

HOW TO STOP IRAQ'S SADDAM HUSSEIN

Iraq's Saddam Hussein is giving America and its allies a first glimpse of the post-Cold War world. It is a sobering vision of a world in which Soviet power may be in decline, but where the democracies face well-armed barbarians, apparently enamored of power and unfazed by human suffering. Saddam and other aggressors can be stopped, but not by America alone. The Iraqi attack is George Bush's first test in post-Cold War diplomacy, the diplomacy of American leadership with responsibility shared among the United States, its allies, and other states with an interest in stopping aggression.

If Bush is to lead, he will have to set clear objectives and design a plan for achieving them. The immediate objectives of U.S. and allied efforts should be to: stop further Iraqi aggression; prevent global oil shortages; and pressure Saddam into withdrawing his forces from Kuwait and restoring Kuwaiti sovereignty. In pursuit of these objectives, the U.S. should lead an international effort to: blockade Iraq economically; deploy to the area U.S., allied, and Arab military forces capable of defending Saudi Arabia; send the clear diplomatic message to Saddam that he is isolated and that further aggression will be met by American and allied military forces.

Economic Measures. The centerpiece of the U.S.-led international effort should be an economic blockade of Iraq and occupied Kuwait, designed to force Saddam to withdraw his forces. The Iraqi economy depends on oil. If Iraq cannot export oil, its economy will be in danger of collapse and Saddam's political position will be threatened.

Iraq is vulnerable. Only three choke points must be blocked in order to stop the flow of Iraqi and Kuwaiti oil onto world markets: a pipeline through Saudi Arabia; a pipeline through Turkey; and Kuwaiti ports on the Persian Gulf. To shut the flow of Iraqi oil, America will need the cooperation of Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Turkey is a NATO ally, but has been hesitant to support U.S. policy in the Middle East. Now, however, Turkey is nervous about planned U.S. force cuts from Europe and looking to curry favor with Washington. The U.S. should make this a key test of Turkey's commitment to its alliance with America. As for Saudi Arabia, U.S. military support should be conditioned on full Saudi willingness to block the pipeline.

As the next likely target of Iraqi aggression, Saudi Arabia has an interest in stopping Saddam, but understandably is afraid to confront him. The Saudis face Iraq's million-man army and 5,500 tanks with about 50,000 soldiers and 500 tanks of their own. If Saudi Arabia is to stand up to Saddam by participating in a blockade, Saudi leaders will have to be reassured of U.S. and other allied military backing.

To complete the blockade, U.S. and other NATO warships must blockade the Straits of Hormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf to prevent ships leaving Kuwaiti ports from carrying their oil to world markets. To compensate for the loss of Iraqi and Kuwaiti oil, Saudi Arabia would have to increase its production — it has tremendous excess capacity and easily could do so — to keep world markets supplied and prices stable.

Military Measures. The first principle for American military action should be that America will not act alone. If Arab states and U.S. allies do their share, Washington can dispatch air and naval power to counter an Iraqi move into Saudi Arabia. There is of course some danger in this. U.S. surface ships and aircraft would have to face an Iraqi airforce of over 550 planes equipped with French *Exocet* and other missiles; Iraqi air defenses now also may include sophisticated U.S. *Hawk* missiles supplied to Kuwait. U.S. carrier-based aircraft therefore would have to be supplemented with such U.S. fighters as F-15 *Eagles* and F-16 *Fighting Falcons* along with air-refueling tankers and other aircraft deployed to bases in Saudi Arabia. Together this force could control the air over an Iraqi-Saudi battlefield and attack Iraqi forces on the ground, which will become increasingly vulnerable as their supply lines stretch out across the desert. This effort would require the full cooperation of Saudi Arabia, which will have to provide bases for U.S. planes. U.S. F-111 bombers also could be based in the Middle East for strikes on targets deep in Iraqi territory, including nuclear plants and chemical weapon and ballistic missile facilities.

It would be logistically difficult and politically unwise to send American ground forces to defend Saudi Arabia. Ground forces must be supplied by the Arab countries, and their willingness to supply them would be the best test of whether these countries are serious about stopping Saddam. Egypt, which on August 5 began mobilizing its army of half a million active forces and 600,000 reserves, is the most likely candidate for the mission. American Air Force C-5 *Galaxy* airlifters could be sent to Egypt to help transport Egyptian troops and equipment to Saudi Arabia.

Diplomatic Measures. Diplomacy should be viewed primarily as a means of backing up and reinforcing military and economic measures against Saddam. The main diplomatic message to be sent is that further aggression will be met not only with international opprobrium, but military force. Ongoing steps at the U.N. to isolate Saddam should continue. The important diplomacy, however, will be that between the U.S. and those Arab states willing to fight Saddam, and between the U.S. and its allies willing to send warships and to help enforce an economic blockade. As part of this effort, Bush should convey publicly and unambiguously to Saddam that aggression against Saudi Arabia, or such other Iraqi neighbors as Jordan, will be met by U.S. military force.

If Saddam is permitted to swallow Kuwait, he will pose a permanent threat to Saudi Arabia and could dictate Saudi oil prices. This would put him in control of about 40 percent of the world's oil reserves, allowing him to control world oil prices and squeeze the West, perhaps sending Western economies into a tailspin. From this position he would be tempted to threaten Jordan and then Israel.

Saddam Hussein can be stopped, and pushed back. An economic blockade can bring the Iraqi economy to a standstill and force Saddam to bring his armies home from Kuwait. Deployment of substantial U.S., allied, and Arab military force to the region can enforce the blockade, reassure Saudi Arabia, and stop Saddam if he sends his armies on the march again. Diplomacy can reinforce these actions. Action means risks. For the U.S. the immediate risk is to the lives of American citizens in Kuwait taken hostage by Iraqi forces. Saddam should be warned that he, personally, will be the target of U.S. military retaliation if American hostages are harmed.

The success of the plan to stop Saddam depends on international cooperation. For this, the U.S. will have to make it clear to its allies and the Arab world that America is not prepared to act alone. The test for Bush will be his ability to use his skill to persuade and pressure the international community to rally behind American leadership in opposition to aggression. If he succeeds, he will have established a precedent for defending America's interests in the post-Cold War world.

Jay P. Kosminsky
Deputy Director of Defense Policy Studies