

**STATEMENT OF
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COMMANDER IN CHIEF
U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND
BEFORE THE U.S. SENATE
COMMITTEE ON THE ARMED SERVICES
19 SEPTEMBER 2000
FORMAL WITNESS STATEMENT**

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee.

Last month marked the tenth anniversary of Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait. In response to this unprovoked act of aggression, the United States organized a broad international coalition to liberate Kuwait in Operation Desert Storm. Had the United States not met this challenge, the Middle East would be a much more dangerous, unstable place today. We remain, however, engaged in unfinished business in the Central Region: Saddam Hussein is still in power, and were he free to act as he wishes, he would almost certainly once again plunge his country and the region into war. The peoples of Iraq and the region would suffer as a result of his policies.

I intend to describe USCENTCOM's role in U.S. policy regarding Iraq and leave the description of overall U.S. policy to my esteemed colleagues from OSD and State Department. USCENTCOM is working to ensure that Saddam does not threaten his neighbors in the region

and we add to the security of Iraqis in both Northern and Southern Iraq by enforcing no-fly zones.

Indeed, the U.S., together with its allies, plays a key role in containing Iraq. USCENTCOM and USEUCOM are at the forefront of this effort, which consists of several components: a significant forward military presence; no-fly zones in northern and southern Iraq, a no-enhancement zone in southern Iraq; and maritime interdiction operations.

Forward Presence

By maintaining a significant forward presence in the region, the U.S. seeks to deter and, if need be, to defeat Iraqi aggression. To this end, at any given time, some 30 naval vessels, 175 military aircraft, and between 17,000-25,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines are in the CENTCOM AOR. In recent years, CENTCOM has taken steps to strengthen our forward presence and our ability to rapidly project forces to the region through Operation Desert Spring exercises in Kuwait, and our post-Desert Storm pre-positioning efforts. We have taken steps to reduce the impact of deployments on readiness, and we have worked to minimize the vulnerability of our troops in the region to terrorism. Thanks to these efforts, both we and our allies are comfortable with current force levels, and believe we can sustain such levels for the foreseeable future.

No-Fly Zones

CENTCOM and EUCOM are responsible for enforcing no-fly zones over southern and northern Iraq, respectively. U.S. aircraft have flown more than 200,000 sorties in support of Operation Southern Watch (which has patrolled the southern no-fly zones since August 1992)

and more than 16,000 sorties in support of Operation Northern Watch (which succeeded Operation Provide Comfort in January 1997).

The no-fly zones are a key component of containment, and the aircrews who risk their lives daily by patrolling the skies of northern and southern Iraq are making an important contribution to U.S. policy. For the Iraqi people who live in both the north and south, the no-fly zones provide a degree of protection from Saddam Hussein. The no-fly zones are a constant reminder of coalition resolve, and are thus a key component of America's deterrent posture. Moreover, by limiting training opportunities for the Iraqi air force, the no-fly zones have helped degrade Iraq's military capabilities. These operations also yield valuable intelligence concerning Iraqi forces, and provide an invaluable additional margin of early warning regarding potential threats to Kuwait.

The additional warning margin afforded by the southern no-fly zone ensures that we are much better prepared today to deal with Iraqi threats to Kuwait than we were in 1990. In this regard, our readiness posture is aided by constraints on Iraqi ground deployments (thanks to the no-enhancement zone established in the south by UN Security Council Resolution 949 in October 1994), and our improved ability to rapidly project forces to the region.

Since Operation Desert Fox in December 1998, much public attention has focused on ongoing coalition operations against Iraqi ground-based air defenses in the no-fly zones. In the wake of Desert Fox, aircraft supporting Operation Southern Watch have responded to some 650 Iraqi violations or provocations on 80 different occasions, while aircraft supporting Operation Northern Watch have responded to more than 110 violations or provocations on some 40 occasions. Each one of these actions has been in response to hostile action by Iraqi air defenses,

and we have gone to extraordinary lengths to select targets and specific weapons so as to minimize collateral damage.

Maritime Interdiction Operations

CENTCOM also conducts Maritime Interdiction Operations to enforce UN sanctions on Iraq. The Maritime Interdiction Force (MIF) was created in 1990 to help enforce UN Security Council Resolution 665, which grants UN member states authority to enforce UN sanctions; it incorporates naval vessels from eight countries (Argentina, Australia, Kuwait, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the UAE, the United Kingdom, and the U.S.). The MIF has impounded millions of dollars worth of oil illicitly exported by the Iraqi government as part of its efforts to generate unsupervised income. The MIF presence also aids in constraining Baghdad's ability to import prohibited items by sea.

For the last several years, Iranian naval forces have facilitated Iraqi maritime oil smuggling. This has made enforcing UN sanctions on Baghdad more difficult for the MIF. Iranian complicity has allowed Baghdad to smuggle on average 309,000 metric tons (or about 2.265 million barrels) of oil a month to world markets, primarily through Iranian coastal waters, earning Saddam Hussein in excess of \$500 million annually. These figures should, however, be seen in context. Iraq has smuggled approximately 76,000 b/d of oil through the Gulf while legitimate exports average 2.5 million b/d, or said another way – this year, the amount of oil smuggled through the Gulf has averaged less than 3 percent of total exports.

Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and Weapons Inspections

Iraq's WMD capabilities remain a key concern. It has been more than a year and a half since UN weapons inspections last occurred in Iraq, and Saddam Hussein has thus far refused new inspections. In the absence of inspections, we suspect that WMD research, development, and even production activities may have continued although we have no firm evidence that they have. These concerns underscore the need for UNMOVIC -- the new UN weapons inspection organization established by UN Security Council Resolution 1284 in December 1999 -- to begin work in Iraq. Resolution 1284 offers a fair deal: the suspension of economic sanctions in return for full compliance. Were Saddam Hussein genuinely interested in assuring the welfare of his people, he would accept such a bargain. Baghdad's record of using WMD against its own population and Iran, underscores the urgency of efforts to account for Iraq's remaining capabilities in this area, and preclude the development and/or acquisition of new WMD capabilities.

Future Challenges

In sum, despite the difficulty and frustration inherent in sustaining our current policy, I believe we should stay the course, while seeking to advance our policy objectives in Iraq, safeguard the security of our coalition partners in the region, and provide for the welfare of the Iraqi people.

Saddam Hussein will continue to challenge our resolve. He will challenge our pilots in the no-fly zones, he will continue to seek sympathy for the plight of the Iraqi people -- for which he alone is responsible -- and he will attempt to rebuild the capability to threaten his neighbors.

We must be ready for such challenges, and in consultation with our allies and coalition partners, we must ensure that Saddam Hussein is denied his ultimate objective of regional domination. The soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines of CENTCOM remain committed to the task.