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Iran-Iraq: The Land War - Stalemate  
After the Winter Offensive

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IRAN-IRAQ: THE LAND WAR  
- STALEMATE AFTER THE WINTER OFFENSIVE

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IRAN-IRAQ: LA GUERRE TERRESTRE - L'IMPASSE À LA SUITE DE  
L'OFFENSIVE DE L'HIVER

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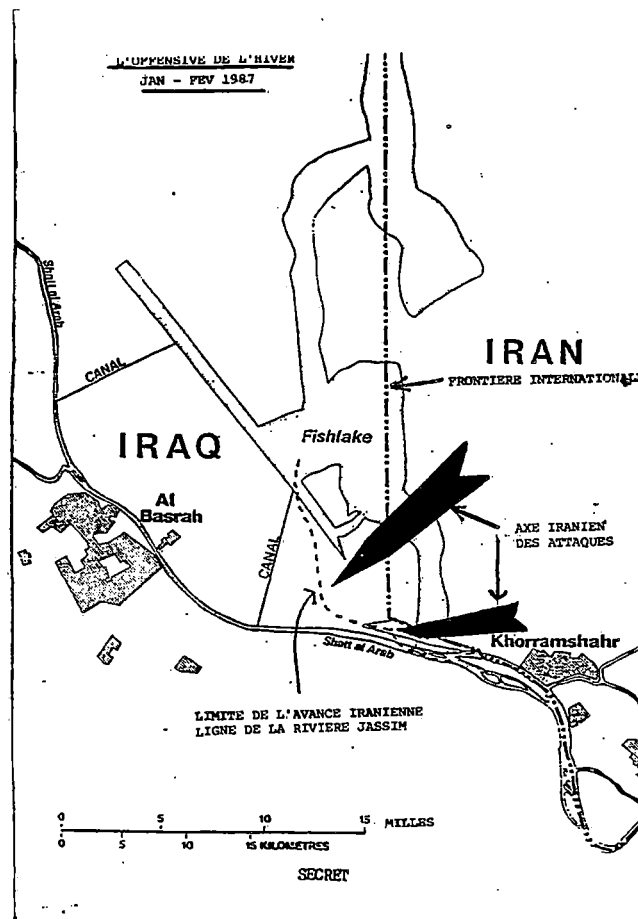
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**IRAN-IRAQ: LA GUERRE TERRESTRE - L'IMPASSE À LA SUITE DE  
L'OFFENSIVE DE L'HIVER**

Points saillants

- ° À notre avis, il y a peu de chances pour que dans l'avenir immédiat, les hostilités atteignent l'ampleur qu'elles ont connu en janvier et en février 1987. L'Iran et l'Iraq sont toujours à peu près au même point. (C)
- ° L'aide ininterrompue de l'Iran aux rebelles kurdes reste une épine dans le pied du gouvernement iraquien. (S)
- ° L'Iran est toujours résolue à renverser Saddam Hussein, mais elle n'est pas en mesure de porter le coup de grâce. Tant qu'Hussein restera au pouvoir, l'optique ne changera probablement pas même si Khomeiny disparaît. (C)
- ° Nous nous attendons pas à une fin prochaine de la guerre. Tant et aussi longtemps que les religieux à la tête de l'Iran feront preuve d'intransigeance, Hussein n'aura pas d'autre choix que de poursuivre la lutte. (C)



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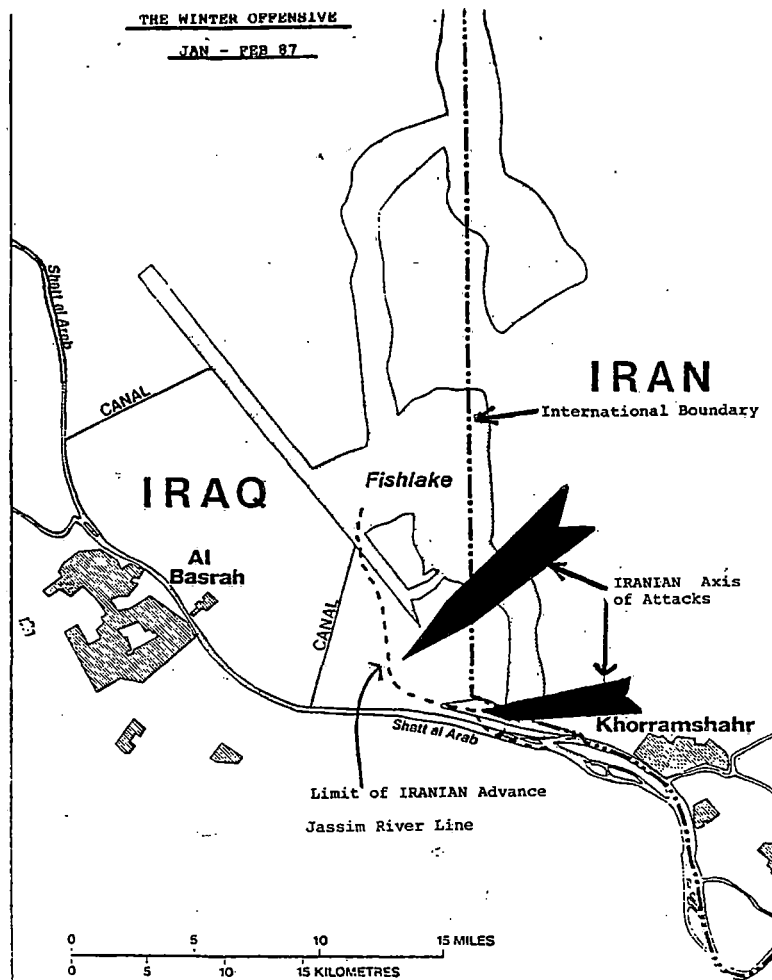
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**IRAN-IRAQ: THE LAND WAR - STALEMATE AFTER THE WINTER OFFENSIVE**

HIGHLIGHTS

- ° For the immediate future, we see little prospect of renewed hostilities on anything like the scale seen during January and February, 1987. The overall balance between Iran and Iraq remains essentially unchanged. (C)
- ° Iran's ongoing support for the Kurdish rebels remains a troublesome but not unmanageable thorn in the side of the Iraqi government. (S)
- ° Iran is still determined to bring down Saddam Hussein, but lacks the ability to inflict a decisive defeat. Even the death of Khomeini, as long as Hussein remains in power, would be unlikely to change Iran's view of the war. (C)
- ° We do not foresee an early end to the war. As long as the religious leadership of Iran remains intransigent, Hussein has little choice but to continue to fight. (C)



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Report

Introduction

1. The battle for Basrah is, for the moment, over. As usual the results have proven indecisive. Iran has gained 50-60 square kilometres of Iraqi territory, at a cost of up to 45,000 killed or wounded. Iraq stemmed the tide and held on to Basrah, but also sustained heavy losses of about 20,000 in the process. (C)

2. Overall, the balance between Iran and Iraq remains essentially unchanged. While it is true that Basrah is now within more effective range of Iranian artillery resulting in a significant egress of population, what is important is that it is still in Iraqi hands and this aspect cannot be overemphasized in terms of its effect on Iraqi morale. On this basis, both sides have claimed a victory; Iran, because it has gained some ground and Iraq, because it successfully prevented Basrah from being captured. In truth, neither side has won anything significant and both have suffered heavily in human losses. (C)

Short-Term Outlook

3. The war, now in its seventh year, has once again reverted to stalemate. In the Basrah area both sides appear content to occupy extensive fortifications facing each other across the Jassim River line and the Shatt al Arab (see attached map). (S)

4. For the immediate future in the Basrah sector, we see little prospect of renewed hostilities on anything like the scale seen during January and February 1987. Although Iran remains capable of mounting local, limited attacks whenever it chooses, with little or no preparation, it lacks the logistic resources necessary to move existing materiel in support of a major offensive. Under these circumstances, some months would be needed to preposition the ammunition and supplies to sustain a major effort. Since the ill-fated offensive adventure against Khorramshahr in 1980, Iraq has adopted a purely defensive posture and is unlikely to initiate any major operation. (C)

5. A second factor which militates against significant military operations in the coming months is the weather. Iran, long on sheer manpower but desperately short of equipment, prefers conditions which favour non-mechanized operations. The Basrah area, particularly in the winter months, is wet and marshy. This drastically reduces the effectiveness of the overwhelming Iraqi superiority in tanks (10:1) by limiting their manoeuvrability. Bad weather also seriously inhibits Iraqi air operations. From end-April until end-October the ground hardens sufficiently to restore mobility to Iraq and clear skies permit

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full operational activity for the Iraqi Air Force with its 12:1 numerical advantage. Therefore, we expect no major activity in this area before the onset of next winter. Further, ground activity in the war in the other sectors will likely remain at a low level, for the same period, with the possible exception of the northern sector where the difficult terrain favours infantry operations. Iran's ongoing support for the Kurdish rebels remains a troublesome but not unmanageable thorn in the side of the Iraqi government. Even here, operations involving formations larger than divisional size, up to 20,000 personnel, are unlikely. (S)

6. Although there has been some improvement in Iranian anti-aircraft defences since the end of 1986, Iraq remains virtually unopposed in the air. The most effective use of this air superiority has been against economic targets. Rather than waging all-out attacks on Iran's economic infrastructure, Iraq has chosen to restrict the campaign to selected economic targets or, on occasion, population centres, in order to drive home the point that it is capable of inflicting almost total economic destruction. This probably reflects the Iraqi realization that its defensive strategy precludes a military victory and that by restricting the air effort, the possibility of a negotiated settlement remains. (C)

Long-Term Outlook

7. Iran is still determined to bring down Saddam Hussein, but lacks the ability to inflict a decisive defeat. Even the death of Khomeini, as long as Hussein remains in power, would be unlikely to change Iran's view of the war. To do so, for example, would bring into question the point of having given approximately one half-million "martyrs" for the cause. The possibility, however, remains that the anticipated power struggle following the death of Khomeini may modify Iran's position. (C)

8. In Iraq, while Hussein is not on such strong ground, the security apparatus that keeps the government in power is pervasive and all-powerful. Murmurings of discontent are, therefore, either muted or silenced. It is unlikely that even the fall of a major prize like Basrah would be sufficient to remove Hussein from the stage. He remains firmly in charge, determined to repel the traditional "Persian" enemy as long as the religious leadership of Iran remains intransigent. We do not foresee an early end to the war. This conflict will probably drag on, for years, if necessary, until both sides, bled white during the process, are forced to the negotiating table. (C)

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