

CSIS

Center for Strategic and International Studies

1800 K Street N.W.

Washington, DC 20006

(202) 775-3270

(To comment: Acordesman@aol.com)

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Saddam’s Last Circle: The Core Forces Likely to Protect Saddam in the “Battle of Baghdad”

Anthony H. Cordesman

Arleigh A. Burke Chair for Strategy

Center for Strategic and International Studies

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Creating a “Loyal” Command Structure

It seems likely that Saddam will try to put up at least some resistance throughout the country, but it is clear that his main defense will come in the Baghdad area, and that there are serious questions about the willingness of the regular army to fight a last battle of attrition, and even requiring the loyalty of some elements of the Republican Guard.

Nevertheless, Saddam has powerful tool to use in ensuring that he has some sort of final circle to defend him. Saddam Hussein is the Supreme armed forces Commander. The Special Republican Guard reports directly to him through his younger son, as does the President’s Special Security Committee. He chairs Defense Council of key loyalists, including the Minister of Defense, Minister of the Interior, and. Armed Forces Commander. The Chief of the General Staff is head of the armed forces headquarters and combined service staff. Each of the four service headquarters are located in Baghdad, as is the headquarters of the military intelligence elements and each reports upwards through the Combined service Staff. Armed Forces Commander and Minister of Defense.

Iraqi forces are under the command of loyalists to the regime. These include General Sultan Hashim al-Ubaydi, the Minister of Defense, and General Ibrahim Abd Al-Satter Muhammad al-Tikriti, the Chief of Staff.

While this command structure is highly centralized, Saddam set up four regional commands at the time of Desert Fox in 1998, each of which was placed under one of his most dedicated supporters. These regional commands are likely to reappear in some form in the course of any US-British attack. They included:

- ***The Southern Region***, which included the governates of Basra, Dhikar, Misan, and Waset under Saddam's cousin General Ali Hassabn al Majid.
- ***The Northern Region***, which was under Qusay, and covered the three Kurdish governates of Sulaimaniya, Arbil, and Dohuk plus the northern governate of Mosul.
- ***The Central Euphrates Region***, which was largely Shi'ite and included Kerbala, Babylon, Najaf, Quadisiya, and Muthanna. It was commanded by Muhammed Hamza al Zubeidi, an RCC member and Deputy Prime Minister.
- ***The Central Region*** including Baghdad, Saladin, Anbar, and Diyala, under Defense Minister Ahmed Sultan.

Saddam not only is likely to create similar regional commands in the event of war, he is likely to use the civil intelligence and security forces to attempt to hold on to each major urban area and region as well as create a core defense in Baghdad. Saddam must know that even limited local resistance could help force the US to disperse its forces, while successful urban resistance in a number of areas could confront the US with much more serious problems in urban warfare. He also must know that large elements of the Iraqi Army might not be loyal if he did not maintain control over the key regions and towns and cities as long as possible.

The Loyalty of the Iraqi Manpower Base

The loyalty of Iraq's overall manpower pool will clearly be a problem. Iraq has considerable potential for popular mobilization. Iraq has a reserve pool of some 650,000, and a large pool of annual conscripts. The CIA estimates Iraq's population at over 24 million, with over 5 million males of ages 14 years or less, and 6.1 million males between 15 and 49, of which 3.4 million are fit for military service. Some 274,000 males enter military service each year. It has the ability to include over 100,000 men from the security services and police forces in some military or paramilitary roles, and has at least lightly armored combat elements in each of its three main civilian security and intelligence services. It also has a popular force called Saddam's Fedayeen, and a youth corp that receives some form of military training.

Serious questions do exist, however, about the effectiveness of any such mobilization. Iraq has small arms enough to equip several hundred thousand men for light infantry warfare, and to play a limited role in urban warfare. It does not, however, have enough heavy weapons to properly equip its pre-build-up forces.

It is also far from clear how motivated any Iraqi reserve and popular forces will be. Saddam Hussein has spent the last decade dealing with repeated problems in his armed forces, and has had to become more selective in the recruitment and promotion of the men in the regular army heavy divisions and Republican Guard. Iraq also has deep ethnic divisions.

The CIA estimates that Iraq's current population has major ethnic divisions: Arab 75%-80%, Kurdish 15%-20%, Turkoman, Assyrian or other 5%. It also has major religious divisions: Muslim 97% (Shi'a 60%-65%, Sunni 32%-37%), Christian or other 3%. The fact that a relatively small Sunni Arab elite rules oppressively over a majority of Shi'ites and Kurds (58%-76% of the total population) has long led to ethnic clashes with hostile Kurdish and Shi'ite elements. Even the Sunni Arab part of the population is divided, and Saddam's main loyalists have a rural tribal rather than urban character, in a country where even "loyal" tribal elements have sometimes turned against Saddam.

It is important to note that Saddam Hussein's Popular Army was essentially worthless during the Iraq-Iraq War, as were units called up out of Ba'ath Cadres from the civilian elements of the government. Saddam has also faced serious Kurdish and Shi'ite uprisings after the Gulf War. Some 12%-15% of Iraq's population is now in the Kurdish security zone, and Saddam still has major problems in parts of the Shi'ite south. At the same time, no major Shi'ite or Kurdish conscript element of the regular army defected during the Iran-Iraq or Gulf Wars.

A number of experts have also suggested that Saddam will put large cadres of intelligence, security, and Republican Guard personnel into urban areas in civilian dress and intermingle them with popular forces to both ensure that the popular forces will fight and make it impossible for US and British forces

The Regular Army and Republican Guards

The International Institute of Strategic Studies and Jane's estimate that the Iraqi army could still can deploy some 350,000 to 375,000 men, organized into seven corps, with two Republican Guards corps and five regular army corps in mid 2002. It since seems to have mobilized additional reservists, while removing some suspect manpower. Details, however, are not available.

Iraqi Major Combat Unit Strength

These forces include:

- Six Republican Guards divisions (3 armored, 1 mechanized, and 2 infantry)
- Four Special Republican Guards brigades as part of a complex 14 battalion force structure designed to protect Saddam and the regime.
- A regular army with some 16 divisions, (while 11 are relatively low-grade infantry divisions, 3 are armored divisions and 3 are mechanized divisions.
- The regular army also has five commando and two special forces brigades.
- A five wing army aviation component with 2 fixed-wing and 21 helicopter squadrons.

The Deployment of Army and Security Elements

Iraq is carrying out redeployments in response to the US and British build-up, but US experts indicate that Iraqi land forces have a total of thirteen divisions in the north and northeast, four divisions in central Iraq, and six divisions south of An Najaf. There are also four independent brigades: the 65th Special Forces Brigade, the 66th Special Forces Brigade, the 68th Special Forces Brigade, the 440th Marine Brigade. The Republican Guards had a total of three armored divisions deployed in the vicinity of Baghdad—one near Taji, one near Baghdad, and one near As Suwayrah.ⁱ All Republican Guards divisions are located above the 32-degree line. Several additional Republican Guards divisions are located around Baghdad to play a major role in internal security. Several more Republican Guards divisions were located north of Baghdad closer to the Kurdish area.ⁱⁱ

The Regular Army

The Chief of Staff of the regular army is general Abd al Waheed Shenan al Robatt. The regular army has the following force structure and normal deployments. Its infantry divisions are of low quality and may well either be paralyzed or even defect. Its regular heavy divisions, however, have fought well in the past, proved loyal during the Iran-Iraq War, and many units retreated effectively during the Gulf War and uprisings that followed.

So far, the regular army has not carried out the same degree of systematic dispersals as the Republican Guards and security forces, but elements of the heavy regular forces might well retreat successfully into the Baghdad area unless US airpower was able to cut them off from road access. Some might also be willing to fight urban warfare in Saddam's "final circle. It is pure speculation at this point as to what elements might do this and they are far more likely to be individual brigades, regiments, and battalions towards the end, rather than whole divisions. Nevertheless, some role for elements of the regular army units shown in bold italics is possible.

Regular Army Forces in Northern Iraq

- **The 1st Corps is headquartered at Kirkuk and the 5th Corps at Mosul.** They guard the Turkish border area and deploy on the edge of the Kurdish enclave, and guard the

oilfields in the north. They have a total of 8 divisions, but only two are heavy mechanized divisions.

- **The 1st Corps** has its headquarters at Khaleed Camp (al Rashid Command Center) in Kirkuk City. It includes the 2nd Infantry Division headquartered at Alrabee, *the 5th Mechanized division headquartered* at Shuwan, the 8th Infantry Division headquartered at Shuwan, and the 38th Infantry Division headquartered at Quader Karam.
- **The 5th Corps** has its headquarters at Alsalamia Camp (Amouria Command Center) in Mosul. It has units defending the border area with Syria and Turkey as well as covering other parts of the north. It includes the *1st Mechanized Division headquartered at Makhmur*, the 4th Infantry Division headquartered at Bashiqa Maonten, the 7th Infantry Division headquartered at Alton Kopri Castle, and the 16th Infantry Division headquartered near the Saddam Dam and Mosul.

Regular Army Forces in Eastern Iraq

- **The 2nd Corps** is headquartered at the Mansouria Alabal Camp (Al Yarmouk Command Center) in Deyala, and is deployed east of Baghdad to defend against Iran or any attack by Iranian-backed Iraqi opposition forces. It includes the *3rd Armored Division headquartered at Jalawia*, the 15th Infantry Division headquartered at Amerli, and *the 34th Infantry Division headquartered* near Khanaqin

Regular Army Forces in Southern Iraq

The Army has two corps that play a major role in securing Shi'ite areas and suppressing Shi'ite dissidents. They have a total of six divisions and two are heavy armored divisions:

- **The 3rd Corps** is headquartered in the Nasseria area, and is positioned near the Kuwaiti border. It includes the *6th Armored Division headquartered near Majnoon* and Al Nashwa, the 11th Infantry Division headquartered at Al Naserria, and the *51st Mechanized Division headquartered at Zubair*. These forces might retreat into the so-called Sunni triangle in the Baghdad area in the event of a US-British attack
- **The 4th Corps** is headquartered at Al Amara, and defends the border with Iran. It includes the *10th Armored Division headquartered near Al Teab and Al Amarra*, the 14th Infantry Division headquartered south of Al Amara, and the 18th Infantry Division headquartered near Al Amara and Al Musharah.

The Republican Guards

The Republican Guard has some 60,000 to 70,000 men. It is under the supervision of Qusay Hussein and is commanded by Staff General Ibrahim Abdel Satter Muhammed al Tikriti.

Once again, significant elements could be defeated or paralyzed before they can retreat into the greater Baghdad defenses. Some elements could defect, and it is more likely that those willing to fight in Saddam's final circle will be individual brigades, regiments, and battalions rather than entire divisions. The units most likely to contribute to such a battle are shown in bold italics, but this is even more speculative than the unit identifications should for the regular army.

- ***The Northern or 1st Corps of the Republican Guards*** can act to defend against Iran and Turkey, operate against the Kurds, and defend the greater Baghdad area and Tikrit. It is headquartered in Tikrit and in the Al Rashedia area of Baghdad (allah Akbar Command Center).
- The Northern Corps includes, ***the Al Nida (Al Nedaa) Armored Division near Bagubah***, the 2nd Baghdad Infantry Division at Maqloob Maontin-Mosul, and the Al Abed (Al Abid) Infantry Division at Kirkuk-Khalid Camp.
- ***The 1st Adnan Mechanized Division has been moved south from Mosul to a screening position in the center located north of Tikrit.***
- ***The Southern or 2nd Corps of the Republican Guards*** is headquartered at Al Hafreia (Alsuwera Camp) and the Al Fateh al Mubin Command Center. It helps defend against Iran in the south, as well as any US-led attack, and acts as a deterrent force to suppress any Shi'ite uprising. It is commanded by Major General Mahmoud Ali al Lihaiby.
- The ***al Madina al Munawara Armored Division is located at as-Suwayrah*** and plays a key role in defending the outer Baghdad area. It has three brigades: 2nd and 10th Armored and 14th Mechanized. It is the Special Republican Guards, however, that provide protection and defense within the city.
- Its other forces include the ***Nebuchadnezzar (Nabu Khuth Nusser) Infantry Division at Al Husseinia-al Kutt, the Hamurabi Mechanized Division in the al-Taji area.***

The Special Republican Guards or Al-Haris al-Jamhuri al-Khas

The hard core of organized, trained combat strength in Saddam's final circle is likely to be the Special Republican Guards. They have four brigades, which are located largely within the Baghdad area organized to defend the regime. The Special Republican Guard has four infantry/motorized brigades with 14 battalions, an armored brigade, and an air defense command with elements to secure Baghdad's ground-based air defenses against any coup attempt.

The Special Republican Guard is headed by Qusay Hussein, and its formal commander is Major general Kheir-Allah Wahees Omar al-Nassiri. Major General Namiq Hassan coordinates operations between the special Republican Guards and Republican Guards. The main headquarters is at Al-Nisoor square in Baghdad.

It serves as a praetorian guard, protecting Presidential sites and escorting Saddam Hussein on travels within Iraq. It has a total active strength of about 12,000 to 15,000, but some sources claim it can mobilize to 20,000 to 25,000. It is the only force stationed in central Baghdad and in the Republican Palace, although these are also brigades of the Special Security Service (SSO), the Iraqi Intelligence Service (IIS), and secret police in the city. British intelligence reports that it has played a role in securing WMD warheads and maintains control of a few launchers.

The First Brigade is headquartered at Hayy Al-Qadisiyeh in Baghdad

It has five battalions, including ones stationed in the Republican palace and at Saddam International Airport. Additional battalions, including plain-clothes units, are assigned to protect

Saddam while he is in transit, and are assigned to guard other palaces and facilities. According to Jane's:

- The First Battalion protects Saddam in movement.
- The Second Battalion deploys men on foot to guard Saddam's farms and places near Baghdad's Saddam International Airport.
- The Fifth Battalion is based inside the Republican Palace and guards it and the National Assembly. It guards the Presidential House in the palace compound and has training from the SSO. Elements travel with Saddam at all times and is commanded by friends and relatives of Saddam.
- The Seventh Battalion provides plain cloths bodyguards and protects Saddam's private residences in Baghdad, Basra, Mosul. Falajua, Jebel Makhool, and other locations.
- The Eighth Battalion protects Baghdad's Saddam International Airport.

The Second Brigade is headquartered at the Al Rashid Military Base

It has combat-experience elements outside Baghdad and in the Mosul area.

- The Fourth Battalion is a significant combat unit that protects Saddam's palace in Makhool in the Beiji area that is north of Baghdad.
- The Sixth Battalion protects the palaces in the Mosul area.
- The Eleventh Battalion guards the approaches to Baghdad from the direction of Taji.
- The Fourteenth Battalion guards the approaches to Baghdad from the direction of Salam Pak and Kut.
- The Fifteenth Battalion is part of the western defenses of Baghdad.

The Third Brigade is headquartered at Taji

It has four combat battalions to defend Taji and the approaches to Baghdad.

- The Third Battalion is a rapid reaction combat force.
- The Ninth Battalion protects the palaces and road approaches in the Tharthar area.
- The Tenth Battalion is a combat unit in Taji that protects Baghdad from the direction of the north and northwest.
- The Twelfth Battalion reinforces the defense of Baghdad in the direction of Taji.

The Fourth Brigade is motorized and is located at Al Harithiyeh and Al Quadisiyeh

It defends the southern outskirts of Baghdad. It has two regiments with T-72 tanks and BMP-1 and BMP-2 armored fighting vehicles.

The Armor Command (Fourth Armored Brigade)

This unit has T-72s, BMP-1 and BMP-2s, and has two armored regiments. The First (Adnan) Regiment is located at the Abu-Ghraib Camp, and the Second Regiment is located near the Al-Makasib village. They provide armored forces to defend the major entrance points to the city.

There is also an intelligence bureau and a,

Air Defense Command

It has two regiments and three independent batteries; The First Regiment defends the International Airport and has elements near Tharthar Lake and Radwanayah. The Second Regiment defends key locations in Baghdad. The batteries cover key locations near Door, Tikrit, and Kirkuk.

Military Intelligence and Security Forces

Iraq has extensive military intelligence and internal security forces, and they are designed to force military units to be loyal to Saddam to the last. Their success may be marginal in many areas, but some of these forces have combat elements, and many may feel their survival is tied to that of the regime and be willing to fight for the last. They include”

The Military Intelligence Service (MIS), or Al Istikhbarat al Askariyya

This force has a 3,000-6,000-man element with a major complex in the Aladhamia area of Baghdad. It also has a base at the Al Rashid Camp, and sectoral commands in Kirkuk, Mosul, and Basra, plus a special regional command for Baghdad.

- The Special Branch of the MIS is organized to carry out covert operations, infiltrate opposition movements, and provide internal security operations within the military. Its Unit 999 penetrates deeply into the Kurdish enclave.
- There is an Opposition Battalion organized to operate in various elements of the Iraqi opposition. The First Battalion covers Iran, the Second covers Saudi Arabia, the Third covers Israel, the Fourth covers Turkey, and the Fifth is a specialized unit for riverine and mine operations.

British intelligence reports that its main functions are ensuring the loyalty of the army's officer corps and gathering military intelligence from abroad. But it is also involved in foreign operations, including assassinations.

The heads of Al-Istikhbarat al-Askariyya have not been immediate relatives of Saddam. Saddam appointed, Sabir 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Duri as head during the 1991 Gulf War. After the Gulf War he was replaced by Wafiq Jasim al-Samarrai. After Samarrai, Muhammad Nimah al-Tikriti headed Al-Istikhbarat al-Askariyya in early 1992 then in late 1992 Fanar Zibin Hassan al-Tikriti was appointed to this post.

These shifting appointments are part of Saddam's policy of balancing security positions. By constantly shifting the directors of these agencies, no one can establish a base in a security organization for a substantial period of time. No one becomes powerful enough to challenge the President

The Military Security Service, or al Amn al Askariyya (Askari)

This is a 6,000-man force that operates throughout the armed forces and, reports directly to the Presidential Palace, and deals with subversion within the military forces. The MIS runs parallel internal security operations. British intelligence reports that it was established as an independent entity in 1992, its function is to detect disturbances in the military. The *Amn* was initially headquartered in the Bataween district of Baghdad. In 1990 *Amn* moved to a new headquarters in the Al Baladiat area of the city, with the Bataween building becoming the agency's main prison.

The Secret Police also has a number of additional facilities and office buildings. *Amn* maintains a presence in every town and village, with personnel stationed in civilian police stations across Iraq -- normally the "ordinary" police are on the ground floor and the Secret Police on the second floor. The Security branch is responsible for monitoring and countering dissent within Amn, and the Military Brigade provides rapid intervention para-military capabilities - the Brigade commander was executed in August 1996 for alleged involvement in a coup attempt. *Amn* is currently headed by Staff Major General Taha al Ahbabi, who previously headed the Military Security Service and served as the head of the secret service section of the *Mukhabarat*. As with many other senior Iraqi leaders, he is a native of Saddam's hometown of Tikrit.

Iraq's Capability for Popular Mobilization

It is unlikely that Iraq can mobilize the Iraqi people in mass, even in "loyal" areas, but Iraq probably can mobilize significant elements to supplement its military forces, and it may be able to use them to create serious problems in terms of urban warfare.

These popular forces include an unknown number of Ba'ath Party loyalists. Almost all of these loyalists and officials are required to receive reserve military training, and many have had annual field training for some time.

Saddam has a significant tribal base, including his own al-Bu Nasser tribe, and citizens from the towns of Tikrit, Dur, Sharqat, Huwayja, Bayji, Samarra and Ramadi. They are located in what Ibrahim al-Marashi calls the Sunni Arab Triangle. Other major Sunni tribes and families that have a record of loyalty to the regime, and which play a key role in the intelligence and security forces, include the Dulaym, the Jubur (mixed Shi'a/Sunni) and the 'Ubayd tribes. There are also loyalist factions in the Duri and Samarra families. Some tribes, like the Jubur (Juburi) seem to have received arms and there are convincing reports of rising gun sales. Many of these tribal elements now live in Iraqi cities.

In addition, there are a number of popular forces that the regime might use:

Fedayeen Saddam (Saddam's Men of Sacrifice)

A force of up to 30,000-40,000 men, which was formed by Uday in 1995. Most are young men who border on a youth gang, with thugs of age 16 and up, but they are placed under a real Lt. General. All are urban and the force is centered in Baghdad. British intelligence reports that Saddam's Martyrs are composed of young militia press ganged from regions known to be loyal to Saddam.

It was founded by Saddam's son Uday in 1995, and started out as a force of some 10,000-15,000. In September 1996 Uday was removed from command of the *Fedayeen*. Uday's removal may have stemmed from an incident in March 1996 when Uday transferred sophisticated weapons

from Republican Guards to the *Saddam Fedayeen* without Saddam's knowledge. Control passed to Qusay, further consolidating his responsibility for the Iraqi security apparatus. According to reports, control of Saddam Hussein's personal militia was later passed back to his eldest son, Uday.

The deputy commander is Staff Lieutenant General Mezahem Saab Al Hassan Al-Tikriti. The unit reports directly to the Presidential Palace, rather than through the army command, and is responsible for patrol of borders and controlling or facilitating smuggling. They are supposed to help protect the President and Uday, and carry out much of the police's dirty work. The *Fedayeen Saddam* include a special unit known as the death squadron, whose masked members perform certain executions, including in victims' homes. The *Fedayeen* operate completely outside the law, above and outside political and legal structures.

Jerusalem or Al Quds Brigades

This is the Popular Army and intended to be a mass volunteer force, and has female as well as male units. Iraq claims as many as 7 million members, but even a nominal 1 million may be unrealistic. It is usually dismissed as a showpiece force used for propaganda purposes, but may have youth and other elements that would be loyal to Saddam in some areas. At least some of its members have been given rifles, mortars, RPGs, and light automatic weapons in largely Sunni areas.

Lions of Saddam (Eshbal or Ashbal Saddam)

A Hitler Youth-like paramilitary training structure for ages 10-16. No one knows how real this force is, or what role it might play in combat, but it cannot be totally dismissed. Young men are often loyal and all have Saddam as the leader during their entire lives.

National Defense Battalions

(Kurdish Jash or Militia Forces): Although it is scarcely a loyal force, there are still elements of what used to be a massive force of some 100,000 men in 250 battalions. There are still 1,000 man elements from two tribes with ties to Saddam, and which may have much to fear if the other Kurds take over: the Zibar and Herki. A few might flee to Baghdad and fight for Saddam, feeling they will be killed by a new regime.

Youth (Civil Defense) Force

There are reports t a so-called youth army was formed in 1999 to defend the cities, supposedly out of youths ages 12-17. It is unclear that such a force exists that is separate from the Lions of Saddam and Fedayeen Saddam, but Iraqi media coverage does show youths and adults being training and possibly armed for such a role.

Great Retaliation Force

The force is clearly far more a matter of propaganda than real. It was supposedly formed in November 1999 under Qusay to deal with the problem of the Kurdish threat and to limit any entry into non-Kurdish areas, but many reports indicate that this is a military contingency force using regular army units and Republican Guards, and has only limited armed popular forces –

including some Christian Arabs. A few might flee to Baghdad and fight for Saddam, feeling they will be killed by a new regime

Other Forces

There are other popular forces like the various tribal militias. These are less disciplined and well-structured, but they cannot be ignored, both in terms of urban warfare and rear area security. It is at least possible that some men might also join in the last defense from the paramilitary forces. These include:

National Police

Some 40,000 personnel that have elements of paramilitary forces with light weapons and light armored vehicles.

Frontier Guard

30,000-man mobile force, largely equipped with cross-country trucks.

Security Services that Might Support the Armed Forces and Help to Ensure Their Loyalty

It is dangerous to assume that US and British forces can count on uprisings, defections, and being treated as liberators. This may well happen in some areas, but Iraq has a 100,000-man security service and a 40,000-man police force which can help maintain loyalty and be used both to fight on their own and compel Iraqi civilians to do so.

The Presidential Secretariat:

The Presidential Secretariat has around 100 staff, which are drawn from the security agencies. The Secretariat is responsible for Saddam's personal security, as well as defense, security and intelligence issues. It is overseen by Saddam's personal secretary, Lieutenant General Abid Hamid Mahmud. Mahmud is Saddam's distant cousin and is the sheikh of both the Al-Bu-Nasir and Al-Khattab tribes. Mahmud is regarded by some as the real number two figure in the Iraqi leadership. He controls all access to Saddam - possibly with the exception of Qusay and Uday Hussein - and has the ability to override government decisions.

The National Security Council (*Al-Majlis Al-Amn Al-Qawni*):

Is headed by Saddam Hussein but usually chaired by his son Qusay Hussein, it oversees the work of all other security agencies. Membership in Majlis Al-Amn Al-Qawni includes chosen people from the;

- Iraqi Army
- Special Security Service
- General Intelligence Directorate
- Military Intelligence

- General Security Service
- Office of the Presidential Palace

The Majlis Al-Amn Al-Qawni, is headquartered at the Presidential Palace in Baghdad, and meets on a weekly basis. It has a Special Operations Room in the Presidential Palace, and some reports indicate it controls a small brigade that works closely with the Special Republican Guard or has direct control over an element of the Special Republican Guard.

Special Security Committee

Qusay Hussein is the deputy chairman of the Special Security Committee of the Iraqi National Security Council that was created in 1996 as part of the President's office. The Committee membership includes:

- Tahir Jalil Habbush al-Tikriti, the director of the Public Security Directorate
- Dahham al-Tikriti, Director of the Iraqi Intelligence Service –Al Mukhabarat
- Abid Hamid Mahmud, the president's personal secretary.
- Faris 'Abd-al-Hamid al-'Ani, the director general of the Presidential office

This special body also includes representatives of the Republican Guard. The Committee is supported by over 2,000 staff. The staff is drawn from the Republican Guard, or the Special Guard, and the intelligence services. Their main task is preventing the United Nations inspectors from uncovering information, documents, and equipment connected with weapons of mass destruction. They are recruited for this specific mission and chosen from the most efficient and loyal units.

The work is divided between two sections, each of which has a staff of about 1,000:

- The first section focuses on the daily work of the UN monitoring commission, including sites to be visit and inspected, escorting UN inspectors, preventing them from carrying out their mission effectively.
- The second section conceals documents, equipment, and materials and moves them about from one location to another. Several facilities have been especially built for collecting and hiding such selected material. This section is responsible for material that is imported through "special channels" as part of the program of rebuilding the strategic military arsenal, including chemical and biological weapons as well as missiles and associated technology.

The Special Protection Apparatus or *Jihaz al-Hamaya al-Khas: (Himaya)*

This is a small unit charged with protecting Presidential Offices, Council of Ministers and the Regional and National Commands of the Ba'ath Party. It is the only organization responsible for providing bodyguards to the very top of the regime. Approximately 40 personal bodyguards are responsible for Saddam's immediate security. It is commanded by 2-5 men who are "companions" of Saddam or "murafiqin." One element protects Saddam's palaces and homes another protects Saddam's movements. Most are Tikritis or from Saddam's tribe.

The exact role of this group relative to the Special Republican Guard and other security services is unclear. Saddam does, however, have a very sophisticated protection system.

There are several factors to be considered:

- Saddam is always under deep cover. He moves constantly, has a wide range of shelters and facilities, and often conceals himself in buildings or facilities outside palace compounds.
- Saddam is the center of such security measures, but his key advisors and supporters also have such protection. So do both his sons. These measures have been tightened up and made more sophisticated since the attempt on Uday's life.
- While Saddam heads the government, there is a large, sheltered power structure and there are mixed chains of command with shelters, landline and optical fiber systems, and dispersal shelters and facilities. Going deep goes far beyond Saddam.
- Reports Saddam has gone into hiding, and only his younger son Qusay will communicate with him, would be completely different from any previous wartime command procedures used by Saddam, and are probably based on half facts at best. Saddam normally has operated out of a variety of shelters with a small coterie of advisors, and visiting officials and military have gone to secondary centers that Saddam moves to or out of at will. Saddam regularly holds command reviews in sheltered areas, just as Hitler did.
- Qusay's role tends to be misunderstood because he runs the National Security Council on a day-to-day basis. This is not a body like our NSC. It is a group staffed by the SSO that coordinate intelligence, security, and the Special Republican Guards. Military command moves through a separate channel.
- It is important that Saddam has set up four regional commands to devolve power in wartime, but this is only part of the story. Each of the 15 governates not under Kurdish control, and each major city also has limited authority to function if Baghdad loses control. Landlines and optical fiber systems give communications back up that do not emit signals that can be detected and targeted.
- Saddam sometimes uses doubles, and his bodyguard and the Special Republican Guards create false movement patterns, convoys, and locations -- trying to make Saddam appear where he isn't with false signal and communication.
- While the media focuses on Iraqi palace compounds and main headquarters buildings, there are some 23 ministries with facilities in Baghdad, civil facilities that almost certainly have shelters, and some four major intelligence centers.
- The Special Republican Guards alone have seven major facilities and some 40-70 buildings and dispersal locations. No one can be sure which ones might high Saddam.
- Iraq has been building shelters and covert facilities with considerable fervor even since the Israeli attacks on Osirak. More than 20 years. They are now spread broadly over Baghdad and environs, and many seem to be connected by tunnels.
- Iraq learned in the late 1970s to build the shell and roofs of buildings to conceal the depth of their basements and nature of the structure from satellites.

- Iraq went to the former Yugoslavia for shelter techniques because Warsaw Pact shelters were known to be much better than NATO ones, and the Yugoslav defense strategy was based on building even better concealed dispersed shelters to ride out a Russian attack.
- Iraq has long used landlines to avoid giving signals that intelligence can trace and began to make extensive use of optical fiber communications years ago. Complex nets exist in Baghdad.
- Desert Fox (1998) showed the Iraqis the US could hit almost anything precisely, but it also showed the US that it often hit empty buildings and could not locate Iraqi dispersal facilities. It is unclear how much Iraq and the US have learned since that time.

Special Security Service (SSS), Special Security Organization (SSO) or Amn al Khass

Controlled by Saddam's son, Qusay, who supervises the Special Bureau, the Political Bureau and the Administration Bureau, the agency's own military brigade, and the Special Republican Guard.

It is an ultra loyal force that has grown from a cadre of around 500 to a force of about 2,000-5,000 men that was established in the mid-1980s. It is recruited from loyal tribes around Tikrit, Hawiija, and Samarra, such as Saddam's own tribe, the Abu Nasr. It is headquartered in Palestine Street in Baghdad. According to most reports, it is the key security force and plays a major role in controlling the actions of the Republican Guard and particularly the Special Republican Guard. It is also reported to be in charge of the surveillance of General Intelligence, Military Intelligence, Military Security, and General Security. It is the most critical and powerful security agency.

Its Security Bureau has a Special Office, to assure loyalty in the SSS, and there is an Office of Presidential Facilities that guards such facilities through the Jihaz al-Hamaya al-Khas (The Special Protection Apparatus). It is responsible for guarding the Presidential Offices, Council of Ministers, National Council, and Ba'ath Party Regional and National Command of the Ba'ath Party, and provides bodyguards for Iraq's leaders.

The British White Paper of February 3, 2000 stated that the SSO is responsible for

- The security of the President and of presidential facilities;
- Supervising and checking the loyalty of other security services;
- Monitoring government ministries;
- Supervising operations against Iraqi Kurds and Shias; and
- Securing Iraq's most important military industries, including WMD.

It also stated that the Al-Amn al-Khas is nebulous and highly secretive and operates on a functional, rather than a geographical basis. Its military brigade serves as a rapid response unit independent of the military establishment or Special Republican Guard. In the event of a coup attempt from within the regular military or Republican Guard, Special Security can easily call up

the Special Republican Guard for reinforcements as this unit is also under its control. There are two key bureaus:

- **The Security Bureau:** The Security Bureau is divided into a Special Office, which monitors the Special Security agency itself to assure loyalty among its members. If necessary, it conducts operations against suspect members. The Office of Presidential Facilities, another unit of the Security Bureau, guards these places through Jihaz al-Hamaya al-Khas (The Special Protection Apparatus). It is charged with protecting the Presidential Offices, Council of Ministers, National Council, and the Regional and National Command of the Ba'ath Party, and is the only unit responsible for providing bodyguards to leaders.
- **The Political Bureau:** The Political Bureau collects and analyses intelligence and prepares operations against "enemies of the state." This unit keeps an extensive file on all Iraqi dissidents or subversives. Under the Political Bureau, the Operations Office implements operations against these "enemies," including arrests, interrogations and executions. Another division is the Public Opinion Office, responsible for collecting and disseminating rumours on behalf of the state.

The operations of Special Security are numerous, particularly in suppressing domestic opposition to the regime. After its creation in 1984, Special Security thwarted a plot of disgruntled army officers, who objected to Saddam's management of the Iran-Iraq War. It pre-empted other coups such as the January 1990 attempt by members of the Jubur tribe to assassinate him.

It played an active role in crushing the March 1991 Shi'a rebellion in the south of Iraq. Along with General Intelligence, Special Security agents infiltrated the Kurdish enclave in the north of Iraq in August 1996, to hunt down operatives of the Iraqi opposition.

It serves as the central co-coordinating body between Military-Industrial Commission, Military Intelligence, General Intelligence, and the military in the covert procurement of the necessary components for Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

During the 1991 Gulf War, it was put in charge of concealing SCUD missiles and afterwards in moving and hiding documents from UNSCOM inspections, relating to Iraq's weapons programs.

It is also thought that Special Security is responsible for commercial trade conducted covertly in violation of UN sanctions. It seems to be responsible for arms and WMD component smuggling from abroad and for concealing Iraq's WMD efforts. It was a key target in Desert Fox, is believed to control the weapons of the Chemical Corps, manages recruiting for the Republican Guard, and manages key secure aspects of Iraq's military industries.

It staffs and runs the *National Security Council or al-Majlis al-Amn al-Qawmi*.

General Intelligence Directorate (GID) or Iraqi Intelligence Service (IID) or Mukhabarat

This is the organization Saddam used to take control over the Ba'ath Party and eventually the Iraqi state. It is currently directed by Tahir 'Abd al-Jalil al-Habbush. It provides security in the Ba'ath Party, monitors all organizations, monitors foreign embassies and studies, has counter-espionage elements, and has heavily infiltrated most Iraqi opposition groups. It also conducts

operations against Syria, Iran, Kuwait, Jordan, and other states, and could be a key source of operations against US and British forces or direct or proxy covert attacks on the US and Britain.

It has some 4,000 to 8,000 men, according to source. They are carefully screened to be ultra-loyalists, and now with strong ties to Qusay and a series of internal security Directorates plus Directorate 14 which is in charge of covert operations overseas and might organize any CBRN or "terrorist" attack outside Iraq. They are, however, likely to fight for Saddam in significant numbers in Baghdad, and act as stiffeners that try to force ordinary Iraqis and popular forces to fight for Saddam.

Key Functions of the Mukhabarat

British intelligence reports that Al-Mukhabarat is roughly divided into a department responsible for internal operations, coordinated through provincial offices, and another responsible for international operations, conducted from various Iraqi embassies.

Its internal activities include:

- Spying within the Ba'ath Party, as well as other political parties;
- Suppressing Shi'a, Kurdish and other opposition;
- Counter-espionage;
- Targeting threatening individuals and groups inside Iraq;
- Spying on foreign embassies in Iraq and foreigners in Iraq;
- Maintaining an internal network of informants.

Its external activities include

- Spying on Iraqi diplomats abroad;
- Collecting overseas intelligence;
- Supporting terrorist organizations in hostile regimes;
- Conducting sabotage, subversion, and terrorist operations against neighboring countries such as Syria and Iran;
- Murder of opposition elements outside of Iraq;
- Infiltrating Iraqi opposition groups abroad;
- Providing disinformation and exploitation of Arab and other media;
- Maintaining an international network of informants, using popular organizations as well such as the Union of Iraqi Students.

British intelligence reports that Al-Mukhabarat uses intelligence to target Iraqis .It forces Iraqis living abroad to work for Saddam by threatening dire consequences for relatives still inside Iraq. It is reported that an Iraqi cannot work for a foreign firm inside Iraq without also working for Al-Mukhabarat directly or as an informant. This includes those allowed to work with foreign media organizations. All Iraqis working with foreigners have to have a special permit that is not granted unless they work for Al-Mukhabarat. They carry out tests that include approaches to Iraqi officials with false information to see whether they report it to Baghdad or foreigners

Al-Mukhabarat manages Iraqi support of the coordinating operations with the Iranian opposition group, the Mojahedin-e Khalq and National Liberation Army elements based in Iraq. It was the key service to infiltrate the INA and defeat CIA efforts to use it in a coup, and worked with Mas'ud Barzani's Kurdish Democratic Party in planning the Iraqi Army advance into the Kurdish areas in 1996 and its purge of the PUK and INC elements in the Kurdish security zone.

It tracks and sometimes kills students and exiles abroad, and manipulates journalists. It is blamed for the April 1993 Iraqi attempt on President George Bush's life. Its role in assassinations is the reason its headquarters were struck by US cruise missiles in June 1993.

Organization of the Mukhabarat

There are district commands in Basra (South), Mosul (north), Ramadi (West), Karbala (East). It has a light brigade with light armor and heavy weapons. The details of the internal structure of the GID are uncertain. According to work by Ibrahim al-Marashi and Jane's Periscope, it is organized so that the following directorates might have an impact in ensuring popular loyalty or play some role in wartime in the last ditch defense of Baghdad or in some kind of act of covert attack or terrorism as Saddam nears his fall:

- Directorate 3: Surveillance directs the surveillance of suspected traitors and key personnel.
- Directorate 4: Secret Service: Places agents throughout the government in various agencies and is present in virtually every Iraqi embassy and many cover firms overseas. Has offices that deal with each major country in the world. Analyzes signal intelligence from the Al Hadi Project (See below).
- Directorate 5: Counterintelligence: Focuses on foreign intelligence operations like the US and Israel, but also on neighboring countries like Syria.
- Directorate 6: GID security: Handles internal security in the GID.
- Directorate 7: Detention and interrogation.
- Directorate 8: Forensics.
- Directorate 14: Special Operations: The unit is located near Salman Pak, about 20 kilometers south of Baghdad. It is responsible for covert operations abroad and is one of the largest elements of the GID. Agents are highly trained, with language and cultural training, and given training in cover attacks ranging from the use of bombs to assassination. Is believed to carry out joint operations against Iran with elements of the People's Mujahideen.
- Directorate 18: Iranian Affairs.
- Directorates 21 through 26 are responsible for monitoring various regional districts in Iraq.
- Directorate 21, the residency located in Baghdad, is in charge of security issues in the capital as well as issuing residence permits to foreigners in Iraq.
- Directorate 23, the Southern District based in Basra, conducts operations in the south of Iraq.

- Directorate 24, the Northern District, does the same in northern Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan. Based in Mosul, with an office in Kirkuk, it is responsible for infiltrating the opposition in Iraqi Kurdistan.
- Directorate 25, the Western District, is located in Ramadi and maintains a network of informants in Syria and Jordan.
- Directorate 26, the Eastern District, operates in the Karbala Governate.
- Directorate 28: MIO Security: Located at Palestine Street and responsible for the security of the Military Industrial Organization, and overseas security for both the overt operations of the MIO and individuals involved in covert purchasing and probable some aspects of Iraq's WMD programs.

It has shown it can enforce loyalty in various urban areas with consummate ruthlessness.

The General Security Services (GSS) or General Security Directorate (GSD) or al-Amn al-Amm

This is the oldest security service in the country and used to be part of the Ministry of Interior but now is an independent agency that reports directly to the Presidential Palace. It has about 8,000 men who monitor daily life in every town and village and has elements in every police station. It is headquartered in the al Baladiat area of Baghdad, and seems to be under the command of Major Mu'tamad Nima al-Tikriti.

It is the key force monitoring the day-to-day activities and loyalty of ordinary Iraqis. It is also a key force in terms of wiretapping, surveillance, tracking families and foreigners, and watching UN inspectors and virtually all press movements. It hires countless informants, and any media in Iraq will become acquainted with the GSS, either under the cloak of the Ministry of Information, as a helper, or often as a translator or apparent dissident. Many hotels used by foreigners have both GID and GSS staff.

It has, however, played an active paramilitary and covert role in helping to enforce security and run intelligence operations in Kurdish areas, and seems to have played a role in hiding WMD and missile components.

The Al-Amn Al-Aam supports the domestic counter-intelligence work of other agencies. As a policy, Saddam staffs key positions in Al-Amn Al-Aam with his relatives or other close members of his regime. In 1980, Saddam appointed 'Ali Hassan al-Majid, who would later be the architect of the regime's anti-Kurdish campaign, as its director to instill the ideology of the Ba'ath Party into the agency.

Al-Amn al-Aam was given more political intelligence responsibilities during the Iran-Iraq War. When Majid was put in charge of repressing the Kurdish insurrection in 1987, General 'Abdul Rahman al-Duri replaced him until 1991 when Saddam Hussein's half-brother, Sabawi Ibrahim al-Tikriti, (who had served as its deputy director prior to 1991) then became head of this agency.

In 1991, Saddam Hussein provided it with a paramilitary wing, *Quwat al-Tawari*, to reinforce law and order, although these units are ultimately under Al Amn al-Khas control. After the 1991 Gulf War, *Quwat al-Tawari* units were believed to be responsible for hiding Iraqi ballistic missile components. It also operates the notorious Abu Ghuraib prison outside of Baghdad, where many of Iraq's political prisoners are held.

Each neighborhood, every office and school every hotel and coffee shop has an officer assigned to cover it and one or more agents in it who report what is said and what is seen. Al-Amn Al-Aam runs a program of provocation where their agent in a coffee house or work place will voice dissident views and report on anyone who agrees with those views. An Al-Amn Al-Aam agent or officer will sometimes approach an Iraqi official pretending to recruit him for some opposition or espionage purpose and then arrest him if he does not report it. They also look for foreigners who might be breaking Iraqi law or seeking to stir up anti-regime feelings among native Iraqis.

Technically, it is illegal for an Iraqi official or military officer to talk to a foreigner without permission from a security officer.

Al Hadi Project or Project 858

The *Al Hadi* Project is the organization responsible for collecting, processing, exploiting and disseminating signals, communications and electronic intelligence. It is a small agency of about 800 that is unlikely to be actively involved in military operations, but which will monitor cell phones, and particularly any signals activity throughout Iraq. Though it reports directly to the Office of the Presidential Palace, *Al Hadi* is not represented on the National Security Council, and the intelligence it collects is passed on to other agencies for their use

Murafaqin or Companions of Saddam (also called the Special Protection Apparatus (Jihaz al-Himaya al-Khasa in other sources)

- A small, tribal, elite group of bodyguards at the Presidential Palace, most of who have some kind of family relationship. Most are members of Saddam's tribe, the al-Bu Nasir. The Special Location Group protects Saddam in all of his homes and his family. The Salih or Mobile Group protects him while moving. Will probably die for Saddam

The Ministry of Information

Its operations are fully integrated into Iraqi intelligence operations, including all contacts with the foreign media and press. It has many trained agents that appear in front of TV cameras or are trained to act like independent or semi-opposition voices in dealing with foreign reporters. Combat capability is likely to be non-existent.

The Ba'ath Party or Socialist Arab Resurrection Party or Hizb al-Ba'ath al-'Arab al-Ishtiraki

This is not a security service as such but uses its large group of members who hold positions in government, the military, virtually every profession and throughout the legal profession, and in communities and most educational institutions to monitor Iraqis, carry out propaganda activities, and use various benefits to tie Iraqis to the regime. It has a security element called the Amn al-Hizb (Party Security), to maintain party loyalty. Some might die to defend Saddam.

Emergency Force of the Governates

Each of the 15 governates still under Saddam's control is reported to have its own light brigade of roughly 1,000 men for internal security missions. It is conceivable that some might flee to Baghdad, believing their survival is a stake.

National Liberation Army or Mojahedin-e Khalq (MKO or MEK)

A force of Iranians based in Iraq under the command of the People's Mujahideen, which in the past was a violent left-wing Marxist movement in Iran and assassinated US personnel and officers. Its strength is unclear, but it has some 4,000-8,000 personnel, and Iraq has trained and equipped it to use some 250 T-54/T-55, and Chieftain tanks, other armored vehicles, and artillery.

The Tribal Chief's Bureau or *Maktab al-Shuyukh*

British intelligence reports that this bureau was created after the Gulf war as a vehicle for paying tribal leaders to control their people, spy on possible dissidents and provide arms to loyal tribesmen to suppress opposition. It is conceivable that some might flee to Baghdad, believing their survival is at stake.

Higher Committee for Monitoring the Inspection Teams

There is considerable doubt as to who might control Iraq's weapons of mass destruction during the fighting. Most experts feel it will be the SSO and Special Republican Guards, but it is possible that the group supposedly in charge of disarmament could play at least a limited role.

Secretary Powell stated on February 5, 2003 that Iraq had a high-level committee to monitor the inspectors who were sent in to monitor Iraq's disarmament -- not to cooperate with them, not to assist them, but to spy on them and keep them from doing their jobs. The committee reports directly to Saddam Hussein. It is headed by Iraq's Vice President, Taha Yasin Ramadan. Its members include Saddam Hussein's son, Qusay.

This committee also includes Lieutenant General Amir al-Sadi, an advisor to Saddam. General Sadi has been the Iraqi regime's primary point of contact for Dr. Blix and Dr. El Baradei. General Sadi publicly pledged in the fall of 2001 that Iraq was prepared to cooperate unconditionally with inspectors. However, Iraq's security organizations, as well as Saddam Hussein's own office, have been directed to hide all correspondence with the Organization of Military Industrialization. This is the organization that oversees Iraq's weapons of mass destruction activities. Saddam's son, Qusay, is known to have ordered the removal of all prohibited weapons from Saddam's numerous palace complexes. Iraqi government officials, members of the ruling Baath Party and scientists have since hidden prohibited items in their homes. Other key files from military and scientific establishments have been placed in cars that are being driven around the countryside by Iraqi intelligence agents to avoid detection. Secretary Powell has stated that, "Sadi's job is not to cooperate; it is to deceive, not to disarm, but to undermine the inspectors; not to support them, but to frustrate them and to make sure they learn nothing. This committee must also have the function of trying to manage concealment from the UN and the world in any transition to war."

The Loyalty of the Iraqi Armed Forces and Security Services

All of these forces have significant limitations. The army and internal security forces have lost many of their personnel with combat experience, in the decade since the Gulf War, Iraqi forces have had limited exercise training, and have never mastered combined arms and joint operations by Western standards.

Saddam Hussein's regime has always given internal security against coup's a much higher priority than military effectiveness per se. There were exceptions during the most threatening periods in the Iran-Iraq war, but many of the best officers were the retired or shoved aside into positions of limited importance, and some suffered suspicious fatal accidents. Political control has not only affected independence and initiative, but has extended to the point of limiting or preventing the use of ammunition in live fire exercises, the scale of maneuver exercises, and forward stockage of ammunition and supplies that might be used in a coup.

Iraqi forces have, however, had ongoing low-level combat experience against the Shi'ite opposition in southern Iraq, and deploy to positions opposite Iran and the Kurdish security zone. They do conduct static fire training and limited maneuver training, and the Special Republican Guards, Republican Guards, and security forces are trained for urban warfare and to put down uprisings. The Republican Guards units never broke during the Gulf War, and the army's regular armored, mechanized, and commando/special forces units have generally fought with considerable determination when ordered to do so.

Iraq has other problems. Saddam exercises tight central control in his self-appointed role as field marshal, and innovation and initiative are often discouraged. Saddam's rotation, and sometimes violent purges of commanders to ensure their loyalty, promotion for loyalty or because of tribal origin, the ruthlessness of the security services, and tensions between the regular forces, Republican Guards, Special Republican Guards, and various security services create additional problems.

While a number of seemingly convincing reports of security, problems, defections, and coup attempts have proved false, at least some seem to be correct and it is far from clear that the situation has improved in spite of Iraq's increasing oil income and the regime's ability to manipulate oil-for-food deliveries. Professional security services cannot challenge regular armed forces and rarely succeed in suppressing large-scale popular revolts. Large unprofessional security services have limited value.

Saddam has tried on several occasions in the past, to create a parallel popular force that would act as a further check upon the regular forces. Such forces failed dismally during the Iran-Iraq War. The latest such effort is the so-called Jerusalem Army, which has been created since the start of the Second Intifada and is under General Iyad Futayyih Khalifa al-Rawi, a former Republican Guards commander. This force is reported to have a goal of 21-divisions, but Iraq lacks the experienced cadres, equipment, supplies, and manpower input to build up anything like such a force except at the cost of its other land-force units.ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ Based on interviews.

ⁱⁱ USCENTCOM briefing by "senior military official".

ⁱⁱⁱ Amatzia Baram, "The Iraqi Armed Forces and Security Apparatus," Conflict Security Development, Centre for Defense Studies, King's College London, 2001, pp. 113-123.