

25X1

TS

TASKING CONTROL FORM

Classification

OFFICE OF ORIGIN		DOCUMENT DATE		DOCUMENT NO.	
(b)(3) 10 USC 424		DATE RECEIVED		DATE TASKED	
		02/02/91-1630		02/02/91-1630	
DATE RECEIVED		DATE TASKED		DATE REVISED	
02/02/91-1630		02/02/91-1630			
DIA SUSPENSE:		02/03/91-1200		TASKING CONTROL NO: 4094	
ORIGINATOR'S SUSPENSE:				COLLAB SUSPENSE:	
				COORDINATION SUSPENSE:	
SUBJECT COORD: THE POSSIBILITIES FOR IRANIAN SUPPORT OF IRAQ					
INTERNAL ROUTING				PREVIOUS ACTION OFFICER	
ACTION		COLLABORATION		COORDINATION	
ITF					
INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE					
<i>Cover sheet for your use.</i>					
Declassified Under Authority of the Interagency Security Classification Appeals Panel, E.O. 13526, sec. 5.3(b)(3) ISCAP Appeal No. 2015-002, Doc. 15 Declassification Date: April 12, 2024					
SUB ELEMENT INSTRUCTIONS					
(b)(3) 10 USC 424					
SIGNATURE					
RETURN WITH COMPLETED ACTION TO:				FINAL DISPOSITION	
KEYWORD SEARCH ENTRY:					
THIS FORM BECOMES			UPON REMOVAL OF ATTACHMENT(S)		

S:\DATA\SHARED\ITF\TASKERS\TASK401.32A
1620/2FEB91 SENT BY PAT

THE POSSIBILITIES FOR IRANIAN SUPPORT OF IRAQ

KEY JUDGMENTS

(S) In the short run, we assess that there is little that active Iranian support for Iraq can do to enhance Iraqi prospects for success or threaten coalition forces or operations. Active Iranian combat support to Iraq would provide only limited military capabilities and would subject Iran to coalition military retaliation-- a prospect Iran would want to avoid. Any military equipment it could funnel through the Soviet Union or offshore sources would be too limited in quantity to provide Iraq any significant short-term increases in combat capability.

(S) Iran will likely be forced to increase its cooperation with Iraq over the coming weeks because the increasing stridency of the Islamic radicals within Iran. We expect that this increasing cooperation will be incremental and non-military to the maximum extent possible. As the Gulf war continues, we expect the power of the radicals to increase and Rafsanjani's range of policy options shrink.

THE POSSIBILITIES

1. (C) Since the beginning of the Gulf Crisis, Iran has professed a declared policy of neutrality. Tehran has condemned Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Despite this pronouncement, Iran has pursued a policies perhaps best described as 'calculated ambiguity' in supporting United Nation's sanctions while allowing significant amounts of food and medicine to cross its borders into Iraq. Tehran appears to have been playing both sides against the middle for its own benefit. Iran's recent provision of a safehaven for Iraqi transport and fighter aircraft may portend that internal political dynamics have forced Iran to tilt its neutrality. If this does in fact represent an Iranian shift to Iraq's side of the conflict, it becomes important to consider what support Iran might provide Iraq that would be detrimental to U.S./coalition interests. Such support could fall into the following categories:

a. (C) Political and/or Islamic support to Iraq: Iranian political or Islamic support for Iraq is a plausible Iranian policy option because there is no need for deniability, it doesn't militarily violate Iranian neutrality, and is not inconsistent with United Nation's resolutions.

(1) (C) Political: In the short run, Iranian political support rendered to Iraq would have no major effect on coalition efforts. Iran has little political influence in the Arab world. The only Arab countries in which Iranian political support might be meaningful are those that are already outside the coalition with little influence upon it. Arab and European coalition members are unlikely to be influenced by any such Iranian political support for Iraq. Iran may have broader political influence outside of the Middle East region,

specifically in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). In this context, support for a UN ceasefire sponsored by the NAM might be enhanced by Iranian actions, although it would have only questionable prospects for success in the UN.

(2) ~~(C)~~ Islamic: Iranian influence in the Arab Middle East is stronger in terms of its Islamic influence than its political. Iranian support for Iraq on an Islamic basis would probably have moderate influence with the nascent Islamic fundamentalist factions in most Arab countries. Over time, this fundamentalism could mobilize popular Arab support for Iraq, against U.S. and coalition military operations and threaten anti-Iraq regimes. Arab countries supporting the coalition would be susceptible to this threat.

b. ~~(C)~~ Providing Iraq with Intelligence data on U.S. and allied forces: Iran could provide Iraq with intelligence data on U.S. and allied naval dispositions in the Persian Gulf and northern Arabian Sea. This is a credible option which can be pursued covertly and with deniability. Iran's capability to provide quality intelligence to Iraq is limited to Humint, modest Sigint, and maritime and aerial patrol reporting. Such intelligence would be of only marginal value to the Iraqis because only Iranian coverage of the southern Gulf wouldn't normally be available to Iraqi intelligence collectors anyway. Iraq has limited to no capability to attack targets south of Qatar. In any case, Iranian intelligence data would not likely contribute materially to Iraq's war efforts.

25X1



d. ~~(C)~~ Conduit for Soviet weapons and repair parts: With its extent military relationship with the Soviet Union, and unproven indications that some factions within the Soviet Union would like to support Iraq's war effort, Iran is well positioned potentially to provide Iraq a conduit to Soviet equipment and repair parts. This is an option that could be conducted clandestinely and allow the regime in Tehran plausible deniability, although quantities probably would be restricted by harsh winter road conditions in the mountains between Iran and Iraq and the risk of exposure by U.S. technical means. To this point, there is no credible evidence to suggest that this is occurring. It is also questionable whether either the Soviets or the Iranians would be willing to risk exposure for such a resupply effort at this time.

e. ~~(C)~~ Terrorism: Iran has a large and competent terrorist infrastructure. It could employ this asset most effectively in the Middle East and in Western Europe. It is unlikely that Iranian terrorism would have any direct military effect on coalition military operations. Even at the height of the EARNEST WILL operation, Iran did not conduct terrorist operations against U.S. forces in the Gulf region despite provocation. Iranian terror might contribute to weakening the resolve of coalition members that were targeted. Terrorism might be an attractive Iranian option for a variety of reasons. First, because it offers plausible deniability; conducted carefully terrorist operations would not directly point back to Tehran. Secondly, and more important than any effects that could be achieved, a terrorist campaign would probably serve to pacify the radical elements within the Iranian government who are calling for increased cooperation with Iraq in its battle against the 'Great Satan'. (see discussion below) The latter would most likely be the driving factor in an Iranian decision to employ terrorism.

f. ~~(C)~~ Allowing Iraqi combat sorties from Iranian airspace:

(1) ~~(S/NF)~~ While the total number of military aircraft that Iraq has parked in Iran to date is generally small, approximately 75 fighter aircraft representing roughly only 10 percent of its fleet, these aircraft represent the preponderance of Iraq's long-range offensive airstrike capability including the Mirage Fleg capable of launching the EXOCET missile. It is possible that the Iraqi aircraft have the capability to launch offensive strikes from Iran. It is also possible that they were transferred to Iran only to prevent their destruction in the allied air campaign against Iraq's hardened aircraft shelters. It is not known if the aircraft arrived in Iran with combat loads, what material was onboard the transport aircraft, or what the disposition of the Iraqi pilots has been but, it is possible that the aircraft arrived in Iran with full combat loads and would require only refueling, which could be accomplished with Iraq's IL-76 tanker aircraft.

(2) ~~(S)~~ Many factors would seem to mitigate against this scenario. Launching these aircraft from Iran in offensive strikes against U.S. or coalition forces would offer Iraq little or no tactical advantage. The presence of Iraqi combat aircraft in Iran has increased U.S. concern and vigilance. Ranges to attack coalition naval targets in the Gulf average 400 nautical miles. These ranges would generally require in-flight refuelling or forward deployment with the concomitant loss of surprise both would entail. U.S. early warning assets (E-3a and E-2c) and defensive systems (carrier and land based aircraft, AEGIS platforms) are sufficiently available to minimize any such threat. The Iranian government is unlikely to allow or condone Iraqi combat operations launched from Iranian territory as this would violate its declared neutrality. Even so, Saddam Husayn may have other plans and Iran may not have the wherewithal to prevent such an Iraqi endeavor.

g. ~~(C)~~ Direct military support for Iraq: At the extreme end of Iran's options would be a military alliance with Iraq against coalition forces. From an Iranian point of view, this is likely to be a costly endeavor. Iran has no credible ground force capabilities, these were destroyed in the latter stages of the Iran-

Iraq war. It does have significant maritime and air assets which could be used against coalition naval forces in the Gulf but, it probably learned from its engagements with the U.S. Navy during the EARNEST WILL operation that its chances of any success are low. This is especially true now that a much larger U.S. naval presence is currently in the Gulf. This option would also make Iran subject to a U.S. military response similar to that pursued against Iraq. While the limitations and costs would appear to dissuade Iran from pursuing such a course of action, Islamic fervor and intensity cannot be discounted in leading Tehran to ignore the costs.

2. (S) In the short run, we assess that there is little that active Iranian support for Iraq can do to enhance Iraqi prospects for success or threaten coalition forces or operations. Iranian aid will most likely consist of non-belligerent material and continued safehaven for Iraqi aircraft. Active Iranian combat support to Iraq would provide only limited military capabilities and would subject Iran to coalition military retaliation-- a prospect it is likely to avoid. While there is a possibility for the transfer of military equipment and repair parts from the Soviets and offshore sources such as North Korea these could not be expected to provide any short-term improvement in Iraq's military capabilities. Likewise, Iranian political or Islamic support are unlikely to provide Iraq significant short-term benefit.

CONFLICTING INTERESTS AND RESURGENT RADICALS

3. (S) Tehran's agreement to shelter Iraqi aircraft may portend a more active role for Iran in the Gulf war tilted toward Iraq. The surprise and confusion exhibited by the Iranian government over the arrival of Iraqi fighters seems to indicate that Iranian policy toward the Gulf war is now reactive rather than calculated. Tehran's responses to the Gulf war may be reacting to a combination of competing interests and internal political pressures. These include: conflict between the Iranian 'radicals' who want to confront the West and the ruling 'moderate' elite; Iran's obvious displeasure over the prospects for a long-term U.S. military presence in the Gulf; Iran's concern for the post-crisis political environment if Iraq is effectively destroyed; and possible concern over future Iraqi enmity if Iraq is not destroyed. It is also likely that Tehran does not want to be left out or taken for granted in the resolution of the crisis. Iran rightfully feels that it is a major power in the Gulf and wants a role in shaping the post-crisis region. This has been evidenced by its discussions with the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council concerning a post-crisis security regime.

4. (S) In assessing future Iranian policy and actions toward the Gulf war, the most critical factor will probably be the internal competition between the radicals and the moderates in the Iranian government. Since coming to power as President of Iran in 1988, Rafsanjani has effectively steered Iran along a moderate course which has focused on rebuilding Iran's economic infrastructure. To do this, Rafsanjani has looked to the West to gain the investment needed to rebuild Iran's economy. Rafsanjani has generally gotten his way in policy vis-a-vis the more radical members of the government despite the majority control in the national parliament held by the radicals. The radical factions have had no cohesive agenda or voting bloc. They have instead tended to coalesce into small groups pursuing their own unique goals. The current Gulf crisis appears to have

provided a unifying issue to the disparate radical factions; bringing them together in a consensus seeking to aid Iraq and challenge the United States. A cohesive radical element within the Iranian government is a direct challenge to Rafsanjani and his moderate policies and the President will be forced to make concessions to the radicals. Iran's acceptance of the Iraqi aircraft may reflect an incremental accommodation by Rafsanjani to the radicals. It was probably considered a concession that would not bring coalition retaliation or put at risk Rafsanjani's national objectives. As the Gulf war continues, we expect the power of the radicals to increase and Rafsanjani's range of policy options shrink.

OUTLOOK

5. (S) Iran will likely be forced to increase its cooperation with Iraq over the coming weeks because the increasing stridency of the Islamic radicals within Iran. We expect that this increasing cooperation will be incremental and non-military to the maximum extent possible. There are several scenarios which could hasten or guarantee stronger Iranian support to Iraq. These include: a disproportionate Israeli retaliation on Iraq or entry into the war on a continuing basis; a belief by the Iranians that the coalition or the U.S. had damaged or destroyed the Islamic holy sites in Iraq; a U.S. military campaign into Iraq proper; a perception by Tehran that Turkey was going to make a grab for Iraqi land; and a major increase in Iraqi civilian casualties. In any case, we assess that there is little that active Iranian support for Iraq can do in the short run to enhance Iraq's prospects for political or military success.

TASK RECORD OF ACTIONS

DAY/TIME

RECORD of ACTION (notes, problems)

2/2/91

1300

~~1700~~

1700

ITF assigned a task # 2

(b)(3) 10 USC 424

(b)(3) 10 USC 424

Task # 2 is part of # 4/13

Task # 2 is part of # 4/13

ITF

(b)(3) 10 USC 424

2/2/91 Feb

Copy has gone to

(b)(3) 10 USC 424

for publication

Check task # 2 for hand off

2/23/91 Feb 91

(b)(3) 10 USC 424

Coordination complete. Counsel of ITF

(Handwritten mark)