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THREATS AND RESPONSES: HUSSEIN'S FOES; Iraqi Groups Draft Statements

By Craig S. Smith

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Iraqi opposition groups meeting here since Saturday worked into the early hours this morning to create a representative committee that can give a unified voice to the dozen or more groups and hundreds of independent activists who hope to take part in an Iraqi government after any ouster of Saddam Hussein.

By early today, the Iraqi Open Opposition Conference, which has drawn about 330 delegates and hundreds more observers from around the world, had succeeded in drafting two statements. One covers the opposition's shared political vision for the future, and the other the general framework for governing the country in the period immediately following a collapse of the current government, presumably in the wake of an American invasion.

''We have proven our many critics to be wrong by organizing and financing this conference,'' said Hoshyar Zebari, a senior official of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, one of the opposition's six main groups. Many people, particularly in the Arab world, have argued that the Iraqi opposition is too diverse and divided to form a united front.

But the two documents, neither of which had yet been formally endorsed by the delegates, sidestepped the most difficult issues that any post-Hussein government would face. The question remained whether they, or the committee the conference hopes to appoint, would matter much if and when the bombs started to fall.

''My guess is that 80 percent of the people here won't have any role in a post- Hussein government,'' said an American observer, who asked not to be identified.

The United States government pushed for the conference, eager to demonstrate that Mr. Hussein's varied opponents can work together. But Washington has not said what role the opposition will play in governing Iraq if the United States invades the country, as it has threatened to do.

The opposition groups worry that the Americans, not Iraqis, will decide how and who will govern the country if they topple Mr. Hussein, a concern that American officials have done little to dispel.