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As this is being written, another United States Government (USG) military attack appears very likely. That such an attack would help achieve USG publicly stated objectives appears unlikely.

A change of leadership in the Iraqi Government through assassinating Saddam Hussein would violate a sequence of Presidential Directives beginning with U.S. President Gerald Ford. The death of Saddam Hussein through collateral damage is unlikely. The death or overthrow of Saddam Hussein through another power faction within or outside of the Iraqi Government induced by an attack is unlikely. Other unlikely consequences of an attack are (1) the adequate destruction of weapons of mass destruction, their components, technologies, delivery vehicles--and the knowledge to obtain relevant materiel and produce more and (2) a change of heart or mind within Saddam Hussein to sincerely comply with the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) and U.N. resolutions.

A likely consequence of a military attack is the death of Iraqis who have little or nothing to do with Saddam Hussein's violations. An equally likely consequence is the long-term demise of any sort of weapons inspections. A third likely consequence is the reinforcement of Saddam Hussein's credibility amongst (1) Iraqi citizens who--as much as they may desire a more benign leader or government--more strongly resent the sanctions, attacks, and deaths perpetrated by the USG and (2) many leaders and other citizens throughout the Mideast--who regardless of their negative attributions towards Saddam Hussein--see him as successfully maintaining power and flaunting the will of the USG.

Publicly stated rationales for an attack by the USG have also focused on the need to maintain the credibility of the UN and the USG. Without punishment of the Iraqi government, this credibility is assumed to be threatened. Can credibility be supported by an intervention that seems so unlikely to achieve so many public-stated objectives? Whether killing through military attack or killing through sanctions that exacerbate the living conditions that are a fallout of Saddam Hussein's rule, the USG may be killing its own credibility throughout the Mideast and the world at large as well. (See Bombing Iraq as therapeutic intervention: Symptom substitution as consequence. (February, 20, 1998). IBPP, 4(7); Brief discourse analysis of a call to arms: Rationale for not bombing Iraq. (February 20, 1998). IBPP, 4(7); Broder, J.M. (November 12, 1998). Clinton is sending bombers and G.I.'s to Persian Gulf. The New York Times, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Comments on Iraq, the United Nations (UN), and the inspection crisis: What Iraqi error in judgment? (November 14, 1997). IBPP, 3(16); Rationales and rationalizations: United States Government policy towards Iraqi noncompliance with United Nations-mandated inspections and monitoring. (August 21, 1998). IBPP, 5(8); The inspection crisis: the Iraqi-U.S. scorecard. (November 21, 1997). IBPP, 3(17); Why bombing Iraq as punishment is contraindicated. (January 30, 1998). IBPP, 4(4).) (Keywords: Credibility, Death, Iraq, Killing, Saddam Hussein, United Nations, United States Government.)