

### What Dangers do Iraqi Defenses Pose for U.S. Pilots?

It seems that the United States go to war with the army of Saddam Hussein in Iraq later this week in the hopes of deposing one of the most dangerous men in the middle east. Twelve years ago, similar events played out for the peoples of America and Iraq as the United States aggressively defended its strategic interests in the Middle East. The battles of Desert Storm and the subsequent occupation were merely the first movement of what seems to be a well-written symphony composed by Saddam himself. In the eyes of American officials, the coming events are intended to be the final climactic movement in the manipulative and cruel reign of Saddam Hussein.

The war, however, will not be easy. Between American soldiers and Saddam is the entire Iraqi army, complete with anti-aircraft fortifications surrounding Baghdad. The strength of the Iraqi army is the team of seasoned military veterans who support Saddam and his regime. The Iraqi Generals learned much from fighting American's in the early 1990's, and very soon, they will put it to use in this new war. The strategy that seems to have dominated the behavior of the Iraqi generals is one of complete fortification and full support of Baghdad. The United States Military forces are developing strategies to eliminate the threat that such an arrangement of enemy troops, air defenses, and fortifications. One other interesting and technologically simple tactic has taken shape outside of Baghdad over the recent weeks. Large trenches filled with oil have been made outside of the city so that they can be set ablaze to impede movement and vision.

The hope is that such a disturbance will reduce the effectiveness of U.S. air support. This issue of air support is a critical issue that has a number of different technical facets that could alter the face of the war.

The U.S. military has many advantages over the Iraqi military. The chief advantage is our air superiority. The technology in our planes is often several generations beyond the technology that is in their planes. Two examples of American air superiority are the stealth bomber and fighters, which are both far beyond the technical knowledge of the Iraqi armed forces. This mismatch existed twelve years ago during the first Gulf War and was exploited from the beginning of the war until the end of the war. The Iraqi generals quickly realized the might of American bombs and air support and developed strategies for defense. The Iraqi army believed that eliminating the air threat was the crucial step in staving off an American invasion. To succeed in this endeavor, Saddam Hussein and his top generals have worked very hard to replace outdated ground radar and artillery sites to make air raids from U.S. bombers more dangerous for American pilots and less accurate. Despite these efforts, intelligence indicates that the defenses are still far below the required strength to actually defend against U.S. warplanes. Despite the American superiority, American officials have indicated that the elevated risk to pilots will be managed through careful strategic bombing in the first 48 hours to eliminate anti-aircraft facilities.

The end result of the Iraqi fortification of Baghdad seems to be a much more strategic war that pits high technology systems against less sophisticated systems. In the very least it will be an interesting illustration of the evolution of war.