Gassing One’s Own People: Contrasting Leader Motivations and Behavior in Iraq and Syria

Performers: Texas A&M University

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Project Cost: $59,000
FY15-16

Objective:
Leaders of both Iraq (Saddam Hussein, 1988) and Syria (Bashar al-Assad, recently) have used chemical weapons against their own people. There is now extensive documentation of Iraq’s chemical weapon decision-making in 1988, making it a uniquely rich case study. This project will produce a monograph contrasting Iraq’s chemical decision-making with Syria’s recent use of chemical weapons and draw insights from Iraq that are applicable to understanding Syria’s actions. As policy makers weigh options for contending with Syria, this research will provide timely and informed analysis.

Approach:
The research team will study records captured from Iraq available at the Conflict Records Research Center, Hoover Institution, and University of Colorado (Boulder), as well as recently declassified interrogation reports of Iraqi principals, records and testimony released from Iraqi war crimes trials, documents in the Reagan Presidential Library, and other sources. Once this information is collected, the team will analyze it and draft a monograph. The monograph will be revised through feedback from experts and then shared with interested policy makers, intelligence and defense officials, and think tank analysts.