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## **AFTEREFFECTS: WEAPONS; Woman on Most Wanted List Of 55 Iraqi Leaders Is Seized**

By JUDITH MILLER

American authorities have picked up Dr. Huda Salih Mahdi Ammash, a senior biologist in Iraq's suspected biological warfare program, according to a Defense Department official. She is the only woman on the military's 55-person most wanted list.

American military authorities in Iraq would not comment tonight on how or when the American-trained Dr. Ammash was detained.

A former dean of the College of Women and later of the College of Science at Baghdad University, Dr. Ammash has long been suspected of involvement in Iraq's biological warfare program. Richard Spertzel, a former inspector for the United Nations Special Commission, or Unscm, said she had traveled outside of Iraq in the late 1990's to acquire equipment, supplies and reagents for genetic experiments. "Several defectors have also said that she was involved in the germ warfare program," he said.

Experts on biological warfare said her arrest could be a major boost to American understanding of Iraq's biological programs, which senior Iraqis in the fallen government insisted were peaceful after 1991.

Meanwhile, a military planning group is arriving Tuesday to develop a transition plan between the Exploitation Task Force, the military unit that has been hunting for unconventional weapons, and the Iraq Survey Group, the replacement unit.

The detention of Dr. Ammash generated considerable excitement among weapons inspectors here in Iraq. Her detention is the first of a senior scientist in what American officials have charged was an Iraqi biological warfare program. Dr. Ammash also held a senior rank in Iraq's Baath Party.

In an interview tonight, Col. Richard McPhee, the commander of the Exploitation Task Force, said that neither the "site survey teams" nor the "mobile exploitation teams" were responsible for her arrest. He said he had not heard that she had been detained and did not know which American agency had detained her.

Dr. Nissar Hindawi, a pioneer of Iraq's germ weapon program, said in an interview late last week that Dr. Ammash was part of Iraq's illicit germ warfare program. He said he had been told by colleagues that Dr. Ammash had fled to Syria before the war along with another senior woman in the germ warfare program, Dr. Rihab Taha.

Colonel McPhee disclosed tonight that a portion of the task force, comprising 214 soldiers from the 75th Field Artillery Brigade, which he commands at Fort Sill, Okla., would be leaving soon, sometime after the arrival of the new Iraq Survey Group.

He said the departing group would include the soldiers who have been leading the exploitation teams that have conducted most of the hunts for unconventional weapons. He said those soldiers would be replaced by some of the 1,000 to 1,500 soldiers and civilians being sent in as part of the Iraq Survey Group. The replacements have not taken part in any of the military or survey operations during the war.

Asked whether the planned departure of some of the most seasoned weapons hunters would jeopardize current operations, just as some scientists are beginning to come forth to talk about their work, he replied, "The planning team will figure out how best to achieve continuity."

He said there would almost certainly be an overlap between veteran weapons hunters and the new arrivals. Some members of the new group reportedly include former American members of international inspection teams like Unscm.

There has been widespread frustration among the 150-member exploitation teams with the tactics in the hunt for weapons and the scientists who supposedly produced them. Too often, soldiers have complained, the search has amounted to little more than what they described as "check the block" exercises, inspections of more than 900 targets that were selected more than a year ago by the nation's intelligence agencies.

Apparently reacting to the chorus of complaints, Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld said Sunday that the United States was unlikely to find unconventional weapons or evidence of such programs at preselected sites. He said that although he remained convinced that allied forces would find evidence that Iraq was engaged in producing nuclear, chemical or biological agents and weapons, such information would most probably come from information provided by Iraqi scientists.

Colonel McPhee maintained that the transition from the exploitation teams to the new Iraq Survey Group would not result in any loss of expertise for those in the group. "There will be a period of overlap, and we will all be training together, not from ground zero, as the XTF did, or from what we expected to find, but from what we now know," he said.

He added that there was already a shift in focus from sites on the target list to missions generated by tips and other reports. He noted, for instance, that a mission was begun today to survey a mysterious white powder and a possible radiological source buried about two yards underground in the Iraqi sector controlled by Britain.

Asked if he believed that allied forces would eventually find proof of such programs, Colonel McPhee said: "I am confident that we have stopped Saddam Hussein's program and ended his capability to create a program in 5 or 10 years. That is why we're here, so that my son doesn't have to come back and fight five years from now."

