

Bush reportedly spending millions to oust Hussein



LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Bush Administration has proposed nearly tripling the \$15 million budget for covert action to help overthrow Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, it was reported Sunday.

The request would increase CIA spending on the Iraq effort to \$40 million, the *Los Angeles Times* reported in its Sunday

editions.

The size of the proposed increase for fiscal 1993 reflects an admission that the U.S.-led effort to oust Hussein has been ineffectual to date, according to unnamed government sources.

The request follows a year of U.S. frustration and embarrassment over Hussein's ability to survive the political and military punishment from Operation Desert Storm and to

reconsolidate his hold over Iraq.

The additional funding would go toward a program begun in May 1991, when President Bush signed a presidential finding after two uprisings — by Shiite and Kurdish opponents — failed to force the Iraqi leader from power.

The finding reportedly allowed for U.S. covert action to destabilize the Iraqi regime and

then to encourage internal forces to oust Hussein.

Senior U.S. analysts recently have cautioned that Hussein — who became president in 1979 — may be able to hold power indefinitely.

Hussein, they say, may have overcome the biggest short-term domestic challenges including the U.N.-imposed economic sanctions and a U.S.-funded propaganda campaign.

Hussein has managed to prevent any individual from posing a threat to his leadership by periodically shaking up his inner circle, the analysts say.

And, in part by playing to strong nationalist themes, he has been able to regroup without hindrance from opposition figures or propaganda.

Although the sanctions have taken a toll on Iraqi society, some shortages — particularly in the major cities — have been eased by a thriving black market and smugglers coming in through Turkey, Iran and Jordan, the analysts say.

The primary uses of the new CIA funds reportedly would be: to increase U.S. surveillance over Iraq, particularly to monitor arms deployment and potential manufacturing in defiance of the U.N. cease-fire; to fund and assist at least three Iraqi opposition groups; and to increase an anti-Hussein propaganda campaign.

The proposed funding allegedly has widespread bipartisan support among those informed of the plan, though some critics say the increase may be too small.

The analysts' predictions contrast with recent public assessments by the administration saying that Hussein faces growing obstacles in his country.

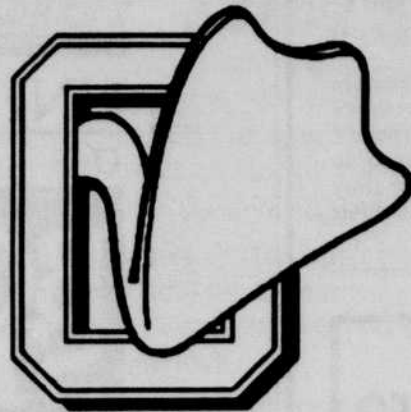
In January, on the first anniversary of Operation Desert Storm, Bush said Hussein's ouster was imminent and Defense Secretary Dick Cheney said the Iraqi leader would be removed "in the not-too-distant future."

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