THE COMING WINTER SEASON. POLITICALLY BAGHDAD CAN CLAIM THAT THE KURDS NOW HAVE A FAIR MEASURE OF AUTONOMY THEY HAVE LONG SOUGHT TO ATTAIN.

6. **KRS** THE IRAQI REGULAR ARMY PERFORMED POORLY IN ITS POST-ELF WAR OPERATIONS AGAINST THE KURDS. THE RGSC HAD TO BE DRAFTED IN TO SUPPRESS THE INSURGENCY. THE IRAQI PRESIDENT IS NOT EXPECTED TO RELY ON HIS REGULAR FORCE IN THE NORTH UNTIL MAJOR COMBAT AND SUPPORT UNITS HAVE RECONSTITUTED AND UNDERGONE ADDITIONAL TRAINING. IF REQUIRED, HOWEVER, THE RGSC WOULD BE DEPLOYED TO THE NORTH EITHER TO REINFORCE REGULAR ARMY UNITS OR TO ACT INDEPENDENTLY. ALTHOUGH THE RGSC WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE SUCCESSFUL AGAINST THE KURDS, SADDAM HAS RECENTLY SEEMED SATISFIED TO MAINTAIN MOST RGSC UNITS IN GARRISON IN CENTRAL IRAQ, WHERE THEY PERFORM A SECURITY ROLE FOR BAGHDAD AND WHERE THEY CAN PROCEED EFFICIENTLY WITH THEIR RECONSTITUTION.

7. **KRS** SADDAM’S ACTION HAS ISOLATED THE KURDS, WHO REMAIN DIVIDED OVER ACCEPTING BAGHDAD’S TERMS ON THE AUTONOMY AGREEMENT. THEY WILL NOW BE FORCED TO ADJUST TO SECURITY AND PROVIDE SUBSISTENCE IN THEIR HOMELAND. THE KURDS also have been denied control over oilfields and industrial areas by this move. THEY ARE NOW EVEN MORE VULNERABLE TO ECONOMIC BLOCKADE OR MILITARY MOVES BY SADDAM.

8. **KRS** IRAQI FORCES IN THE NORTH ARE SAID TO BE PRESSURING KURDS TO LEAVE THE AREAS ALONG THE CURRENT FORWARD LINE OF TROOPS (FLOT) IN ORDER TO CREATE A BUFFER ZONE. THERE ARE SOME REPORTS OF FORCED EVICTIONS FROM AREAS NEAR IRAQI POSITIONS. KURDS AND IRAQIS EACH EXPECT ATTACKS BY THE OTHER SIDE. THE CONTINUING TENSION ALONG THE FLOT COULD RESULT IN MAJOR CLASHES, PARTICULARLY IN THE KIRKUK, KIFRI, AND KALLAR AREAS. IRAQI FORCES WILL MOST LIKELY SEEK TO AVOID DECISIVE ENGAGEMENTS, TRYING TO RELY ON ARTILLERY AND LOCALIZED OPERATIONS.

OUTLOOK

9. **KRS** KURDISH GROUPS MAY TRY TO PRECIPITATE BATTLES WITH THE IRAQIS IN THE HOPE THAT MULTI-NATIONAL FORCES WOULD ASSIST THEM. EVEN THOUGH THE COALITION HAS REPEATEDLY STATED IT WOULD NOT INTERVENE, THE CONTINUED INTERNAL DIVISIONS AMONG KURDISH GROUPS WILL ALSO LIMIT THE CONTROL THE KURDISH FRONT HAS OVER VARIOUS GROUPS. ATTEMPTS BY INDIVIDUAL GROUPS TO EXPAND THEIR CONTROL VS-A-VS OTHER GROUPS IN THE AREA OF THE FLOT COULD LEAD TO BATTLES WITH THE IRAQIS.

10. **KRS** THERE IS NO HISTORICAL PRECEDENT FOR LONG-TERM UNITY AMONG THE KURDS. THE PRINCIPAL KURDISH GROUPS IN IRAQ ARE UNLIKELY EVER TO BE IN COMPLETE HARMONY, AND THEIR DIFFERENCES WILL CONTINUE TO RESULT IN OCCASIONAL SKIRMISHES, BUREAUCRATIC COMPETITION, AND OBLIGATORY AND OBSTRUCTIVE ACTIONS.

11. **KRS** THE WEAKNESSES IN THE KURDISH ADMINISTRATION OF THE REGION WILL GIVE SADDAM’S REGIME GREAT POWER TO INFLUENCE AND INFLIGT THE KURDS. ANY SUCCESSOR TO SADDAM’S REGIME WOULD ALSO LIKELY BE ABLE TO EXERT SIMILAR PRESSURES AND CONTROL.

12. **KRS** OVER THE NEXT YEAR SADDAM’S ACTIONS WILL BE INFLUENCED BY THE POSSIBLE EXPIRATION OF THE PROVIDE COMFORT-TURKISH AGREEMENT ON 31 DECEMBER. THE CURRENT PRESENCE OF UN AND NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN NORTHERN IRAQ AND PROVIDE COMFORT FORCES IN TURKEY PROVIDE SOME RESTRAINTS ON SADDAM’s ACTIVITIES. IRAQ REMAINS
RELATIVELY QUIESCENT, AS SEEMS LIKELY DURING THE INCLEMENT WEATHER, THE STATUS QUO IN THE NORTH IS LIKELY TO PERSIST AT LEAST THROUGH THE WINTER, ALTHOUGH OCCASIONAL LOCALIZED FLAREUPS OF FIGHTING ARE ALMOST CERTAIN. CONDITIONS THAT COULD LEAD TO A DECISION BY SADDAM TO CONDUCT A DELIBERATE OFFENSIVE IN THE SPRING WOULD INCLUDE:
- A PERCEPTION BY SADDAM THAT INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION IS NOT FOCUSED ON THE KURDISH ISSUE.
- CONTINUED OR INCREASED KURDISH UNREST, OR THE PERCEPTION OF IMMINENT UNREST.
- CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO CONTROL CENTRAL IRAQ AND TO EXTEND ITS AUTHORITY NORTHWARD.
14. (S//NF) UNLESS THESE CONDITIONS ARE MET, BAGHDAD WILL BE UNLIKELY TO ORDER A SPRING OFFENSIVE. AT SOME POINT, SADDAM WILL WANT TO REASSERT FULL CONTROL OF THE NORTH, BUT PROBABLY HOPES THAT ECONOMIC PRESSURE AND THE THREAT OF MASSIVE FORCE WILL BE ENOUGH TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL. ALTHOUGH BAGHDAD HAS GRANTED A MEASURE OF DE FACTO AUTONOMY TO THE KURDISH AREA, IT IS UNLIKELY TO FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH THIS SITUATION OVER THE LONG TERM. THE KURDS THEMSELVES WILL OBVIOUSLY PLAY A KEY ROLE IN WHETHER CIRCUMSTANCES ARE SUFFICIENT TO PROVOKE SADDAM TO ATTACK, PARTICULARLY IN TERMS OF THEIR ABILITY TO COOPERATE AMONGST THEMSELVES AND OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THEY ARE WILLING AND ABLE TO COOPERATE WITH BAGHDAD.