



Disc Review

Jp 01255

SIR CHARLES POWELL - o/r

cc Sir Robin Butler  
Vice Admiral Sir John Kerr (MOD)  
Mr Gozney (FCO)  
Mr Webb (MOD)

**Iraqi Options: Threat of a Pre-emptive Attack**

We do not know which way Saddam will jump. Reason should still push him to begin a last-minute withdrawal (total or partial) or to announce a withdrawal. On the other hand, his recent statements make such a withdrawal more difficult and he may decide to stand and fight.

2. If he takes this second course, he may decide to launch a pre-emptive attack. This could be against Israel in the hope of rallying the Arabs against Israel and the West, and/or against Allies in the Gulf.

3. Such an attack could come soon, not just on or immediately before the expiry of the UN deadline of 15 January. If, as is likely, Tariq Aziz gets an unpalatable message at Geneva and Saddam still is determined not to back down, he will have to judge whether there is any possibility of the political situation shifting to his advantage before the deadline runs out. If he sees little chance of this, he could well decide to attack before an Allied air offensive sharply reduces his capability. We have therefore to allow for the possibility of a pre-emptive attack as early as 10 January.

4. We do not know what his targets would be in such an event. He could use SCUD Bs and aircraft against Allied forces in the north of Saudi Arabia and extended-range SCUDs, possibly with CW, against targets further afield, eg Israel and Riyadh or Dhahran. As between the last two targets, there will be attraction in attacking large



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concentrations of Allied aircraft. But he will not be able to launch large numbers of missiles in a pre-emptive strike. He might therefore prefer to concentrate a missile-launched attack on Riyadh, where key operational headquarters and intelligence staffs are situated.

5. MOD share our view of this risk and British forces are being alerted.

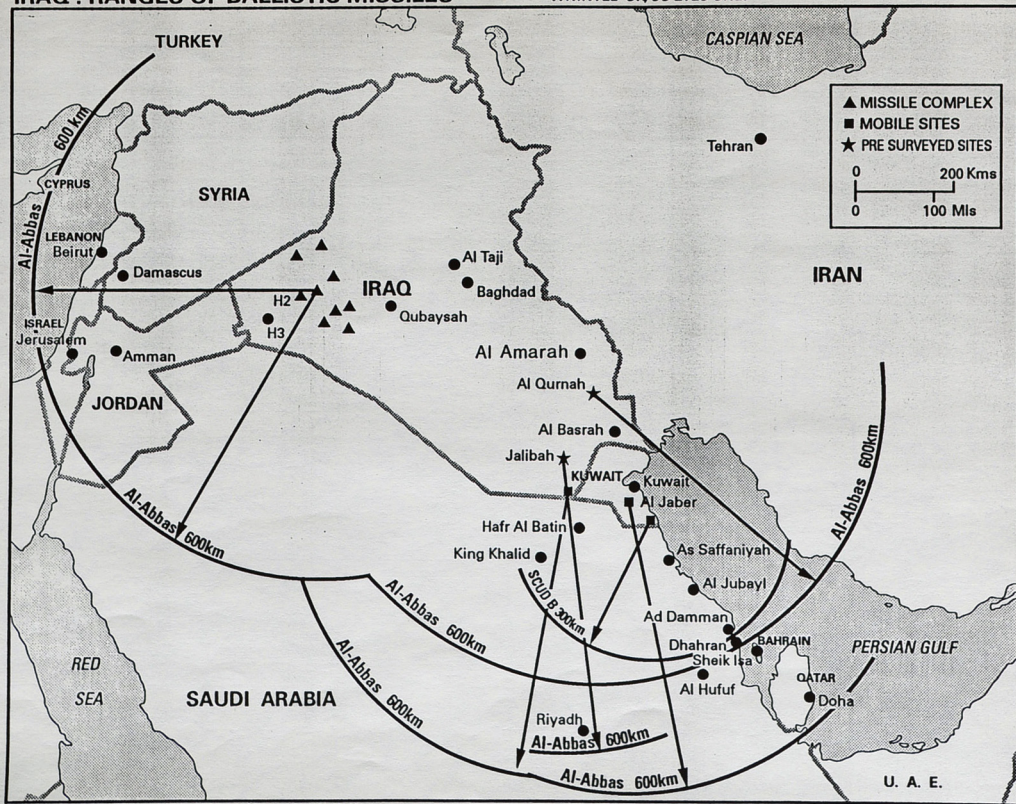
A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'P. Cradock', with a horizontal line underneath.

PERCY CRADOCK

8 January 1991

# IRAQ : RANGES OF BALLISTIC MISSILES

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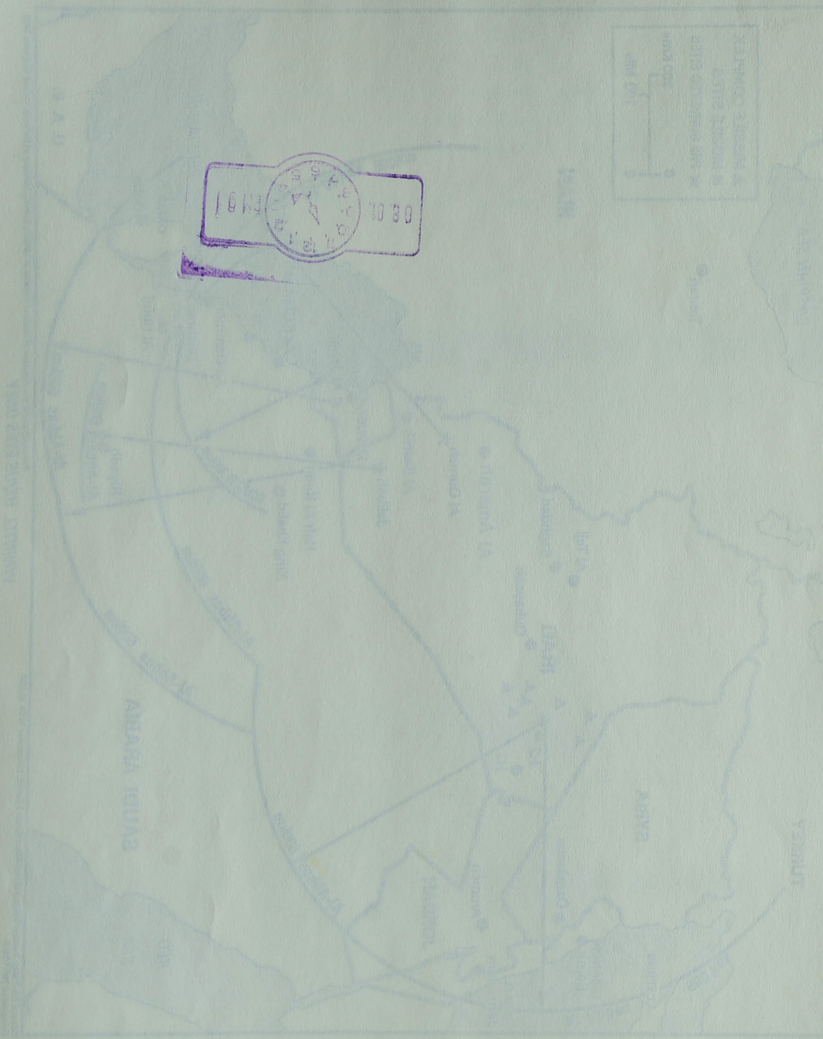


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ANNEX B



VIETNAM GENERAL STAFF

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