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IR 199/-IRAN/IRAQ: Six  
Down one to go?

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IRAN/IRAQ: Et ça continue

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IRAN/IRAQ: Et ça continue

Résumé

1. Le 22 septembre dernier marquait le sixième anniversaire du conflit. On a assisté à une recrudescence des combats au cours de la dernière année et l'Iran a remporté deux victoires tactiques et morales à Al Faw et à Mehran. Aucun des deux protagonistes ne se montre disposé à entamer des négociations sérieuses. L'Iran, acculé par les attaques menées contre des objectifs économiques, se prépare à une autre "offensive finale". La position du président iraquien, Saddam Hussein, semble assurée, à moins qu'une défaite évidente et importante ne survienne, ce qui est peu probable si on en juge d'après le niveau des préparatifs iraniens. Les perspectives de succès de l'Iran pourraient s'améliorer si le pays réussissait à surmonter ses problèmes internes et à beaucoup augmenter le nombre de soldats engagés dans la prochaine offensive. L'Iraq n'hésiterait sans doute pas à faire usage de ses armes chimiques si une percée iranienne majeure risquait de se produire. (S/W)

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IRAN/IRAQ: Six Down One to Go?

Summary

1. September 22 marked the sixth anniversary of the war. The past year has seen an increase in the level of fighting with Iran achieving two tactical and moral victories at Al Faw and Mehran. Neither side has been willing to begin meaningful negotiations. Iran, cornered by attacks on economic targets, is preparing for yet another "final offensive". The position of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein appears secure against all but an obvious and major defeat. This is unlikely judging from the scale of present Iranian preparations. Should the Iranians overcome their own internal problems sufficiently to increase greatly the numbers of troops they commit to the next offensive, the prospect of an Iranian victory might increase. Iraq may not hesitate to use chemical weapons if a major Iranian breakthrough occurred. (S/W)



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Report

2. On 22 September 1980, Iraq attacked Iran. The cost of the war in terms of human and economic resources has been staggering for both nations. The last year of conflict saw a rise in the intensity of the conduct of the war by both sides. (S)

3. The sixth year of the war began on a high note last fall with the Iraqi airforce carrying out a small number of accurate strikes against Iran's oil exporting facilities. Iran, unable to respond in kind, began a large scale mobilization to divert Iraqi attention away from economic targets. (S/W)

4. Iraq, noting increased Iranian activity in the Hawizah Marsh, and expecting the major Iranian thrust to come from that area, made preparations. Instead, on 9 February Iran attacked in the southern part of the border area. One major thrust north of Al Basrah was beaten back with heavy losses inflicted upon the Iranians. Further south, the Iranians achieved local tactical surprise, succeeded in crossing the Shatt-Al-Arab in force and seized the disused Iraqi oil exporting terminal at Al Faw. The Iranians were able to trumpet their victory at Al Faw into a major success. (S/W)

5. Iraqi counter-attacks to retake Al Faw floundered. Saddam Hussein in desperate need of a victory to offset plummeting morale began a series of limited attacks in the central front. In mid-May the Iraqis captured the abandoned Iranian border town of Mehran and touted it as a victory equivalent to the capture of Al Faw. In late June 1986, Iran launched an attack that caught Iraq off guard and routed their units out of Mehran in a few days with disastrous losses to the Iraqi units involved. (See map 2). (S/W)

6. Saddam Hussein again made overtures of a negotiated peace but Iran remained firmly committed to its well known list of terms to end the war. Totally unacceptable to the regime in Baghdad, the terms are:

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1. the removal of Saddam Hussein;
2. war repatriation currently estimated by Iran at \$600 billion;
3. Iraq must admit to starting hostilities;
4. Iran will remain in control of the Shatt-Al-Arab water way.

Outlook

7. Iraq will continue to apply its airpower at a level deemed necessary against Iranian oil facilities and shipping in the hope that the pressure created by the destruction of Iran's economic infrastructure will force the Iranian leaders to the negotiating table. Iraqi ground forces are now preparing to repel an expected Iranian thrust at Al Basrah in the south. (S/W)

8. The upcoming and seventh year looks increasingly bad for Iraq. Iran has been better able to shoulder the high casualties due to its much larger population and its current run of military victories has lifted the morale of its populace. Iran sees the prospects for toppling the regime in Baghdad as excellent. It believes that another victory in the field will seal Saddam's fate and push Baghdad to accept Iran's peace terms. Iran's offensive preparations have been slow and on a small scale likely due to logistics problems, the expectation of better campaigning weather in the month of October, and co-ordination problems between Iranian army and revolutionary guard personnel. The apparent lack of full scale preparations may indicate a decision to delay the offensive until weather conditions once again improve. In addition, the serious state of Iranian finances, already under considerable strain as a result of Iraqi air attacks against economic targets and falling oil prices, may adversely impact on the scale of an Iranian offensive. (S/W)

9. The Iranian offensive will likely begin with limited thrusts in the central front in the hope of luring

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Iraqi reserves away from the south. The main Iranian thrust in mid to late October will likely be aimed at isolating Al Basrah, Iraq's second largest city. Iraq may not hesitate to use chemical weapons if a major Iranian breakthrough occurred. (S/W)

10. The position of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein appears secure against all but an obvious and major defeat which is unlikely to result from the scale of present Iranian preparations. The Iraqi people, their morale bruised by last year's losses, are kept firmly in check by tightened security which permeates every level of the society. (S/W)

11. Only within the upper echelons of the Baath revolution command council could a credible opposition be contemplated but they too owe their existence to repeated protestations of loyalty and can trust no one, precluding most conspiracies. This system promises to survive all but an undeniable defeat, when even the president's head could become bargainable. Should the Iranians overcome their own internal problems sufficiently to increase greatly the number of troops they commit to the next offensive, the prospect of an Iranian victory might increase. On the Iranian side, the regime appears committed to continuing the war of attrition. We expect this to continue until Khomeini dies and for some time thereafter. (S/W)

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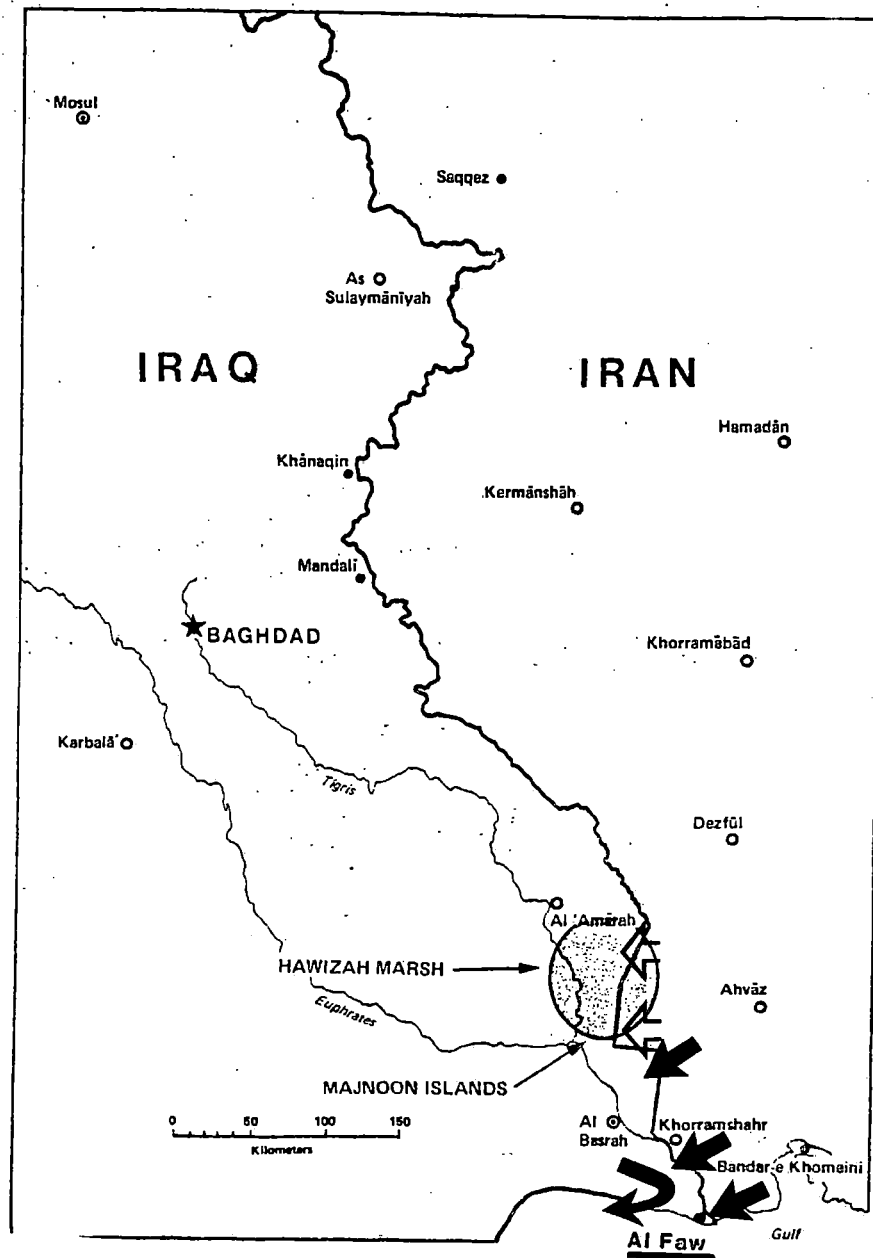
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MAP 1

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EXPECTED IRANIAN ATTACK

ACTUAL IRANIAN ATTACK

FOILED IRAQI COUNTER-ATTACK

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MAP 2

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IRAQI ATTACK

IRANIAN COUNTER-ATTACK

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