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Iraq: Humanitarian Needs, Impact of Sanctions, and the “Oil for Food” Program

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Abstract

Much of the Iraqi civilian population is suffering from shortages of food, medical care, and an infrastructure damaged by the 1991 Gulf war. This report discusses these shortages, and what the “oil for food” program, established by the U.N. Security Council, is doing to alleviate them. It discusses the conflicting views about the extent and cause of the civilian suffering and the reliability of the available data. Information on the political and military situation in Iraq since the 1991 Gulf war can be found in CRS Issue Brief 92117, *Iraqi Compliance with Cease-Fire Agreements*. This report will not be updated.

Iraq: Humanitarian Needs, Impact of Sanctions, and the “Oil for Food” Program

Summary

Many private and international humanitarian agencies argue that under the U.N. sanctions, Iraqi civilians, and especially children, suffer and die from lack of adequate food and medical supplies despite the “oil for food” program and other international assistance. They argue that the sanctions are inhumane and should be lifted immediately. On the opposing side, defenders of international policy argue that it is not the sanctions causing suffering but deliberate Iraqi policies diverting resources and even manipulating the humanitarian “crisis”. Some also accuse Iraqi officials of exaggerating the level of suffering. They point out that Iraq can end the sanctions at any time by meeting the conditions of its 1991 surrender.

The U.N. Security Council established the “oil for food” program in December 1996 to alleviate the impact of sanctions on the civilian population. Since December 1996, the program has been extended and amended to allow more oil to be sold in the face of evidence that civilian suffering continues, but Iraq alleges that the U.S. and British governments deliberately hold up the arrival of humanitarian goods. The United States and Britain argue that the Iraqi government creates the delays itself.

On June 4, 1998, the latest extension of the “oil for food” program began and will allow Iraq to sell oil worth up to \$4.5 billion to import humanitarian goods and pay for their distribution during this six month period, bringing the volume of permitted oil exports nearly to pre-Gulf war levels.

This report discusses the conflicting views on the extent and causes of human suffering in Iraq and the reliability of data. It describes and assesses the “oil for food” program, its operation, impact and perceived shortcomings.

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Iraq: Humanitarian Needs, Impact of Sanctions, and the “Oil for Food” Program

Background

U.N. sanctions were first applied to Iraq after its invasion of Kuwait in 1990. The 1991 report of a U.N. Under-Secretary General describing near-apocalyptic destruction in Iraq at the end of the war led the Security Council to establish the current sanctions regime. Security Council resolution 686, adopted on March 2, 1991, prohibited all trade with Iraq including the sale of oil. No limits were placed on Iraq's ability to import food, medicine or other humanitarian goods after the war, however Iraq's foreign assets were frozen. Under a special “oil for food” program, established by Security Council resolution 986 in April 1995, the sale of oil currently allowed may be used only to purchase goods authorized by the U.N. Security Council.

The “oil for food” program is not the only source of food available to Iraq. The Iraqi government controls domestic food production and distribution. This system, prior to the war, provided up to one third of domestic food. The “oil for food” program is also not the only way Iraq currently sells oil. Some oil (about 100,000 barrels per day at below market rate prices) is exported to Jordan under a longstanding program tacitly authorized by the United Nations. Press reports indicate that about \$100 million in oil per year is smuggled into Turkey and sold on the black market. Other oil is also exported through Iran and from seaports in the south such as Basra for black market sale. It is not clear how much this benefits the Iraqi government.

The “oil for food” program is not the only source of humanitarian aid to Iraq. Both bilateral and multilateral aid continues to flow into the country as it has since the end of the war. Because U.N. and other humanitarian agencies provide aid to Iraq both through the “oil for food” program and with other funding, it is difficult to determine how much humanitarian assistance is provided outside of the “oil for food” program. It is also impossible to determine the total amount of multilateral and bilateral aid provided by all donors. But UNICEF alone has spent \$200 million since the end of the war on programs of health, nutrition, water, sanitation, education and child protection in Iraq. The UNICEF budget for Iraq for 1997, independent of “oil for food” funded assistance, was \$16 million, including \$7.7 million donated by the United States. UNICEF expects to spend \$20 million during 1998 and 1999.¹ Similarly, the UN Development Program budget included \$12.8 million for Iraq in 1997. Other international agencies, countries and private voluntary organizations

¹ UNICEF. Iraq monthly country situation report. December 1997. p. 1

(PVOs) also provide assistance. The European Community's foreign aid program has provided \$230 million since the end of the Gulf war².

Prior to the 1990 Gulf war, Iraq had one of the highest per capita food availabilities in the region due to its relative prosperity, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Food availability has declined sharply since 1990, and, because other countries in the region have not seen similar declines, FAO believes that natural causes are not the reason for the decline. Since the end of the war with Iraq, numerous surveys and studies have been made of the health and nutrition status of the civilian population. Most studies show a continuing decline in health and nutrition of Iraqi civilians, especially children and the elderly. But it is difficult to determine how much of the suffering is due to the sanctions imposed on Iraq and how much is due to other factors. Imposition of U.N. sanctions followed a nearly decade long war between Iraq and Iran, during which spending on the social welfare system declined. The bombing during the Gulf war damaged or destroyed much of the public infrastructure such as water and sewage plants and many public buildings. And since the end of the war, Iraq's government has repeatedly attacked with military force its minority populations in both the north and the south parts of the country leading to destruction of homes and a growing population of displaced persons. There is a government-imposed internal embargo on the northern Kurdish areas which limits trade, financial transactions, and other commerce within Iraq.

Much of the information available on the conditions within Iraq is also questionable. In a closed society such as Iraq, information is provided either with the concurrence of the Iraqi government or in anecdotal form from people fleeing the country. The Iraqi government publicizes estimates that the death toll from the sanctions is 1.5 million, including 500,000 children. Many private and intergovernmental organizations cite these figures as their own. Other groups question the accuracy of the statistics, but have no independent sources of information. All estimates of the number of deaths due to lack of food or medical care vary widely based on the source. In an April 20, 1998 speech calling for a new look at the Iraq sanctions, European Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs Emma Bonino noted that despite the shortage of reliable information, all the information gleaned from U.N. and private sources led her to the conclusion that the Iraqi social fabric is badly eroded.³

Because Iraq has not satisfied U.N. Security Council conditions for a full lifting of the trade embargo, the "oil for food" program was adopted by the Security Council as a way of protecting the Iraqi poor while maintaining pressure on the Iraqi government to abide by the terms of the peace agreement.⁴ Iraq did not accept the conditions of the "oil for food" program until December 1996 and the first shipments of goods did not arrive until Spring 1997. Thus the "oil for food" program has been

² European Community Humanitarian Office. Speech of the Commissioner. Iraq Humanitarian Meeting. London. April 20, 1998.

³ European Community. Speech of the Commissioner.

⁴ For information on the actions of the U.N. Security Council in the post-Gulf war period, see Iraqi Compliance with Cease-Fire Agreements, by (name redacted), CRS Issue Brief 92117. Updated regularly.

in operation for a little more than a year. At the present time, a full lifting of the oil embargo is tied to certification by U.N. inspectors (UNSCOM) that Iraq has destroyed all chemical and biological weapons and the equipment and raw materials to manufacture them in the future. The problems with the “oil for food” program are political as well as medical and nutritional and have changed over the last year.

Human Suffering in Iraq and Its Causes

Observers of the Iraqi situation have identified disturbing health and nutrition problems affecting the civilian population. These have been tied to the consequences of war, sanctions, shortcomings of assistance, and the deliberate policies of the Iraqi regime. While the U.N. “oil for food” program was established to alleviate these problems, there is controversy over whether any U.N. run program is able to address them. These problems are:

Malnutrition. Opponents of the U.N. sanctions and critics of the “oil for food” program cite U.N. health evaluations over the 1991-1997 period to argue that the civilian population is suffering under current conditions, with children and other vulnerable groups especially hard hit. These show an increase in infant and child mortality and malnutrition. The most recent UN FAO/World Food Program (WFP) Food Supply and Nutrition Assessment was released on October 3, 1997⁵. It covered the food supply and nutrition situation for civilians in Iraq based on a June 9- July 8, 1997 visit, when the “oil for food” program had been in operation for two months. The mission based its evaluation on discussions with Iraqi Government Ministries and Departments, UN System Organizations, bilateral agencies and NGOs and on field visits throughout the country. The mission concluded that although there had been some improvements in the food supply situation under the revised “oil for food” program, malnutrition remained a serious problem throughout the country.

A UNICEF survey made in October /November 1997 indicated that nearly 1 million Iraqi children under five years old are suffering from chronic malnutrition in the center and south of Iraq. The Iraqi government maintains that the infant mortality rate has risen sharply since the imposition of sanctions, with government estimates ranging from 5,600 to 6,500 deaths per month in 1998 compared to 389 to 450 deaths per month before sanctions were imposed. Iraq’s health ministry figures indicate that 57,000 children under five die each year. UNICEF statistics (which are generally provided by governments) as published in the *State of the World’s Children*, show an under five mortality rate of 122 in 1996, compared with 89 in 1989, as shown in an earlier *State of the World’s Children*. Beginning in 1991, U.N. assessment missions have observed cases of marasmus and kwashiorkor, the most alarming forms of protein energy malnutrition, indicating that the nutritional health of the population has fallen to dangerous levels. Incidences of stunting, underweight, and wasting among children under five in Baghdad increased from 12%, 7%, and 3%, respectively, in 1991 to 28%, 29%, and 12% in 1995, according to a World Health

⁵ Special Report. FAO/WFP Food Supply and Nutrition Assessment Mission to Iraq. October 3, 1997. Iraqsanc.fao.txt.

Organization survey.⁶ (The figures for Baghdad in the July 1997 FAO/WFP survey for stunting, underweight, and wasting of 15%, 11%, and 3.3%, respectively, indicate that even early in the “oil for food” program, the country has made substantial progress, at least in Baghdad, though not to pre-Gulf war levels.)

Others, including the U.S. government, argue that much of the malnutrition seen in Iraq is caused by Iraqi government activities, and is imposed selectively. Iraqi dissident groups point out that the U.N. ration basket was supposed to be an addition to what the Iraqi government provided, and was never intended to provide all the food that the Iraqi population needed. These groups state that the Iraqi government has completely stopped distributing government subsidized food to some groups, leaving the U.N. food basket the only food available for many people. Families of dissidents and army deserters, as well as ethnic and religious minorities have lost their ration cards. The U.N. Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Iraq noted in his March 1998 report to the Economic and Social Council that “the effect of the embargo is harsher on members of ethnic and religious minorities, and that there exists discrimination in the allocation by the authorities of the limited resources available between rural and urban areas, and against the southern region with respect to the Marsh people.”⁷ (It should be noted that the U.N. Human Rights Rapporteur has not been allowed into Iraq for several years and this information is acquired second hand.) The U.S. State Department, in a February 28, 1998 Fact Sheet on the Oil for Food program states that Iraq has reduced its own purchases of humanitarian goods and diverted its own stocks to the military, or placed them in warehouses for future use. The United States asserts that Iraq continues to spend its available funds on arms and benefits for the government elite and its supporters. Finally, the United States points out, the assessment team was in Iraq during the 2 months when the Iraqi government refused to sell oil, thereby exacerbating food shortages. In a resolution adopted by the Security Council to mitigate the effect of this Iraqi shutdown of oil sales, the Security Council noted in the text that the Iraqi government bore full responsibility for hardships caused by its decision not to sell oil during the period.

Others have questioned Iraqi statistics on whether there has been an unusually large number of civilian deaths, particularly among children under five. According to the newsletter of the Washington Institute, Iraq’s official 1997 census showed a population increase of 3.5 million since 1990 which is consistent with a normal level of births and deaths for the country and a normal rate of infant mortality.⁸ The FAO/WFP survey stated that the official Iraqi census showed a population increase between 1987 and 1997 of 6.62 million.

Health. Another cause of the unnatural rise in deaths noted by UNICEF and the WHO, especially among children, is said to be disease due to lack of common medicines, medical equipment shortages and poor sanitation. Critics of the sanctions

⁶ World Health Organization. Health Conditions of the Population in Iraq since the Gulf Crisis. March 1996. p. 7 WHO/EHA/96.1.

⁷ Report on the situation of human rights in Iraq. p. 20.

⁸ Clawson, Patrick. ‘Oil for food’ or the end of sanctions. Policywatch. 303. February 26, 1998. p. 2.

argue that they are especially damaging in the health area, leading to unnecessary suffering and deaths. U.N. Director of the “oil for food” program in Iraq Dennis Halliday, stated during an interview on March 13, 1998 that “it is tragically the case that the lack of drugs, equipment, supplies, is, indeed, having a devastating impact on young children in particular but also adults.”⁹ The Secretary-General’s March 1998 report¹⁰ noted that despite the fact that a large variety of supplies have been delivered, quantities received to date remain inadequate...often covering only 20 percent of requirements. The report suggested that some of the problems were caused by inadequate internal transport at all levels which led to an average time of 5 to 6 weeks to distribute supplies from warehouses to the rest of the country, and that cold chain transport (of medicines which need to be kept refrigerated) is even worse. Other problems were caused by uncoordinated arrival of supplies, such as injectable drugs but no syringes. Some problems he blamed on U.N. personnel. Since the problems exist in both the Northern (U.N. administered) and Central and Southern areas (Iraqi government administered) area, it seems fair to fault U.N. administrators, at least in part. Other problems were caused by the lack of prioritization of needs by Iraqi government personnel, which led to oversupplies of some drugs and very low or no quantities of others, as well as poor communication between health care facilities and the Ministry of Health or even within health facilities. Before the war, Iraq imported an estimated \$500 million in drugs and medical supplies annually, or 75 percent of total needs. The other 25 percent were manufactured locally. According to accounts in the press, \$200 million worth of medicine was delivered under the “oil for food” program during 1997.¹¹

Following the changes made by the Security Council and the U.N. Secretary-General, Eric Falt, U.N. spokesman in Iraq, stated that a May 1998 report by WHO showed that the time lag for delivery of medical supplies has been cut to under four months. He noted that during May, 50 percent of patients received their full prescribed treatment, up from 39 percent six months before. Fifteen percent received none of their prescribed drugs, down from 25 percent.¹²

In other health areas, Iraq continues to maintain a high level of health care with the assistance of the international community. The UNICEF Iraq Monthly Country Situation Report for December 1997 states that the level of childhood disease vaccination coverage has been maintained at greater than 90 percent and that 50 percent of women of child bearing age in high risk areas were vaccinated for tetanus. These statistics are virtually the same as the figures UNICEF provided for 1988-89. The UNICEF publication *State of the World’s Children for 1998* states that no vaccination funding was provided by the Iraqi government.

Sanitation. Health experts and Iraqi doctors say malnutrition and increased early childhood deaths are no longer the result of lack of food, as they were before

⁹ Transcript of the NewsHour with Jim Lehrer. March 13, 1998.

¹⁰ Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to Paragraph 4 of Resolution 1143 (1997). S/1998/194. March 4, 1998.

¹¹ Reuters. June 7, 1998.

¹² Reuters. June 4, 1998.

the “oil for food” program. Rather they are caused by lack of safe drinking water and inadequate sanitation. This leads to intestinal diseases that can dehydrate and eventually kill children, especially in rural areas where people are poor and have little knowledge of preventing these problems.¹³ UNICEF’s December report on Iraq expresses concern that only half of the people in rural areas have access to a water supply from a network, public tap or well, compared to 96 percent of people living in towns and cities. Only 34 percent have a sanitary type of latrine, compared to 97 percent of the urban population. But a comparison with UNICEF’s *State of the World’s Children for 1991* (which covered the years 1985-88, before the Gulf war) shows similar statistics, with nearly all urban dwellers and 54 percent of rural residents having access to clean water. There were no statistics on sanitary latrines. Water and sanitation are clearly problems which predate the sanctions. The U.N. Secretary-General’s most recent report estimates the cost of rehabilitating the water and sanitation system at \$500 million.

Education. A growing concern is the state of education in Iraq. According to the Iraqi Minister of Education, \$170 million is needed for immediate rehabilitation of 7,550 schools at the primary and secondary levels and for essential supplies for students. According to the March 1998 report of the Secretary-General, only 12 percent of the educational supplies of the first year’s program have been delivered, which made it impossible for him to assess the program. UNICEF’s report on Iraq states that in 1995, only 58 percent of Iraq’s 4 million school age children finished primary school, compared to 71 percent completing primary school in 1985-87. This discrepancy may be due in part to internal political disputes which have halted teacher pay by the government in the northern Kurdish areas and the large increase in the number of displaced persons due to Iraqi and Kurdish military activity.

The Oil for Food Program

How the Program Works¹⁴

Security Council resolution 986 permits Iraq to sell limited quantities of oil over six-month periods. The money generated is deposited into a bank of Iraqi choosing and is used to provide humanitarian goods to Iraqi civilians under close U.N. supervision. The funds are also used to compensate victims of the invasion and occupation of Kuwait and to pay for UNSCOM investigations and other U.N. costs in Iraq. (Thirty percent is provided for compensation and about 5 percent for other U.N. costs, though these percentages can be changed.) After the U.N. Security Council adopts a resolution authorizing the sale of oil for a six month period, the government of Iraq must provide the U.N. Secretary-General with a plan outlining how the Iraqi government plans to spend the oil revenue, which also must be approved by the U.N. Security Council. This must include an agreed upon proportion

¹³ Struck, Doug. “Iraqi ingenuity aids survival”. Washington Post. May 3, 1998. A22.

¹⁴ For more detailed information on the organization of the U.N. sanctions regime, see Iraqi Compliance with Cease-Fire Agreements, by (name redacted), CRS Issue Brief 92117. Updated regularly.

of aid for the Kurdish areas of the country. The Government of Iraq distributes humanitarian supplies in the south and center of the country and the U.N. Interagency Humanitarian Program distributes supplies in the north due to the internal embargo against the Kurdish areas in the north. But the “oil for food” program provides funds for the entire country. U.N. observers are stationed throughout Iraq to ensure equity and to prevent diversion of food and other humanitarian aid from civilians and to prohibit the misuse of dual use equipment like ambulances or laboratory equipment. The program establishes a ration basket, which, under the latest resolution provides 2500 calories per person per day. Additional assistance is provided directly to vulnerable groups, such as widows with children, the elderly and the handicapped, by U.N. agencies and PVOs throughout the country.

Originally, the “oil for food” program was to be a supplement, available primarily to the poor and vulnerable, in addition to the ration which has been provided by the Iraqi government for many years. However, it has quickly become the only source of food for many Iraqis.

Shortcomings/ Bureaucratic Delays in the Program

The October 1997 FAO/WFP report criticized the slowness of the “oil for food” program. It noted that in the first six months of the “oil for food” program, only 43 percent of the wheat flour and 20 percent of the rice had been received. Some other foods and salt had not arrived at all. The report noted many other examples of delays in both food and medical supplies. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in his February 1998 investigation of the delivery system, agreed with many of these complaints. He spoke of “exceptional and unprecedented complexity” in the “oil for food” bureaucracy. He pointed out other delays, noting that only 25% of the phase I and II water and sanitation equipment budgeted has arrived in the south and central parts of Iraq. Though distribution is adequate, delays have occurred in the installation of equipment due to lack of funds and qualified technicians. In the northern governates, 21% of supplies have arrived.¹⁵

While not disputing bureaucratic slowness, others argued that much of the delay has been caused by the Iraqi government. The March 1998 report of the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Iraq noted that twice the Iraqi government had stopped pumping oil for many weeks, choosing to wait for the Security Council to adopt a new resolution, rather than continuing to pump oil in anticipation of the resolution. “The Special Rapporteur notes that rather than taking every opportunity to facilitate the distribution plan in order to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi population, the Government of Iraq insists upon arguing about procedural mechanisms.”¹⁶ In a similar comment, Britain’s International Development Secretary was quoted in the press as saying: “With the volume of resources now available to

¹⁵ Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of resolution 1143(1997). March 4, 1998.

¹⁶ Report on the situation of human rights in Iraq, submitted by the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Max van der Stoep, in accordance with Commission resolution 1997/60. March 10, 1998. E/CN.4/1998/67. p. 21.

the government of Iraq there is simply no reason why children should be starving. But they are, and we must help them.”¹⁷

Supporters of the “oil for food” program also argue that the program can and has been improved since it began. Since his February 1998 report, the Secretary-General has worked to improve the response time by recommending that Iraq formulate a distribution plan that will prioritize applications and deliveries. The Security Council Sanctions Committee adopted procedures to process applications within two business days, issue approval letters on the basis of anticipated revenues, and release funds more quickly. Other options are also being adopted to improve the processing time of the program. The monthly WFP emergency report on Iraq, dated April 24, noted that the pipeline has improved greatly, and though some supplies are not sufficient to meet all needs, the supply has become more regular. During April, only rice and infant formula were insufficient, and those were to be supplied from government stocks. The U.N. spokesman in Iraq was quoted in the press as saying that the June ration would be complete, except for legumes (such as peas or beans).¹⁸ WFP’s emergency operation for vulnerable groups, including malnourished children, pregnant and nursing mothers, those in hospitals and other institutions, the internally displaced and refugees, continues to provide aid to 893,000 people with funds provided by donors.

Amended “Oil for Food” Extension

The Security Council adopted SC res. 1153 (February 20, 1998) in response to the problems identified both in the FAO/WFP 1997 study and the U.N. Secretary-General’s February 1998 study. The resolution amended the “oil for food” program to more than double the amount of oil that can be sold in order to raise and improve the caloric content of the ration basket and to provide one time infrastructure repair in water, sanitation, electricity, agricultural production, mine clearance, reforestation and education. Thus the purely humanitarian nature of the program has been broadened to include some rebuilding of the country.

The FAO/WFP study of October 1997 reported that the U.N. ration was inadequate in a number of nutrients and provided a low quality of protein. It concluded that sustained improvement in civilian nutrition would require a significant investment in rehabilitating the country’s agricultural sector, including better seed, more fertilizer, pesticides, farm machinery, animal feed and vaccines. It also called for repair of irrigation systems, and water and sanitation equipment.

Under the new “oil for food” extension, \$3 billion will be available for humanitarian assistance. Of this, \$1.113 billion will be for the food sector, to improve the ration basket and address storage and distribution problems. The plan allocates \$308 million to the medical services sector with 60% for import of required items for rehabilitation of hospitals and health centers and 40% for medicines. The plan allocates \$210 million for rehabilitation of water and sanitation facilities, \$411

¹⁷ Reuters. April 20, 1998.

¹⁸ Reuters. June 4, 1998.

million for rehabilitating electric power generation units. The \$250 million allocated to rehabilitate the agricultural sector will include \$80 million to rehabilitate irrigation equipment and \$50 million to increase poultry production. The rest will be used for equipment and supplies to enhance domestic food production. The plan allocates \$100 million to rehabilitation of schools, \$150.5 million to improving the telecommunication system and \$300 million for rehabilitation of oil production equipment and facilities. In all of these areas, specific allocations are made for the three Kurdish governates. In addition, \$55 million is dedicated to rebuilding Kurdish cities and towns and \$11 million for mine clearance activities in Kurdish areas.¹⁹

Impact on Sanctions

Though support for the current sanctions is less unified among Security Council members than it has been in the past, thus far, no Security Council member has indicated a willingness to end the sanctions entirely. The next vote on continuing them will be in September. Nonetheless, Under Secretary for Political Affairs Pickering stated in testimony during May, that after eight years of sanctions, “most states in the world either do not understand or do not care that the Iraqi Government is fully responsible for the Iraqi people’s suffering--they just want that suffering to end.”²⁰ The Iraqi government has continued to press for an end to the sanctions as the only way to relieve the suffering population, and has received support from many governments and international organizations, both private and governmental. In a July 2, 1998 press release, the Executive Director of the U.N. Iraq Program described the “oil for food” program as a mixed success, excellent in some sectors and not impressive in others. He stressed that the U.N. effort was never meant to meet all the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people. U.N. Special Envoy to Iraq Prakash Shah was quoted in the press as noting that there is greater awareness among U.N. member states, including Security Council members, of the harm being done to the Iraqi population by the sanctions. He also stated that no country expected the sanctions to go on forever.²¹

Some critics argue that authorizing the sale of \$4.5 billion in oil per half year or a total of \$9 billion per year in oil sales is actually an end to the sanctions. Average Iraqi oil exports during the 1981-89 period were \$9.54 billion per year, adjusting for inflation, or slightly more than will be allowed under the new “oil for food” extension. In addition, the Iraqis are guaranteed the sale of all the oil at a price higher than the current market sale price, which has been moving downward recently. The new extension of the “oil for food” program allows Iraq to import nearly the full range of imports that it would be making without sanctions (the exception being

¹⁹ Enhanced Distribution Plan Submitted by the Government of Iraq to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding of 20 May 1996 and Security Council resolution 1153 (1998). U.N. Security Council document S/1998/446. May 29, 1998. p. 3-9.

²⁰ Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Pickering. Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. May 21, 1998. Press release.

²¹ Reuters. May 25, 1998.

motor vehicles) at about half the pre-war level and to invest in infrastructural improvements.²²

Supporters of the increased oil sales, on the other hand, say that the tactic will reduce suffering among Iraqis and make it more difficult for the Iraqi government to maintain anti-American/British sentiments and nationalistic fervor.²³ As long as the oil revenue is kept out of the control of the Iraqi government, it hinders Iraq's ability to produce, store, or threaten to use chemical or biological weapons of mass destruction.

Finally, some express concern about a post-sanctions Iraq and how the sanctions should be ended. Kurdish separatist groups are expressing alarm at the potential end of an egalitarian distribution of oil revenue generated supplies and wonder what their future will be in light of the continuing Iraqi internal embargo. Others question how long the Iraqi population will have to wait for their country to be rebuilt and how patient they will be after such a long period of shortages. What safeguards can be put in place to make sure that the Iraqi government will use oil revenue for rebuilding Iraq, given the U.S. and British insistence that the current Iraqi government will try to divert revenues to building up the Iraqi military capability?

²² Clawson, Patrick. p.1.

²³ Weiss, Thomas G. and Crawford, Neta. A humane way to lessen Iraqi suffering. Boston Globe. December 24, 1997.

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