



Executive Memorandum

214 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002-4999 • (202) 546-4400 • <http://www.heritage.org>

No. 725

March 1, 2001

SALVAGE U.N. SANCTIONS ON IRAQ'S MILITARY

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Ten years after the Persian Gulf War, Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein poses a growing threat to the peace and stability of the Middle East. Despite unprecedented international sanctions against his regime, he has strengthened his position in recent years. He halted the United Nations arms inspections in 1998; he increased illegal oil exports; and he waged an effective propaganda offensive against the U.N. economic sanctions that eroded international support for containing Iraq. There is growing concern that heightened Arab-Israeli tensions, Saddam's rising prestige in the Arab world, and high oil prices will enable Baghdad to undermine sanctions even further.

Secretary of State Colin Powell, who pledged to "re-energize sanctions," met recently with leaders from Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Syria on his first diplomatic mission to the region. They discussed tightening sanctions against Iraq's military programs in exchange for loosening restrictions on the civilian economy. This approach makes sense as long as it is accompanied by greater international cooperation to enforce restrictions on Iraq's military, curb Iraqi oil smuggling, target sanctions against Iraqi leaders, and provide support to the Iraqi opposition movement.

Baghdad's End Run. Saddam, who survived numerous clashes with two previous Presidents, quickly moved to challenge President George W. Bush with increasingly bold efforts to shoot down U.S. and British warplanes patrolling the southern no-fly zone. The Bush Administration responded

on February 16 with air strikes against Iraqi air defense radar and command-and-control centers. By striking outside the no-fly zone for the first time in two years, President Bush signaled that he will not be bound by the self-imposed constraints of the Clinton Administration. The Bush Administration also is increasing U.S. support for the Iraqi opposition, which soon will receive \$29 million in U.S. aid. This down payment, after eight years of neglect by the Clinton Administration, indicates that the United States finally is getting serious about ousting Saddam's regime rather than merely containing it.

The most immediate issue facing the new Administration is how to salvage sanctions against Iraq. The U.N. economic sanctions imposed after the Gulf War are unraveling as international support for them wanes. Saddam won a propaganda victory by blaming the sanctions for the misery of the Iraqi people, even though his regime bears full responsibility for their predicament. The U.N. would have lifted the sanctions long ago if Saddam had fulfilled his obligation to dismantle his missiles and programs for building weapons of mass destruction. Saddam has spent scarce Iraqi funds to build palaces and

Produced by the
Kathryn and Shelby
Cullom Davis Institute
for International Studies

Published by
The Heritage Foundation
214 Massachusetts Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C.
20002-4999
(202) 546-4400
<http://www.heritage.org>



This paper, in its entirety, can be
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rebuild his military, rather than providing for his people. Moreover, Baghdad has been caught red-handed trying to export food and medicine meant for Iraqis to earn foreign currency for other purposes.

Nevertheless, a growing number of states are pushing the U.N. Security Council to lift the sanctions, ostensibly for humanitarian reasons. Security Council members Russia, China, and France favor lifting the sanctions to recoup the billions of dollars that Iraq owes them and to gain access to its oil and markets. Last November, Syria opened an oil pipeline to enable Iraq to export up to 150,000 barrels of oil per day outside the framework of the U.N. oil-for-food program. Egypt, Jordan, and Syria recently negotiated free trade pacts with Baghdad, and many Middle Eastern and European countries have eased restrictions on travel to Iraq.

Strengthening Military Sanctions. The Bush Administration is coming under increasing pressure to abandon the faltering U.N. sanctions against Iraq. It is reviewing U.S. policy toward Iraq to find a way to rebuild flagging international support for the sanctions by making them less onerous for the Iraqi people and targeting them more precisely against Saddam's regime and military power. To salvage the key elements of the sanctions at a time of eroding support, the Bush Administration should work to revamp the sanctions to reduce their impact on Iraqi civilians while maintaining restrictions on Saddam's capacity to threaten his neighbors and his own people. In negotiations with Iraq's neighbors and the members of the U.N. Security Council, the Bush Administration should agree to the lifting of sanctions on the Iraqi civilian economy only in exchange for sustained international cooperation to:

- **Tighten long-term controls over Iraq's military imports.** Iraq should be prohibited from importing arms, military equipment, and technology or material that could be used in its missile or weapons of mass destruction programs. The U.N. also should set up Sanctions Assistance Missions to monitor imports at major border crossings.

- **Curb Iraqi oil smuggling.** To punish countries that help Iraq export oil outside of the U.N. oil-for-food program, every U.N. member state should cut off foreign aid, loans, and arms sales to those countries. Washington should encourage Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to offer subsidized oil to Jordan, Turkey, and Syria to offset the loss of low-cost Iraqi oil.
- **Target sanctions against Iraqi leaders.** The U.S. and its allies should work to prohibit foreign travel by Iraq's top leaders and freeze their foreign bank accounts and assets to make clear that the international community considers Saddam's regime to be an outlaw government.
- **Support the Iraqi opposition.** Ultimately, the only way to protect the human rights and welfare of the Iraqi people and ease international concerns about Iraq's efforts to obtain weapons of mass destruction is to overthrow Saddam. The United States should work with Iraq's neighbors to train, equip, and arm Iraqis opposed to Saddam, helping them to build a broad-based provisional government that eventually could be established on liberated Iraqi territory to challenge his regime directly.

Conclusion. In addition to gaining greater international cooperation in blocking Saddam's military efforts, the Bush Administration must vigilantly guard against Iraqi aggression. If Saddam provokes another crisis, Washington should be ready to conduct robust air strikes to damage what Saddam values most: the Republican Guard, Iraq's missile and weapons of mass destruction programs, and the internal security forces that prop up his regime. Finally, these policies must be integrated with a coherent long-term strategy to rebuild a coalition of Iraq's neighbors, eventually including Iran, that will contain Saddam's military threat and support a broad, pluralistic, democratic Iraqi opposition movement to oust him.

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