

# The Sanctions Dilemma: Saddam vs. the UN

By Amy DeFrank

*Sanctions against Iraq are a contentious subject both within the United States government and within the United Nations. This paper examines the effectiveness of the United Nations' enforcement mechanism, the multinational Maritime Interception Force (MIF), as well as the humanitarian and economic effects of the sanctions upon Iraq. An analysis of the risks and benefits of ending the sanctions concludes that due to the limited effectiveness of the MIF, the sanctions in their current form are not worth the resources or the political capital required to maintain them.*

## INTRODUCTION

The controversy over the employment of economic sanctions as an instrument of U.S. foreign policy did not begin, nor will it end, with the sanctions regime currently in place against Iraq. The sanctions were first instituted on August 6, 1990, with the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 661. This resolution imposed a broad range of economic sanctions on Iraq in response to its invasion of Kuwait in hopes of compelling Iraq to withdraw from the country (United Nations Security Council 2000). These measures have been modified numerous times by the UN in the intervening decade, yet they remain as an ongoing attempt to contain Iraq and force it to conform to international will and standards.

When these sanctions were first imposed, it was with the backing of a large majority in the international community. However, in recent years, that once broadly based coalition of states has begun to crumble, often pitting the U.S. and the United Kingdom against other Security Council member nations on the issue of sanctions. Even within the U.S., an increasing number are speaking out against Iraqi sanctions and calling for them to be lifted, particularly due to the poor humanitarian situation in that country.

An entire book would be required to examine the sanctions regime in its totality. Therefore, this paper focuses only upon selected aspects, beginning with a component of the enforcement side of the regime – the multinational Maritime Interception Force (MIF). It examines and evaluates the operations of the MIF, and offers conclusions about the sanctions policy.

## THE OPERATIONS AND FAILINGS OF THE MIF

The MIF derives its authority from UN Security Council Resolution 665, passed on August 25, 1990 (United Nations Security Council 2000). As a maritime force in the Persian Gulf charged with the enforcement of sanctions against Iraq, the MIF intercepts and boards vessels in international waters suspected of carrying contraband, particularly illegally exported Iraqi oil. Though the U.S. by far has always played the largest role in the MIF, it was originally conceived as a force comprised of assets from a significant number of nations. However, the U.S. currently provides an overwhelming majority of the forces used for these operations, with the UK being the only other consistent contributor (U.S. House Committee 2000). Recently, the U.S. Department of State has become increasingly engaged in an effort to encourage old and new MIF partner countries to participate more actively by contributing ships and personnel to help enforce the sanctions. However, as present support for the sanctions regime in general is relatively low, this has been somewhat of an uphill struggle. At this time, the majority of the vessels comprising the MIF are diverted from the U.S. carrier group stationed in the Gulf. In all, the U.S. maintains a presence of approximately thirty vessels in the area, which are called upon to perform a wide variety of duties (U.S. House Committee 2000).

Since its inception in 1990, the MIF has queried more than 28,000 vessels, boarded over 12,000, and diverted over 700 for carrying illegal cargo (Department of State 2000b). Despite these seemingly impressive numbers, the MIF only intercepts a small fraction of the smugglers operating in the Gulf. State Department personnel involved in the process believe the MIF intercepts only five to ten percent of the smugglers moving through the Gulf. In fact, it has been estimated that oil smuggling topped over 100,000 barrels per day in January 2000. Subsequent rises in oil prices provide incentives to continue, and indeed increase smuggling activities (Department of State 2000b).

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Why does the MIF intercept so few smugglers? A variety of factors contribute, including: Iranian complicity, the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) "revolving door," increasingly intelligent and innovative smugglers, the sheer volume of the smuggling, and very limited MIF resources. All of these difficulties can be illustrated through the following discussion of the process by which a vessel is queried, boarded and subsequently diverted if found to be carrying illegal cargo.

A vessel acting under the authority of the MIF may issue a query to another vessel, typically outbound, in the Persian Gulf. If it appears that all is in order and there is no intelligence from other sources to suggest that the queried vessel is involved in illegal activities, then the ship is allowed to proceed. However, if any questions posed by the MIF are not answered to its satisfaction, or the vessel does not issue a reply, then it may be boarded by MIF personnel. In addition, the MIF occasionally possesses satellite photos of certain vessels, which clearly show them uploading oil from an illegal port or from another ship known to be involved in smuggling activities. Mina al Baqr is the only port through which oil exports have been authorized under the oil-for-food program in the Gulf. Therefore, if satellite photos exist of a queried vessel taking on oil at any other port, then that oil is illegal and intended for smuggling. Many smugglers go through a loading facility called Abu Flus, which receives its oil from the refinery Basarah. Basarah was destroyed in the 1998 air strikes, but has since been rebuilt and currently produces 140,000 barrels of oil per day, all of which is unauthorized (Department of State 2000b). Therefore, a vessel may be boarded on the basis of the intelligence gleaned from satellite photos.

Yet, even if the MIF possesses evidence of smuggling, it is not always able to approach those vessels involved. The MIF is authorized to operate only in international waters and may not conduct surge operations (MIF naval operations which enter a nation's territorial waters), without the express permission of that country's government. For a country to acquiesce to such operations would be to allow the MIF (primarily the U.S. as it supplies the majority of the assets) to greatly infringe upon that country's territorial sovereignty. Therefore, the MIF can typically intercept smugglers only when they venture into international waters. Over the years, oil smugglers leaving Iraq have developed a very effective system allowing them to avoid coalition forces in the Gulf with the help of an old foe, Iran.

Upon taking oil from an illegal loading facility, such as Abu Flus, or from another vessel, a smuggler may then enter Iranian territorial waters. Territorial waters are internationally recognized as extending outward twelve miles from a country's shore. The smuggler is then able to hug the coastline and remain in these waters until reaching the Strait of Hormuz. In this narrow waterway, the territorial waters of Iran and Oman overlap, allowing the smugglers to cross the Strait without ever entering international waters. They can then offload the oil in Oman or continue and exit the Gulf, thus

leaving the operational jurisdiction of the MIF. By remaining in territorial waters for their entire journey, the smugglers effectively stay beyond the reach of MIF vessels.

Yet it is only with the complicity of Iranian officials that the smugglers are able to operate in Iranian waters. According to reports, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard charges smugglers approximately fifty dollars per ton of oil, which buys passage through Iranian waters and provides falsified documents stating that the oil on board is Iranian rather than Iraqi (Global Intelligence Update 2000). The smugglers merely add this "fee" into the cost of doing business and then take advantage of a system that allows a large number of them to avoid entanglements with the MIF. If Iran were to crack down on smuggling through the Gulf, as it has sometimes done in the past at the urging of the UN and U.S., the amount of oil being illegally exported would drop dramatically. In what may be viewed as a political nod to the UN and U.S., Iran has on several occasions closed its waters to smugglers for periods, forcing them to use international waters. In fact, it did so in early 2000, though after a few months it reopened its waters to smugglers again, allowing large a number through. It is therefore apparent that the revenue Iran receives from the smugglers provides a powerful incentive for the country to aid the smugglers, and it may take a significant increase in political pressure on this issue for Iran to refuse passage on a more permanent basis.

However, if a smuggler does not use this system and passes through international waters, it may be boarded. Once boarded, an inspection of the cargo is performed and crew members are interviewed. If illegal exports are found to be on board, then the ship must be diverted in accordance with UN regulations. Some may question how MIF personnel are able to determine if oil found on board is illegal Iraqi oil and not legitimate oil from a neighboring country such as Iran. The MIF is typically able to make such a determination on the basis of several factors. In many cases, documentation found on board the vessel (charts, logs, GPS plots, etc.) indicates from which port the oil was obtained. In other instances, the satellite imagery or other outside intelligence is available. Furthermore, often crew members will provide information to MIF personnel about the ship's activities. However, on occasion less evidence is available and/or the situation is particularly politically sensitive and additional proof is needed before a divert may be made. In these cases, samples of the suspect oil are taken and flown to the U.S. for analysis by labs in California. Scientists in the U.S. have developed a technique that enables them to pinpoint not only the oil's country of origin, but also the oilfield from which it originated.

If the evidence collected proves the vessel boarded to be involved in smuggling operations, it is then diverted, not back to Iraq, but to a third country. The process of determining where to divert the vessel possesses its own difficulties. The country to which a smuggler is sent must first agree to accept the vessel, a task to which many Gulf countries are not always willing to agree. A country is most likely to accept a smuggler

if it has a pre-established connection with the vessel in question, (i.e. the company who owns the vessel is based in that country). Thus, the U.S. must then first look for any association between a ship and a possible divert state. Approximately eighty percent of the time, that country is the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which provides a level of cooperation to the UN force that has proven essential to its operation. However, the fact that a majority of the vessels possess a connection to the UAE is a major reason why this country is willing to accept such a large number of divers.

Once the ship is diverted to the UAE, the oil is offloaded and sold, and the vessel is auctioned off – often back to the original owner at a fraction of its worth. This additional expense is then simply factored into the smugglers' cost of doing business, as is the Iranian payoff discussed earlier. This is what has become known as the UAE's "revolving door" among government personnel involved in MIF operations. In fact, many ship owners, upon learning their vessel will be diverted, immediately will identify themselves to the UN as the vessel's owners. This allows them to speed the process along, thus helping them to more quickly buy back their vessel and return it to smuggling. Unfortunately, the UAE does not typically seek out and punish in a criminal court those who are financing these illegal activities. Such actions could be a significant deterrent to the businessmen involved in the smuggling operations, as the cost of engaging in this business suddenly could be much higher. However, while the UN and U.S. may encourage such enforcement actions, all that is required under the UN resolution is that the oil be offloaded, sold, and the profits be deposited in a UN account. Any further action is left to the host country. Moreover, the U.S. is reluctant to apply too much diplomatic pressure on the UAE over this issue, for fear that it may then retaliate by refusing to accept diverted vessels, thus causing enormous problems for the MIF. This delicate situation with the UAE facilitates the smuggling process by keeping costs of interception at a relatively low level.

Few countries other than the UAE are willing to accept more than a few diverted vessels. The processing of a smuggling vessel does impose some burden on the accepting country and many Gulf states feel that they already sufficiently contribute to the sanctions regime. Kuwait refuses to accept any diverted vessel with Iraqi citizens among the crew. The approval process in Saudi Arabia to accept a vessel typically takes so long that the MIF very rarely requests ships be diverted there. Oman will occasionally accept a vessel, as will Bahrain if pressed (though as Bahrain is the headquarters for the U.S. Fifth Fleet and the MIF, the U.S. is unlikely to press them). This forces the MIF to rely heavily on the UAE to accept divers. If more of the Gulf States were willing to accept vessels on a regular basis, the reliance on the UAE would be lessened, thus opening the door to the possibility of applying more pressure on other Gulf states to close their "revolving door." Furthermore, recent discussions within the State Department and U.S. Navy have raised the possibility

of expanding the list of countries to which vessels may be diverted.

Unfortunately for the MIF, the smugglers have also developed new tactics and strategies that hinder MIF effectiveness. One increasingly common tactic used by smugglers is the blending of the illegal Iraqi oil with that of Iranian or another country's oil in an attempt to mask its origin from any lab tests. While the oil analysis process developed by U.S. scientists is sophisticated enough to recognize this and identify the origins of the different components, it does significantly complicate and slow a process already long and complicated. Moreover, if another country performs an analysis using its own methods (which are not comparable in sophistication to the U.S. tests), the blending is likely to cause inaccurate or indeterminate results. This may create political difficulties when the oil in question is owned by a certain company or is aboard a vessel of a certain flag. For example, a large Russian flagged tanker, the *Academik Pustovoyt*, was recently intercepted in the Gulf. United States analysis determined the oil to be a mixture of Iranian and illegal Iraqi oil (United Nations Noon Briefing Highlights 2000). In this case, there was other evidence available before the oil analysis was done, but since the Royal Dutch Shell oil company owned the cargo and the tanker was Russian, it was felt that these tests needed to be performed in hopes of mitigating possible political difficulties. Initially, Shell disputed the results of the tests, claiming that oil analysis could not pinpoint its origin. This contentious issue was finally settled after numerous meetings, some of them at relatively high levels, and Shell agreed to deposit two million dollars into the UN account (United Nations Noon Briefing Highlights 2000). While awaiting the outcome of the dispute, MIF vessels detained the *Academik Pustovoyt* in the Gulf. While U.S. scientists produced conclusive results about the oil's origin the smugglers' tactics caused valuable MIF resources to be diverted to detain a single vessel.

The sheer volume of smuggling makes such a diversion of resources an increasingly significant concern. As previously noted, vessels from the U.S. carrier battle group in the Gulf comprise the large majority of MIF operational forces, along with a few British ships. Performing Maritime Interception Operations (MIOs) are only one of several duties that this group must perform, and often they must gauge the opportunity costs of engaging in one task over another. Furthermore, as oil prices continue to rise, the number of smugglers is also likely to rise as the profit incentive increases. Yet the number of UN naval assets remains constant; thus the MIF is being asked to do more with an identical force structure.

Clearly, the MIF is faced with numerous difficulties that greatly hinder its effectiveness. While MIOs have put a dent in smuggling operations over the past decade, those operations have been by no measure shut down. In December 1999, Leonodas Drollas of the Center for Global Energy Studies estimated that Iraq pulls in between 300-400 million dollars from illegally smuggled oil every year (MacVicar 1999). With subsequent rises in oil prices, and increased

Iranian complicity, this has only escalated. In fact, the U.S. State Department estimated that in January 2000, smuggling reached 100,000 barrels per day, and that Baghdad earned over 25 million dollars in that month alone (Department of State 2000b). Oil prices and the number of smugglers have both soared in the intervening months. Thus, despite some impressive numbers when viewed on a stand-alone basis, the MIF has been largely unable to prevent Iraq from reaping major financial benefits from illegal trade. Saddam Hussein has thus profited greatly from smuggling. The considerable revenue he has gained through these means has been used to construct extensive personal palaces throughout the country and finance his personal guard. He has accumulated considerable personal wealth while enhancing his political position by focusing the attention of the international community on the poor humanitarian situation in his country and blaming it on the sanctions.

Currently, the MIF does not possess the capacity to improve upon its performance. What would most greatly aid the MIF and significantly hinder smugglers would be an end to or significant reduction of Iranian complicity. The U.S. and UN must apply considerable political pressure on the Iranian government to crack down on smuggling, but both seem unwilling to press hard for fear of damaging slowly improving relations with Iran. In fact, in a U.S. State Department February 29, 2000 press conference cited several times in this paper, the issue of Iranian complicity was addressed. Then spokesperson James Rubin skirted the issue and used very conciliatory language toward Iran, a fact on which the reporters picked up and even commented (Department of State 2000b). Political sensitivities in the region may hinder the implementation of any changes. A similar situation exists with the UAE. Heightened pressure on the UAE to prosecute those criminals behind the smuggling would raise the cost of smuggling and increase the turn-around time of diverted vessels. However, before that option can be undertaken, efforts must first be made to ensure that other states would accept diverted vessels, should the UAE then decide to retaliate against such pressure.

As we have seen, the effectiveness of the MIF has been hamstrung by a number of factors. Should all or some of the above proposals be pursued, it is likely that the enforcement of sanctions in the Gulf would improve dramatically (as has been the case in the past when Iran bowed to political pressure). Indeed, while proposals are regularly discussed, due to wavering support for sanctions even within the branches of the U.S. government resistance often arises to any new policies that would indicate a harder stance on sanctions. Thus the MIF appears largely ineffective, and without the previously discussed reforms, the cost of maintaining such a force seems to outweigh the limited services it is able to provide. Moreover, as a component of the sanctions regime, it is criticized for contributing to the humanitarian difficulties in Iraq.

## THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS: ARE SANCTIONS TO BLAME?

Very few contest the fact that the current humanitarian situation in Iraq is dismal. However, there is copious disagreement over the bearer of the blame for the country's current state. Many cite the UN sanctions as the primary causative agent, a situation that Hussein exploits to his political advantage, both at home and abroad. Opponents of the sanctions point to hold-ups in oil-for-food contracts, the lack of food and medical supplies, the deteriorating infrastructure, and so on, as major factors contributing to the overall poor welfare of the Iraqi people. UN sanction supporters argue that Hussein earns hundreds of millions every year from smuggling operations, money he then spends on palaces and his personal guard rather than his starving population. In other words, proponents point to Hussein as the primary reason for the current condition of his people, while opponents place the blame on sanctions. While sanctions undoubtedly do contribute to the poor conditions in Iraq (as would be expected from such broadly based sanctions), it is also apparent that Hussein greatly exacerbates the problem. He clearly has the ability to improve the condition of his people to some degree if he so chooses. However, he can use their dismal situation to his political advantage in his push to have the sanctions lifted. The following section is a brief discussion of the current humanitarian crisis in Iraq, an analysis of the two opposing positions outlined above, and an argument for the lifting of sanctions.

There can be little doubt that the humanitarian situation in Iraq is grave. After eight years of war with Iran, and ten years of virtual diplomatic and economic isolation from the international community beginning with its invasion of Kuwait, Iraq suffers from a variety of problems. Yet agreement ends there. Facts and studies are disputed by both sides who contend that the other side is misinterpreting data, or deliberately overlooking contradictory information. For example, a study released by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) on August 12, 1999 revealed that the infant mortality rate for children under five years old has more than doubled in the past ten years in south and central Iraq. However, the study also indicates that the infant mortality rates have fallen to pre-war levels in the north. In Northern Iraq, the UN, rather than the Iraqi government, administers the oil-for-food program and sanction supporters point to this as evidence that it is Hussein who is to blame for the worsening situation (Department of State 2000c). Yet others claim that this discrepancy is not primarily due to the difference in who controls the program in the area, but rather due to a combination of factors. They point to benefits to the population from widespread overland smuggling across the borders in the north, the greater dependency of the south on an irrigation system that is largely deteriorating, and the greater presence of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the north (Economist 2000). Thus, the fact remains that mortality rates

are lower in UN-controlled areas, but how much significance one should give this is uncertain.

Other central issues are the deteriorating infrastructure and the need for spare parts in many industries. The budget that allowed for spare parts under the oil-for-food program was recently increased in a UN Security Council meeting, but opponents do not believe this will help significantly. Currently, many of the problems are encountered when possible dual-use items come into question. Certain machines and chemicals that are necessary in the oil or farm industries may have also more nefarious uses, and therefore these contracts are held up by the UN in order to further investigate the planned end use of these items. If it can be determined that the end use will indeed be legitimate, contract approval is given. It is a difficult problem for the UN when a contract is submitted to provide a legitimate and needed item that very well may have an illegitimate use as well. This then forces delays or refusals of contracts, resulting in criticism of the sanctions regime, and the continued decay of the infrastructure. Moreover, this deterioration of the infrastructure compromises Iraq's ability to produce that which is needed to sustain itself, forcing it to become ever more reliant on imports. Though figures show that Iraq now imports as much food as it did before the Gulf War, its capacity to produce its own food has been diminished, especially as the country is currently experiencing its worst drought in fifty years with an irrigation system in grave need of repair (Department of State 2000c). Sanction supporters point to the fact that Hussein seems to get the required items he needs to build palaces, with elaborate fountains, and rebuild illegal oil refineries. These items, and the money used to purchase them, Hussein obtains primarily through illegal means and uses them to benefit himself and those comprising his inner circle.

The oil-for-food program itself has also been the subject of much criticism from those who would see sanctions lifted. They view the contract approval process as slow and bureaucratic, citing late-arriving shipments, and a number of contracts that have been placed on hold (these holds do not include any contracts for food). In contrast, those who back sanctions state that approximately 90 percent of all orders placed have been approved, thus only a fraction are currently being held up, primarily due to legitimate concerns about their dual-use capabilities. Of course, sanction supporters are also quick to point out that Hussein has never taken full advantage of this program. As early as 1991, the Security Council attempted to create the oil-for-food program out of concern for the humanitarian situation, only to have it rejected by Hussein. The Council adopted a second oil-for-food resolution in 1995, which again met with refusal from Iraq. Finally in 1996, after five years of delays, Iraq agreed in theory to comply with the program, developed to help its own citizens (Department of State 2000c). The failure to order all the supplies for which money has been set aside under the program, including nutritional supplies for children and pregnant and nursing mothers, has also been a source of criticism by supporters of the sanctions.

The Iraqi government also has been condemned for making poor choices when it does spend the money that it has been allocated. For example, six million dollars of the money allotted for medical supplies and equipment was used to purchase a gamma knife, used for complicated neurosurgery. Another four million was spent on a MRI machine. Ten million dollars was therefore spent on advanced equipment when many hospitals do not have enough disinfectant, sutures, vaccines or other such basic materials and medicines (Department of State 2000c). Another dubious use of the allocated money can be found in the importation of alcohol. Alcoholic beverages are legal under the oil-for-food program because they are classified as foods, but alcohol is illegal in Iraq. Nevertheless, significant quantities of alcohol are imported to benefit the privileged, using money intended to help the people of Iraq through the purchase of necessary food staples.

The population is suffering from general malnutrition and an overall low standard of living. Sanitized water is not always available in some areas, the electrical system is deteriorating as much of everything else is, and the average relative wage of the Iraqi citizen has fallen drastically (Economist 2000). With the large number of children dying and the poor situation in general, some NGOs have begun to call the sanctions genocide. Yet Hussein is clearly far from doing all that is possible for his population. In fact, there is evidence that some of the food and medicine imported for his people under the oil-for-food program is then exported to be resold. On August 11, 1999, a Kuwaiti coast guard seized a vessel whose cargo contained 75 cartons of infant powder and 25 cartons of infant feeding bottles. The ship's captain admitted to committing six other similar violations (Department of State 2000a). The vessel, M/V *Minimare* was also diverted by UN forces and found to have contained 2,000 metric tons of rice that could have been used to feed the Iraqi population, but was instead to be sold for hard currency (Department of State 2000c). Therefore, not only is Hussein not taking advantage of all that is allowed under the oil-for-food program (which was further expanded on June 8, 2000), but that which his country does receive under the program does not always stay in the country.

Hussein himself has accumulated massive amounts of personal wealth throughout this time period: in July 1999, *Forbes* magazine estimated Saddam's personal wealth at six billion dollars (Department of State 2000c). One of the numerous palaces he has constructed since the end of the Gulf War is Abu Bhurayb Palace, which is complete with crystal chandeliers, gold faucets, and elaborate fountains and waterfalls. In the middle of a severe drought, the water resources diverted to these fountains could greatly benefit a people whose crops are suffering from a severe lack of water. Furthermore, the pumping systems used in such fountains could be used for sanitation or irrigation needs, again depriving the population of valuable resources (Department of State 2000b). It is estimated that Hussein has spent over two billion dollars on palaces since the end of the war, clearly illus-

trating the excess in which he indulges. Luxury cars have been provided for top government officials, along with extra rations and a plethora of other luxury goods, which benefit only those in Saddam's inner circle. Saddam openly uses the money gained from illegal activities to increase his considerable wealth, without applying it toward alleviating any of the numerous problems suffered by his people. Reports have also been received of Saddam using the illegal money to build up that which he desires most – strategic and tactical military capabilities.

### THE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF LIFTING SACTIONS

The suffering of the average Iraqi citizen, and what appears to some as the failure of the sanctions has caused many, to advocate lifting or substantially limiting the sanctions. However, this raises a very important question. What are the possible risks and rewards of lifting the sanctions?

This question is very hotly contested, with many taking hard-line stances on either side. However, both sides acknowledge that there are pros and cons to each option. Many opponents of sanctions have begun to call them a form of genocide and cite the poor humanitarian situation in the country as the primary reason for lifting the sanctions. They believe that with their removal the standard of living for Iraqi citizens will improve. No longer would there be delays in oil-for-food contracts or the prohibition of dual-use items that are crucial components in the oil or farming industries. They point to the deteriorating infrastructure that apparently has at times prevented Iraq from producing the amount of oil allowed under the oil-for-food program (though caps on production have recently been lifted and the budget allowed for spare parts expanded). They argue that the ending of sanctions would allow Iraq to acquire items needed to repair its refineries, which were previously prohibited as dual-use items or held up in the contract approval process. If sanctions were lifted, Iraq would not be limited in conducting repairs, allowing it to enhance its oil production and thus be able to purchase more food and medicine for its population. As of 31 January 2000, the value of spare parts contracts on hold was \$291 million, more than half of the \$506 million in approved contracts. The UN Security Council has become increasingly concerned with the deterioration of Iraq's oil industry. Consequently, it was one of the subjects addressed at some length in its 24 March 2000 meeting (United Nations Noon Briefing Highlights 2000).

Most advocating the ending of sanctions do have concerns about the development of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) program. However, they argue (and the argument is supported by this author) that the current sanctions regime is almost completely ineffective in controlling Hussein's efforts to acquire such weapons, due to the amount of smuggling the sanctions have been unable to restrict. Moreover, with the termination of onsite inspections in 1998, it has become very difficult to determine Saddam's capabili-

ties. Therefore, it is argued that the sanctions are accomplishing very little of their original purposes and only hurting the general public, not Hussein and his inner circle. Sanctions opponents give one more major reason for lifting the sanctions: it would deprive Saddam of a domestic political tool he employs to rally the population around himself and against the UN (particularly the U.S.).

Supporters of the UN sanctions largely believe otherwise. They do not believe the lifting of sanctions would significantly improve the lives of the ordinary Iraqi. Hussein's current behavior is used as evidence that should sanctions be ended, he would not necessarily devote any of the additional resources that would become available to lessening the plight of the common Iraqi citizen. They argue that he would largely continue his present pattern of spending and use newly obtainable resources to develop his military, not repair the country's infrastructure or come to the aid of his starving citizens. In direct rebuttal to opponents of sanctions, supporters commonly state that Hussein has had the capacity to rebuild his oil facilities had he chosen to do so. Basarah, an illegal refinery, was destroyed in the 1998 strikes, yet the Iraqi regime had enough spare parts for its repair. However, the Iraqi government often claimed it was unable to meet oil-for-food production targets due to a lack of spare parts with which to repair the refineries.

A major concern frequently voiced by proponents is the fear that the removal of sanctions will give Hussein a free reign to pursue a WMD program. While current sanctions have not completely prevented the dictator from the development of such weapons, the sanctions may have at least slowed it down and complicated it to a degree. Many supporters also view a lifting of sanctions as giving in to Saddam and admitting defeat. This is a step that some of them are unwilling to take.

### THE SANCTIONS REGIME: THE NEED TO EITHER STRENGTHEN OR END

So what is the answer? After being involved in MIF operations at the U.S. Department of State for four months and conversing with numerous personnel involved in the process, this author believes that the sanctions regime cannot remain as is. It needs to be dissolved, or be reinforced to close the significant gaps that exist and become more effective. Perhaps if the enforcement side of the regime were given more teeth, the UN would be better able to prevent Hussein from illegally accumulating the large financial resources needed to develop weapons systems. Yet if they are to remain as they are currently, the author believes that sanctions should be lifted because they are doing very little to deny Hussein the resources he needs to pursue his main goals, though they may make his pursuit a little more difficult. The considerable resources employed in the region to enforce these sanctions would be better used elsewhere, if they are not allowed to be as effective as they are capable of being. Furthermore, though

it is probable that Hussein will continue to let his people suffer even with the lifting of the sanctions (he has presented little real evidence of good intentions), he could no longer place the blame on the UN for Iraq's plight, thus losing an important domestic political tool.

Though the sanctions have been relatively ineffective, it is difficult, in general, to judge sanctions in terms of success. As David A. Baldwin pointed out in his paper, *Success and Economic Sanctions*, there is little agreement over what it means when one asks if sanctions "work" (Baldwin 1999). Without agreement on this basic concept, political scientists and economists have been unable to find an accepted way of measuring their success. Thus it is impossible to declare whether the sanctions have actually "worked."

Iraqi sanctions have become an increasingly contentious issue over the past several years, and it appears that they are likely to remain so in the immediate future. One of the major problems Iraqi sanctions pose for the U.S. government is the political minefield that surrounds the issue. It is so hotly contested on each side that any move in any direction by the UN is likely to attract major criticism. However, inaction on this matter has also been criticized since many believe, as does this author, that the sanctions regime as it currently exists, is not worth the resources required or the political damage caused by pictures of starving children in Iraq. Either changes must be made to the MIF and to the sanctions in general, or they should both be ended.

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