Order Code IB94049

CRS Issue Brief for Congress

Iraq-U.S. Confrontation

Updated November 20, 2001

Alfred B. Prados and Kenneth Katzman
Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division

CONTENTS

SUMMARY

MOST RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

Events of the Crisis
- Forerunner Episodes
- December 1998 Air Strikes
- Further Actions
  - The February 2001 Strikes
  - Additional Strikes and Provocations
  - Aftermath of the Terrorist Attacks

Force Deployments and Costs
- The 1998 Build-Up
- After Desert Fox
- Costs

U.S. and International Reactions
- Administration Position on Use of Force
- Congressional Reactions
- International Reactions

Plans and Alternatives

FOR ADDITIONAL READING

Iraq-U.S. Confrontation

SUMMARY

Efforts by Iraq to impede U.N. weapons inspections since late 1997 and to challenge the allied-imposed no-fly zones over northern and southern Iraq have resulted in further confrontations with the United States and its allies. In early 1998, U.S.-led retaliatory strikes against Iraq were averted by an agreement negotiated by the U.N. Secretary General on February 23, under which Iraq promised "immediate, unconditional, and unrestricted" access by U.N. inspectors throughout Iraq. On March 3, the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 1154, which warned Iraq of the "severest consequences" for violating the agreement.

A decision by Iraq to ban almost all U.N. inspections on October 31, 1998, precipitated a new phase of the confrontation. The Clinton Administration decided to abort air and missile strikes planned for November 14-15 after Iraq agreed at the last minute to resume cooperation with U.N. inspections. But, following a report on December 15 by the chief weapons inspector that Iraq was withholding cooperation, the United States and Britain conducted a 4-day operation against Iraq (Operation Desert Fox) including approximately 410 missiles and 600 bombs.

Since the December 1998 operation, the United States and Britain have carried out air strikes against Iraqi air defense units and installations on a frequent basis, in response to Iraqi attempts to target allied aircraft enforcing no-fly zones over northern and southern Iraq. On February 16, 2001, allied aircraft conducted strikes against five Iraqi air defense installations north of the 33rd parallel (the northern limit of the southern no-fly zone) in response to increasing challenges by Iraqi air defense units. Since then, allied aircraft have continued to conduct periodic strikes against Iraqi air defense installations, amid reports that Iraq has been upgrading its air defense capabilities. On October 7, 2001, following the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations warned Iraq not to move against Iraqi opposition groups or attack its neighbors while the United States was involved in its campaign against terrorism.

According to the U.S. Defense Department as of late November 1998, expanded military operations and crisis build-ups in the Gulf since the 1991 war had cost a total of $6.9 billion. Incremental costs of these operations amounted to approximately $1.6 billion in FY1998, 1.3 billion in FY1999, $1.1 billion in FY2000, and $1.1 billion estimated in FY2001.

Erosion of the former allied coalition and U.S. force constraints limit some military options. Although some Arab states, notably Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, host U.S. aircraft enforcing no-fly zones, no Arab states with the exception of Kuwait have publicly supported allied air strikes against Iraq.

Some officials and analysts have called for expansion of no-fly zones over Iraq. Others support covert operations to inflict damage on key Iraqi facilities and build a viable opposition to the regime. According to a press article in mid-November, some U.S. officials favor more strikes against Iraq even in the absence of evidence linking it to the September attacks, in view of its efforts to acquire mass destruction weapons, refusal to readmit U.N. weapons inspectors, and long-standing support for terrorism.

MOST RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

According to numerous press reports since September 11, 2001, U.S. officials have found no hard evidence of an Iraqi hand in the terrorist attacks on the United States or the appearance of anthrax, although some U.S. officials suspect Iraqi involvement. On October 11, U.S. Defense Department spokesmen were quoted as saying that there had been no significant increase in skirmishes between allied forces and Iraqi forces since the September 11 attacks. A November 19 press article reported that some U.S. officials favor more strikes against Iraq even without evidence of Iraqi involvement in the September 11 attacks, in view of Iraq's efforts to acquire mass destruction weapons, its refusal to readmit U.N. weapons inspectors, and its longstanding support for terrorism.

Also on October 11, a U.S. Air Force RQ-1B Predator – an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) or "drone"– was reported missing over southern Iraq. This was the third such reconnaissance aircraft lost over southern Iraq in a two-month period. Although Iraqi media claimed that its air defenses had hit the plane, U.S. military spokesmen said it was unclear whether the drone had crashed or had been shot down.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

This issue brief covers the most recent U.S.-Iraqi confrontation, which began in the fall of 1998. It summarizes events that led to the crisis, the allied military build-up, military strikes against Iraq, international reactions, costs, and options for U.S. policy makers. It does not cover developments in the war in Afghanistan, except insofar as they may relate to the U.S.-Iraqi confrontation. For further information on previous U.S.-Iraqi confrontations, see CRS Report 98-386, *Iraq: Post-War Challenges and U.S. Responses, 1991-1998.*

Since the cease-fire of March 3, 1991, that ended the Persian Gulf war (Operation Desert Storm), the United States has resorted on several occasions to the use or threat of force against Iraq. Some of these incidents resulted from Iraqi challenges to U.N. cease-fire terms that followed the war. Others resulted from bilateral issues between Iraq and the United States and its allies.

A principal factor in the most recent confrontation was Iraq's failure to cooperate fully with U.N. weapons inspectors. The inspection regime, established by U.N. Security Council Resolution 687 adopted on April 3, 1991, is designed to identify and dismantle Iraq's programs to develop weapons of mass destruction, including chemical, biological, and nuclear warfare systems as well as missiles capable of delivering them. Two agencies are charged with conducting these inspections: the U.N. Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM), which deals with chemical, biological, and missile systems; and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which deals with Iraqi nuclear weapons programs. Since the inception of the inspection regime, Iraq has obstructed its work in various ways:

- False, misleading, or incomplete responses to questions posed by inspectors;
- Interference by Iraqi escorts with the conduct of inspections;
- Denial of access to "sensitive" sites on grounds of national security;
- Removal of or tampering with material evidence of weapons programs; and
- Attempts to exclude U.S. personnel from inspection teams.

On seven occasions between 1991 and 1993, the U.N. Security Council found Iraq in "material breach of cease-fire terms"; however, the Council has not issued a finding of "material breach" since June 17, 1993, despite subsequent Iraqi provocations. According to news reports, some Council members are reluctant to agree to another such finding, which they think might provide the basis for an attack on Iraq.

Another factor contributing to the recent confrontation was Iraqi violation of the no-fly zones imposed by the United States and its allies over portions of northern and southern Iraq. U.S. and British aircraft (and formerly French aircraft) have conducted overflights of northern and southern Iraq since 1991 and 1992, respectively, to enforce the bans on Iraqi aircraft in these zones. The allied overflights are known as Operation Northern Watch and Operation Southern Watch and are designed to exclude Iraqi aircraft from flying north of the 36th parallel and south of the 33rd parallel, respectively. The southern zone, covering 227,277 square kilometers (87,729 square miles) is larger than the northern zone, which covers 43,707 square kilometers (16,871 square miles), but Iraqi air defenses reportedly are thicker in the northern zone. Together, these zones cover 270,985 square kilometers (104,600 square miles), or 62% of Iraqi territory.

U.S. officials base the no-fly zones primarily on U.N. Security Council Resolution 688 of April 5, 1991, which demands that Iraq end repression of its population (notably Kurds in the north and Shi'ite Muslims in the south), and on the military cease-fire agreements after the Gulf war (the Safwan Accords), which forbid Iraq to interfere with allied air operations over Iraq. Some countries question this interpretation, arguing that Resolution 688 was not passed under Chapter VII provisions (peace and security) and does not by itself permit military action to enforce its terms. Iraq maintains that the no-fly zones constitute an illegal infringement on its sovereignty and has occasionally fired on allied planes conducting overflights to enforce these zones.

Events of the Crisis

Forerunner Episodes

Between mid-1993 and 1996, UNSCOM personnel were able to carry out their inspections of Iraqi weapons programs with relatively little interference by the government of Iraq. Increasing attempts by Iraq in 1997 to impede U.N. weapons inspections and to exclude U.S. personnel from UNSCOM teams prompted demands by the U.N. Security Council that Iraq cease its interference or face further sanctions. A Russian undertaking in November 1997 to seek "balanced representation" in UNSCOM membership temporarily averted a crisis; however, tensions mounted again in January 1998, as Iraq once more barred U.S.-led teams from conducting inspections and declared several "sensitive sites" off limits to U.N. inspectors. After a month of intensive diplomacy and a continuing build-up of U.S.

forces in the Persian Gulf region, the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister and the U.N. Secretary General signed an agreement with the following provisions:

- Reconfirmation by Iraq that it accepts relevant U.N. resolutions
- Commitment of U.N. member states to "respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq"
- "Immediate, unconditional, and unrestricted access" by UNSCOM and IAEA within Iraq, with respect for Iraqi concerns relating to "national security, sovereignty, and dignity"
- Special procedures to apply to inspections at eight "presidential sites" defined in an annex to the agreement
- Efforts to accelerate the inspection process, and an undertaking by the Secretary General to bring to U.N. Security Council members the concerns of Iraq over economic sanctions.

On March 3, the U.N. Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1154, co-sponsored by Britain and Japan, which commended the initiative of the Secretary General in security these commitments from Iraq, stressed that Iraq must comply with its obligations, and warned that any violation of these terms or other Security Council resolutions "would have the severest consequences for Iraq." Although inspections during the spring of 1998 proceeded relatively smoothly, many questions concerning Iraq's weapons programs remained unresolved. Also, Iraqi spokesmen continued periodically to warn of a new crisis if economic sanctions were not quickly removed.

December 1998 Air Strikes

After a lull of several months, tensions mounted in August 1998, as Iraq began to challenge U.N. operations once more. On August 5, Iraq announced that it would no longer allow UNSCOM to inspect new facilities, and followed with a ban on all remaining UNSCOM activities on October 31. U.S. officials described Iraq's actions as unacceptable, as did some other members of the Security Council. Resolution 1205 of November 5, which demanded that Iraq rescind its bans on U.N. weapons inspection activities and resume full cooperation with UNSCOM, did not specifically mentioned use of force; however, U.S. officials emphasized again that all options are open including military force to compel Iraqi compliance. On November 11, the United Nations evacuated more than 230 staff personnel from Baghdad, including all weapons inspectors, as the United States warned of possible retaliatory strikes against Iraq.

As U.S. forces were on the verge of conducting air and missile strikes against Iraq on November 14, the Clinton Administration delayed them for 24 hours upon learning that Iraq had agreed to resume cooperation with UNSCOM. After further negotiations, Iraq agreed in a letter to the Security Council on November 15 to provide unconditional cooperation to UNSCOM and rescind its ban on UNSCOM activities. The Administration then canceled the planned strikes; however, the President warned that Iraq must fulfill its obligations. Specifically, in a news conference on November 15, he listed five conditions Iraq must fulfill to meet the criteria of unconditional cooperation:

- Resolution of all outstanding issues raised by UNSCOM and the IAEA.
- Unfettered access for inspectors with no restrictions, consistent with the February 23 memorandum signed by Iraq.
- Turnover by Iraq of all relevant documents.
- Acceptance by Iraq of all U.N. resolutions related to mass destructions weapons.
- No interference with the independence or professional expertise of weapons inspectors.

Despite its pledges on November 14-15, Iraq began to impede the work of U.N. weapons inspectors once more, according to statements by UNSCOM Chief Butler on December 8. On December 15, Butler submitted a report in which he concluded that "Iraq did not provide the full cooperation it promised on 14 November 1998" and "initiated new forms of restrictions upon the Commission's work." On December 15, Butler withdrew remaining UNSCOM inspectors from Iraq, saying that they could no longer perform their mission. On the following day, then President Clinton directed U.S. forces to strike military and security targets in Iraq. He described the mission as "to attack Iraq's nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programs and its military capacity to threaten its neighbors."

Attacks began on December 16, 1998, at 5:06 p.m. EST (December 17 at 1:06 a.m. Baghdad time) in an operation known as Desert Fox, as U.S. forces launched over 200 cruise missiles (officials declined to give an exact number) at over 50 targets in Iraq, from the aircraft carrier *U.S.S. Enterprise*, other Navy ships in the region, and some 70 Navy and Marine Corps aircraft. According to some media reports, B-52 bombers based in the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia took part as well. British forces also joined in the attacks. A second wave of attacks took place on the evening of December 17-18, involving approximately 100 cruise missiles (but with larger warheads than those used in the first wave of attacks) and B-52 bombers, again with British participation. B-1 bombers joined the attack during the third wave (evening of December 18-19), marking the first combat operations for this aircraft. After the fourth wave of attacks (evening of December 19-20), President Clinton halted the 72-hour operation (code named Operation Desert Fox) on December 20. Senior U.S. officials warned that the United States would repeat its attacks as often as necessary to prevent Iraq from continuing programs to develop mass destruction weapons.

During Operation Desert Fox, U.S. and British forces launched approximately 415 cruise missiles (325 Tomahawks fired by Navy ships and 90 air launched cruise missiles mainly by B-52s) and dropped more than 600 bombs. According to reports by the U.S. Department of Defense, the 97 targets of allied attacks included lethal weapons production or storage facilities (11), security facilities for weapons (18), Iraqi Republican Guards and other military facilities (9), government command, control, and communications facilities (20), air defense systems (32), airfields (6), and one oil refinery. According to preliminary Defense Department assessments on December 20, 10 targets were destroyed, 18 severely damaged, 18 moderately damaged, 18 lightly damaged, and 23 not yet assessed. A second assessment on December 21 cited a total of 98 targets, of which 43 were severely damaged or destroyed, 30 moderately damaged, 12 lightly damaged, and 13 not damaged. The U.S. theater commander described the estimates as conservative, pointing out that even lightly damaged facilities can be rendered unusable. There were no U.S. or British casualties. According to the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, the allied action killed 62 Iraqi military personnel (including 38 Republican Guards) and wounded 180; there have been no estimates of Iraqi civilian

casualties. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Harry Shelton told the Senate on January 5, 1999, however, that allied strikes killed or wounded an estimated 1,400 members of Iraq's elite military and security forces (600 from the Special Republican Guard and 800 from the Republican Guard).

Further Actions

A series of follow-on military actions have occurred since December 28, 1998, as Iraqi air defenses have tried to target U.S. and British aircraft patrolling the no-fly zones and Iraqi aircraft have made brief intrusions into the zones. U.S. Air Force and Navy aircraft, as well as British aircraft, have responded to Iraqi challenges with anti-radiation missile strikes directed against Iraq air defense and command and control installations and have fired at intruding Iraqi aircraft. Before Operation Desert Fox, U.S. responses to Iraqi violations of the no-fly zones were usually confined to the immediate source of the violation, i.e., an air defense battery or an intruding Iraqi aircraft. On January 27, 1999, authorities expanded rules of engagement to allow U.S. aircraft to target a wider range of Iraqi air defense systems and related installations in response to Iraqi violations of the no-fly zones. In congressional testimony on March 23, 2000, a Defense Department official said operational commanders have been given additional flexibility in responding to Iraqi provocations; under the current rules of engagement, pilots may respond not only by defending themselves but also by acting to reduce the overall Iraqi air defense threat to coalition aircraft.

Official Iraqi media reported on January 3, 1999 that President Saddam Hussein condemned the no-fly zones as illegal and said his people would resist them with "bravery and courage." The Iraqi President followed up by offering a $14,000 bounty to any unit that succeeded in shooting down an allied plane and an additional $2,800 reward for capturing an allied pilot. In an NBC interview carried on June 17, 2001, the Iraqi Ambassador to the United Nations said Iraq would do "anything possible to down American planes" and confirmed that the government had offered a reward to Iraqi military personnel who succeeded in doing so.

In a May 8, 2000 interview, the U.S. commander of Operation Northern Watch said Iraqi air defense weapons, which can reach altitudes of 40,000 feet, have the capability to hit U.S. aircraft. According to a July 24 press report, however, the newly designated commander responsible for the Southern Watch operation told the Senate Armed Services Committee that Iraqi air defense missiles are largely ineffective because they do not use their radar systems (which allied pilots can target) and because they must move frequently (approximately every 12 hours). On June 15, the commander of Iraqi air defense forces asserted that Iraq had succeeded in shooting down or intercepting 100 U.S. high-speed anti-radar missiles (HARM) used by allies to target Iraqi radar; however, allied sources dismissed the Iraqi claim. Similarly, allied officials state that no U.S. or British planes have been lost, despite Iraqi claims to the contrary. (On September 13, 2000, an Iraqi air defense spokesman asserted that Iraqi air defense units had shot down 10 allied aircraft since December 17, 1998.)

Iraq has claimed that allied air strikes have killed a number of Iraqi civilians. In a note to the U.N. Human Rights Commission released by U.N. officials on March 26, 2001, the Iraqi government protested that allied air strikes had killed 315 and wounded 965 Iraqis, all civilians; the note described the allied overflights as a violation of international law. Subsequently, the Iraqi Government claimed that a U.S.-British air strike on June 20, 2001

killed 23 Iraqis and injured 11 others participating in a soccer game near the city of Mosul in northern Iraqi.

U.S. and British officials have denied some Iraqi reports of civilian casualties and have attributed others to the Iraqi practice of placing air defense weapons in close proximity to populated areas, thus using nearby residents as human shields. For example, on August 18, 1999, U.S. Defense Department officials said reconnaissance photographs showed two Iraqi missile launchers located 115 feet from homes in the northern city of Mosul. On at least one occasion, in May 1999, U.S. authorities reportedly acknowledged the likelihood that allied units had erroneously identified a civilian target as an air defense installation. Allied officials have dismissed some Iraqi complaints as distortions or fabrications; with regard to the alleged soccer casualties, for example, allied spokesmen said their aircraft had not carried out any air strikes on June 20 and suggested that any casualties or injuries that occurred may have been caused by misdirected Iraqi ground fire.

The year 2001 has seen what appears to be a more aggressive effort by Iraq to bring down an allied aircraft by upgrading its air defense capabilities and mounting more challenges against allied overflights. Iraq reportedly has succeeded in extending the range of some of its older model air defense missiles and has made its communications less vulnerable by installing fiber optic cable, reportedly with Chinese assistance. On July 31, 2001, U.S. Defense Department spokesman Rear Admiral Quigley told reporters that Iraq has shown "a considerably more aggressive stance in trying to bring down a coalition aircraft." He noted continuing provocations by Iraq against allied aircraft over the two no-fly zones, especially in the southern zone, and allied retaliations (number of days on which allied aircraft have struck Iraqi targets in response):

- Southern Watch: 221 provocations in 2000 (18.4 per month); 370 in the first seven months of 2001 (30.8 per month).
- Northern Watch: 145 provocations in 2000 (12.1 per month); 62 in the first seven months of 2001 (8.9 per month).

In response, allied forces conducted strikes on Iraqi targets in the Southern Watch area on 32 days in 2000 and 19 days during the first 7 months of 2001; in the Northern Watch area, on 48 days in 2000 and 7 days during the first 7 months of 2001.

U.S. officials have acknowledged increased risks to allied pilots posed by Iraqi challenges and have made further efforts to counteract them. On June 4, 2001, U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld told reporters that "there is a risk to pilots that fly in areas that are dangerous and defended." He added that "[t]he risk grows to the extent that other nations assist Iraq in strengthening its military capability, its air defense capability and its ability to proceed with its clear and unambiguous desire to have increasingly powerful weapons and military capabilities." On August 3, he said: "[i]t does appear that Iraq has been successful in quantitatively and qualitatively improving their air defenses." According to news reports, allied strikes have been increasingly designed to set back recent improvements in Iraqi air defense capabilities.

The February 2001 Strikes. On February 16, between the hours of 11:20 a.m. and 1:40 p.m. Washington, D.C. time, 24 U.S. and British combat aircraft struck five Iraqi air defense command-and-control installations, using precision guided munitions. According to

a U.S. Defense Department spokesman, four of the five installations struck by the allied aircraft were located north of the 33rd parallel (the northern limit of the southern no-fly zone), but the aircraft themselves did not go north of the 33rd parallel. The spokesman noted that this was the first time since Operation Desert Fox that allied aircraft had hit targets outside the southern no-fly zone, although targets outside the northern zone had been struck during the fall of 1999.

According to press reports, one goal of the allied strikes was to destroy a fiber optic cable network that Chinese are reportedly installing to upgrade the effectiveness of Iraqi air defense radars. On March 6, China's foreign minister said relevant agencies had investigated these allegations and found no evidence that Chinese companies had assisted Iraq in installing fiber optic cables for Iraqi air defenses. A March 17 *Washington Post* article, citing U.N. documents and unidentified diplomats, reported that a Chinese company, Huawei Technologies, has been seeking U.N. approval to sell Iraq telecommunications equipment and switching systems.

Subsequent press reports indicated that many of the munitions fired by allied units had missed their targets; according to these reports, a majority of the AGM-154A Joint Stand-Off Weapons (JSOWs) dropped by U.S. aircraft went astray, although two other types of "smart weapons" (AGM-130 guided missiles and Stand-Off Land Attack missiles) achieved somewhat more success. These alleged problems have been attributed by press sources to several possible factors: human error in programming, heavy wind, software defects, mechanical failure, or jamming of signals by Iraqis; officials reportedly believe the first two explanations are the most likely. Defense spokesmen have declined to identify the munitions used in the strikes.

Additional Strikes and Provocations. Since February, allied forces have carried out several significant strikes against Iraqi air defense installations, including an Iraqi mobile early warning radar in southern Iraq on April 19, an air defense site in northern Iraq on April 20, an air defense installation 180 miles southeast of Baghdad on May 18, and an air defense site in northern Iraq on August 7. On August 10, in the largest air strike since February, U.S. and British aircraft hit three installations: a surface-to-air missile battery 170 miles southeast of Baghdad, an associated long-range mobile radar system, and a fiber optic communications station 70 miles southeast of Baghdad. Before this strike, on July 29, U.S. National Security Advisor Condoleeza Rice told CNN that the Administration is contemplating the use of "military force in a more resolute manner" and said that "Saddam Hussein is on the radar screen for the Administration."

Meanwhile, some observers believe Iraqi air defense forces may be improving their ability to target allied aircraft. On July 24, Iraqi forces fired a surface-to-air missile at a U.S. high altitude U-2 reconnaissance aircraft, and Defense Department sources reportedly said the missile came close to hitting the plane. On August 27, according to the U.S. Defense Department, a U.S. Air Force RQ-1B Predator – an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV or "drone") – was reported missing over southern Iraq while on a routine mission in support of Operation Southern Watch. A Defense Department statement described the Predator as "one of many systems used for reconnaissance and surveillance to monitor Iraqi compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolutions." Iraqi media claimed that Iraq's air defense units successfully hit the UAV, while the U.S. Defense Department statement said the aircraft may have crashed or may have been shot down. According to the U.S. Defense Department,

no sensitive technology was compromised by the loss of the aircraft. Press reports have noted, however, that if the Iraqi claim is correct, it would be the first time that a U.S. aircraft involved in enforcing the Northern or Southern Watch Operations has been brought down by enemy fire. A second RQ-1B was lost over southern Iraq on September 11 and a third on October 10. Again, Iraqi media claimed responsibility for both losses but U.S. military spokesmen said they had not confirmed the cause. According to a U.S. military spokesman commenting on the first incident, U.S. officials are aware of efforts by Iraq to bring down a manned allied aircraft.

Aftermath of the Terrorist Attacks. The Iraqi government was the only Middle East regime that did not send condolences to the United States after the September 11 attacks, although Iraq officials did express sympathy to several U.S. non-government organizations known to oppose U.S. containment policies toward Iraq. According to numerous press reports, U.S. officials have found no hard evidence of an Iraqi hand in the attacks or subsequent cases of anthrax, although some U.S. officials suspect Iraqi involvement. Some commentators have pointed to several alleged meetings in recent years between Iraqi intelligence officials and members of Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda organization and speculated that Iraq could provide Al Qaeda with money and expertise on chemical and biological warfare. Other commentators counter that Saddam and bin Laden have different views and ideologies and note that Iraq has been trying recently to cultivate better relations with western countries in an effort to gain support for terminating economic sanctions imposed in 1990 and 1991.

On October 7, 2001, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations John D. Negroponte delivered a warning to his Iraqi counterpart stating that the United States would launch military strikes against Iraq if it tried to attack its neighbors, aid anti-U.S. forces in Afghanistan, or move against domestic opposition groups such as the Kurds in northern Iraq while the United States is involved in its counter-terrorism campaign. Iraqi Ambassador Muhammad al-Douri rejected the warning on the following day as "stupid" and said "What you have warned about is not on Iraq's agenda." On October 11, U.S. Defense Department spokesmen were quoted as saying that there had been no significant increase in skirmishes between allied forces and Iraqi forces since the September 11 attacks. According to a November 19 press article, even in the absence of evidence linking Iraq to the attacks, some U.S. officials are in favor of more strikes against Iraq because of its efforts to acquire mass destruction weapons, its refusal to readmit U.N. weapons inspectors, and its long-standing support for terrorism. In a press interview on October 28, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz accused the United States and Britain of trying to overthrow the Iraq regime under the guise of fighting terrorism and charged that the two governments had plans to strike 300 targets in Iraq with 1,000 missiles.

Force Deployments and Costs

The 1998 Build-Up

U.S. force levels have fluctuated somewhat since the latest series of confrontations that began in the fall of 1997. During the mid-1990s, U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf region on an average comprised 15,000 to 20,000 personnel (many of them Navy and Marine Corps personnel embarked on ships), together with up to 200 aircraft and 20 ships, usually but not always including an aircraft carrier. The first phase of the crisis saw U.S. force levels increase to more than 40,000 personnel in late February and March, reinforced with British and other allied contingents. As the crisis receded later in the spring, forces were briefly drawn back down to their pre-1997 levels.

As the crisis worsened again in the fall of 1998, U.S. force levels in the Gulf began to climb once more. Additional deployments begun on November 11 were briefly halted after November 16, following cancellation of planned allied strikes in response to a last-minute understanding reached with Iraq. As Iraq failed to honor its November commitments, Secretary Cohen announced "a sharp increase in our forces in the Gulf" (approximately 24,100 personnel as of December 15). Cohen and General Shelton announced the deployment of a "crisis response force" consisting of nearly 60 additional Air Force and Marine jet fighters (including 10 F-117A radar-evading stealth fighters), additional Patriot missiles, elements of an Army brigade (some 2,700 troops), and a second aircraft carrier, the *U.S.S. Carl Vinson* with up to 60 Navy jet fighters, to the Gulf region. According to subsequent reports, up to 15,000 additional military personnel were deployed or ordered to the region. During Operation Desert Fox, Defense Department officials said U.S. force strength in the Gulf reached 29,900 on December 19, together with 37 ships and 348 aircraft.

After Desert Fox

These forces were once more reduced after Operation Desert Fox was over, even though smaller scale military action continued. U.S. commanders pointed out that the lack of an effective Iraqi response to Desert Fox made the reinforcements unnecessary at this time, and said the United States would return to a normal continuous presence in the Gulf. Most U.S. personnel in the region, including those conducting Operation Southern Watch, are assigned to the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), whose area of responsibility covers large parts of the Middle East and portions of nearby northeastern Africa. U.S. forces conducting Operation Northern Watch are based in Turkey and assigned to U.S. European Command (EUCOM). The task forces responsible for enforcing the two no-fly zones are linked by a hot line and coordinate many of their operations. On September 12, 2000, a Defense Department official said that at any given time the United States has between 20,000 and 25,000 personnel in the region, most of them afloat. The total number of U.S. military aircraft (Navy and Air Force) in the Gulf region has generally averaged about 200 in recent years. Ship totals vary; as of June 2001, the U.S. Navy had 20 ships (including one aircraft carrier and eight other combatants) in the Gulf region. **Table 1** provides figures on U.S. troop strength in the Gulf region as of March 31, 2001, but these figures represent the situation before the September 11 attacks.

As of August 1999, Britain had 1,400 military personnel, a supply ship, and 26 military aircraft in the Gulf region, including 12 Tornado GR-1 bombers operating out of Kuwait and 6 Tornado air defense aircraft in Saudi Arabia. A more recent news report, on October 25, 2000, places British personnel strength in the Northern Watch area of operations at 162. This figure does not include British personnel in the Southern Watch area.

Table 1. U.S. Force Levels in Persian Gulf Region

Country/Area	Total	Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force
Bahrain	1,026	29	779	191	27
Kuwait	4,838	2,215	7	586	2,030
Oman	193	3	1	9	180
Qatar	51	36	3	0	12
Saudi Arabia	5,233	770	30	393	4,040
United Arab Emirates	418	0	7	6	405
Afloat*	20,138	0	20,138	0	0

Source: Department of Defense, as of March 31, 2001. Figures since the September 11 terrorist attacks are not available.
*This figure includes other areas not in the immediate vicinity of the Persian Gulf.

Costs

A Defense Department spokesman told reporters on November 17, 1998 that expanded military operations and crisis build-ups in the Gulf since the war in 1991 had cost a total of $6.9 billion. Much of this figure represents the costs of enforcing the no-fly zones over northern and southern Iraq. Following are costs estimates for several other crisis build-ups and retaliatory operations undertaken by the United States between 1991 and 1997.

- Troop movements and retaliatory strikes against Iraq, December 1992-January 1993: $400 million
- Troop deployments to counter Iraqi force movements, October 1994 (Operation Vigilant Warrior): $257 million (partially defrayed by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia)
- Retaliatory strikes following Iraqi incursion into protected northern zone, August-September 1996 (Operation Desert Strike): $102.7 million.

Incremental costs of U.S. operations in the Persian Gulf since FY1997 appear in **Table 2**, below.

Britain, according to an August 23, 1999 *London Times* report, is spending approximately 4.5 million pounds ($7.19 million at exchange rate of U.K. 1 pound=U.S. $1.5974) per month on its deployments in the Gulf.

Table 2. Costs of Persian Gulf Operations
(in U.S. $ millions)

Operation	FY1998	FY1999	FY2000	FY2001*
Southern Watch	1,497.2	954.8	755.4	678.0
Northern Watch	136.0	156.4	143.6	138.7
Desert Spring (Kuwait training)**	5.6	13.8	239.8	241.8
Desert Thunder (Nov. 1998 build-up)	n/a	43.5	n/a	n/a
Desert Fox (Dec. 1998 air strikes)	n/a	92.9	n/a	n/a
Totals	**1,638.8**	**1,261.4**	**1,138.8**	**1,058.5**

Source: Department of Defense, Comptroller.
*Estimate.
**Known as Intrinsic Action until FY2000.

U.S. and International Reactions

Administration Position on Use of Force

U.S. administrations have taken the position that they already have sufficient authority to use military force to compel Iraqi compliance. On February 3, 1998, during an earlier phase of the present confrontation, Clinton Administration officials reportedly cited the joint resolution passed by Congress on the eve of the 1991 Gulf war (P.L. 102-1) as the basis for this authority. P.L. 102-1 has no expiration date, and some specialists in international law agree that this law provides sufficient authority to U.S. administrations to use force against Iraq.

In the international context, the United States believes that two previous U.N. Security Council resolutions provide sufficient authority to use force against Iraq: Resolution 678 (November 29, 1990), which authorized military action after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and Resolution 687 (April 3, 1991), which made a cease-fire conditional on Iraqi compliance with various specified terms, including the inspection and dismantling of Iraq's lethal weapons programs. U.N. Security Council Resolution 1154 of March 2, 1998 (see above) does not specifically mention the use of force, but warns Iraq of "severest consequences" for violation. In a news conference on March 11, President Clinton said "We believe that the resolution gives us the authority to take whatever actions are necessary. But, of course, we would consult [with other Security Council members]." Subsequently, U.N. Security Council Resolution 1205 of November 5, 1998 condemned Iraq's refusal to cooperate with UNSCOM

as a "flagrant violation" of Resolution 687 and other relevant agreements, and expressed full support for efforts by the Secretary General to seek full implementation of the February 23 agreement. Other members of the Security Council, however, with the notable exception of Britain, do not believe that the wording of recent U.N. Security Council resolutions provides an automatic trigger authorizing military force.

Congressional Reactions

Congress has been largely supportive of Administration efforts to compel Iraqi compliance with U.N. resolutions. Some Members have argued for even stronger measures against Iraq, although others believe the Administration should seek further congressional authorization before engaging in any significant escalation of hostilities. Congress has also appropriated funds to defray the cost of increased U.S. force deployments to the Gulf since 1997 (see CRS Report 98-386, *Iraq: Post-War Challenges and U.S. Responses, 1991-1998*, updated March 31, 1999, for further information on costs and appropriations).

Some Republican Members of Congress questioned the timing of the Clinton Administration's decision to launch the strikes in December 1998, noting that the decision coincided with the floor debates in the House on impeachment of then President Clinton. The President denied that issue of impeachment was related to his decision to launch air strikes, and said the timing was dictated by the need for surprise, along with his desire to avoid starting hostilities during the month of Ramadan. On December 17, 1998, the House of Representatives passed H.Res. 612, expressing unequivocal support for the men and women of our Armed Forces carrying out missions in the Persian Gulf region, and supporting efforts to remove Saddam Hussein from power, by 417 to 5, with one voting "present" (Roll No. 539).

International Reactions

International reactions to U.S. reprisals against Iraq have been mixed and have varied according to the nature of the crisis that precipitated a U.S. military response. On the whole, altered international conditions have caused some erosion since 1991 in international support for the use of force against Iraq. Contributing factors include U.S.-Russian tensions, Arab disillusionment with broader U.S. Middle East policies, diminished Arab concerns over a potential threat from Iraq, and increasing sympathy for the sufferings of the Iraqi people.

Most European allies supported Desert Fox, as did Japan, South Korea, Australia, and Canada. Britain, on its part, has continued to participate in U.S. military actions against Iraq and, along with the United States, takes the position that existing U.N. resolutions provide the necessary legal basis for such action. France, on the other hand, regretted the air strikes and China and Russia condemned them. France also suspended its participation in the allied overflights of southern Iraq. The latter three countries have continued to criticize the U.S.-British retaliatory responses to Iraqi challenges in the no-fly zones since December 1998. Criticism increased after the February 16, 2001 allied strikes on Iraq's air defense installations. According to the Kremlin, Russian President Vladimir Putin described the strikes as "counter-productive for the process of a political settlement" and the French Foreign Minister said there was "no legal basis for this type of bombardment." Turkey's Prime Minister said "[t]he U.S. Administration should have informed us beforehand" of the strikes. In east Asia, Japan declined either to endorse or to criticize the strikes, but South

Korea's national news agency warned that the "policy of strangling Iraq" has failed to achieve its goals. Meanwhile, according to a U.S. official, the U.S. State Department has been in touch with China about reports of Chinese assistance in upgrading Iraqi air defense units.

Most Arab leaders were restrained in their comments on the December 1998 strikes, but hostile demonstrations took place in several countries including Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, Palestinian areas, and Syria (where they briefly turned violent). The 55-member Islamic Conference Organization appealed for a halt to the attacks on Iraq. Kuwait and Oman, alone among the six pro-western Gulf states, allowed U.S. and British combat aircraft to launch strikes from bases on their territory. The other four, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), allowed support operations and including air space clearance and take-off by refueling planes. Saudi Arabia expressed hopes that the strikes would end quickly, and the UAE Defense Minister went so far as to say "the option of force should not even have been considered, as the only ones who suffer are the Iraqi people." On December 30, 1998, Saudi Defense Minister Prince Sultan reaffirmed that Saudi Arabia would not agree to air strikes from its territory, but called on Iraq to implement U.N. Security Council resolutions.

Arab countries have reacted ambivalently to follow-on allied military operations against Iraq during 1999 and 2000. Gulf states have not publicly endorsed U.S. responses to Iraqi challenges in the no-fly zones and Qatar's foreign minister expressed concern during a joint news conference with then Secretary of Defense Cohen on March 9, 1999, commenting that "We do not wish to see Iraq bombed daily or these attacks which are being made in the no-fly zones." An Arab League foreign ministers' meeting on March 18 called for an end to all operations against Iraq not backed by the U.N. Security Council, but urged all countries to abide by Security Council resolutions in "spirit and letter." A year later, on April 9, 2000, Saudi Minister of Defense Prince Sultan made the following statement in a news conference:

> ... the [U.S.] troops which have been in Saudi Arabia since the end of Desert Storm are within the frame of United Nations assignments and directions to continue the surveillance of southern Iraq, and also the border of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, as well as the other GCC countries. And these troops are doing their duties to protect peace only, and not for aggression.

Saudi officials continue to cite provocations by Iraq. On June 4, 2001, the Saudi Ambassador to the United Nations charged that Iraq had staged 11 raids on Saudi border outposts during recent months.

Arab governments, including those friendly to the United States, denounced the allied strikes conducted against Iraqi air defense installations on February 16, 2001. The Secretary General of the Arab League stated that the raid "has no justification, violates international law, and has provoked anger and resentment in the Arab world." Egypt's Foreign Minister called the raid "a serious negative step that we cannot accept," while his Jordanian counterpart said Jordan "never condones the use of military force against Iraq." Saudi Arabia initially withheld official comment and a senior Saudi official said his country was not previously informed of the strikes. On February 21, however, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faysal during a visit to Damascus issued a joint statement with the Syrian Foreign Minister that "[b]oth sides expressed feelings of denunciation and anxiety over the recent escalation against south Baghdad." In nearby Oman, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs

commented that "[t]hose attacks will not benefit regional security or negotiations and discussions." Since the September 11 attacks, friendly Arab leaders have urged the United States not to expand the current war against terrorism being waged against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan to target Iraq or other Arab countries.

Plans and Alternatives

Military options present various challenges. Shipborne missile strikes against selected Iraqi targets incur relatively few risks and have the added advantage of not requiring overflight permission or logistical support from Gulf allies; however, missile strikes have had only limited effects in the past. Supplementing missile strikes with a more massive bombing campaign could succeed in destroying some key military organizations, weapons production facilities, and command and logistical installations, as in the recent Desert Fox operation. A bombing campaign, however, entails risks to U.S. pilots and aircrews, inflicts more civilian casualties, and elicits significant opposition within the Arab world. A further limiting factor is the unwillingness of Saudi Arabia and some other Gulf states to permit air strikes from their territory. Operation Desert Fox, which combined missile strikes and a bombing campaign, was more extensive than any of the previous post-1991 confrontations, but some analysts still feel that it represented a limited operation producing limited results.

After Operation Desert Fox, the Clinton Administration seemed to adopt a policy of limited escalation, including responses to Iraqi challenges in the no-fly zones through low-level aerial bombardment and missile strikes. On March 1, 1999, commenting on the expanded rules of engagement governing allied military action against Iraq, then Secretary of Defense Cohen told reporters that U.S. pilots "have been given greater flexibility to attack those systems which place them in jeopardy" and added that pilots can go after command, control, and communications centers as well as simply respond to provocation from an antiaircraft or air defense missile site. The Bush Administration appears to have continued this policy. In describing the allied air strikes against Iraqi air defense installations on February 16, 2001, a Defense spokesman said such strikes on targets outside the no-fly zones are not routine, but they do occur occasionally "as part and parcel to protecting our aircraft." Press reports indicate that concerns reportedly registered by senior U.S. commanders regarding overflights of Iraq will be considered in a wider review of Iraq policy under way in the Bush Administration.

Some commentators have suggested that, in addition to targeting Iraq's air defense capability, the allied strikes serve as a psychological weapon against key Iraqi commanders and military units. According to this theory, the strikes are designed to send a message that the regime is vulnerable and that Iraqi attempts to shoot down an allied pilot will backfire. Iraq, on its part, seems to be trying to achieve that goal by luring U.S. or British aircraft within range of Iraqi air defense batteries. U.S. officials, quoted in a February 1, 2000 press report, emphasized that a U.S. attack (presumably on the scale of Desert Fox) did not appear imminent, but warned that Iraq should not cross three "red lines": a threat against a neighboring country (Kuwait or Saudi Arabia); an attack on the Kurdish minority in northern Iraq; or reconstitution of nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons programs. U.S. Ambassador-at-Large David Scheffer, in a briefing on August 2, 2000, warned that the United States "would take an appropriate response" if Iraq should "come uninvited into the north." As noted above, however, Defense Department officials dismissed the Iraqi incursion into the

Kurdish enclave on December 9, 2000, as a short-lived troop movement that did not involve any attacks on Kurdish targets.

Ground action, which would probably be necessary if the U.S. government should seek to overturn the Iraqi regime, would not be feasible without more widespread allied support than currently exists; neither Saudi Arabia nor any other neighboring country is likely to permit the United States to stage a ground invasion of Iraq from its territory. A ground invasion would be costly, particularly if the object were to unseat the incumbent regime.

Members of Congress from both parties have expressed support for military action against Iraq. Some have suggested that diplomatic efforts have been exhausted and that failure to retaliate will embolden Saddam to mount more serious challenges. At the same time, others have expressed concern over the burdens placed on U.S. Air Force assets by continuing air operations over Iraq, as well as the risks to pilots in the event of a mechanical failure or a successful hit by an Iraqi air defense unit. There have been suggestions to scale back the U.S. presence in the Gulf and rely more on long-range power projection capabilities. According to a *Chicago Tribune* article on March 29, 2001, U.S. Army General Tommy R. Franks, Commander of Central Command, presented Secretary Rumsfeld and his deputy with four options: (1) continue with current enforcement of no-fly zones over Iraq, (2) increase combat strikes, (3) reduce combat flights while increasing reconnaissance (possibly with the use of satellites), or (4) eliminate enforcement entirely. General Franks reportedly told the House Armed Services Committee on March 28, however, that "[e]nforcement of the no-fly zones will remain a dangerous but necessary business." In a subsequent press interview, he recommended that the no-fly zones continue in some form, pointing out that as long as the United States has vital interests in the region and remains concerned over the threat of mass destruction weapons, "it will be necessary to keep Saddam [Hussein] in his box."

U.S. officials and analysts have suggested various other options that could be used in conjunction with or as a substitute for a conventional military attack. These options include further curtailments on Iraqi military activity, more emphasis on unconventional warfare, or more active support for anti-government militia or other opposition groups in their efforts to topple the regime of Saddam Hussein. For example, the United States could consider extending the two no-fly zones imposed by the allies over northern and southern Iraq to cover the entire country, coupled with a ban on helicopter flights and imposition of "no-drive" zones forbidding movement of Iraqi armored forces in designated areas. To enforce such measures, however, the United States and its allies would have to allocate more assets, incur greater risks, and deal with further challenges by Iraq. Another approach would involve covert action against the Iraqi regime, combined with an expanded program to buttress the efforts of opposition groups. (For more information, see CRS Report RS20843, *Iraq: U.S. Efforts to Change the Regime*, by Kenneth Katzman.) Many analysts believe the opposition is too fragmented and lacking in support within the Iraqi heartland to be effective, and cite the failure of previous efforts to build a viable opposition in Iraq. Others maintain that the United States has provided insufficient support to opposition groups and missed key opportunities to further their efforts.

Table 3. Comparative Military Strengths and Inventories: Gulf States

Country	Military Personnel	Tanks	Other Armored Vehicles	Field Artillery		Attack Heli-copters	Combat Aircraft	Naval Units	
				Towed	Self-Propelled			Surface Combat-ants	Sub-marines
Saudi Arabia	183,500	910	5,017	260	200	33	417	8	0
United Arab Emirates	65,000	331	1,178	93	177	49	101	2	0
Oman	43,500	117	284	91	24	0	40	0	0
Kuwait	15,300	293	545	0	41	20	82	0	0
Qatar	12,330	44	284	12	28	19	18	0	0
Bahrain	11,000	106	411	36	62	40	34	1	0
Total: Allies	*330,630*	*1,801*	*7,719*	*492*	*532*	*161*	*692*	*11*	*0*
Iraq	429,000	2,200	4,400	1,900	150	120	316	0	0
Iran	513,000	1,135	1,145	1,950	290	129	296*	3	5

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2000-2001*. (Note: Figures shown here do not include materiel believed to be in storage and inoperable.)

* Includes aircraft flown from Iraq to Iran during 1991 Gulf war.

FOR ADDITIONAL READING

CRS Issue Brief IB92117. *Iraqi Compliance with Cease-Fire Agreements,* by Kenneth Katzman.

CRS Report 98-386. *Iraq: Post-War Challenges and U.S. Responses, 1991-1998,* by Alfred B. Prados.

CRS Report RS20843. *Iraq: U.S. Efforts to Change the Regime,* by Kenneth Katzman.