THE SADDAM TAPES

The Inner Workings of a Tyrant's Regime, 1978–2001

During the 2003 war that ended Saddam Hussein's regime, coalition forces captured thousands of hours of secret recordings of meetings, phone calls, and conferences. Originally prepared by the Institute for Defense Analyses for the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, this study presents annotated transcripts of Iraqi audio recordings of meetings between Saddam Hussein and his inner circle. *The Saddam Tapes*, along with the much larger digital collection of captured records at the National Defense University's Conflict Records Research Center, will provide researchers with important insights into the inner workings of the regime and, it is hoped, the nature of authoritarian regimes more generally.

The collection has implications for a range of historical questions. How did Saddam react to the pressures of his wars? How did he manage the Machiavellian world he created? How did he react to the signals and actions of the international community on matters of war and peace? Was there a difference between the public and the private Saddam on critical matters of state? A close examination of this material in the context of events and other available evidence will address these and other questions.

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107016859

First published 2011

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Woods, Kevin M.
The Saddam tapes : the inner workings of a tyrant's regime, 1978–2001 / Kevin M. Woods, David D. Palkki, Mark E. Stout.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-107-01685-9 (hardback) – ISBN 978-1-107-69348-7 (paperback)
1. Iraq – Politics and government – 1979–1991 – Sources. 2. Iraq – Politics and government – 1991–2003 – Sources. 3. Hussein, Saddam, 1937–2006 – Archives. 4. Hussein, Saddam, 1937–2006 – Friends and associates. 5. Hussein, Saddam, 1937–2006 – Political and social views. 6. Authoritarianism – Iraq – History – 20th century – Sources. I. Palkki, David D., 1974– II. Stout, Mark, 1964– III. Title.
DS79.7.W66 2011
956.7044092–dc23 2011026512

ISBN 978-1-107-01685-9 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-107-69348-7 Paperback

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Foreword

The Institute for Defense Analyses prepared the original version of this book for the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, under task order AJ-8-2826, the Conflict Records Research Center. The study addresses the task objective of drawing lessons from captured Iraqi records and making information in the captured materials available to the scholarly community. The original study, and the larger body of captured recordings on which it rests, was designed to provide researchers with important insights into the inner workings of the regime of Saddam Hussein and, it is hoped, the nature of authoritarian regimes more generally.

Analysts will benefit for years to come from reviewing copies of the captured records at the Conflict Records Research Center (CRRC), which recently opened its doors at the National Defense University's Institute for National Strategic Studies, in Washington, DC. Saddam's regime is gone forever, yet important insights will emerge, and understandings evolve, as a new generation of students and scholars cuts its teeth on these fascinating records. Lessons derived from the captured records will also be of considerable import to policymakers, because conventional understandings about how Saddam's regime operated continue to influence expectations about events in and outside of Iraq. As William Faulkner once observed, "The past is never dead. It's not even past."

Saddam emerges from these transcripts as a highly intelligent yet frequently deluded man. As the editors point out, his worldview consisted of a "curious mix of shrewdness and nonsense." He was a tyrant who foolishly and ruthlessly invaded his neighbors and repressed his people, yet he was also a pragmatist whose perspicuity at times exceeded that of his generals and advisors. He ordered his lieutenants to restrict UN inspectors' access to suspected WMD sites, to bribe inspectors, and to refuse to deliver information on Iraq's foreign suppliers of WMD-related materials. Despite such

obstructionism, the recordings are consistent with other evidence indicating that Iraq had divested itself of prohibited nuclear, chemical, and biological weapon stockpiles and activities prior to the 2003 invasion. As Saddam emphasized to his inner circle, "We have nothing; not even one screw."

The editors provide context to the transcripts and highlight key observations, yet emphasize that the book was intended more to introduce the recordings to scholars, and to enable them to ask their own questions and to reach their own conclusions, than to compile a list of definitive findings. The National Defense University is pleased to invite scholars to visit the CRRC to conduct this important research.

Dr. Hans Binnendijk

Vice President for Research and Applied Learning, National Defense University

Acknowledgments

The editors wish to thank the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy for generously sponsoring this project. The Joint Advanced Warfighting Division, which is responsible for the development and publication of this study, is a division at the Institute for Defense Analyses. Related works were cosponsored by the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics; the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy; the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and the Commander of U.S. Joint Forces Command.

The editors owe a debt of gratitude to a number of individuals. Significant contributions by Jessica M. Huckabey and Elizabeth A. Nathan on early drafts of several chapters were invaluable. Research support from Hal Brands, Jon Grinspan, Kristen Sproat, and Ana Venegas was critical in managing the scope of this project. Mike Pease played a key role in locating and categorizing candidate recordings for translation. Laila Sabara spent countless hours summarizing recordings, translating, and correcting others' translations. Carolyn Leonard provided expert editing assistance. The Conflict Records Research Center staff, especially Joseph Simons, assisted in creating CRRC citations. Robert Jervis, Marcus Jones, James Kurtz, Peter (Pooch) Picucci, Judith Yaphe, and four anonymous Cambridge University Press reviewers read the entire manuscript and offered invaluable comments and suggestions. Despite all of the help, any mistakes in this study are the sole responsibility of the editors.

Note to Readers

In preparing this volume, the editors worked through a vast amount of material, most of it fascinating. Unfortunately, space constraints required painful trade-offs, and the material here represents only a small portion of the available Saddam tapes. Furthermore, none of the transcripts here is complete. In theory, the less excised from a transcript, the better the reader can understand the context of the conversation. In practice, many of the translations contain rambling, tangential discussions or otherwise distracting and relatively unimportant material. Therefore, in many places, the editors deleted material they considered to be less important to cover more ground, fully aware that these represented decisions with which others might disagree. In an effort to provide researchers the opportunity to explore the material to decide for themselves, the editors and their colleagues at the Institute for Defense Analyses have worked with the staff of the National Defense University's Conflict Records Research Center (CRRC) under sponsorship from the U.S. Department of Defense to open digital copies of the records to the general scholarly community at the CRRC. The full transcripts of conversations presented here, as well as digital copies of tens of thousands of pages of other Iraqi state records and Al Qaeda related documents, are or will shortly become available to scholars at the CRRC.

The editors of this study are aware of concerns about the appropriate use of captured records and potential for harm to innocent individuals that could occur through careless disclosure of sensitive material. In regard to the first concern, the editors find that analyzing captured state records for historical purposes is consistent with international law and has a lengthy history of precedents in state behavior. Although debates exist as to the future definition of records, archives, and cultural property, the copies of material accessed for this research clearly fall into the category of state records seized during armed conflict.[1] The clearest precedent was the capture,

[1] See Douglas Cox, "Archives and Records in Armed Conflict: International Law and the Current Debate over Iraqi Records and Archives," *Catholic University Law Review* 59 (July 2010): 1001–56.

copy, and research into the records of the former Axis powers at the close of World War II. The Allies treated these records, in accordance with international law, as "public moveable property seized during hostilities pursuant to military necessity."[2] Title to these state records, as distinguished from cultural property, passed to the capturing power. The United States eventually returned (technically "donated") the vast majority of the original records to the postwar governments in both West Germany and Japan. It did, however, retain copies of certain state records, which it subsequently made available to scholars. The "emancipation" of these records made an important contribution to historical scholarship of the shared history between former adversaries.

The second concern is equally important. In any dissemination of original records or copies thereof, whether to Iraqis, Americans, or others, great care must be taken to minimize risk of harm to innocent individuals. Guided by such concerns, in one transcript the editors redacted the names of Iraqi citizens who were not senior government officials acting in their official capacities. Such considerations are central to the ethical use of any such records and a major consideration in both the preparation of this work and ongoing research at the Conflict Records Research Center. These same considerations should, and almost certainly will, influence the timing and manner in which the original records may eventually be returned.

Several devices occur throughout to indicate where sections have been deleted from the transcripts, or to clarify meaning. Ellipses and centered section dividers indicate deleted text. When the words of only one speaker have been deleted, ellipses are found within the text. When words from multiple speakers have been deleted, centered section dividers replace the excised passages. A dash indicates when a speaker has trailed off or been interrupted; "[*interrupting*]" will often appear to distinguish between the two. When one word or words was incomprehensible to the translator, this has been marked as "[*inaudible*]." Laughter, discontinuities in the recording, and other such disruptions are similarly indicated with an italicized comment inside square brackets. In a few places, the editors added unitalicized words in square brackets to the dialogue to summarize excised text or to otherwise enhance clarity.

Insofar as possible, the editors have tried to present these transcripts from an Iraqi perspective. Because individuals in Arabic generally go by their first names, speakers are identified by their first rather than last names. Where Iraqi names for events differ from their English counterparts, these terms have been translated directly. For instance, Iraq's war with the international coalition in 1991 was the Mother of All Battles, Iraq's primary enemy to its

[2] Such records are treated as "Spoils of War" in accordance with U.S. law (50 USC sec. 2204) and international law (specifically, but not limited to, the 1907 Hague Regulations).

west was the Zionist Entity, and so forth. Throughout the study, the editors have sought to use the most common English transliterations of Arabic names.

Identifying the speakers in each recording has been difficult, as they did not always address one another by name. Most of the recordings are audio files without an index to contents, and the translators had to identify individuals by recognizing voices and other cues. This was particularly challenging because the recordings are often of poor sound quality and frequently contain extraneous noises such as clinking dishes or even, in a few cases, street sounds. A few conversations were videotaped, and these, of course, provide additional clues. Despite our efforts, many speakers remain unidentified. Electronic enhancement of the recordings might, in the future, improve the audio quality, thus enabling better speaker identification and improved translations. Unidentified speakers are enumerated as Male 1, Male 2, and so on (as it happens, all the voices in the transcripts here are male); however, Male 1 in one conversation is not necessarily the same Male 1 in another. When different parts of the same recording are used in different places, though, the numbering of unidentified males remains constant. In the few cases where their other names are unknown, speakers are identified only by their "Abu" names, an informal naming convention in the Arab world: Abu X means "father of X."

Beyond identifying the speakers, identifying those present in meetings was, for this study, generally infeasible. Most of the tapes lack lists of meeting participants. Although it is often possible to confirm the presence of speakers by their voices, voice recognition cannot identify individuals who might have remained silent. Even when we know the type of meeting (e.g., cabinet, RCC), this is no guarantee that all members were present. Nor does knowledge of the meeting type necessarily tell us who else might have been invited to temporarily take a seat at the table. Perhaps ongoing translation efforts will reveal master lists of meetings and meeting participants. Alternatively, interviews with identified participants could help establish who was in the room during given meetings. In the meantime, interested readers might benefit from reviewing lists of Iraqi officials already in the public sphere.[3]

This project was fortunate to have the services of Ms. Laila Sabara, a native Arabic speaker with substantial experience translating Iraqi documents. In addition to her work as the project's lead translator, she reviewed translations repurposed from U.S. government military operations, intelligence efforts (notably the Iraq Survey Group), and legal investigations.

[3] For instance, see Edmund A. Ghareeb, with Beth Dougherty, *Historical Dictionary of Iraq: Historical Dictionaries of Asia, Oceania, and the Middle East*, No. 44 (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004).

The full transcripts of conversations excerpted here, as well as digital copies of tens of thousands of pages of other Iraqi state records and Al Qaeda–related documents are or will shortly become available to scholars at the CRRC. Notwithstanding Ms. Sabara's considerable expertise, visiting researchers at the CRRC will almost certainly discover translation errors in this study. The editors encourage researchers to visit the CRRC to read the full transcripts, to listen to the audio files, and to explore other captured records from Iraq and Afghanistan not referenced in this book. Approximately two-thirds of the records cited in this study, along with full English translations, were available in the CRRC when *The Saddam Tapes* manuscript went to press. Asterisk marks preceding certain CRRC citations indicate that these records are not yet available at the CRRC. The CRRC record numbers reveal whether the records are audio, video, or document files.[4] The CRRC provides transcripts and audio files of three records from the 1991 Gulf War on its Web site and is preparing dozens of records from the Iran-Iraq War for release to the Internet.[5]

[4] All CRRC records cited in this book began with an "SH," indicating that they belong to the "Saddam Hussein Regime" portion of the CRRC's collection. The next series of letters is tied to the originating Iraqi agency of the specific record. For instance, the special category "Saddam Tapes" is marked *SHTP*. An *A* for audio, *V* for video, or *D* for document follows the abbreviation of the originating agency. The remaining numbers merely indicate the order in which the records were added to the database.

[5] The CRRC posts a list of all CRRC records on its Web site, which it will update as it adds new records to the collection. The center currently houses roughly 1,200 records, constituting some thirty-four thousand pages. Of those records, 138 are audio files involving conversations with Saddam (see www.ndu.edu/inss/index.cfm?secID=101&pageID=4&type=section).

Dramatis Personae

Name	Biographical Details
Abd al-Ghani al-Ghafur	Iraqi Regional Command member (1982–2001), cabinet minister without portfolio (1982–91)
Abdul Halim Khaddam	Syrian foreign minister (1970–1984) and vice president (1984–2000)
Abid Hamid Mahmud al-Tikriti	Iraqi military officer, later Hussein's personal secretary (1990s)
Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr	President of Iraq (1968–79)
Ahmed Hussein Khudayr al-Samarrai	Iraq's minister of foreign affairs (1991–1993), prime minister (1993–1994), finance minister (1994–2001)
Ahmed Yassin al-Samarrai	Iraq's head of the presidential cabinet during the Gulf War (1991)
Alain Juppe	French foreign minister (1993–1995) and prime minister (1995–1997)
Alexey Kosygin	Premier of Soviet Union (1964–1980)
Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani	President of Iran (1989–1997)
Ali Hassan al-Majid, aka Chemical Ali	Iraq's military governor of Kuwait (1990), defense minister (1991–1995), interior minister (1991), and member of the Revolutionary Command Council (1991–2003)
Amir Hamudi Hassan al-Sa'di	Iraqi presidential science adviser
Amir Muhammad Rashid al-Ubaydi	Iraq's minister of oil (1996–2003), head of the Organization of Military Industrialization (early 1990s)
Andrei Kozyrev	Russian foreign minister (1990–1996)
Anthony (Tony) Lake	U.S. national security adviser (1993–1997)
Anwar Sadat	President of Egypt (1970–1981)

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Name	Biographical Details
Boutros Boutros-Ghali	UN secretary-general (1992–1997)
Colin Powell	Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff during the Gulf War (1991)
Elias Farah	Syrian Ba'athist intellectual
Fahd Ahmad Al-Fahd	Kuwaiti director of state security during the Gulf War (1991)
Fahd bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud	Ruler of Saudi Arabia (1982–1995)
Gamal abd Nasser	President of Egypt (1956–1970)
George Habash, aka al-Hakim	Founder of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
George Herbert Walker Bush	U.S. president (1989–1993)
George Schultz	U.S. secretary of state (1982–1989)
Haitham Rashid Wihaib	Iraq's minister of protocol (1980–1993)
Hamid Hammadi	Saddam's secretary and president's office director (1982–?), Iraq's information minister (1991–2001), and culture minister (1992–2003)
Hazim Ali	Senior official in Iraq's biological weapons program
Hazim Ayubi	Lieutenant general who commanded Iraqi Scud forces during the Gulf War (1991)
Hikmat Mizban Ibrahim al-Azzawi	Iraq's minister of finance (1995–2003)
Hosni Mubarak	President of Egypt (1981–2011)
Houari Boumedienne	Ruler of Algeria (1965–1978)
Husam Muhammad al-Yasin, aka Husam Muhammad Amin	Iraqi Head of National Monitoring Directorate (liaison between UN inspectors and Iraqi officials)
Hussein Kamil al Majid	Saddam's son-in-law, head of Special Security Organization (1983–1989), head of Military Industrial Commission (1987–1995)
Hussein Rashid Muhammad al-Tikriti	Commander of the Republican Guard (1980–1987), Iraqi Army chief of staff (1990–1991)
Igor Ivanov	Russian first deputy minister of foreign affairs (1994–1998) and foreign minister (1998–2004)
Iyad Khali Zakil	Iraqi major general, commander, IV Corps during Gulf War (1991)
Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri	Iraqi vice chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council (1982–2001)
Jaber al-Ahmed al-Jaber al-Sabah	Emir of Kuwait (1977–2006)
Jalal al-Talabani	Kurdish separatist leader and founder of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
James Baker	U.S. secretary of state (1989–1992)
Jimmy Carter	U.S. president (1977–1981)

Name	Biographical Details
John Major	British prime minister (1990–1997)
Khidir Hamza, aka Hazem	Iraqi nuclear physicist who defected in 1994
King Hussein bin Talal	King of Jordan (1952–1999)
Latif Jasim	Iraq's minister of culture and information (1979–1991), member of Regional Command (1982–91), minister of labor and social affairs (1993–1996), member of Revolutionary Command Council (1994–2001)
Leonid Brezhnev	Head of state, Soviet Union (1964–1982)
Madeleine Albright	U.S. secretary of state (1997–2001)
Mahdi Obeidi	Nuclear scientist who headed Iraq's centrifuge enrichment program (1987–1991), director of Ministry of Industry and Military Industrialization (2000–2003)
Mahmud Fayzi Muhammad al-Hazza	Head of Jihad Operations Command during the Gulf War (1991)
Margaret Thatcher	British prime minister (1979–1990)
Mazban Khader Hadi	Iraqi member of Revolutionary Command Council and Republican Guard commander
Menachim Begin	Israeli prime minister (1977–1983)
Mikhael Gorbachev	Head of state, Soviet Union (1985–1991)
Mizban Khadr al-Hadi	Iraqi member of Revolutionary Command Council (1991–2001)
Muammar al-Gaddafi	Leader of Libya (1969–present)
Muhammad Hamzah al-Zubaydi	Iraq's deputy prime minister (1991, 1994–2001), prime minister (1991–1993), member of Revolutionary Command Council (1991–2001), Regional Command member (1982–1991)
Muhammad Nuri al-Shammari	Iraq's director of Civil Defense Department (1990s–2003)
Muhammad Reza Pahlavi	Shah of Iran (1941–1979)
Muhammad Saeed al-Sahhaf, aka Baghdad Bob	Iraqi foreign minister (1992–2001) and information minister (2001–2003)
Na'im Haddad	Speaker of Iraqi National Assembly (1980–1984), member of Revolutionary Command Council (1977–1986)
Nizar al-Khazraji	Head of the Iraqi army's First Corps (1984–1988), Iraqi Army chief of staff (1988–1990), fled Iraq in 1996
Nizar Hamdun	Iraq's ambassador to the United States (1984–1987), deputy foreign minister (1988–1992), ambassador to the United Nations (1992–98), and secretary of the Foreign Ministry (1999–2001)

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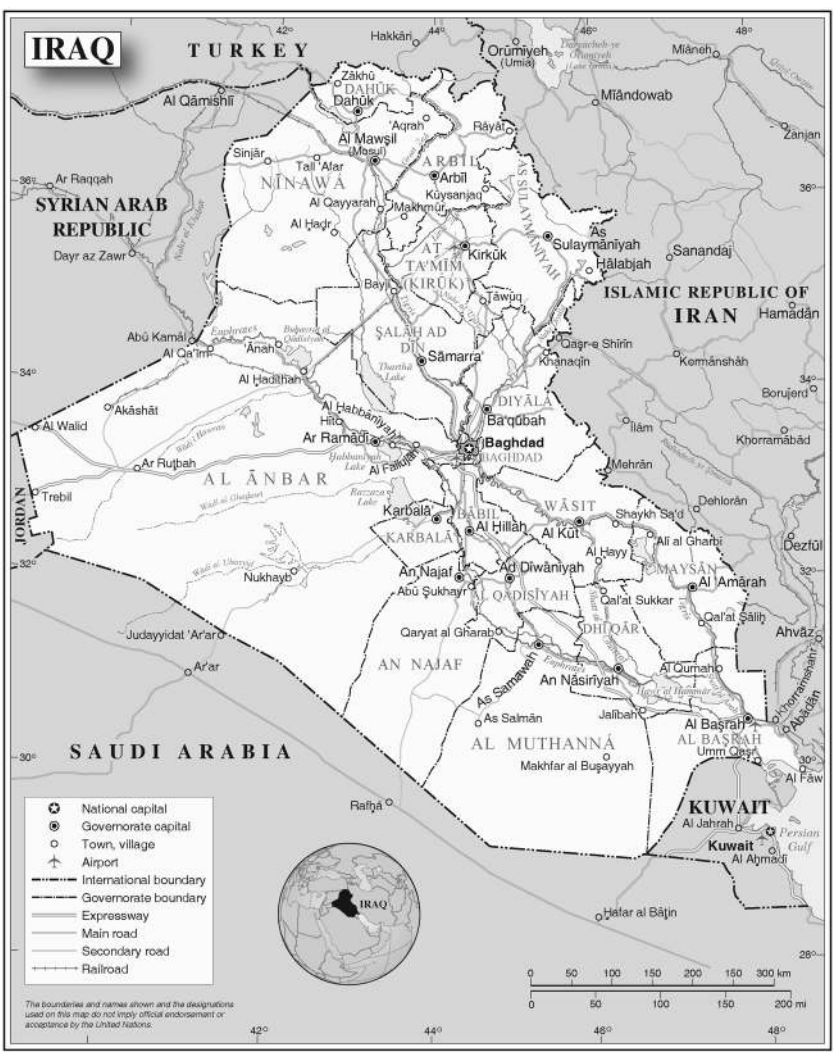
Name	Biographical Details
Norman Schwarzkopf	Commander of coalition forces during the Gulf War (1991)
Omid Medhat Mubarak, aka Ahmeed Medhat	Iraqi health minister (1993–2003), Iraqi labor and social affairs minister (1989–1993)
Oscar Wyatt	American businessman implicated in the UN oil-for-food scandal
Peter de la Billiere	Commander of British forces during the Gulf War (1991)
Qaboos Bin Sa'id Bin Taimour al-Sa-id	Ruler of Oman (1970–present)
Qays (possibly Qais Abd al-Mu'nim al-Zawawi)	Omani foreign minister
Qusay Hussein	Saddam's son, head of Special Security Organization (1995–2003)
Ra'ad al-Hamdani	Republican Guard officer (1980s–2003)
Richard (Dick) Cheney	U.S. secretary of defense (1989–1993) and vice president (2001–2009)
Richard Holbrooke	U.S. ambassador to Germany (1993–1994), envoy to Bosnia (1995–1996), and ambassador to the United Nations (1999–2001)
Robert (Bob) Dole	U.S. senator (R-KS) (1969–1996)
Rolf Ekeus	Swedish diplomat and head of the UN Special Commission (1991–1997)
Ronald Reagan	U.S. president (1981–1989)
Ruhollah Khomeini	Supreme Leader of Iran (1979–1989)
Saddam Hussein Abd al-Majid al-Tikriti	President of Iraq (1979–2003)
Sa'dun Hammadi	Iraqi foreign minister (1974–1983), member of the Revolutionary Command Council (1986–91), and prime minister (March–September 1991), oil minister (1969–1974), speaker of the National Assembly (1984–2003)
Saman Abdul Majid	Saddam's interpreter (1987–2003)
Samir Vincent	Iraqi American businessman convicted in 2008 on fraud charges related to the UN oil-for-food program
Samuel Berger	U.S. national security adviser (1997–2001)
Suleyman Demirel	Turkish prime minister (1975–1980, 1991–1993) and president (1993–2000)
Taha Muhyi al-Din Ma'ruf	Revolutionary Command Council member (1982–1994) and vice president of Iraq (1975–2003)
Taha Yasin Ramadan, aka Taha al-Jazrawi	Vice president of Iraq (1991–2003) and member of the Revolutionary Command Council (1969–2001)

Name	Biographical Details
Tariq Aziz, aka Abu-Ziyad	Iraq's foreign minister (1983–1991) and deputy prime minister (1979–2003)
Uday Hussein	Saddam's son
Viktor Posuvalyuk	Russian deputy foreign minister, envoy to the Middle East (1992–1999)
William (Bill) Clinton	U.S. president (1993–2001)
William (Bill) Cohen	U.S. secretary of defense (1997–2001)
William (Bill) Richardson	U.S. congressman (D-NM) (1983–1997), U.S. secretary of energy (1998–2001), ambassador to the United Nations (1997–1998), and governor of New Mexico (2003–present)
Yasir Arafat, aka Abu-'Ammar	Chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and head of Fatah (1959–2004)
Zaid bin Sultan al-Nahayan	President of United Arab Emirates (1971–2004)

Map of Iraq



Source: Iraq, no. 3835 Rev. 5 March 2011, United Nations.