparently switched to recruiting on the basis of tribal allegiance. The Fedayeen received excellent pay,<sup>114</sup> free health care, extra rations, and land as compensation.<sup>115</sup> The Fedayeen also recruited via lectures at universities and schools. Finally, the Fedayeen were touted as an elite unit, giving its members a certain amount of prestige and social status.<sup>116</sup>

The Fedayeen also recruited via the Ashbal Saddam (Saddam's Lion Cubs<sup>117</sup> or Saddam Cubs).<sup>118</sup> The Ashbal Saddam was a Ba'athist youth organization designed to indoctrinate children to be loyal to Saddam and the ideals of the Ba'ath party.<sup>119</sup> Those Ashbal members who were 10 to 15 years of age would attend month-long summer camps for training in the use of small arms.<sup>120</sup> The children were also desensitized to violence via beatings and cruelty to animals. The most promising members of the Ashbal Saddam were recruited into the Fedayeen Saddam when they completed the program.<sup>121</sup> The exact number of Saddam Cubs in existence is unclear, but the *Iraqi Perspective Report* lists classes from two branches, the Wafaa' al-Qaid ["Loyalty to the Chief"] and al-Anbar, as numbering 600 and 300 children, respectively.<sup>122</sup> Since these are only two branches in a single year, a yearly class presumably numbered in the thousands.

Though membership in the Fedayeen Saddam was supposedly voluntary, some recruits reportedly faced external pressure to join. The IRBC mentioned students' exam results being withheld until they joined, and there are indications some tribal leaders pushed youths to enlist.<sup>123</sup> Other examples of pressure included reduced food rations, torture, or reprisals against state employees who declined to join, such as termination of employment or transfer to

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<sup>113</sup> *IPP III*, "Harmony Document Folders and Media Files."

<sup>114</sup> IRBC, "Iraq."

<sup>115</sup> Lizza, "Secret Service."

<sup>116</sup> IRBC, "Iraq."

<sup>117</sup> Lizza, "Secret Service."

<sup>118</sup> Global Security, "People's Army/Popular Army/People's Militia (Al Jaysh ash Shaabi)."

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Lizza, "Secret Service."

<sup>122</sup> *IPP III*, 108.

<sup>123</sup> IRBC, "Iraq."



unpleasant locations.<sup>124</sup> Deserters or evaders also risked coming to the attention of Iraq's notoriously brutal security services.<sup>125</sup> Whatever their recruitment methods, the Fedayeen were intended both as yet another check on Iraq's army and a tool to use against Saddam's Western opponents.

Captured letters indicate the Fedayeen put this training to use by launching attacks on Western targets. In one case, a vehicle carrying members of a Western organization was bombed, killing or wounding its occupants.<sup>126</sup> In another instance, two hotels in the Kurdish city al-Sulaymaniyyah were bombed on Fedayeen orders. Since the hotels drew large numbers of foreigners during the holidays, the bombings were timed to coincide with Christmas, so as to maximize casualties.<sup>127</sup> The planning officer also requested permission to strike at the Turkish Operations Command in Irbil, a suspected British intelligence site,<sup>128</sup> and a Communist Party headquarters in an indeterminate location.<sup>129</sup> The letters also include intelligence reports from the Fedayeen to Uday, with Uday's acknowledgement.<sup>130</sup> Theoretically, intelligence activities were somewhat outside the Fedayeen's mandate, but these documents support the reports that Uday used the Fedayeen as his personal power base and enforcers.

#### **Al-Quds Brigades/Al-Quds Volunteer Army**

The Al-Quds Brigades were regional militias intended to mobilize masses of Iraqis to fight for Saddam. They officially consisted of 7 million Iraqis organized into 21 divisions under Qusay.<sup>131</sup> The Al-Quds Brigades were founded in the wake of the second Palestinian intifada, ostensibly to assist in the liberation of Palestine,<sup>132</sup> and they began training on March 10, 2001, with considerable fanfare.<sup>133</sup> The Al-Quds Brigades failed to impress Western observers, who regarded them as propaganda measures to show Saddam's support for Palestinian,<sup>134</sup> pan-Arab, and pan-Islamic causes.<sup>135</sup> In practice, the Al-Quds Army was intended to help quell any

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<sup>124</sup> IRBC, "Iraq."

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> *IPP III*, 215-216. The organization's name has been redacted, as have the translator's comments on the entry.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 243.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 244.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 244-246.

<sup>131</sup> Global Security, "People's Army/Popular Army/People's Militia (Al Jaysh ash Shaabi)."

<sup>132</sup> Tolson, "Ruthless and Ready."

<sup>133</sup> Hartford Web Publishing. "Iraq Starts Training Al Quds Volunteers," <<http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/51/235.html>>, March 1, 2001 (accessed Oct. 28, 2010).

<sup>134</sup> Global Security, "People's Army/Popular Army/People's Militia (Al Jaysh ash Shaabi)."

<sup>135</sup> Tolson, "Ruthless and Ready."

internal unrest or resistance to the Ba'athist regime.<sup>136</sup> Various sources agree that the Al-Quds Brigades were far smaller than official Iraqi sources suggested,<sup>137</sup> with the only numerical estimate placing their numbers around 500,000.<sup>138</sup> Western intelligence experts believed the Al-Quds Brigades primarily consisted of untrained rural residents with few weapons.<sup>139</sup> Some rifles, mortars, and light automatic weapons did reach Al-Quds volunteers, typically those from the central, Sunni areas of Iraq,<sup>140</sup> but Western sources still considered the volunteer army ineffective.<sup>141</sup>

The *Iraqi Perspectives Report* offers anecdotal evidence suggesting these theories did not give the Al-Quds Brigades enough credit. In mid-2002, Brig. Gen. Ismail Ali Kat'ee, commander of the Hussein Brigade requested materials to construct models of Israeli settlements to use as training tools for his fighters, a request that was subsequently approved.<sup>142</sup> The Al-Quds Brigades also recognized the possibility that their lines of communication might be destroyed, and planned to use messengers to control their units.<sup>143</sup> This may have been a lesson of the Gulf War, in which the Iraqis lost communications with their units and had to rely on messengers instead.<sup>144</sup> While this was undoubtedly a cumbersome system, it would prove less problematic for the Al-Quds Brigade in question, since its units were in close proximity to one another.

Despite these signs of advance planning, there is some evidence of the ineffectiveness that Western observers expected from Al-Quds Brigades. The brigade's backup plans dictated that liaison units be trained and deployed to serve as couriers, going so far as to include criteria for their selection.<sup>145</sup> The commander on the ground responded, in triplicate, by complaining that the necessary personnel for the liaison teams had never actually been assigned to him.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Lacey, *Takedown*, 35.

<sup>137</sup> Tolson, "Ruthless and Ready," Global Security, "People's Army/Popular Army/People's Militia (Al Jaysh ash Shaabi)," Council on Foreign Relations, "What is the Fedayeen Saddam," <http://www.cfr.org/publication/7698/Iraq.html> (accessed Oct. 28, 2010). (Hereafter referred to as "CFR, 'Fedayeen Saddam'").

<sup>138</sup> Lacey, *Takedown*, 35.

<sup>139</sup> Tolson, "Ruthless and Ready."

<sup>140</sup> CFR, "Fedayeen Saddam."

<sup>141</sup> Global Security, "People's Army/Popular Army/People's Militia (Al Jaysh ash Shaabi)."

<sup>142</sup> *IPP III*, 286-288.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

<sup>144</sup> Richard P. Hallion, *Storm Over Iraq: Air Power and the Gulf War*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 176.

<sup>145</sup> *IPP III*, 294.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

While the Al-Quds commander in question apparently learned from Iraq's experiences in the Gulf War, the same could not be said of his superiors.

## **Qualitative Changes**

### **Equipment**

The foundation of these new forces did not take place in isolation. While Saddam and his chief lieutenants worked to tighten Saddam's grip on Iraq, the Iraqi state itself suffered debilitating sanctions. These sanctions, imposed by the United Nations in the wake of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991, severely limited Iraqi imports, including an outright ban on the importation of weapons. Given that virtually all of Saddam Hussein's weaponry was imported, this meant that he and his forces could not replace their Gulf War losses via legal purchases on the international arms market, as they had in the wake of the Iran-Iraq War.

The Iraqi leader responded to this problem by attempting to work around it. First, he tried to illegally import as much equipment as possible. While there appears to be little concrete evidence of where the equipment originated, *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment* suggested that North Korea was a likely candidate. It also cited media reports that Russia and Syria were providing equipment as well, though *Jane's* admitted that these reports had not been confirmed.<sup>147</sup> The Russian government acknowledged that Russian technicians remained in Iraq to service Iraqi equipment, but stated that these individuals were there as private contractors.<sup>148</sup>

While these rumors have not been verified, Iraq was known to engage in smuggling after the Gulf War, particularly through Jordan. In 1992, the king of Jordan moved to staunch the flow of arms through his lands. Largely conducted by the Iraq-Jordan Land Transportation Company (a joint venture between the Iraqi and Jordanian governments), the weapons entered Jordan via the southern port of Aqaba, and were then carried by truck to Baghdad. At about the same time, the Jordanian government found (or claimed to find) that Iraq had agents within its bureaucracy; these agents had been signing false end-use and embargo-compliance certificates. Afterward, Jordan began enforcing the sanctions in a more reliable manner.<sup>149</sup>

Jordanian customs officials received a significant boost to their efforts in 1995. Hussein Kamel Hassan, Saddam's son-in-law and a senior Iraqi general, defected to Jordan in 1995,

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<sup>147</sup> *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment*, 195.

<sup>148</sup> Kenneth Timmerman, "Iraq Rebuilds its Military Industries," Staff Report for House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on International Security, International Organizations and Human Rights, June 29, 1993 (accessed Nov. 2, 2010).

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

revealing an embarrassingly large amount of information about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.<sup>150</sup> As a result, Jordanian customs officials were able to track down illicit shipments on at least two occasions. In one case, the Jordanians found a computerized milling machine used for missile manufacture. In another case, the Jordanian government found acids and carcinogenic chemicals hidden in a shipment of medical supplies bound for Iraq. The chemicals had been shipped from a Jordanian pharmaceutical company, while the milling machine came from an Iraqi front company in Amman.<sup>151</sup>

A U.S. Congressional report indicated that European companies may have been active in smuggling equipment to Iraq as well. Germany investigated more than 150 companies, though none had been indicted at the time of the report's publication. The report cited allegations that French defense firms had been active in helping Iraq rebuild its capacity,<sup>152</sup> but these accusations must be regarded with some skepticism, given the lack of information about the report's sources.

Saddam did not limit himself solely to importing weapons. Prior to the Gulf War, the government of Iraq laid the foundations for a domestic arms industry. Apparently hoping to make Iraq a superpower, Saddam Hussein established weapons manufacturing facilities throughout Iraq.<sup>153</sup> A year and a half after the Gulf War ended, *The Times* of London reported that Iraq's weapons manufacturing capability was repaired and online once more. Iraq was believed to be self-sufficient in the manufacture of ammunition, and *The Times'* sources suspected it had at least some capacity for the production of spare parts.<sup>154</sup>

The Congressional report "Iraq Rebuilds its Military Industries" listed 18 manufacturing sites in Iraq that the U.S. government considered active. The most significant of these were: the T-72 tank production plant at Al-Ameen; the Taji facility, capable of producing wheeled transports, armor plate, and artillery pieces; and the SEHEE engineering complex, which was believed to be capable of producing a wide variety of military equipment. Other factories had less impressive capabilities. Some produced vital, if mundane, equipment, such as defense electronics, ammunition cases, explosives and fuel. Still others produced equipment that would prove useful only in special situations, such as small patrol boats or gas masks.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Cordesman, *Iraq: Sanctions and Beyond*, 310.

<sup>151</sup> Reuters, "Jordan Grabs Chemicals," *Washington Times, The*. Dec. 28, 1995.

<sup>152</sup> Timmerman, "Iraq Rebuilds its Military Industries."

<sup>153</sup> *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment*, 196.

<sup>154</sup> Michael Evans, "Saddam Rebuilds his War Machine," *Times, The* (London, England), July 30, 1992.

<sup>155</sup> Timmerman, "Iraq Rebuilds its Military Industries."

The above report warned that Iraq's manufacturing capacities enabled the regime to both repair its remaining equipment and begin expanding its military capabilities "in the very near future."<sup>156</sup> *The Times* was less impressed by Iraq's industrial base. While it acknowledged that Iraq might be able to produce some spare parts, *The Times* suggested that Iraq would still face shortages of critical equipment.<sup>157</sup>

Other sources indicate that *The Times*' skepticism was justified. *The Military Balance* consistently stated Iraq's inventory of main battle tanks to contain between 2,200 and 2,800, with no regular patterns of growth or loss.<sup>158</sup> In 1998-1999, *The Military Balance* noted that all Iraqi units outside the Republican Guard were reportedly at 50% of their nominal combat effectiveness. Iraq was also believed to lack spare parts for half of all its equipment.<sup>159</sup> This was an ongoing condition, as the 2002 edition of *The Military Balance* reported the same problem.<sup>160</sup>

*Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment* confirms these reports. *Jane's* states that Iraq was able to restore some of its military production, but the damage inflicted by the coalition severely reduced its ability to replace its losses and support its war machine. *Jane's* suggested that Iraq had been able to maintain its equipment largely by cannibalizing less vital machinery. Since Iraq's army had shrunk by approximately two-thirds, it was able to strip some of its equipment for spare parts. Iraq also spread its heavy weapons and vehicles much more thinly across the ranks of its regular army, and it reserved its better equipment, such as its T-72 tanks, for its elite Republican Guard.<sup>161</sup> In other words, the Iraqi government decided to lessen its army's access to equipment in order to prolong the functionality of the weapons actually in use. This was not a bad idea, given the duration of the sanctions. Had Iraq not done so, it might have found itself facing the United States with no heavy equipment whatsoever.

An incident from late 2000 illustrates some of the problems Iraq faced. Saddam became aware that 70 of the Republican Guard's vehicles had broken down, so he ordered his son Qusay, the RG's commander, to see to their repair. The Republican Guard's mechanics requested and received funds to cover the work. Qusay's representative found the vehicles, freshly painted and

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<sup>156</sup> Timmerman, "Iraq Rebuilds its Military Industries."

<sup>157</sup> Evans, "Saddam Rebuilds his War Machine."

<sup>158</sup> IISS, *Military Balance, 1995-1996* (London: Oxford University Press, 1996), 135; IISS, *Military Balance, 1997-1998* (London: Oxford University Press, 1998), 127; IISS, *Military Balance, 2002* (London: Oxford University Press, 2002), 105.

<sup>159</sup> IISS, *Military Balance, 1997-1998* (London: Oxford University Press, 1998), 129.

<sup>160</sup> IISS, *Military Balance, 2002*, 105.

<sup>161</sup> *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment*, 173.

cleaned, lined up in two rows on the vehicle park. The representative asked the base personnel to move the vehicles as proof of their repair, only to learn that none of the vehicles would start. The representative informed Qusay of this, but was told not to tell Saddam. Qusay's father had already been informed that the vehicles were repaired, and Qusay did not want Saddam to learn the truth. In the end, Qusay never ordered the vehicles genuinely fixed.<sup>162</sup> It is indicative of the problems Iraq faced that even the elite Republican Guard was unable to fully maintain its fleet.

Making the problem worse, Saddam's inability or unwillingness to trust his army meant that Iraq could not concentrate its limited supply capabilities. After the war, the Iraqi Minister of Defense complained that his department was forced to give weapons to the Al-Quds Brigades, reducing those available to the regular Iraqi Army.<sup>163</sup> The Fedayeen Saddam proved to be an even more voracious competitor; commanded by Uday and supported by Saddam, they had far more pull in disputes over resources than the regular Army. Thus, they exacerbated the Army's supply problems as well.

### **Manpower and Troop Quality**

At the time of Operation Desert Storm, Iraq's ground forces were at their qualitative peak. The existential threat posed by Iran forced Saddam Hussein to lessen his interference in military affairs and begin judging military officers on the basis of their competence, rather than on their perceived loyalty to him. After the Iran-Iraq War ended, Saddam immediately moved his forces against the Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq. When that campaign ended, he sent his forces to invade Kuwait. In short, the Iraqi Army and Republican Guard had been fighting Saddam's wars for over a decade, and Saddam had kept them well-supplied with equipment and personnel throughout that period.

Under the burden of the UN sanctions regime, the situation changed. Saddam's decision to professionalize the Iraqi Army was based almost entirely on the recognition that this would result in qualitative improvements in performance.<sup>164</sup> Saddam convinced himself that Iraq had in fact won the Gulf War, and contradicting Saddam was a dangerous, even life-threatening, risk

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<sup>162</sup> Kevin M. Woods, project leader, Michael R. Pease, Mark E. Stout, Williamson Murray, and James G. Lacey, *Iraqi Perspectives Project: A View of Operation Iraqi Freedom from Saddam's Senior Leadership*, Joint Center for Operational Analysis, Institute for Defense Analyses, 43-44.

<sup>163</sup> Lacey, *Takedown*, 36.

<sup>164</sup> Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 208.

with little chance of success. With no one able or willing to prove him wrong, Saddam was sure of his own brilliance as a military planner, and lost faith in his generals.<sup>165</sup>

Overconfident though he was, the Kurdish and Shi'a revolts deeply disturbed Saddam. Securing the regime became Saddam's foremost priority; this focus on Iraqi internal security only grew stronger due to the perceived ties between Iraq's Shi'ite and Kurdish constituencies and its external enemies, the United States and Iran.<sup>166</sup> Saddam always worried about possible ties between Shi'ite Iraqis and Iran; at the same time, the American-enforced no-fly zones kept Saddam from forcing his will upon the Kurds and Shi'a. This served to convince him further that his internal enemies had to be neutralized.<sup>167</sup>

These factors serve to explain, to some extent, Saddam's subsequent actions. With his faith in his own judgment steadily growing, and his confidence in his generals steadily declining, Saddam apparently saw no reason to continue employing officers whose loyalty he doubted. By 1993, almost none of Saddam's senior commanders from 1991 remained in power. Saddam gave the position of Deputy Commander in Chief<sup>168</sup> to a senior Ba'athist civilian, while the position of Minister of Defense went to a cousin of Saddam's. Rather than promoting Army officers of doubtful loyalty, Saddam placed former Republican Guard commanders in charge of the Army's corps commands.<sup>169</sup> Such favoritism could not have benefited Iraqi morale.

In addition to his blatant cronyism, Saddam hurt his forces' preparedness in other ways as well. Saddam's micromanagement badly weakened Iraq's training procedures. Saddam himself never served in the military, despite wearing the insignia of a field marshal.<sup>170</sup> He actually gained power first as a Ba'athist hit man, and later a Party official.<sup>171</sup> In spite of his own inexperience, Saddam's faith in his own brilliance led him to believe that he could improve the training procedures of the Iraqi Army.<sup>172</sup> As a result of this and his declining trust in his commanders, he began forcing Iraq's various ground forces to train their troops according to his instructions. Had Saddam better understood warfare, this might not have been a problem.

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<sup>165</sup> Kevin M. Woods, project leader, Michael R. Pease, Mark E. Stout, Williamson Murray, and James G. Lacey, *Iraqi Perspectives Project: A View of Operation Iraqi Freedom from Saddam's Senior Leadership*, Joint Center for Operational Analysis, Institute for Defense Analyses, 46. (Designated "Woods et al, VOIF" in future references).

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-26.

<sup>168</sup> The Commander in Chief was, of course, Saddam Hussein.

<sup>169</sup> Eisenstadt, *Like a Phoenix from the Ashes*, 86-87.

<sup>170</sup> Baram, "The Iraqi Armed Forces and Security Apparatus," 118.

<sup>171</sup> Woods et al, VOIF, 3.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

Unfortunately for his soldiers, Saddam's concept of instruction was largely useless. Saddam urged his soldiers to "train in a way that allows you to defeat your enemy," apparently not realizing that this instruction was both sufficiently obvious as to be unnecessary and sufficiently vague as to be useless. Other examples of useless training instructions include the admonitions that all soldiers should be trained in swimming (a relatively useless skill, given Iraq's desert climate) and should climb palm trees for superior navigation and sniping.<sup>173</sup>

To Saddam, a real war was the kind of conflict Iraq had faced when it fought Iran: a brutal slugging match. As the *Iraqi Perspectives Project* phrased it, Saddam's belief in war revolved around his men dying for their country, rather than killing the enemy. The United States' decision to withdraw from Somalia and Vietnam<sup>174</sup> after suffering what Saddam considered minor casualties convinced him that the United States lacked the will to back its demands.<sup>175</sup> Furthermore, his denial of Iraq's loss in the Gulf War meant that his generals could not adapt to any lessons they might have learned; doing so would have contradicted Saddam's pride in his victory, a potentially lethal action.<sup>176</sup> Instead, the Iraqi Army focused on static defense, the same doctrine they used in the Iran-Iraq War and the Gulf War.<sup>177</sup>

Saddam's paranoia also seriously hindered his ability to train his soldiers. Ever mindful of the part Iraq's army played in previous regime changes, Saddam rigidly restricted training and coordination. Senior Iraqi officers could not speak with one another, since, in Saddam's mind, the only possible reason his military commanders could want to communicate would be to plot against him.<sup>178</sup> One Republican Guard commander later complained that even the RG could not move a tank without permission.<sup>179</sup> Meanwhile, the lack of spare parts and ammunition meant Iraqi soldiers had little to use in their training exercises.<sup>180</sup> Saddam worsened the problem by limiting access to these materials for fear of facilitating coup attempts.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Woods et al, *VOIF*, 46.

<sup>174</sup> While 58,000 American casualties does not seem minor to Americans, Saddam's perception of losses differed. The Iraqi Army suffered 51,000 dead in the battle for the Fao Peninsula alone during the Iran-Iraq War. Therefore, Saddam did not consider American losses in Vietnam excessive. The loss of 18 soldiers in Somalia was presumably downright trivial. *Ibid.*, ix.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, ix.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>177</sup> Clawson, *Iraq Strategy Review*, 177.

<sup>178</sup> Woods et al, *VOIF*, 28

<sup>179</sup> Woods et al, *VOIF*, 62.

<sup>180</sup> Baram, "The Iraqi Armed Forces and Security Apparatus," 118.

<sup>181</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, *Iraq's Military Capabilities in 2002: A Dynamic Net Assessment* (Washington, DC: The Center for Strategic and International Studies Press, 2002), 2.



The same paranoia contributed to a serious decline in morale within the Iraqi Army and Republican Guard. Saddam established multiple security agencies, unwilling to trust his safety and power to any single entity. The Special Security Office, the Iraqi Intelligence Service, the Directorate of General Security, and the General Directorate of Military Intelligence all spied on Iraqi Army and Republican Guard units. Spies from each of these security offices infiltrated every unit, as well as their rival services. Agencies even sent spies to report on their own agents within the military units.<sup>182</sup> There were numerous reports of purges within the regular army,<sup>183</sup> and reports of coup plots within the Republican Guard hurt that organization's standing within the Iraqi hierarchy.<sup>184</sup> This atmosphere of mistrust had a crippling effect on the Army's and Republican Guard's morale.<sup>185</sup>

### **The Iraqi Army in 2003**

#### **Equipment**

In 2003, the Iraqi Army and its sister services used the same equipment it had used in 1991. As mentioned above, the U.N. sanctions prevented Iraq from importing large numbers of arms, and its domestic arms industries could not replace its losses. Any changes to the quality of the Iraqi Army's equipment in the interim period had been detrimental.

To review, the Iraqi ground forces had an estimated 2,600 tanks, 1,200 infantry fighting vehicles, and 800 armored personnel carriers.<sup>186</sup> Of these units, Western analysts believed half lacked spare parts.<sup>187</sup> These units had probably seen few, if any, upgrades in the interim period, as the U.N. sanctions would have prevented Iraq from acquiring them legally. The remaining equipment had also been scattered across multiple armies, as Saddam's continued division of his forces spread weapons and other material ever more thinly. Therefore, Iraq's armies were weaker in absolute terms, as Iraq found itself unable to replace equipment lost to age or to the 1991 allied offensive. They were even weaker in comparative terms, as the American forces that invaded enjoyed the use of well-maintained weaponry, equipped with the latest technology available to a superpower. Thus, the capability gap between American and Iraqi forces, already large, widened in the 12-year period between the Gulf War and the invasion of Iraq.

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<sup>182</sup> Woods et al, *VOIF*, 62.

<sup>183</sup> Baram, "The Iraqi Armed Forces and Security Apparatus," 118.

<sup>184</sup> Brian Whitaker, "Loyalty of Iraq's Elite in Doubt," *Guardian, The*, Sept. 20, 2002.

<sup>185</sup> Baram, "The Iraqi Armed Forces and Security Apparatus," 118. Whitaker, "Loyalty of Iraq's Elite in Doubt."

<sup>186</sup> IISS, *The Military Balance, 2003* (London: Oxford University Press, 2003), 111.

<sup>187</sup> IISS, *The Military Balance, 2002*, 106.

## Manpower and Troop Quality

The Iraqi Army as a whole had always suffered certain problems. Even before the Gulf War, Saddam's fear of coups caused the Iraqi Army to centralize (or over-centralize) power; initiative was discouraged. Iraq's conscripts never received adequate training, and its non-commissioned officers were always poor. The Army trained its junior officers by rote, and did not give them significant freedom of action.<sup>188</sup> One author commented that the Iraqi response to surprise attacks was to do nothing, continue its previous action, or flee.<sup>189</sup> By the time of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the country's problems had grown much, much worse.

Estimates of Iraq's readiness at the time of the U.S. invasion vary, but it was clearly in decline. *The Military Balance* states that, outside of the Republican Guard, most units were at 50% readiness.<sup>190</sup> Anthony Cordesman, an analyst who regularly studied Iraq's military capabilities, estimated that at least half of the Iraqi Army's units had 70% or less of their authorized strength. As always, the Republican Guard enjoyed higher readiness. Cordesman believed its units had at least 80% of their manpower in place.<sup>191</sup> Official sources agreed; at the time of the invasion, the U.S. estimated that the Medina and Hammurabi divisions of the Republican Guard both had combat readiness in excess of 90%.<sup>192</sup>

While the Republican Guard may have enjoyed high readiness, the Iraqi Army never recovered from the Gulf War. From its peak of nearly 1 million men, the Iraqi Army's strength fell to around 400,000.<sup>193</sup> In 1997, the Iraqi government called up reserve officers; while this was ostensibly for documentation purposes,<sup>194</sup> subsequent sources indicate that Iraq maintained a call-up among both its officers and its enlisted troops until the invasion of Iraq. *The Military Balance* indicates that Iraq's army included 100,000 reservists, and Iraq called up reservists again in 2002.<sup>195</sup> Nonetheless, the lack of equipment Iraq suffered meant these reservists were almost certainly deployed as light infantry, probably with little in the way of weaponry.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Cordesman, *Iraq's Military Capabilities in 2002*, 8.

<sup>189</sup> Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 258-259.

<sup>190</sup> IISS, *Military Balance*, 2002, 105.

<sup>191</sup> Cordesman, *Iraq's Military Capabilities in 2002*, 2.

<sup>192</sup> Specifically, the Medina was believed to be at 94% of its authorized strength, and the Hammurabi at 93%. Rick Atkinson, *In the Company of Soldiers: A Chronicle of Combat*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004), 119.

<sup>193</sup> Estimates fluctuate from year to year, but most are within 12% of this number.

<sup>194</sup> "Reserve Officers Called Up Reportedly for "Documentation" Purposes, *Al-Qadisiyah*, Baghdad, April 1, 1997.

<sup>195</sup> Cordesman, *Iraq's Military Capabilities in 2002*, 2.

<sup>196</sup> *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment*, 173.

In addition to losing its manpower, the Iraqi Army had all of its traditional problems with troop quality; it was also commanded by an incompetent, meddling despot who lacked the wisdom to listen to his more competent commanders. Furthermore, his impatience, wishful thinking, and brutality meant that his subordinates were too terrified to inform him of the true state of Iraq's military.<sup>197</sup> Finally, its equipment had been looted to provide for Saddam's favored units.

### **Performance**

When Saddam learned that the U.S. genuinely intended to invade him, he formulated a defensive strategy based on his own deeply flawed perceptions of warfare and Iraq's military capacity. Saddam demanded that his forces, specifically the Army, Republican Guard, and Special Republican Guard, be concentrated around Baghdad to defend it. Each force was deployed in a ring around the capital. Predictably, the deployment of these forces was based on loyalty.<sup>198</sup>

The Iraqi Army, always the least trusted and most neglected branch of Iraq's ground forces, was deployed the farthest away from Baghdad. It was not even allowed maps of the city, due to Saddam's traditional paranoia. The Republican Guard was deployed behind it, separating the Army from Saddam. While this makes sense in terms of protecting Saddam from a coup, it interfered with Iraqi doctrine. Ordinarily, the Republican Guard was used as an offensive force or a mobile reserve; Saddam's plan placed it well away from the units it traditionally supported. Finally, the Special Republican Guard guarded Baghdad itself. However, its commanders were not allowed to communicate with the Republican Guard or Army.<sup>199</sup> It is therefore no surprise that, when Iraq's army faced the U.S. and British armies, it quickly collapsed.

Iraq's other armies fared poorly against the coalition. The Al-Nida Division of the Republican Guard was forced to leave its tanks and artillery in order to move safely; even then, it lost more than a tenth of its forces to coalition air strikes. Once it reached the front, the now-poorly-armed division found itself outfought by the American 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division (3<sup>rd</sup> ID).<sup>200</sup> When the Baghdad Division moved from Al-Kut to Baghdad, it took such heavy fire that it shrunk to less than a brigade in strength. Its relief in Al-Kut, the 34<sup>th</sup> Army Division,

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<sup>197</sup> Woods et al, *VOIF*, 9.

<sup>198</sup> Lacey, *Takedown*, 158.

<sup>199</sup> Woods et al, *VOIF*, 27-28.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

disintegrated under the weight of the American 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Expeditionary Force's advance.<sup>201</sup> The Medina Division's 14<sup>th</sup> Brigade was mauled by the 3<sup>rd</sup> ID.<sup>202</sup>

The Fedayeen Saddam was permitted a more proactive role in the defense of Iraq. While the Fedayeen Saddam served as an internal security force during the period between the two wars, Saddam bragged that they would act as a guerrilla force, should the U.S. invade.<sup>203</sup> Although the Fedayeen's members are generally portrayed as dangerously competent terrorists in popular sources, reports from American soldiers suggest Saddam's faith in the Fedayeen's skills was misplaced.

The Fedayeen used tactics that appalled their American foes and frequently violated the laws of war. The Fedayeen did not wear the solid white garments they habitually wore during their parades through the streets of Baghdad. Most Fedayeen dressed in civilian clothes, allowing them to blend in with the Iraqi population as a whole.<sup>204</sup> For transportation, the Fedayeen used technicals, usually pickup trucks with machine guns or other heavy weapons mounted in the beds. The Fedayeen themselves were lightly armed.<sup>205</sup> These weapons were probably all that Iraq's manufacturing industry could support in large numbers.

The Fedayeen fought with a determination and tenacity that amazed American soldiers. After the end of combat operations, Iraqi prisoners explained that their officers had painted a circle around each soldier, and told them to defend that circle to the death. Many of the Fedayeen did just that, despite being grossly outgunned. Unfortunately for the Fedayeen, their willingness to die for their cause was the only point in their favor in their battles against American ground forces. The American soldiers compared fighting the Fedayeen to a training exercise. According to one soldier, "These guys were like stick-looking targets. We'd just gun them down."<sup>206</sup>

To counter the American advantages in armor and firepower, the Fedayeen adopted other techniques; these, too, were often in violation of the laws of war. Iraqi men reported that their families were held hostage in order to force them to take up arms against the Americans. To counter the American advantage in night vision, the Fedayeen forced Iraqi women to build

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<sup>201</sup> Woods et al, *VOIF*, 142.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>203</sup> Lizza, "Secret Service."

<sup>204</sup> Evan Thomas and John Barry, "Saddam's War," *Newsweek*, March 17, 2003, 24.

<sup>205</sup> Lacey, *Takedown*, 32.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

bonfires in the streets, enabling the Fedayeen to see the American forces clearly. Since the American soldiers would not fire on unarmed civilians, there was little the Americans could do to counter this tactic.<sup>207</sup> The Fedayeen also feigned surrenders, or used those attempting to surrender. Unarmed Iraqis would attempt to turn themselves in to the coalition forces; when the coalition soldiers drew near, other Iraqis would open fire from behind them. In other cases, Americans reported seeing Fedayeen hold people in front of them to act as shields during combat.<sup>208</sup>

Despite these appalling tactics, the Fedayeen Saddam did not use the guerilla/terror tactics about which Saddam boasted. They did use ambushes against coalition forces<sup>209</sup> and attempted to blend into civilian populations. Beyond that, there is little of guerrilla warfare in their fighting style, at least in the initial stages of the war. The Fedayeen seemed to depend primarily on overwhelming numbers, determination, and manipulation of the coalition's attempt to abide by the laws of war.

The most noticeable trait of the Fedayeen is that, out of all of the Iraqi military services, they appear to have been the only unit that was permitted to learn from previous clashes with American forces and adapt their tactics accordingly. In the Gulf War, Iraqi units had often been stationed well away from civilian areas in order to maintain the Iraqi defensive line. Whatever their reasons, the isolated locations of Iraqi units in the Gulf War enabled the U.S. to bomb them relatively indiscriminately, since there were no civilians in the area. B-52 bombers were the weapon of choice for this. The B-52s struck every three hours, creating a sense of helplessness in the Iraqi ranks.<sup>210</sup> Captured Iraqi officers believed the immense psychological pressure these attacks created were responsible for the rapid collapse of their units.<sup>211</sup>

In the invasion of Iraq, the U.S. never had the opportunity to use this tactic against the Fedayeen Saddam, as the Fedayeen stayed in cities and other populated areas. The U.S. was forced to be much more cautious in using air support in those areas; any bomb that missed its target would probably cause civilian casualties, damaging American credibility.

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<sup>207</sup> Lacey, *Takedown*, 74.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 48, 127.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>210</sup> Eliot A. Cohen, director, *Gulf War Air Power Survey, Vol. II, Part II* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993) 221, 325.

<sup>211</sup> Hallion, *Storm Over Iraq*, 218-219.

American tactical doctrine also emphasized the importance of firepower and maneuver. Within the constricted areas of city streets, tanks are vulnerable. Many Iraqi cities, such as the Shi'a holy city of Najaf, predate motorized vehicles, and thus have correspondingly narrow, curving streets.<sup>212</sup> The M1A1 Abrams tank is 32 feet long and 12 feet wide.<sup>213</sup> Such a massive tank required more space to maneuver than Najaf's city streets could provide.

The close proximity also made the American use of firepower more dangerous. In addition to the increased risk of civilian casualties, friendly fire became much more likely in crowded urban areas. When an American unit found itself attacked on two sides by a Fedayeen unit, the commander called in air support, only to be warned that there was a significant chance of friendly casualties. While that did not occur in this case, the risk was nonetheless present, forcing U.S. commanders to be more cautious.<sup>214</sup> The Fedayeen use of cities therefore negated, in whole or in part, some of the U.S.'s most significant advantages.

Another example of Fedayeen adaptation is visible in their improvised air defense system. During the Gulf War, the U.S. Air Force had deployed F-4G Wild Weasel aircraft and HARM missiles against Iraq's air defense system; these machines were specifically designed to destroy radar emplacements.<sup>215</sup> They, followed by more than a decade of allied bombing raids, had seriously degraded Iraq's air defense systems by 2003.<sup>216</sup> Iraq still had hundreds of surface-to-air missile launchers,<sup>217</sup> but they and their crews were every bit as vulnerable as their late comrades. To counter this, the Fedayeen did not make use of the missile launchers or radar sites. As an early warning system, Iraqi observers equipped with cellular phones waited in buildings throughout Iraq. When the U.S. launched a helicopter raid on an Iraqi city, U.S. intelligence counted 50 phone calls along the helicopters' route, a method learned from Somali defenders in Mogadishu.<sup>218</sup>

When the American helicopters arrived, Iraqi defenders opened fire. However, the Fedayeen did not use missiles that could be tracked via radar and terminated. When the helicopters came into sight, the town's electricity was switched off for a few seconds, and then

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<sup>212</sup> Lacey, *Takedown*, 90.

<sup>213</sup> Global Security, "M1A1 Abrams," Global Security, <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/ground/m1a1.htm>> (accessed Oct. 28, 2010).

<sup>214</sup> Lacey, *Takedown*, 79.

<sup>215</sup> John M. Broder, "Air Force Poised in Gulf with Formidable Options," *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 24, 1990.

<sup>216</sup> *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment*, 185.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>218</sup> Atkinson, *In the Company of Soldiers*, 149.

switched back on. This served as a simple, untraceable order to the defenders to open fire. The helicopters found themselves under fire from hundreds of Iraqis carrying small arms. In what was probably an accidental bonus for the Iraqis, the helicopters' gunners were unable to track the source of the rounds. Their thermal vision goggles could not see the tracer rounds approaching their planes. The helicopter pilots, equipped with light amplification goggles, had to direct their gunners' aim, slowing the American response. In summary, using decentralized, massed-fire tactics and low-tech equipment, the Fedayeen Saddam successfully drove off an American helicopter attack.<sup>219</sup>

Why did the Fedayeen successfully adapt when the other Iraqi Army units were not permitted to do so? Any answers are ultimately speculation, but an educated guess is possible. The Fedayeen were a loyalist unit, created to help Saddam maintain control. As a result, Saddam would have trusted them more than their Army counterparts. Also, the Fedayeen were stationed well away from Baghdad, with relatively light equipment. As a result, Saddam probably did not feel as threatened by their presence as he did by the well-armed military units in close proximity to Baghdad. Therefore, the Fedayeen did not require as much supervision. Unlike the other Iraqi units, the Fedayeen did not have to request the central government's permission to engage the coalition forces.<sup>220</sup> Given the counterproductive effects of Saddam's meddling in military affairs, it is not hard to believe that the Fedayeen were able to innovate largely because Saddam did not interfere. It is also possible that the Fedayeen training in unconventional warfare helped them to develop more creative counters to American tactics.

Meanwhile, Iraqi unwillingness to report bad news to superiors meant the Iraqi leadership was largely unaware of the setbacks its forces were enduring. Since Iraqi leaders would not allow their commanders to act without permission, the Iraqi forces frequently could not respond to coalition attacks.<sup>221</sup> Saddam was convinced the U.S. would attack through Jordan,<sup>222</sup> and insisted that the forces to the south were simply diversions.<sup>223</sup> Since Saddam punished any official who dared to contradict him, no one was willing to risk correcting the Iraqi dictator.

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<sup>219</sup> Atkinson, *In the Company of Soldiers*, 149-150.

<sup>220</sup> Atkinson, *In the Company of Soldiers*, 161.

<sup>221</sup> Woods et al, *VOIF*, 142.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

Iraq's politically appointed officers proved poorly suited for fighting the coalition. When a veteran Republican Guard commander attempted to argue against the regime's theory, his superiors accused him of not following Saddam's plan.<sup>224</sup> He was also ordered to launch a night attack against the coalition forces. When the Republican Guard commander attempted to point out that the coalition forces' night-vision equipment allowed them to see clearly at night, while his forces could not, he was ignored in favor of obedience to Saddam.<sup>225</sup> By April 6, the Iraqi military had ceased to be an effective organization. Those units that survived were too isolated to be genuine threats.<sup>226</sup> The war against Saddam Hussein's armies was effectively over, although the U.S. forces in Iraq still had a long road ahead of them.

### Summary

To summarize, Saddam Hussein modified his country's military to fight the threats he considered most serious. Saddam did not regard the United States as a serious threat. Saddam's belief that the United States was a paper tiger, and his faith in his own genius, meant that he did not concern himself with fighting the U.S. military.<sup>227</sup> Instead, Saddam crafted his forces to deal with what he regarded as more serious threats: internal rebellions and an attack from neighboring Iran.

In Saddam's eyes, these two possibilities represented existential threats to his regime. Iran was close enough, and determined enough, to conquer and occupy Iraq. It also held common religious ground with Iraq's southern Shi'ites. His foremost concern, however, was clearly an overthrow from within. His various armies were designed to place ultimate power in his hands and to prevent any one branch from becoming strong enough to pose a threat to his position. He regarded the Iraqi Army with particular suspicion, given its role in prior coups. Additionally, both Iraq's Kurds and Shi'a had proven their disloyalty to Saddam with their 1991 uprisings. These groups therefore posed a serious threat to Saddam's continued control of Iraq, so Saddam focused on defending against these threats first and foremost.

Saddam did not have complete freedom of action in making his preparations, of course. The UN sanctions severely limited his ability to arm his forces. He and his commanders therefore had to "make do" with their available resources. To provide his new protectors, such

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<sup>224</sup> Woods et al, *VOIF*, 145.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.



as the Fedayeen Saddam, with weapons to defend against internal revolts, Saddam had to take weapons away from the Iraqi Army. In doing so, he may have lessened his regime's ability to defend itself against the coalition. Saddam regularly robbed Peter to pay Paul in this way; the Iraqi Army was usually the loser in these bureaucratic battles. Mistrusted, without important political backers, it had no way of defending its access to weapons and supplies.

While Saddam's actions might seem ludicrous, they are logical, within the constraints imposed by Saddam's situation, the nature of his regime, and the personality of Saddam himself. Faced with serious limitations and numerous threats, Saddam prioritized based on the threats he believed he faced. Though Saddam may have felt threatened by Iran and, to a lesser extent, the West, he recognized that all of Iraq's rulers since its independence had been overthrown from within. Thus, he ensured that he had an iron grip on his country via multiple, powerful security services, redundant military machines, and absolute loyalty within his inner circle. Saddam was well-defended against the threats that had toppled Iraq's previous regimes. He was simply unprepared for the threat that overthrew his own.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE UNITED STATES ARMY

#### **The United States Army in 1991**

It is truly ironic that, when Saddam Hussein's actions damaged his own Army's effectiveness, they inspired innovation on the part of his enemies. In 1991, the United States Army found itself facing serious budget cuts. The Cold War had just ended in an apparent victory for the United States. Both the electorate and the political leadership of the United States demanded that the military services reduce their expenditures. This was not unusual. Historically, the United States military services often shrank after a war, as the American people turned away from warfare to their everyday affairs.<sup>228</sup>

Before the cuts could begin, Iraq invaded Kuwait. Suddenly, the Army and its sister services found themselves in demand once more, thanks to Saddam Hussein. The Army immediately began a massive troop buildup to oppose the Iraqi forces. At the time, both the Army and the American government approached the conflict with a certain amount of trepidation, or at least caution. The Iraqi Army was the fourth-largest in the world. It had been in virtually continuous conflict for the past eleven years, as it fought an eight-year-long war with Iran followed by a brutal counterinsurgency campaign against the Iraqi Kurds. The United States believed the Iraqi Army to be battle-hardened and experienced.<sup>229</sup> Furthermore, the Iraqi Army had recovered its equipment losses, as Saddam Hussein bought thousands of new weapons for his soldiers.<sup>230</sup> Finally, the Iraqi Army had had months to prepare defensive positions against a U.S. assault; defense from prepared positions was the Iraqi Army's strength.<sup>231</sup>

In practice, the Iraqi Army proved somewhat less impressive in the field. Its conscripted soldiers broke and ran or surrendered in droves as American warplanes hammered their positions and U.S. Marines overran them. The U.S. Army, rather than facing the Iraqis head-on, flanked their forward positions and began hitting Iraqi units in the rear. Iraq's elite Republican Guard

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<sup>228</sup> David H. Schock, "The 'Army 2000,' Today's Effects, Tomorrow's Technology and Future Strategy," *Global Security*, 1990, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1990/SDH.htm> (Accessed Jan. 3, 2011).

<sup>229</sup> United States Army Intelligence and Threat Analysis Center (AITAC), *The Iraqi Army: Organization and Tactics*. National Training Center Handbook 100-91. Jan. 3, 1991, 43.

<sup>230</sup> IISS, *Military Balance, 1990-1991* (London: Oxford University Press, 1991), 105; IISS, *Military Balance, 1987-1988* (London: Oxford University Press, 1988), 100.

<sup>231</sup> United States Army Intelligence and Threat Analysis Center (AITAC), *The Iraqi Army: Organization and Tactics*. National Training Center Handbook 100-91. Jan. 3, 1991, 3.

and its heavy regular units, under orders from Saddam Hussein, largely declined to fight the American forces. They instead retreated back into Iraq, where they could continue to serve their primary purpose of protecting Saddam Hussein's regime. Kuwait was liberated with startlingly few allied casualties in 100 hours.<sup>232</sup>

The Army, like its sister services, enjoyed the plaudits that came from winning such a one-sided victory, but it now found itself in something of a dilemma. It was still expected to downsize its forces and its budget, but it was also expected to maintain the security of American interests across the globe. The Army had to find some way to meet these seemingly contradictory demands.

At the same time, the Army began critically examining its performance in the Gulf War. While it would have been easy to regard the Gulf War as a vindication of its policies and doctrines, the Army instead sought further improvement. One source suggests the example of the Arab-Israeli Wars unnerved the Army. In 1967, the Israelis won the so-called Six Day War. Like the American victory against Iraq, Israel had swiftly and cheaply crushed the Jordanian, Syrian, and Egyptian forces arrayed against it. Yet, six years later, Israel nearly lost against the same opponents.<sup>233</sup> The Arab forces (particularly the Egyptian Army) studied both their strengths and weaknesses and Israel's, and adapted their strategies and tactics accordingly. Israel, in contrast, failed to analyze its own behavior, confident that the Arab forces would be too cowed to face it again.<sup>234</sup>

The U.S. Army was determined not to suffer a similar fate. Thus, in addition to its efforts to meet with the demands placed upon it while simultaneously reducing its size, the Army also decided it would attempt to continue improving on a qualitative level, to ensure that it would not be taken by surprise in any future conflicts it might fight.<sup>235</sup>

## **Doctrine**

The philosophy that motivated the Army and shaped the changes it made is probably most visible in the AirLand Battle doctrine. First formulated in 1981, AirLand Battle required commanders to think beyond the front lines, operating in what AirLand Battle's planners referred

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<sup>232</sup> Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf*, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1995), 470.

<sup>233</sup> Gregory Fontenot, E.J. Degen, David Tohn, *On Point: The United States Army In Operation Iraqi Freedom*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 3.

<sup>234</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991*, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 105-6, 126-7.

<sup>235</sup> Fontenot, Degen, and Tohn, *On Point*, 4-5.

to as “extended battlespace.” Essentially, this meant that planners had to devise ways to “delay, disrupt, and destroy” hostile forces in the enemy rear at the same time they assaulted the enemy’s front-line troops.<sup>236</sup>

The concept of AirLand Battle was based on planners’ perception of warfare. The increasing power of munitions, coupled with the spread of weapons of mass destruction, led the Army’s planners to believe that its forces had to operate at an extremely rapid pace. Forces that stood still or massed in significant numbers would be attractive targets for powerful weapons capable of wiping out the concentrated or stationary forces. Therefore, the Army believed its units had to be decentralized, highly mobile, and well-coordinated. AirLand Battle’s creators considered the most important aspect of warfare the destruction of enemy forces, rather than holding terrain. Holding terrain made Army forces vulnerable, and that was unacceptable. Thus, lines of battle and the concept of secure territory broke down with AirLand Battle.<sup>237</sup>

AirLand Battle essentially argues that the best form of force protection is making one’s forces difficult to find; evasion and elusion are the defensive aspects of AirLand Battle. For offense, rapid force concentration at the enemy’s weak points would allow Army forces to strike and destroy their opponents. They would disperse soon afterward, in an attempt to retain their mobility advantage. The Army emphasized that rapid decision-making and implementation were pivotal to the success of AirLand Battle.<sup>238</sup> When an army’s strategy is dependent upon outmaneuvering its enemy, a commander cannot afford to take his time. In order to be able to implement decisions quickly, a commander had to be able to rapidly communicate his decisions to his subordinates. Here, communication was the key; a commander had to know his forces’ dispositions to effectively coordinate them. Otherwise, the Army forces would not be able to conduct the rapid, coordinated strikes AirLand Battle demanded.<sup>239</sup>

AirLand Battle succeeded beyond the services’ highest expectations in Iraq. Saddam Hussein’s concept of warfare required massive armies, clashing along heavily fortified defensive lines. Since the Iraqi military services were obliged to accept Saddam’s beliefs as reality, their

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<sup>236</sup> John L. Romjue, “The Evolution of the Airland Battle Concept,” *Air University Review*, May-June 1984, <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/aureview/1984/may-jun/romjue.html> (Accessed Dec. 14, 2011).

<sup>237</sup> Yoav Ben-Horin and Benjamin Schwarz, *Army 21 as the U.S. Army’s Future Warfighting Concept: A Critical Review of Approach and Assumptions* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, Arroyo Center, 1988), 9.

<sup>238</sup> Ben-Horin and Schwarz, *Army 21 as the U.S. Army’s Future Warfighting Concept*, 7-8.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-8.

strategy reflected the same thinking.<sup>240</sup> This proved to be a deadly error for the Iraqis. The Iraqis, used to long periods of regrouping and planning between offensives, could not cope with the American way of war. American forces usually overran Iraqi units before the Iraqis could implement their plans.<sup>241</sup>

To carry out its plans, the Army structured its ground forces around the so-called “Big Five” weapons systems.<sup>242</sup> The M-1 Abrams tank filled the niche for armored forces in Iraq. The M-2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle, the Multiple Launch Rocket System, the Patriot Air Defense Missile System, and the AH-64 Apache helicopter rounded out the Big Five.<sup>243</sup>

To understand how the Army changed, it is first necessary to examine how it developed. In 1991, the Army was essentially tailored to fight the Soviet Union. Massive formations of armored vehicles provided most of the Army’s fighting power. Light infantry units, like the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne, gave the Army the ability to quickly deploy wherever it might be needed. Operation Desert Storm made the Army aware of a critical weakness in this force structure. Its heavy forces, the key to its power, took months to deploy to a theater and required an immense infrastructure to support them. Its light units could be deployed very quickly into areas with little or no infrastructure, but it was believed that they could do precious little against the army of a modern, industrialized opponent once they arrived.<sup>244</sup>

When the Army’s attention, and its priorities, had been focused almost exclusively on the European theater and the Soviet Union, this had not been a problem. The Army *knew* where its forces would be fighting: central Europe. Therefore, it deployed its heaviest forces into optimal positions to meet the Soviet forces in combat. Proving once again that what humans believe they know does not always coincide with reality, the American and Soviet war never happened. Instead, the Army found itself called to fight in other areas around the world: Korea, Vietnam, and the Middle East. The circumstances of Korea and Vietnam had not highlighted this weakness in the Army’s force structure. Operation Desert Storm did, as American commanders

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<sup>240</sup> Kevin M. Woods, project leader, Michael R. Pease, Mark E. Stout, Williamson Murray, and James G. Lacey, *Iraqi Perspectives Project: A View of Operation Iraqi Freedom from Saddam’s Senior Leadership* (Joint Center for Operational Analysis, Institute for Defense Analyses), ix.

<sup>241</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 257.

<sup>242</sup> Fontenot, Degen, and Tohn, *On Point*, 4.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>244</sup> Williamson Murray, ed., *Army Transformation: A View from the U.S. Army War College* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2001), 161; Jeff Bryson, *Army Transformation to Expeditionary Formations* (master’s thesis, Marine Corps University, 2008), 4.

waited nervously to see if heavy Iraq forces would strike at their light units, which had been deployed immediately, while the U.S.'s heaviest units took the long, relatively slow sea transit to Saudi Arabia.

Fortunately for the Americans, Saddam Hussein never challenged the American forces in their weakest hour. Instead, he gave them time and space to build their strength and fight the type of war at which the Americans excelled. The result was a lopsided victory for the U.S. The problem, from the American perspective, was how to prepare their forces to deal with a less obliging foe.

### **Changes in the U.S. Army**

Despite its victory in the Gulf, the Army nevertheless faced shrinking budgets. In order to compensate for its declining manpower, the Army attempted to make the soldiers it retained more effective. The Army therefore planned a series of changes that would alter its units' composition, equipment, and specializations. Collectively, these were known as "transformation."<sup>245</sup> Although the Army framed these as revolutionary changes, many of the alterations demonstrate the same assumptions, priorities, and tactics prominent in the Army's earlier thinking. In practice, many of the Army's transformation efforts were an attempt to carry out AirLand Battle more efficiently in spite of budgetary constraints.

#### **Modularity**

One Army initiative was the unit modularization project. During and immediately after the Cold War, the Army was organized around the division, a large unit of 10,000 to 15,000 soldiers. During the period between the two wars with Iraq, the Army began building itself around brigades, units of 3,000 to 5,000 men and women. The Army therefore, rather than having 10 divisions, would now have 43 brigades.<sup>246</sup>

While this may seem to have been of little consequence, it did make a difference in Army deployments. Most Army units have specialized support assets attached to them to facilitate their missions. These support units include intelligence specialists, medical staff, legal experts, reconnaissance assets, etc. The level at which these units are attached dictates their size and who exercises ultimate control over them. When they are attached at a divisional level, the division

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<sup>245</sup> Fontenot, Degen, and Tohn, *On Point*, 5.

<sup>246</sup> Michael Moran, "U.S. Army Force Restructuring, 'Modularity,' and Iraq," Council on Foreign Relations, [http://www.cfr.org/publication/14212/us\\_army\\_force\\_restructuring\\_modularity\\_and\\_iraq.html?breadcrumb=%2Fregion%2F405%2Firaq](http://www.cfr.org/publication/14212/us_army_force_restructuring_modularity_and_iraq.html?breadcrumb=%2Fregion%2F405%2Firaq) (Accessed Nov. 9, 2010).

commander, usually a major general, is responsible for the relevant units. However, when attached at the brigade level, the brigade commander, usually a colonel, wields control.<sup>247</sup> Therefore, when support assets were moved from the divisional to the brigade level, brigade commanders gained a larger degree of independence and autonomy, as they were no longer dependent on their divisional commanders for access to support assets.

Modularity, in theory, is supposed to allow brigades to be specifically tailored for the tasks they are being deployed to perform. During the Cold War, the Army based its staffing and equipment distribution on a tiered system. Those units in Europe, where the Army expected conflict to break out, were given the best equipment and top staffing priority. In contrast, units stationed in the U.S. had to cope with older equipment and unfilled staff positions.<sup>248</sup>

Under the modular system, Army units are intended to be interchangeable and interoperable. For instance, an infantry brigade may have some of its infantry detached for service with an armored brigade, while the armored unit has infantry elements attached to support it. Other support assets may also be attached. After undergoing such restructuring, the brigades become known as Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs).<sup>249</sup> These BCTs would then be deployed, having been given the appropriate structure for their mission.<sup>250</sup>

### **Modularity and Manpower**

Modularity was supposed to increase the manpower available to the Army's combat forces by decreasing the sizes of the division headquarters staffs. In theory, the brigades would be more self-sufficient. Supporters of the program note that a modern BCT has as much firepower as a division once wielded. Opponents of the program argue that modularity will negatively impact the Army by creating redundant support units for each brigade. These critics also note that, while the idea of being able to deploy troops in smaller numbers is an appealing one, the U.S. Army rarely deploys in brigade strength, instead deploying in quantities of 20,000

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<sup>247</sup> Rick Atkinson, "Chain of Command," *In the Company of Soldiers* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004), page not numbered; Jim Lacey, *Takedown: The 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division's Twenty-One Day Assault on Baghdad* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2007), xiii.

<sup>248</sup> Henry Kenyon, "U.S. Army Reforges Training and Readiness," *Signal*, June 2006, [http://www.afcea.org/signal/articles/templates/SIGNAL\\_Article\\_Template.asp?articleid=1139&zoneid=185](http://www.afcea.org/signal/articles/templates/SIGNAL_Article_Template.asp?articleid=1139&zoneid=185) (Accessed Nov. 9, 2010).

<sup>249</sup> Lacey, *Takedown*, xiii.

<sup>250</sup> For reasons unknown, the Army has begun using different terminology for its various units. The new brigade types are referred to as "BCTs." Battalions are referred to as "task forces." Companies are referred to as "teams." Compounding the problem, armored units use different terminology, due to their position as heirs to the cavalry tradition. Tank crews refer to battalions as "squadrons" and companies as "troops." This paper, to avoid confusion, will only use the more traditional terms "battalion" and "company." Lacey, *Takedown*, xiii.

or more troops.<sup>251</sup> It should be noted that the reason for such large deployments are not explained. It would not be inconceivable that the Army would habitually deploy in division strength simply because that is the level at which it is used to operating.

The switch to BCTs is consistent with the assumptions behind AirLand Battle. Moving to a brigade-centered Army neatly complies with AirLand Battle's demand for smaller, decentralized units. Although Army literature does not discuss its assumption that decentralized units are superior, it may be at least partially driven by AirLand Battle's emphasis on maneuver as defense.

### **Network-Centric Warfare**

Of particular interest to the Army were the rapidly advancing capabilities of the information revolution. To soldiers and generals alike, the "fog of war" is one of the most frustrating and problematic aspects of armed conflict. Soldiers on the ground always want to know more about what lies beyond the next hill, or what opposition they will likely face in the course of their mission. Generals always want more precise information about the disposition of the enemy's troops and, for that matter, their own.

Because of this, the increasingly capable surveillance and communications equipment of the so-called Digital Age offered tantalizing possibilities to American commanders and soldiers. At the outset of the Gulf War, the Army had already begun incorporating some of these advances. Precision-guided munitions made their premiere appearance during the Gulf War, allowing American commanders to strike at the enemy much more efficiently than before. Rather than sending waves of bombers to firebomb enemy cities, American forces attempted to destroy the regime they opposed by striking Iraqi command facilities.<sup>252</sup>

At the same time, the Army made use of the Global Positioning System (GPS). In what would become an infamous underestimation of American capabilities, Saddam's defensive line left much of the Iraqi desert uncovered. The Iraqis believed the immense, trackless desert would not prove navigable for their American opponents, so they did not attempt to defend it. The allied forces, equipped with GPS receivers, easily traversed the desert and emerged in the Iraqis' rear.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Moran, "U.S. Army Force Restructuring, 'Modularity,' and Iraq," Council on Foreign Relations.

<sup>252</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 188.

<sup>253</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 353.



The Army recognized these advantages, and wanted to build upon them. The Army essentially wished to be certain that it always knew more about what was happening on the battlefield than its opponents did. To do so, newer versions of Army units are supposed to incorporate significantly more intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets than their older counterparts.

Apparently realizing that its sensor capabilities were not suited for all situations, the Army began creating specialized reconnaissance assets for its units. These new Reconnaissance, Surveillance and Target Acquisition (RSTA) Squadrons included human intelligence and counterintelligence experts to cover the Army's weak areas.<sup>254</sup> These battalion-sized units (roughly 500 people) typically replace one of a brigade's infantry battalions.<sup>255</sup>

The Army also began attaching intelligence companies to its brigades. Whereas the RSTA Squadrons were focused on intelligence collection, the intelligence companies emphasized analysis.<sup>256</sup> The Army stressed that the intelligence assets of various units should communicate constantly: internally; with other Army intelligence assets; and with other services. It is unclear if this emphasis was a response to the notorious lack of communication within the American intelligence community, or if it was a component of the Army's transformation plan from the beginning.

The Department of Defense developed doctrine regarding Network-Centric Warfare. To summarize the DoD's views in plain language, American forces were supposed to be able to operate in a dispersed manner. Rather than engaging in the huge (and costly) force concentrations used in the Gulf War, the armed forces would use superior information-gathering techniques, coordination, and precision firepower to have the same effect.<sup>257</sup> In essence, the armed forces hoped that they would be able to better strike opponents' weak points by using these methods. The DoD hoped this would allow the services to compensate for their decreased size. The DoD pursued "functional control" versus physical occupation of a battlefield.<sup>258</sup>

One prominent technology that came into use during the interim period is Blue Force Tracker (BFT), also known by the much more unwieldy title of "Force XXI Battle Command Brigade and Below (FBCB2) system." This satellite-based system allows communication

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<sup>254</sup> Williamson Murray, ed. *Army Transformation: A View from the U.S. Army War College*, 287.

<sup>255</sup> Maj. Jeff Bryson, *Army Transformation to Expeditionary Formations*, 8.

<sup>256</sup> Murray, ed. *Army Transformation: A View from the U.S. Army War College*, 289.

<sup>257</sup> Department of Defense, *Military Transformation: A Strategic Approach*, Fall 2003, 32.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

between, and within, units via text messaging and map network. Transponders carried by each unit transmit their locations to the satellites, which in turn send the locations to friendly receivers. This means soldiers can communicate and track both their location and those of their comrades via the display. Commanders can also mark the positions of enemy forces, making them visible on the displays of other vehicles in the unit. This gave the Americans an advantage in intelligence and coordination. The Army was pleasantly surprised to learn that it reduced friendly fire incidents as well.<sup>259</sup>

Once again, the Army's emphasis on communication, command, and control is reminiscent of AirLand Battle. Blue Force Tracker, Network-Centric Warfare, and the other aspects of the Army's attempt to utilize the digital age all reflect AirLand Battle's attempt to maneuver friendly forces more rapidly than the enemy, and to concentrate the Army's forces at key points.

### **Speed of Deployment**

Another problem the Army moved to solve was its difficulties with rapid, effective deployment. Apparently feeling that it had units that could only achieve one of those two qualities at a time, the Army began working to create a balanced unit that could both arrive quickly and fight effectively. The Army approached this transition via multiple paths. One attempt to create a more balanced force was the creation of the Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT).

The Stryker was intended to fill the gap between the M1 Abrams tank and the lighter vehicles used by infantry. The 19-ton Stryker was specifically designed to be easily deployable, unlike the Abrams. The Army claims that a SBCT can deploy in 96 hours, and a full division can deploy in 120 hours. The eight-wheeled Stryker is a very flexible vehicle, capable of being configured for a number of tasks.<sup>260</sup> Part of the reason for this is the Army's desire to streamline its logistics processes. By using the same basic platform for multiple missions, the burden on the Army's maintenance and logistics capabilities decreases sharply, as training and spare parts for the various Stryker configurations are largely the same.<sup>261</sup> The Stryker's various roles include

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<sup>259</sup> Fontenot, Degen, and Tohn, *On Point*, 63.

<sup>260</sup> Project Management Office, "Stryker Brigade Combat Team," United States Army website, [www.sbct.army.mil/index.html](http://www.sbct.army.mil/index.html), last updated Dec. 7, 2010 (Accessed Dec. 16, 2010). (Identified as "PMO, 'SBCT'" in future references).

<sup>261</sup> PMO, "SBCT;" Project Management Office, "Commander's Vehicle," United States Army website, <http://www.sbct.army.mil/Commanders-Vehicle.html>, last updated Feb. 11, 2010 (Accessed Dec. 16, 2010).

infantry transport, command vehicle, reconnaissance, anti-tank operations, engineer transport (differentiated from infantry transport by its mine- and rubble-clearing capabilities), mobile gun platform, mortar carrier and nuclear/biological/chemical detection.<sup>262</sup> Among the innovations included in the Stryker is its communication equipment, the aforementioned FBCB2 digital communications system.<sup>263</sup>

Another method of transformation is the creation of the Heavy Brigade Combat Team (HBCT). These units use a mixture of pre-existing vehicles. The two combat battalions of the HBCT use two armored companies and two mechanized companies each. For readers unfamiliar with the differences between the types of companies, a brief explanation follows.

The M1 Abrams is the workhorse of the Army's armored companies. The Abrams is bulky and slow-moving. It is 32 feet long, 12 feet wide, and 8 feet high, and, depending on the configuration, it weighs between 60 and 70 tons. However, it compensates by being extraordinarily tough and hard-hitting. In the first Gulf War, Iraqi T-72s were unable to pierce the Abrams' armor at 740 yards, even with their main gun. At that range, the Abrams was able to destroy the T-72 using only its machine gun.<sup>264</sup> However, such close-range engagements were probably the exception. The Abrams mounts systems that enable it to target enemy units at extended ranges.<sup>265</sup> The Abrams detected Iraqi tanks as far away as 2.4 miles (4 km), and destroyed them from 2.2 miles away, usually with a single shot. Iraqi tanks, in contrast, could not detect the Abrams more than two-thirds of a mile away.<sup>266</sup>

In short, while the Abrams was, and still is, cumbersome and difficult to deploy, it was nonetheless more than a match for its toughest Iraqi counterpart. During the interim period, the Iraqis struggled to maintain their T-72s; improvement was not an option. The Abrams, in contrast, did receive upgrades during this period, particularly to its computer systems. These improvements allowed the Abrams' crew to access and utilize the increasingly powerful communication systems being integrated into the Army at all levels.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> PMO, "SBCT."

<sup>263</sup> Project Management Office, "Infantry Carrier Vehicle," United States Army website, <http://www.sbct.army.mil/Infantry-Carrier-Vehicle.html>. Last updated, Feb. 11, 2010 (Accessed Dec. 16, 2010).

<sup>264</sup> Daryl G. Press, "The Myth of Air Power in the Persian Gulf War and the Future of Warfare," *International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Fall 2001), 13.

<sup>265</sup> United States Army, "Abrams," United States Army website, <http://www.army.mil/factfiles/equipment/tracked/Abrams.html> (Accessed Oct. 28, 2010).

<sup>266</sup> Press, "Myth of Air Power," 13.

<sup>267</sup> U.S. Army, "Abrams."

The Bradley Fighting Vehicle constitutes the backbone of mechanized companies. Primarily an infantry transport, the Bradley is designed to provide protection and transport to its passengers and offer supporting fire for them when they dismount. Like the Stryker, it is equipped with FBCB2. Unlike the Stryker, the Bradley is more limited in its roles. Only two versions of the Bradley exist: an infantry transport variant and a cavalry version for reconnaissance and guard missions. Twenty-one feet long, and 11.8 feet in both height and width, the 25-ton Bradley<sup>268</sup> is somewhat larger than the Stryker, but is much smaller than the Abrams.<sup>269</sup>

### **Method of Transformation**

The Army could not make the shift from its traditional, Cold War structure to its new one overnight; necessity forced more gradual change upon it. The United States Army was (and continues to be) an immense organization, with an authorized force strength of 547,400 soldiers.<sup>270</sup> As with any large bureaucracy, change did not happen quickly or easily in the Army. Furthermore, the project was simply too expensive to finance in a brief period. The Army's plans required new equipment and training for its soldiers, far more funding than Congress was willing (or could afford) to allocate in a small period of time. Therefore, the Army had to make changes as funds became available. Finally, much of the Army's desired hardware, equipment vital to its plans, was not yet ready for deployment. Some systems were still in the very early stages of their development, and it was not clear when they would be ready for deployment.<sup>271</sup>

At the same time, the Army could not simply scrap its old equipment and wait for its new units to activate. The Army had, and continues to have, duties around the world. After September 11, thousands of soldiers became responsible for homeland security duties in the U.S. Seven hundred soldiers patrol the Israeli-Egyptian border in the Sinai Peninsula, and another 700 are stationed in Honduras. Fifty-eight thousand soldiers live in Germany, and more than 25,000 soldiers live in both South Korea and Alaska. Another 1,700 American troops keep peace in Kosovo. More than one hundred and fifty thousand troops are stationed in the Middle East.

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<sup>268</sup> This is the weight of the Bradley Fighting Vehicle alone. A fully loaded Bradley weighs 33.5 tons.

<sup>269</sup> U.S. Army, "Bradley," United States Army website, <http://www.army.mil/factfiles/equipment/tracked/Bradley.html> (Last accessed Oct. 28, 2010);

<sup>270</sup> Moran, "U.S. Army Force Restructuring, 'Modularity,' and Iraq," Council on Foreign Relations.

<sup>271</sup> Carol R. Schuster, Reginald L. Furr, Jr., Kenneth F. Daniell, Kevin C. Handley, M. Jane Hunt, and Leo B. Sullivan, "Military Transformation: Army Has a Comprehensive Plan for Managing its Transformation but Faces Major Challenges," United States Government Accounting Office, GAO-02-96, 28. (Hereafter cited as "Schuster et al, 'Military Transformation,' GAO").

Because of these worldwide commitments, the Army had to make changes while simultaneously maintaining its capability to perform the tasks assigned to it. Transformation has to be undertaken not just gradually, but carefully.<sup>272</sup>

In order to achieve this, the Army developed a Transformation Campaign Plan. Intended to be implemented over a period of three or more decades,<sup>273</sup> the Transformation Campaign Plan was to serve as a reference tool for officials throughout the Army, as transformation affected all branches of the service. Budgeting and planning for transformation was incorporated into the Army's existing procedures to guarantee its implementation.<sup>274</sup>

The Army came to the conclusion that it could best meet the demands placed upon it by developing three distinct types of Army units. The first, known as Legacy Force, was essentially the Army's traditional ground unit. Legacy Force was a concession to the constraints the Army faced. Since the Army had to continue to be able to deploy and fight for the decades it needed to transform, Army leaders decided to maintain some of their existing equipment.<sup>275</sup> This is why the decades-old Abrams tank remains in service. The Army has not yet developed an effective replacement, so the Abrams remains active, albeit updated with more advanced computer and communications systems.<sup>276</sup> The same reasoning applies to the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, which has been upgraded with the electronics necessary to carry out the Army's network-centric warfare concept.<sup>277</sup>

The second type of Army unit is aptly, if not particularly creatively, designated the Interim Force. The Interim Force was never intended to be a long-term fixture of the Army's force structure. As its name suggests, the Interim Force was a stop-gap measure, intended to ease the transition between its traditional force structure and its next-generation successor. Examination of the Army's planned numbers makes clear the transient nature of the Interim Force. As mentioned earlier, the Army was to have more than forty brigades once it completed its transformation. The Interim Force was never supposed to constitute more than six to eight of those brigades.<sup>278</sup> Clearly, the Army did not believe more would be necessary.

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<sup>272</sup> Moran, "U.S. Army Force Restructuring, 'Modularity,' and Iraq," Council on Foreign Relations.

<sup>273</sup> Schuster et al, "Military Transformation," GAO, 9.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>276</sup> United States Army, "Abrams," United States Army website.

<sup>277</sup> United States Army, "Bradley," United States Army website.

<sup>278</sup> Schuster et al, "Military Transformation," GAO, 11.

The Interim Brigade Combat Teams (IBCTs) were mentioned earlier under another name, the Stryker Brigade Combat Teams (SBCTs); for the sake of consistency and clarity,<sup>279</sup> the latter term will be used to refer to them. The SBCTs were designed with three mechanized infantry battalions, an artillery battalion, and a Reconnaissance Surveillance Target Acquisition battalion. Each SBCT also included a support and logistics battalion, as well as engineering, intelligence, and signal companies.<sup>280</sup>

Interim Force was something of a test bed for Objective Force, the Army's eventual goal. The Army apparently recognized that its transformation plans rested upon untried doctrines, tactics, and procedures. Army leaders therefore planned to test these new ideas using the Interim Force, so as to avoid spending billions of dollars, and American lives, learning that their new ideas did not work in practice.<sup>281</sup> Thus, the Interim Force's relatively small size might not be solely due to its temporary nature. It might also be an attempt by the Army's leadership to minimize risk by limiting the use of untested ideas to a few brigades.

Sources are somewhat vague on exactly what Objective Force would be. According to the GAO, the Army was flexible in its plans for the future, so as to better adapt to whatever events lay ahead.<sup>282</sup> The Army did explain that it wanted to incorporate advances in robotics, armor, communications, and sensors into its Objective Force.<sup>283</sup> However, there is no evidence that the Army has made concrete decisions regarding Objective Force's composition. Apparently, the Army is adopting a "wait and see" approach regarding the newest changes.

### **Contractors**

The final way in which the Army attempted to adapt to its changing circumstances is also the most controversial. The Army, and the Defense Department as a whole, began contracting out many of its functions to private firms. Private firms, it was argued, are generally cheaper and more efficient than governmental agencies. Therefore, the Army could hire them to do many tasks, particularly non-essential ones, and save money. This money could in turn be devoted to the Army's modernization projects.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> The term "IBCT" is also used to refer to Infantry Brigade Combat Teams. This creates room for confusion; thus the term "IBCT" will be avoided when referring to the Stryker brigades.

<sup>280</sup> Bryson, "Army Transformation to Expeditionary Formations," 5.

<sup>281</sup> Schuster et al, "Military Transformation," GAO, 23.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>284</sup> Vago Muradian, "DoD Can Save Billions by Outsourcing Work, DSB Says," *Defense Daily*, Oct. 1, 1996.

Part of the Army's willingness to hire contractors was an attempt to maximize efficiency. Personnel costs are the single largest expense in the Defense Department's budget.<sup>285</sup> Reducing the size of its most significant expenditure was an obvious way to free up funds. The Defense Science Board estimated that the Pentagon as a whole could save \$12 billion annually by contracting out functions not directly dealing with combat.<sup>286</sup>

The Army had another reason for employing contractors. Its force strength is limited by law; it is not allowed to expand its ranks of uniformed soldiers beyond a certain point dictated by Congress. Therefore, from the Army's perspective, active-duty personnel are a limited resource. By using contractors for non-combat positions, the Army is able to deploy more of its soldiers into combat zones. Beginning in 1997, the Army started replacing instructors at its Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) locations with contractors. By 2002, the ROTC instructors at more than 200 universities and colleges had been replaced.<sup>287</sup>

In this case, reductions in costs were not among the Army's goals. The Army knew from the beginning that filling the positions with contractors rather than active-duty personnel would be expensive. In fact, the RAND Corporation estimated that the program would cost an estimated \$10,000 more per instructor when soldiers were replaced by contractors.<sup>288</sup>

Part of the reason for the program's expense was the Army's stringent standards for its instructors. ROTC is meant to instill the Army's future leaders with the same mores and social norms that the Army expects of all its soldiers. As a result, the Army was not willing to risk the potential decline in quality that might occur if a contractor cut corners to increase its profits. The Army demanded that the positions be filled only by personnel who had recently retired from the Army, met its physical fitness requirements, and regularly attended ROTC instructors' training programs.<sup>289</sup> This enabled the Army to continue performing the missions assigned to it while legally remaining within the boundaries set by Congress.

The American use of private-sector contractors was nothing new. Contractors provided extensive services to the American military for much of its history. In the Spanish-American War, privately owned boats were hired to transport American troops to their destinations, with

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<sup>285</sup> Moran, "U.S. Army Force Restructuring, 'Modularity,' and Iraq."

<sup>286</sup> Muradian, "DoD Can Save Billions," *Defense Daily*.

<sup>287</sup> Deborah D. Avant, *The Market for Force: The Consequences of Privatizing Security*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 116.

<sup>288</sup> Avant, *The Market for Force*, 117.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

lackluster results in some cases.<sup>290</sup> Traditionally, the private sector has also manufactured much of the Army's weapons and equipment.<sup>291</sup> These uses of the private sector are sometimes problematic, but familiar.

As the military budget began to shrink, the Army and its sister services began to hire contractors to fill a widening array of roles. In the Gulf War, 9,200 contractors assisted American forces,<sup>292</sup> with one contractor serving for every 50 American soldiers. During the conflicts in the Balkans, the military services had to rely even more heavily upon contractors.<sup>293</sup> As will be shown later, this dependence would grow even further in the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

To summarize, the Army's changes were made partially by choice and partially in an attempt to adapt to changing circumstances and perceived needs. The Army voluntarily attempted to learn from Desert Storm by filling the gap between its light and heavy forces. Shrinking budgets *forced* the Army to find ways to do the same, or more, duties that it had always performed; it sought to meet these demands by using fewer soldiers. Contractors assisted in this, providing many rear-echelon services, enabling the Army to deploy more uniformed soldiers into forward positions. The Army also hoped transformation would assist its soldiers by increasing the firepower available to them. The effects of these decisions and choices on the Army's performance would remain unclear until the Iraq War.

### **The U.S. Army in 2003**

When war came in 2003, the U.S. Army was once again in transition. Whereas the Army in 1991 had been a Cold War force preparing for peacetime, the U.S. Army in 2003 was just beginning to implement more than a decade of planning. It restructured itself in an effort to make it more deployable and capable.

#### **Effects of Modularization**

Ironically, when the United States ultimately invaded Iraq in 2003, ease of deployment did not matter, rendering the Army's efforts in that direction somewhat beside the point. The Army had ample time to prepare for the invasion of Iraq. Its efforts were rewarded, at least in

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<sup>290</sup> Graham A. Cosmas, *An Army for Empire: The United States Army in the Spanish-American War*, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1994), 206.

<sup>291</sup> Deborah D. Avant, *Market for Force*, 114.

<sup>292</sup> Alexander Nicoll, editor, "Contractors in War," *International Institute for Strategic Studies Strategic Comments*, Vol. 13, Issue 9, Nov. 2007.

<sup>293</sup> Kevin Collins, *America's Mercenaries: War By Proxy*, master's thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2006, 2.



the initial campaign. Saddam Hussein's forces were generally devastated in lopsided battles as poorly armed Iraqi troops threw themselves at better trained and better armed Americans.

The Army continued its work on modularizing its units, developing eight types of modular BCTs. Three of these brigades are oriented towards combat. Heavy and light brigades remain similar to their Cold War counterparts. A heavy brigade has two armored-mechanized battalions, while a light brigade has two battalions of infantry. The primary difference is the replacement of a third battalion, usually of the same type as its sister units, with an RSTA battalion.<sup>294</sup> The third variety is, of course, the aforementioned Stryker BCT.

Five types of support brigades have been developed as well. Four of these are specialized units with a single mission. They carry out such missions as surveillance, logistics, aviation, and fire support. The Army describes the fifth variant of support brigades as versatile units providing "engineer, military police, air defense, chemical and signal capabilities."<sup>295</sup> Given that these units were historically attached in relatively small numbers to other units, it seems likely that this type of brigade is a "jack-of-all-trades" unit designed to provide services that did not require entire battalions of personnel.

The Army's efforts were not entirely beneficial. The Army's much-vaunted efforts at modularization and its attempts to integrate more reconnaissance capabilities into its units reportedly fell short of expectations. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division (ID), the Army unit that spearheaded the primary assault into Iraq, did not have enough reconnaissance capabilities to carry out its mission. It had to resort to borrowing reconnaissance assets from other units.<sup>296</sup> Additionally, the 3<sup>rd</sup> ID's brigades reportedly found their ad hoc unit structures too unwieldy for their command staffs to coordinate.<sup>297</sup> In all fairness to the Army, the 3<sup>rd</sup> ID's reorganization was not complete, but the unit's problems suggest that the Army's reforms need improvement.

Of far more concern to Americans was the Army's subsequent performance in Iraq. Iraq rapidly descended into disorder, sometimes balancing on the precipice of civil war, as Sunnis and Shi'a retaliated against each other for past grievances and recent attacks on their respective populations. The Army invaded with only three divisions, assisted by a single division of

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<sup>294</sup> U.S. Army, "Providing Relevant and Ready Landpower to Support the Combatant Commanders," *United States Army Posture Statement 2005*, <http://www.army.mil/aps/05/providing.html>, 2005.

<sup>295</sup> U.S. Army, "Providing Relevant and Ready Landpower to Support the Combatant Commanders," *United States Army Posture Statement 2005*, <http://www.army.mil/aps/05/providing.html>, 2005.

<sup>296</sup> Moran, "U.S. Army Force Restructuring, 'Modularity,' and Iraq," Council on Foreign Relations.

<sup>297</sup> Douglas A. MacGregor, "XVIII Airborne Corps: Spearhead of Military Transformation," *Defense Horizons*, No. 37, Jan. 2004.

American Marines and some allied assistance. This was certainly in keeping with the Army's desire to perform the same duties with fewer soldiers, and the Army's experience in Iraq indicates that this might be feasible in large-scale conventional warfare. Where low-intensity conflict is concerned, however, the Army has not yet discovered a replacement for the American infantryman.

From the perspective of fulfilling its goal of fighting and winning conventional wars, the Army's efforts were hugely successful. The campaign to overthrow Saddam Hussein ended quickly with few American casualties. The Iraqi conventional forces were badly beaten by the well-coordinated, well-armed American forces.

### **Low-Intensity Conflicts**

The Army may have succeeded in winning a conventional war, but its subsequent failures suggest the Army was poorly prepared to fight a counter-insurgent campaign. Had this been a new experience, it would be unfair to fault the Army for its failures. Regrettably, the need to fight in low-intensity conflicts was hardly novel. Even in the wake of the Cold War, low-intensity conflicts outnumber conventional wars. Kosovo, Bosnia, Somalia, and Afghanistan all fell into the category of low-intensity conflicts. Only the Gulf War could be considered a conventional conflict. Therefore, the Army unquestionably had warning that low-intensity conflicts lay in its future. It simply failed to prepare for this.

The roots for the Army's failure may well lie in its doctrinal assumptions. While AirLand Battle will play a prominent role in this discussion, it is important to note that AirLand Battle and its planners are *not* responsible for the American failures in Iraq and Afghanistan. Rather, they reflect the assumptions, priorities, and thinking processes of the U.S. Army that shaped them. Those assumptions, priorities, and processes bear ultimate responsibility for the Army's failures.

The first aspect of this discussion is the Army's emphasis on the destruction of the enemy's forces, as opposed to holding territory. When American forces attacked Iraqi conventional forces, the Iraqi forces quickly collapsed, unable to stand up to the Americans' heavier firepower. In contrast, insurgents did not attempt to withstand the American forces when the Americans entered an area in strength. Rather, they simply melted away, ceding the territory to American forces. They then struck at weakly defended areas before blending back into the

populace. When the American forces believed an area cleared, they would then move on to the next area, and the insurgents would return to the abandoned area.

In effect, the insurgents were using the same concepts as the Americans. They depended on dispersion and evasion to defend their forces. For offensive purposes, they rapidly congregated to strike at American weak points. The insurgents' efforts were partially intended to destroy enemy forces, rather than hold territory in the face of enemy assaults. The United States Army only began to reverse the insurgents' successes when it began adopting counterinsurgency tactics. These tactics effectively abandoned the assumptions of AirLand Battle.

The battle for Baghdad is a useful example. Army forces began by surrounding Baghdad. Coalition forces then moved into Baghdad itself and began systematically clearing specific areas. Once an area had been cleared, the coalition stationed forces to hold that region permanently. This effectively deprived the insurgents of maneuvering room. While the Army described its new tactics as protecting the population, the resemblance to traditional warfare is clear.<sup>298</sup> The Army once again found itself holding territory, creating lines of defense around cleared districts, and ignoring AirLand Battle's dictates that Army forces remain mobile.

### **Contractors in Iraq**

As mentioned in the previous section, private security contractors began to play an increasing role in the United States Army's affairs in the period between the Gulf War and the invasion of Iraq. By 2006, 48,000 contractors from 181 companies were in Iraq.<sup>299</sup> There was one contractor for every 50 soldiers in the Gulf War; during the occupation of Iraq, the ratio of contractors to soldiers rose to one contractor for every 10 soldiers.<sup>300</sup>

In the past, private contractors had largely limited their activities to non-combat roles; their performance of these roles, as mentioned earlier, freed uniformed soldiers for combat duties. By the invasion of Iraq, contractors began branching out into new areas, and the results worried both military professionals and academics. Particularly troubling to observers was the use of contractors for security purposes. Security in areas as dangerous as Iraq and Afghanistan virtually required that security personnel be armed, and private security personnel in the employ

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<sup>298</sup> Kimberly Kagan, *The Surge: A Military History* (New York: Encounter Books, 2009), 30-31.

<sup>299</sup> Nicoll, ed., "Contractors in War," IISS.

<sup>300</sup> Collins, "America's Mercenaries," 2.

of the U.S. government were no exception. Contractors guarded important figures and locations in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and they interrogated prisoners.<sup>301</sup>

There was little that the Army or its sister services can do about this, however. Contractors supplied needs that the Army could not supply itself without compromising its ability to perform its primary missions. Contractors frequently assisted in training foreign forces allied to the United States, such as the Iraqi Army and police.<sup>302</sup> They provided technical assistance for the increasingly complex electronics used by American forces.<sup>303</sup> Doing so enabled more American soldiers to provide security for ordinary Iraqis, and it reduced the Army's training costs. Additionally, there were some gaps that the Army could not reasonably be expected to fill in a timely manner. When the U.S. decided to provide trainers to African countries, it found that its trainers needed to be fluent in French, a skill that the American Special Forces lacked. Contractors provided the necessary personnel.<sup>304</sup>

Contractors also worked for agencies other than the Department of Defense. For instance, the American embassy in Iraq needed heavy security to ensure the safety of its staff. In addition to its Marine security guards and diplomatic security service agents, the State Department also employed almost 1,500 private contractors to protect the embassy.<sup>305</sup> The Army was already notoriously overstretched; had it been asked to provide an additional 1,500 soldiers to protect the U.S. embassy in Iraq, it would have been hard-pressed to meet the request. One thousand five hundred soldiers is equal to the number of uniformed soldiers staffing Guantanamo Bay, and only 200 less than the entire American contingent in Kosovo.<sup>306</sup> The State Department insisted that its embassies could not function without the security contractors. The department noted that 23 security contractors had been killed between July 2004, when the embassy was established, and June 2006, when the State Department's representative testified before Congress. Six more had been killed in Afghanistan and Gaza in that period.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Nicoll, ed., "Contractors in War," IISS.

<sup>302</sup> Avant, *The Market for Force*, 122.

<sup>303</sup> Collins, "America's Mercenaries," 4.

<sup>304</sup> Avant, *The Market for Force*, 123.

<sup>305</sup> House Committee of Government Reform, Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations, *Private Security Firms Standards, Cooperation and Coordination on the Battlefield*, 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 1976, Serial No. 109-214, 44. (Hereafter referred to as HCGR, *Private Security Firms*).

<sup>306</sup> United States Army, "Accomplishing the Mission Today: Sustaining Global Commitments," *United States Army Posture Statement 2005*, <http://www.army.mil/aps/05/accomplishing.html> (Last accessed Dec. 24, 2010).

<sup>307</sup> HCGR, *Private Security Firms*, 44.

However, the contractors themselves had relatively little accountability, and there was little coordination between them and governmental forces. Contractors demonstrated a willingness to open fire that angered both the Iraqi and Afghan governments. Afghanistan began working to ban foreign contractors in 2010. Even American soldiers, who theoretically had fewer obligations because of the contractors' presence, resented them. The troops considered their private sector counterparts unprofessional and trigger-happy. As an example, contractors typically travel in unmarked vehicles, often at high speeds. They frequently came under fire from Iraqi and coalition soldiers, who became understandably nervous at the sight of unmarked vehicles careening toward their positions. This, coupled with disturbingly frequent reports of unjustified shootings by contractors, has undermined their credibility.<sup>308</sup>

### **Summary**

Overall, the results of the United States Army's efforts at change and reform were mixed. The Army's efforts at modernization were clearly useful. For example, soldiers' accounts of the Iraq War suggest they frequently consulted Blue Force Tracker; this indicates that they both understood it and trusted the information it provided. Similarly, the Third Infantry Division's victories suggest that the modular brigade concept has potential, despite its problems.

On the other hand, the quality of an army is judged at least partially by how it fares against opponents of high caliber. The Iraqi Army emphatically does *not* fit this description. The United States' defeat of the Iraqi Army in 2003 was not a particularly astounding victory. Therefore, modularization cannot yet be said to be a confirmed success.

Meanwhile, the Army's poor performance in both the low-intensity conflicts between the two wars and the post-war occupation indicates that it did not achieve its desired effectiveness at "full-spectrum warfare." The Army's transformation efforts were consistent with its long-standing understanding of warfare, as an exercise in the use of maneuver and firepower, emphasizing the destruction of the enemy. Like the government of Saddam Hussein, the Army's leadership was shaped by past wars, and it molded its organization according to what it considered "real" war. Unlike Saddam's government, the U.S. Army survived, enabling it to learn from its mistakes.

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<sup>308</sup> James Glanz and Andrew W. Lehren, "Use of Contractors Added to War's Chaos in Iraq," *New York Times*, Oct. 23, 2010. (Last accessed Oct. 25, 2010).

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **CONCLUSION**

As mentioned in the introduction, both the American and Iraqi armies made changes to prepare for the wars they regarded as being the most likely to occur, and those changes were made within the constraints imposed upon them by their political masters and their own internal cultures. In the end, the American and Iraqi Armies both failed to prepare for the wars that lay in their respective futures, but the reasons for their failures to adapt differ.

#### **Iraq**

The Iraqi Army was unable to make the changes that would have enabled it to mount a more effective defense largely for political reasons. Even Iraq's economic problems, which inhibited the Iraqi military machine's ability to resupply, were ultimately political in origin. Saddam Hussein's poor foreign policy decisions brought a crippling embargo on his state, hobbling Iraq's military capabilities.

Saddam Hussein also bears at least partial responsibility for the Iraqi ground forces' other problems. Theoretically, adopting a more decentralized system of command might have enabled Iraqi commanders to react more quickly to the Americans' fast-moving methods of combat. However, doing so would have lessened the control wielded by Saddam's hand-picked favorites. This would have been unacceptable to Iraq's political leadership; Saddam regarded the Army, and to a lesser extent its sister services, with intense suspicion. This suspicion was arguably justified, given the Iraqi Army's role in prior coups, but it still left the Army with the same inflexibility and slow decision-making processes that plagued it in the Gulf War. Nonetheless, it is unfair to lay the blame entirely at Saddam's feet. Iraq's junior officers consistently received poor training, so there is no guarantee that they would have been able to effectively use the freedom of action a more decentralized command structure would have given them. Other Iraqi military services suffered from the same problems.

Additionally, Saddam's obsessive need to keep his armed services divided badly degraded the capabilities of those forces. At the time of the invasion of Iraq, Iraqi ground forces included the Iraqi Army, Republican Guard, Special Republican Guard, Fedayeen Saddam, and Al-Quds Brigades. These units were not permitted to coordinate or train with one another,

preventing cross-pollination of ideas. For instance, the Fedayeen Saddam successfully adopted Somali insurgent tactics in their fight against the American forces, but they were apparently unable or unwilling to share this with the other Iraqi armed services. When war did come, most of Iraq's armed forces demonstrated little institutional learning.

Finally, Saddam's tight control over his military forces, and his brutal methods for maintaining that control, seriously hampered Iraq's fighting abilities. Saddam did not have the military competence to direct his subordinates effectively, but his pride convinced him otherwise. His subordinates could not criticize or contradict any of Saddam's views for fear of negative consequences. Saddam's highly personalized, fear-based system of rule virtually eliminated the free exchange of ideas or toleration of alternative thinking. This in turn largely precluded the possibility of institutional learning within the majority of the Iraqi armed services.

### **United States**

In the case of the American Army, the situation was very different. The United States government was largely content to leave the task of running the Army to the Army's generals, and those generals tolerated, even encouraged, discussion within the Army's ranks. As a result, the Army did learn from the Gulf War. Despite having won an overwhelming victory over their Iraqi opponents, the Army's planners recognized flaws within their force structure and set about correcting them. Unfortunately, the new weapons systems and techniques they developed were clearly meant to fight the same sort of warfare the Army envisioned when it created the AirLand Battle doctrine; when the Iraqi occupation ceased to resemble this type of warfare, the Army was caught flat-footed. Thus, the Army as an institution did learn within the boundaries created by its view of warfare; however, it failed to account for situations in which the enemy's behavior did not meet with its expectations.

### **Comparisons and Contrasts**

Both the Iraqi and American armies suffered from declining resources. In the case of the Iraqi Army and its sister services, this was due largely to the United Nations' sanctions. These sanctions devastated Iraq's economy, which in turn left Saddam unable to fund his forces as liberally as he had in the past. The arms embargo was particularly detrimental to the armed services. Iraq's domestic weapons industry lacked the capacity to do more than slow the decline of Iraq's armed services. Saddam had, in the past, relied upon imports to replace lost equipment

or supply new weapons; he was likewise dependent on foreign technicians to repair and maintain that equipment. With his access to both of these resources drastically reduced, Iraq's weaponry quickly began to wear out.

In the case of the United States Army, the Army's funding, along with that of the other military services, had been cut to divert spending to other, more profitable venues. The Iraqis dealt with their dwindling resources by cannibalizing existing units and, when possible, domestically producing or illegally importing spare parts. The Americans worked to make their existing resources more efficient.

### **Significance**

This paper differs from other works both in its scope and its purpose. First, it is a historical overview of the American and Iraqi armies from the Gulf War of 1991 to the invasion of Iraq in 2003. This paper is not intended to propose reforms or policy changes. It is instead an analysis of the changes made after the first war between the United States and Iraq, and the effectiveness of those changes in their second conflict. It is a comparison of the relative efficacy of the changes made by two powers, and of the differing constraining and motivating factors affecting their thinking.

This is not to say that there are no useful lessons in the behavior of the two military powers. The lessons are particularly abundant in the case of Iraq. The Iraqi Army's failure to adapt is a primarily a byproduct of the fear-based control Saddam wielded over his forces. It is a reminder of why toleration of dissenting opinions is a necessity in any organization.

The behavior of the Iraqi and American armies is a reminder of the importance of examining one's underlying assumptions. Saddam Hussein could not respect any type of conflict other than the brutal battles of attrition his state fought against Iran. The United States Army's planners thought about war primarily in the context of large-scale, conventional warfare. In the end, Saddam Hussein's forces paid the price for their leader's inability or unwillingness to adapt to the Americans' fast-paced, maneuver-based warfare. The American soldiers and the Iraqi people, in turn, paid for the U.S. Army's failure to quickly stabilize Iraq in the wake of its government's overthrow.

To give both the Iraqi and American high commands their due, not all the actions the two powers took were unwise. For instance, there is nothing wrong with preparing for the types of



wars one expects to conduct. To do otherwise seems both irrational and counterproductive. The flaw in this thinking is disregarding the possibility that *other* types of wars might occur. For instance, the United States Army apparently did not adequately plan or prepare for counterinsurgent operations in Iraq, and Saddam Hussein did not believe he would have to make serious preparations for an American invasion. Unfortunately for both, their expectations proved wrong, and their commanders lacked the appropriate training to adapt quickly to these unexpected situations.

In the case of the Iraqi high command, most of its more disastrous decisions were not its own. Its political overseer, Saddam Hussein, possessed a number of significant personality flaws: paranoia, egotism, brutality, self-deception, military incompetence, and a propensity for micromanagement. By themselves, any one of these defects could have had a negative impact on military effectiveness. Taken together, these faults proved absolutely catastrophic. Saddam's brutality combined with his paranoia to create an atmosphere of fear among all who surrounded him. Because of this widespread sense of terror, his subordinates were more preoccupied with pleasing Saddam than carrying out their jobs effectively. The former contributed far more to their continued survival than the latter. In fact, being *too* efficient risked drawing unwanted attention from Saddam's security services.

Because of this, the Iraqi Army and its sister services cannot be faulted for many of the flaws they suffered. In the fear-driven climate of the Iraqi government under Saddam Hussein, commanding officers had to develop a new set of priorities. Self-preservation was necessarily at the top of this list, while military efficiency was significantly less important.

The U.S. Army does bear rather more responsibility for its failures, but it can also boast of more successes. The Army wisely recognized that victory in 1991 did not guarantee victory in the future; successfully resisting the temptation to be drift into complacency is no small matter. The Army realized that its force structure left it with a serious vulnerability in the earliest portion of a deployment, and it went to considerable effort and expense to correct this, as evidenced by the Stryker program. The Army also recognized the enormous advantages that its superior reconnaissance, communication, and mobility gave it. Rather than resting on its laurels, the Army instead began looking for ways to increase these advantages further.

Unfortunately for the Army, all of its "lessons learned" were in the arena of conventional warfare. Despite becoming involved in several low-intensity conflicts between the two wars, the

Army as an institution made little to no effort to learn how to fight more effectively in these situations. It was only after the near-disintegration of post-invasion Iraq that the Army began to reluctantly adapt.

These changes almost certainly affected the way in which the invasion of Iraq was eventually conducted. The United States Army vastly overmatched the Iraqi Army and its sister services because it had spent the intervening 12 years preparing for exactly the type of warfare conducted in the initial invasion. That being said, the Army's enormous qualitative and quantitative advantages probably would have been sufficient to ensure its victory, even without the aforementioned changes.

In the case of the Iraqi ground forces, at least part of the reason they performed as poorly as they did was Saddam's treatment of them. His foremost concern was clearly the pre-emption of any internal threats, real or imagined. As a result, the Iraqi armed services were structured in such a way as to prevent them from presenting a threat to Saddam. Unfortunately for Saddam, this strategy largely precluded the Iraqi ground forces from presenting a threat to invaders, as well.

The Americans, in turn, found their advantages largely evaporated when faced with an enemy they could not reliably locate and destroy. The American focus on the destruction of hostile forces left the Army somewhat at a loss as to how to deal with an enemy that was even more skilled at dispersal and evasion than itself. In the end, the Army had to completely shift its thinking processes to deal with the Iraqi insurgency.

The Iraqi ground forces of Saddam Hussein no longer have to worry about their difficulties, having been supplanted by an American-trained replacement. Out of all the organizations discussed in this study, the only one still able to learn from its mistakes is the Army of the United States. While the United States Army showed improvement in its understanding of its counterinsurgency in Iraq, the Army and Marines still face serious challenges in Afghanistan. These difficulties suggest that the Army still has far to go before it achieves the full-spectrum readiness it claims to seek.

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## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

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