

STATEMENT OF
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BEFORE THE U.S. SENATE
COMMITTEE ON THE ARMED SERVICES

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INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee.

Iraq's recent refusal to fully cooperate with the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) to account for and verify destruction of Iraq's existing Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and WMD development programs continued its pattern of interference and obstruction. This conduct led to Ambassador Butler's decision to withdraw UNSCOM from Iraq and issue a report critical of Iraqi compliance in December of last year. Based on the terms of United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) 687, 715, 1154, and 1194, the National Command Authorities ordered U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) to execute Operation DESERT FOX.

Operation DESERT FOX

Our objectives for this operation were: reduce Iraq's capability to produce WMD; degrade strategic and tactical command and control facilities, damage industrial infrastructure used for the smuggling of gas and oil; and the overall reduction of Iraq's capability to threaten its neighbors in the region.

Primary targets struck during Operation DESERT FOX were installations associated with development of WMD, units

providing security to WMD programs, and Iraq's national command and control network. Additional targets included selected Republican Guard facilities, airfields, and the Basrah oil refinery that was involved in production of illegal gas and oil exports. Iraq's integrated air defenses and surface-to-air missiles (SAM) sites were also heavily struck in order to ensure the safety of coalition aircraft.

Due to the destruction of key facilities and specialized equipment, we assess that Iraq's ballistic missile program has been set back one to two years. Several of Iraq's most sensitive security units suffered attrition and the Iraqi command and control network was disrupted, with some degradation remaining today.

Regarding the success of Operation DESERT FOX, over 80 percent of the designated targets were hit and damaged. Additionally, every security unit attacked suffered damage. Iraqi claims of civilian casualties and collateral damage remain unsubstantiated. Finally, these successes were realized with no casualties to our coalition forces.

Since the end of Operation DESERT FOX, coalition air forces have continued to maintain the No Fly Zones (NFZ) that were established after Operation DESERT STORM. As you know, Iraq has taken a more aggressive position against the aircraft flying those missions as a part of Operation

SOUTHERN WATCH and Operation NORTHERN WATCH, the latter conducted by European Command (EUCOM). As a result, we have had over 70 violations of the NFZ, and Iraqi air defense systems have continued to engage our aircraft.

Additionally, the number of SAM sites has almost tripled in the south, and almost doubled in the north. The regime has moved multiple rocket launchers into the south, has coordinated threats against UN command and control and reconnaissance aircraft, and has initiated coordinated efforts to lure U.S. aircraft into SAM engagement zones or ambushes. Lastly, additional aircraft have periodically been moved to airfields in the south.

In order to deal with this increased threat, the President has given us expanded Rules of Engagement (ROE) to provide us the additional flexibility we need to protect our forces. This allows us to continue this important mission with an acceptable degree of risk.

Coalition Support

While the only other member of the coalition to fly combat missions during Operation DESERT FOX was Great Britain, other countries in the region provided significant support. That support included overflight permission, and access to regional facilities such as ports, airfields, and fixed facilities.

Conclusion

Since Operation DESERT FOX, the regime has more actively opposed UNSCOM, has attempted to incite various Arab populations to overthrow their leadership, and has removed or eliminated senior leaders whose loyalty was questioned. Additionally, the regime has declared the NFZ in both the north and south to be null and void, and has notified the UN that UN humanitarian workers may not be safe within Iraq. We believe these reactions indicate that Saddam is becoming increasingly isolated, and perhaps more desperate. There is no doubt that he continues to rule Iraq in a ruthless manner and his increasing paranoia has led him to apply even more ruthless measures to control any internal unrest. We can expect to see this continue and his isolation grow.