

Billions for Iraq, Not a Penny for Saddam

By LAUREN MYRRORE

Today is the deadline set two weeks ago by the Security Council for Iraq to declare fully all material related to its nuclear weapons program. The stubborn Iraqi determination to preserve as many nuclear secrets as they can should dispose once and for all of the hope that economic sanctions would suffice to force a defeated and vanquished Iraq to comply with the terms laid down by the United Nations.

Saddam makes concessions he has no intention of honoring in the expectation that circumstances will change. That is how he has dealt with almost all the international commitments Iraq has made since the Gulf war's end, including Resolution 687, the resolution adopted by the Security Council in April that provides for Iraq's nuclear, biological and chemical disarmament.

Today's deadline, backed by an American threat to attack Iraq if it does not declare everything, elicited yet another list of nuclear-related material, Baghdad's fourth list so far. But despite the newest report's unprecedented detail, administration officials still believe that Iraq has yet to tell all.

But as one more deadline passes, with Iraq still in violation of Resolution 687, the talk is not of possible U.S. air strikes but of easing U.N. sanctions. Sanctions have not prevented Saddam from taking care of his own. The ruling Revolutionary Command Council recently established a new "Socialist Bank," to provide interest-free loans to, among others, "the friends of Saddam Hussein." Journalists returning from Baghdad say that the life of the elite is unaffected by sanction-induced shortages. However, the population is hurting badly. It was that deprivation that led the U.N. Secretary General's special envoy, Prince

Sadrudain Aga Khan, to advise the Security Council Monday of the need to modify sanctions.

But allowing Iraq to sell oil in specific and limited amounts will not ameliorate the problem. As long as substantial restrictions on Iraq's income remain, Saddam will hoard supplies and divert them to his own constituency. Letting the Iraqi people suffer, particularly those who revolted against Saddam at the end of the war, not only serves to exact revenge, but is the easiest way for him to secure the further modification of sanctions. If new funds pass through Iraqi hands, it will be exceedingly difficult to prevent the regime from diverting some portion of them for purposes forbidden by Resolution 687.

But there is a way to alleviate Iraq's plight without putting money into Saddam's hands. Iraq has some \$4 billion in foreign assets. That money can be released to the United Nations to finance a comprehensive, large-scale relief program throughout Iraq. Saddam would never control the money—the U.N. would insure the equitable distribution of supplies. The principle objection to this scheme is that American companies have financial claims against Iraqi assets and they will want their money. But given the human misery involved, the argument hardly seems compelling.

In addition, or alternatively, Baghdad could be permitted to sell its oil, if buyers were obliged to deposit their payments in a special U.N. account. However, while oil sales would produce an impending flow of funds, the resumption of oil sales could needlessly provide Baghdad with the opportunity to evade whatever monitoring arrangements were established.

Whether U.N. relief is financed by Iraqi assets or Iraqi oil sales, Baghdad will

likely protest. It does not like the presence of foreigners in the country, particularly these days. Internal travel restrictions have been imposed on them; Baghdad has even denied relief workers access to the Kurdish security zone evacuated by the allies. Still, the protests could be overcome: The experience with Saddam since the war's end is that while he is impervious to economic sanctions, he is sensitive to the threat of force. There are reasons for making that threat to protect Iraq's suffering population; they rest on joining the concept of "justice" to that of "order," two principles that the Bush administration sometimes strains excessively to separate.

Resolution 687 represents "order" in international politics, a contractual agreement between sovereign parties concerning behavior toward one another. Resolution 688, by contrast, deals with justice. Passed by the Security Council at France's and Turkey's behest two days after Resolution 687, Resolution 688 condemned the repression of the Iraqi civilian population. It was Resolution 688 that provided the legal basis for the intervention in northern Iraq to provide safe havens for the Kurds.

Resolution 688 was also the basis for the Memorandum of Understanding that Prince Sadrudain concluded with Baghdad in mid-April that called for U.N. aid to "all civilians in need, wherever they are located." Unfortunately, since the prince commands no divisions, the understanding is proving almost worthless.

Last month, Iran raised the alarm about an impending Iraqi offensive against Shiite refugees trapped in Iraq's southern marshes. One of Prince Sadrudain's men visited there, and found he region was indeed encircled by the Iraqi army. A month later, Prince Sadrudain found that the

army had evacuated its positions. He secured Baghdad's agreement to the establishment of a U.N. humanitarian relief station, in accordance with the April memorandum.

The moment Prince Sadrudain left Iraq, Baghdad reneged. It turned back a U.N. relief convoy, and returned its troops to their previous positions. The Sadrudain memorandum represents a solemn Iraqi commitment to the U.N. Why should the U.S. not enforce it through the threat to use force, just as it has sought to implement Resolution 687?

As the administration comes to recognize that present means are insufficient to secure Saddam Hussein's ouster, or even perhaps to secure his adherence to Resolution 687, it will have to look for new ways to maintain the pressure on Baghdad.

The presence of many foreigners in Iraq, backed by an outside power offering a modicum of protection to the population, will erode Saddam's authority and help blunt the reimposition of his reign of terror. In addition, by more vigorously enforcing those measures that deal with justice, the administration will generate broader support for its policies. That applies to the American public, which since the war's end has endorsed goals that go far beyond those embodied in Resolution 687. It also applies to the Iraqi public, whose principal complaint since the war's end has been that the U.S. did not finish the job.

Miss Myrrore was recently a visiting fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, where she wrote "The Future of Iraq."