



**NEAR EASTERN AND
SOUTH ASIAN ANALYSIS**

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: APR 2005

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**SPECIAL
INTELLIGENCE
MEMORANDUM**



Special Intelligence Memorandum

20 August 1993

Humanitarian Situation in the Marshes [redacted]

Deteriorating living conditions in Iraq's southern marshlands are prompting some Iraqi Shias to flee to Iran or to locations elsewhere in Iraq. Baghdad's activities in the region have made food scarce in at least some areas and civilian travel difficult. Baghdad's refusal to allow the UN and other international relief organizations access to the area is exacerbating hardships. [redacted]

We take seriously [redacted] recent press reports that thousands of Shias have fled to Iran. Nearly all such reports can be traced to opposition sources, which generally exaggerate the scope of Saddam's atrocities, but we believe these latest stories are founded on real pressure on the marsh Arabs. In response to these reports, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Max Van Der Stoel is planning to send a mission later this month to Iran to interview Iraqi Shia refugees there. [redacted]

Increasingly harsh living conditions are taking a toll on those living in the Al Amarah and Hawr al Hammar marshes. Most of these people--who actually reside on the marshes'

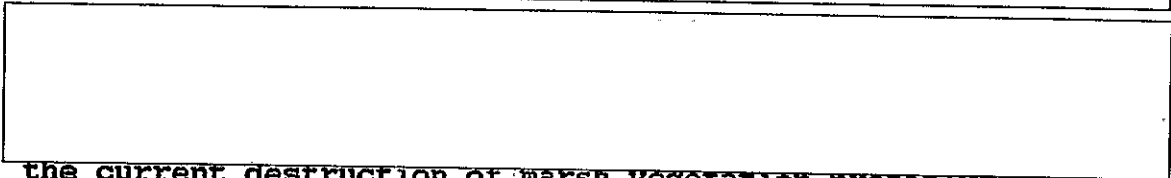
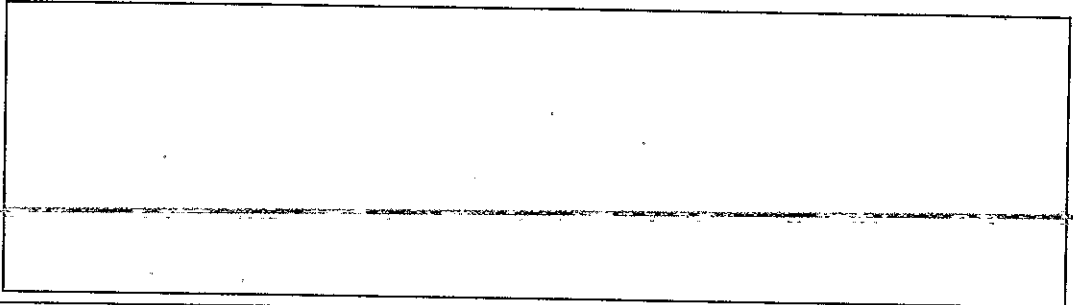
This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis, with contributions by [redacted] NESAS; [redacted] OIA; and [redacted] RTT. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, [redacted] NESAS, [redacted]

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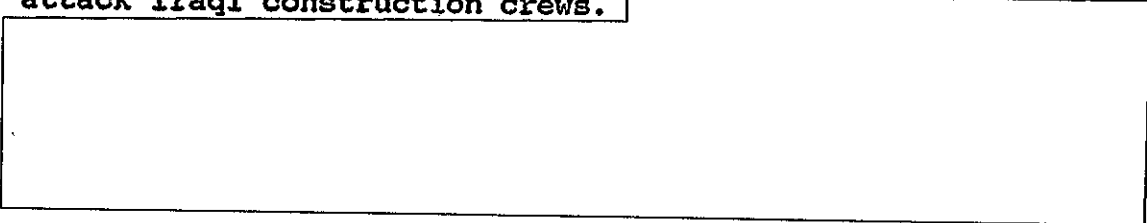
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periphery rather than within the marsh--depend on the wetlands for survival. Iraq's construction of canals and causeways to prevent water from entering these marshes clearly is reducing the ability of Shias in the area to maintain their traditional livelihood:



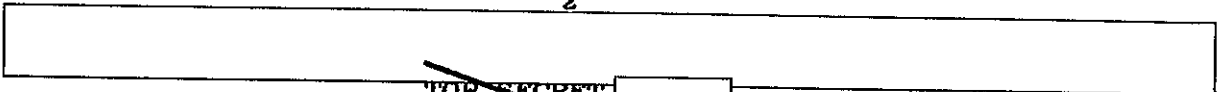
the current destruction of marsh vegetation probably is designed to clear the way for future construction efforts and to oust any rebels hiding in the marsh where they could attack Iraqi construction crews.



Iraqi troops have encircled the marshes, enforcing an economic blockade on the region. Shia opposition sources also claim Iraqi troops prohibit civilians from entering and exiting the marsh. Consequently, the Shia are finding it harder to obtain basic goods. The blockade, coupled with the decline in fishing and local agriculture, could result in severe food shortages over the next few months. An Iraqi doctor asserted in April that the marsh Arabs were beginning to experience malnutrition, [redacted] and recent press reports claim that Iraqi Shia refugees arriving in Iran are malnourished. [redacted]

Assisting Shias in the Marshes

Baghdad continues to deny the UN and international relief organizations access to the marshes. There are two British relief organizations providing relief to Iraqi Shia refugees



in Iran, Ammar Appeal and Iraqi Civilian Aid (ICA). The ICA recently received a \$400,000 pledge to aid the marsh Arabs,

Because of Baghdad's refusal to allow the establishment of humanitarian operations in the marshes, relief is provided by transporting supplies in small quantities over the Iranian border, through difficult terrain. In addition, Kuwait earlier this month pledged to provide support to the Shias through the Iraqi National Congress.

The Supreme Assembly for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SAIRI) is calling on Washington to provide military and humanitarian assistance to the Shias, asserting that it would embarrass Iran into providing more humanitarian support. SAIRI, as well as other groups, such as the ICA, are calling for the coalition to destroy the regime's water diversion projects by bombing dams and causeways. SAIRI also is advocating the use of air drops to provide food and medicine to the Shias.

Military Clashes Continue

In addition to protecting the regime's marsh-drying projects, Iraqi forces in the south conduct routine, small-scale operations against the Shia rebels,

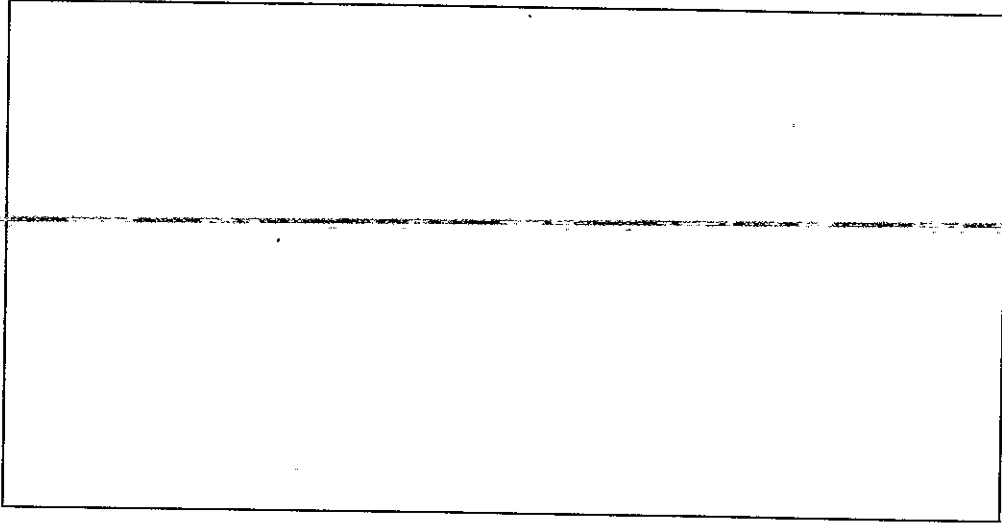
Such attacks coupled with Baghdad's gradual destruction of the southern marshes almost certainly are prompting Iraqi Shias to flee to Iran.

Shia rebels operating out of the southern marshes continue to carry out hit-and-run attacks against the military.

Rebel attacks have failed to shake the regime's increasingly tight grip on the south, however, and we see no signs that Baghdad intends to alter what it views as a "winning" strategy.

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Subject: Humanitarian situation in the Marshes [redacted]



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