



Research into an Authoritarian Regime



10th Anniversary
Larry D. Welch
Award

IDA's Welch Award annually recognizes the best external publication by IDA researchers. Last year marked the 10th anniversary of the award, named for retired U.S. Air Force General Larry D. Welch, who served as president of IDA from 1990 to 2003 and again from 2006 to 2009. This summary is the last in a series reflecting on the 10 winning publications since the award's inception in 2011. The Welch Award winner for best external publication in 2012 was ***The Saddam Tapes: The Inner Workings of a Tyrant's Regime, 1978–2001***, a book published by Cambridge University Press.

Kevin M. Woods came to IDA as an active-duty Army officer in 2002 assigned to the Joint Staff working under what was then the Joint Advanced Warfighting Program (JAWP) at IDA. Woods deployed to the land component command in Kuwait in 2003 as part of a JAWP-led U.S. Joint Forces Command "Lessons Learned" mission to gather insights on the impending invasion of Iraq by a U.S.-led coalition. In 2004, following the fall of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, Woods retired from the Army and accepted a full-time research position at IDA.

His work deriving knowledge about the complexities of Hussein's regime was just beginning upon his return home. IDA sponsors in the Department of Defense were eager to uncover lessons from the invasion of Iraq, to gain an in-depth understanding of Hussein's regime, and to answer questions about the efficacy of the U.S.-led invasion. Woods would spend his first five years at IDA alongside



Kevin Woods after receiving the Welch Award, flanked on the left by the award's namesake, General Larry D. Welch, and on the right by then-IDA President David S.C. Chu, who presented the award.

then-IDA researchers Mark E. Stout and David D. Palkki analyzing state records that had been seized by coalition forces, significantly, the audio records of Hussein's private political discussions with fellow members of the Ba'ath Party. The plethora of records, over 7,000 audio files, meant that the IDA team had their work cut out for them.

Using a vetting process based on a prioritized list of discussion topics, the team sifted through the repository of transcripts and recordings to ultimately form a special collection of 900 tapes for publishing. Hussein's voice was at the forefront of most of the selected tapes as he wielded his political influence, speaking with key advisors, military officials, and members of his general staff about issues ranging from his views on the invasion

of Kuwait to the possibility of chemical warfare. The team selected tapes for publication based on what sponsors would find the most educational and enlightening.

Historically, scholarship using captured state records from foreign governments is rare, and publication of these records is by no means common practice. After the Second World War, German records containing the government's decision-making styles, bureaucratic culture, policy, plans, and more were published in places like the U.S. Army's official history of the war, known as "The Green Books." This was the precedent that the IDA team would use for working on *The Saddam Tapes: The Inner Working of a Tyrant's Regime, 1978-2001*.

For Woods, the experience was "a professional trifecta." He goes on to say, "We were grateful to have been able to develop this project at IDA with the support of our sponsors, we had the freedom to publish with a major academic publisher to a wider audience, and we were recognized by our peers" with the Welch Award. At the time, Woods thought, "it can't get much better than this."

The book's publication led to the creation of another widely used source for academic research known as the Conflicts Records Research Center. The center, which was active for about four years, was a Defense Department-tasks digital archive collection. The collection was intended to facilitate access of Iraqi state records to the larger scholarly community and to spur non-government research in the area. Jessica M. Huckabey served as the center's first director and now serves as an assistant director in the Joint Advanced Warfighting Division.

A significant body of research has been based on the book since it was published in 2011. It continues to be the primary basis for a great deal of research related to Iraq under Hussein's authoritarian regime. Meanwhile, Woods still enjoys a well-deserved reputation for being one of the foremost scholars on Ba'ath Party records, the Saddam era in Iraq, and other topics the book covers.



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