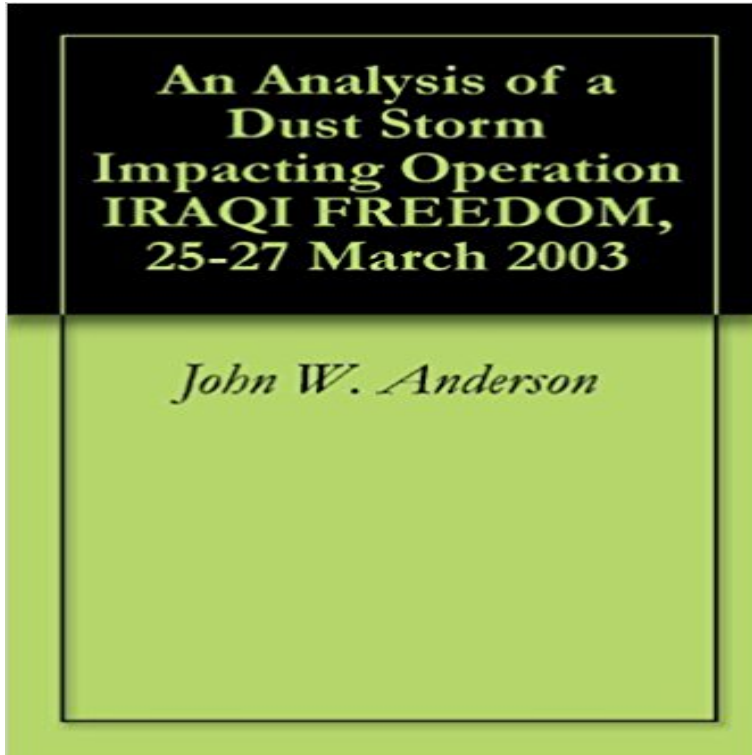


An Analysis of a Dust Storm Impacting Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, 25-27 March 2003



On day five of combat operations during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, advances by coalition forces were nearly halted by a dust storm, initiated by the passage of a synoptically driven cold front. This storm impacted ground and air operations across the entire Area of Responsibility, and delayed an impending ground attack on the Iraqi capital. Military meteorologists were able to assist military planners in mitigating at least some of the effects of this storm. This thesis examines the synoptic conditions leading to the severe dust storm, evaluates the numerical weather prediction model performance in predicting the event, and reviews metrics pertaining to the overall impacts on the Operation IRAQI FREEDOM combined air campaign. In general, the numerical model guidance correctly predicted the location and onset of the dust storms on 25 March, 2003. As a result of this forecast guidance, mission planners were able to front load Air Tasking Orders with extra sorties prior to the onset of the dust storm, and were able to make changes to planned weapons loads, favoring GPS-guided unitions.

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