

THE FEDERAL

Before the Gulf War, Iraq Was a

By John M. Goshko
Washington Post Staff Writer

Recent congressional investigations into how Bush administration actions unwittingly bolstered Iraq's military ambitions prior to the Persian Gulf War have raised questions about which administration officials were actually minding U.S. policies at the time. U.S. policies toward Iraq in that period were guided by a 1989 directive from President Bush—officially known as National Security Decision Directive 26 (NSDD 26)—calling for pursuit of normal relations with Iraq, on grounds that this would promote stability in the volatile gulf region.

In recent weeks, that directive has become the source of great controversy, with Bush's critics in Congress and elsewhere charging that it led the administration to help Iraq accelerate its program of nuclear arms development and encouraged its invasion of Kuwait. Some critics now contend that the directive was the springboard for the greatest foreign policy failure of Bush's presidency.

But the record suggests that Bush, Secretary of State James A. Baker III and other senior foreign policy advisers were not paying much attention to Iraq and its truculent president, Saddam Hussein, in the period between the conception of NSDD 26 and Iraq's August 1990 drive into Kuwait.

Instead, the names that crop up most often in formerly confidential administration documents trickling out of Congress make clear that during the first 1½ years of Bush's presidency, Iraq was handled as what the State Department calls "a sixth-floor problem." On the sixth floor of the State Department are the offices of the assistant secretaries of state and their deputies who deal with different regions of the world on a daily basis.

The same was true in other departments—defense, energy, agriculture, commerce—that had roles in implementing Bush's instruction to improve relations. The officials involved there and at the State Department were people who normally work in behind-the-scenes obscurity. Now they are in the unaccustomed position of seeing their paper trail of memos and recommendations exposed to intense scrutiny and second-guessing by Congress and the media.

Congressional critics charge that the documents point to an official U.S. permissiveness that ignored Saddam's support of terrorism and helped him build up the war machine used to invade Kuwait in August 1990. The officials, who have been the target of these charges, say Congress, by making documents public selectively and out of context, is engaged in a "witch

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hunt" that could make many in the government bureaucracy reluctant to speak candidly or to put anything that smacks of potential controversy on paper.

Among those whose foreign policy roles have become the objects of scrutiny are:

John H. Kelly, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs from June 1989 until the end of 1991. During that period, he was the senior American diplomat dealing with the Persian Gulf and thus was principally responsible for implementing Bush's directive. However, he had never served in the gulf and had worked only briefly in the Middle East during a Foreign Service career centered mostly on Europe and East Asia. He made his only visit to Baghdad just five months before Iraq's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Kelly's title notwithstanding, the real boss over U.S. Middle East policy in the State Department has

Middle East policy in the State Department has been Dennis B. Ross, director of policy planning and one of Baker's most trusted aides. But Ross concentrated on overseeing efforts to start the Arab-Israeli peace process and left other regional issues, including the gulf, to Kelly. Even so, Kelly was unable to get the attention of Baker or other top-level officials, even after the department's Mideast experts began expressing alarm in February 1990 about Saddam's increasing bellicosity toward Kuwait and Israel.

Kelly currently is U.S. ambassador to Finland.

Richard N. Haass, special assistant to the president for national security affairs and senior director for Near East and South Asian affairs for the National Security Council (NSC). When Bush took office in early 1989, he ordered a wide-ranging review of global problems. As part of that process, Haass in February 1989 wrote the criteria for an interagency review of U.S. policy toward Iraq that led to the directive Bush later signed.

Despite a long-standing interest in the region, Haass had no previous high-level experience with Middle East policy. In the Reagan administration, he had worked at the State Department as a specialist on Greece-Turkey-Cyprus affairs, then took a post at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. During the 1988 presidential primary campaigns, he advised Sen. Robert J. Dole (R-Kan.) on Central America issues and, following Bush's election, joined the NSC staff under national security adviser Brent Scowcroft.

Like Kelly, Haass visited Iraq early in 1990, and he came away concerned that the U.S. policy of friendliness was not having the desired effect of moving Baghdad toward moderation. He initiated a series of interagency discussions about whether the policy required some tinkering. But the exercise was confined to working-level officials, and the concerns were not communicated to senior policy makers.

April C. Glaspie, ambassador to Iraq from July 1988 until the outbreak of the gulf crisis. Although her performance in the days leading up to the invasion of Kuwait has been the subject of controversy, Glaspie went to Baghdad with a reputation among her Foreign Service colleagues and Middle East experts as a seasoned diplomat with extensive contacts and astute assessments in the politics of the Arab world. She was the first woman to rise to an ambassadorship through the ranks of America's Middle East diplomatic corps.

Most of the dispute about her role centers on her interview with Saddam on July 25, 1990, just before his move against Kuwait. Critics have charged that her overly friendly tone in the interview, her statement to Saddam that the United States had "no opinion" on Iraq's border dispute with Kuwait and her failure to give Saddam a stern warning against military action apparently encouraged the Iraqi leader to believe that the United States would not oppose his move into Kuwait.

Glaspie's Foreign Service colleagues maintain that she has been treated unfairly, and they cite the charges against her as the most egregious example in the Iraq controversy of how reliance on documents can produce a misleading picture of what actually happened. They note that because her meeting with Saddam took place unexpectedly and on short notice, she did not have detailed instructions from Washington about what to tell him and was not authorized to warn him about specific retaliatory actions the United States might take if Iraq moved against Kuwait.

In addition, the officials say, the impression of a weak

and indecisive stance conveyed in her reporting cable—which was subsequently made public—reflects the traditional Foreign Service dictum that a cable should emphasize the position of the other side and keep descriptions of the U.S. ambassador's response to a minimum. In oral reports on the meeting, the officials say, Glaspie described in much greater detail her sense that the sit-

uation was urgent and her warning to Saddam that the United States would protect its interests in the region.

James P. "Jock" Covey, principal deputy assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs since June 1989. Covey, widely regarded as likely to be among the next generation of top-level American diplomats, has spent virtually his entire Foreign Service career in Middle East affairs. Before becoming Kelly's chief deputy, his assignments included deputy chief of the U.S. Embassy in Egypt, deputy director of the State Department's executive secretariat and staff director of Middle East affairs for the National Security Council. He held the NSC post in 1985 and 1986 when then-national security adviser Robert C. McFarlane oversaw the covert sale of U.S. arms to Iran, but Covey never was publicly involved in the ensuing scandal.

In April this year, Bush nominated Covey to be assistant secretary of state for a new bureau of South Asian affairs that will deal with India, Pakistan and other countries in the region. But last month Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), ranking minority member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, asked for indefinite postponement of hearings on Covey's nomination. Senate sources say Helms and other committee members want to probe Covey's involvement in U.S. policy toward Iraq.

State Department sources say that while Covey's name appears in some of the policy documents of the prewar period, he was in the process of transferring from the U.S. Embassy in Cairo to Washington when Bush's policy directive was being prepared. By the time he became Kelly's deputy on June 18, 1989, the policy line toward Iraq had already been decided. Between then and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the sources said, Covey had only intermittent contact with Iraqi matters, which were handled inside the bureau by Kelly and the deputy assistant secretary for Persian Gulf affairs.

Richard A. Clarke, assistant secretary of state for politico-military affairs. Clarke's name entered the controversy about Iraq with the disclosure of a secret memorandum he wrote assessing U.S. monitoring of Iraq's nuclear and chemical weapons programs in the decade leading up to the gulf war. He concluded in the memo that "no one was paying attention" to blocking Baghdad's purchase of Western equipment for weapons of mass destruction.

He is a career civil servant who has worked for two decades as a State Department and Pentagon analyst of issues involving strategic and conventional weapons in Europe and the Middle East. He was named assistant secretary at the outset of the Bush administration in 1989.

Earlier this year, he became a target of controversy after the State Department inspector general charged that his office had been lax in monitoring Israel's alleged diversion of U.S. military technology to other countries. Clarke denied acting improperly, and while the department rejected some of the inspector gener-

al's charges, it reprimanded State for limiting official inquiries into the subject. Many State and Defense Department officials say that he had been following a long-standing practice within the U.S. government of giving Israel considerable slack on arms transfer questions and had been caught in the cross-fire from those who want the Israelis treated more strictly.

Richard W. Murphy, former assistant secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs. When he retired in January 1989 after six years as assistant secretary, Murphy was the dean of the U.S. diplomatic service's Mideast hands. In his 33-year career, he had served as ambassador to Saudi Arabia and Syria, as well as the Philippines and Mauritania.

One of his last actions was to write a detailed memo titled, "U.S.-Iraqi Relations: Picking Up the Pieces," assessing how the United States should deal with Baghdad in the wake of the eight-year Iran-Iraq War, which ended in 1988. The memo concluded that a policy of carefully measured cooperation with Baghdad offered some hope of coaxing Iraq toward moderation. The memo is regarded as an influential forerunner of Bush's directive on improving relations.

However, while visiting Baghdad in March 1989 as an adviser to private business interests, Murphy quickly became aware that the moderate tendencies evident a year earlier were giving way to a shrill new hostility toward the outside world. He ascribed the problem in large part to the fact that Saddam had mortgaged Iraq's oil revenue to pay for the Iran-Iraq War and ambitious development schemes and was regarded in the international financial community as a poor credit risk. Later, Murphy was to conclude that Saddam's frustration over money was what impelled him to attack his tiny but wealthy neighbor, Kuwait.

"To get out of bankruptcy, you rob a bank," he said. But he also acknowledges that despite the warning signs in early 1990, no one realized just how far Saddam would go.

Paul J. Hare, former acting assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs. Hare, who had been Murphy's principal deputy, served as acting head of the Middle East bureau between Murphy's retirement and the time Kelly assumed the assistant secretary post.

During his four months in that position, Hare headed the interagency working group that produced the draft document from which Bush's directive eventually was derived. The draft, according to a confidential State

Department memorandum, spoke of "the new political, military and economic importance of Iraq" and stressed "the need for a cautious step-by-step approach to broadening and deepening our bilateral relations."

Earlier, Hare was one of three top department officials who prepared a confidential 1988 memorandum for Secretary of State George P. Shultz and argued against congressional efforts to impose tough economic sanctions against Iraq after Baghdad used poison gas against the Kurds.

When Kelly became assistant secretary in June 1989, he dropped Hare as his principal deputy, replacing him with Covey. Hare subsequently retired from the Foreign Service and is now a research associate with the Middle East Institute here.

Richard T. McCormack, former undersecretary of state for economic and agricultural affairs. As the secretary of state's titular chief adviser on economic matters, McCormack was partially responsible for monitoring Iraq's uses of loans it received from the United States.

During the 1980s, the Commodity Credit Corporation, an Agriculture Department agency, guaranteed loans totaling nearly \$1.8 billion to Iraq, ostensibly for purchase of U.S. farm products. Two weeks ago, Frank Lemay, who had been McCormack's special assistant, told the House Judiciary Committee that in October 1989 he had warned his superiors that Iraq apparently had spent part of these loans to illegally buy nuclear arms technology.

When Bush was asked about Lemay's charges during

a network television appearance last Wednesday, he replied angrily, "We didn't know that. The State Department didn't know it. . . . If we had known it, it wouldn't have happened."

However, in his congressional testimony, Lemay said it was his understanding that his superiors passed his warning to Baker. The State Department refused to say whether Baker received such a warning, but McCormack, now out of government, told the New York Times: "Mr. Lemay's representations to the committee were entirely accurate."

Although McCormack's position meant that questions involving Iraqi loans normally would have been brought to his attention, he actually had little expertise or experience in Middle East affairs. A former aide to Sen. Helms, McCormack was made assistant secretary of state for economic affairs in the 1980s as a bow to Republican conservatives in Congress.

However, his weak expertise in economics reportedly annoyed then-Secretary of State Shultz, who had McCormack transferred to the post of ambassador to the Organization of American States. When Baker became secretary, McCormack was elevated, in a new bow to Helms and his followers, to the undersecretary's post. But, until his departure from the department several months ago, real decision-making power on economic matters within the State Department rested not with McCormack, but with Robert B. Zoellick, counselor of the department and one of Baker's most trusted aides.

WATCHING SADDAM
 ROLES OF STATE DEPARTMENT AND OTHER OFFICIALS LEADING UP TO A GULF WAR



John H. Kelly
 Former assistant secretary of state, Near Eastern and South Asian affairs.
 June 1989-end of 1991. Unable to get attention of Secretary of State James A. Baker III as alarm grew over Saddam Hussein's intentions towards Kuwait.



Richard M. Haase
 Senior director of Near East and South Asian affairs, National Security Council, 1989-present.
 Concerned after 1990 Iraq visit about cozy U.S. attitude toward Iraq.



April C. Glasgow
 Former ambassador to Iraq, July 1988-Outbreak of gulf crisis. Met with Saddam in July 1990; performance subject to widely varying interpretations.



Richard W. Murphy
 Former assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs, 1983-1989. Perceived Baghdad's shift from moderation to hostility during 1989 visit.



Richard A. Charles
 Assistant secretary of state for politico-military affairs, 1989-present. Wrote memo saying that "no one was paying attention" to blocking Baghdad's buys of Western weapons-making equipment.



Richard T. McCormack
 Former undersecretary of state for economic and agricultural affairs, 1989-1992. Monitored Iraq's use of U.S. loans.