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Interview Conducted by: SSA George L. Piro  
Arabic/English Translation: SSA [REDACTED]

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~~(S)~~ Saddam Hussein (High Value Detainee #1) was interviewed on February 16, 2004 at a military detention facility at Baghdad International Airport (BIAP), Baghdad, Iraq. Hussein provided the following information:

~~(S)~~ At the beginning of the interview, Hussein was informed that today's dialogue would be a continuation of yesterday's discussion regarding the years following the 1968 revolution and about prominent members of the Ba'ath Party.

~~(S)~~ The interviewer mentioned to Hussein that he understood that the attempted coup in 1973 was undertaken by a protege of Hussein, Nadhim Kazzar, Director of the Ba'ath Party's Security Service and a Shi'a from the city of Al-Amarah. Hussein related that at the time, the Party did not know which members were Sunni or Shi'a Muslims or Christians. As an example, he pointed out that it was not until later that he learned that one of the Party's leaders, Tariq Aziz, was a Christian. The Party was successful because it related to the people, and, thus, no distinction was made on members based on their religion or ethnicity.

~~(S)~~ Hussein related that among the Party's leadership between 1958-63, very few members were Sunni. The Secretary General was Shi'a from the city of Al-Nasiriyah. Hussein claimed that when he attempted to assassinate President Qassem in 1959, he knew nothing about the Sunnis and Shi'as. In 1963, with the exception of two or three Party members, almost all members of the Ba'ath Party were Shi'as. After the revolution, people began inquiring which members were Sunni and which were Shi'a. At the time, it was difficult to know because they were all mixed together. However, by 1968, nearly all Party members were Sunnis. Because the Party had previously operated secretly, few knew or cared about one's religion. However, after the

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revolution, people in the government began talking more frequently about this issue. Many were concerned that promotions and demotions were being decided on the basis on one's sect or religious affiliation. Hussein stated, "You would be surprised to know that the Secretary General of the Party in 1964 was Kurdish."

~~(S)~~ Hussein was asked about a perception that Nadhim Kazzar was Hussein's "right-hand man" and that at one time, he was considered a threat to take over President Bakr's regime. Hussein refuted this characterization by saying that he was not his right hand man in the government and that each person has their own duties and responsibilities. He said that although Kazzar was neither a revolutionary nor among the seventy individuals who took over the Presidential Palace, he was a good Party member and a tough individual while he was in prison.

~~(S)~~ Kazzar was not convinced that the military would be good for the Ba'ath Party. He was influenced by the thoughts of Party members who split and believed in a communist socialist philosophy. Kazzar considered the military members of the Party to be old-fashioned and a burden. Despite his perspective, however, Kazzar decided to remain with the Party. Hussein had no information whether Kazzar had met with officials in Iran. He related that when Kazzar's coup failed, Kazzar fled to Iran but was arrested before he arrived at the border. Hussein said he did not want to talk "bad" about Kazzar. He said that when Kazzar "arrested" the Minister of Defense Hammad Shihab and Minister of Interior Sa'dun Ghaydan, it was done easily and did not require a big plan.

~~(S)~~ While discussing Kazzar, Hussein digressed and characterized this period as being the best time for Iraq because "we nationalized oil, settled oil disputes with the oil companies and invested money in Thoura City," which was later renamed, Saddam City.

~~(S)~~ According to Hussein, the psychology of the Ba'ath Party was to recruit young individuals at the beginning of their schooling such as when they were in elementary and secondary school. The Party seldom recruited members from colleges. Their philosophy was that they wanted a person they could mold to "grow" into the Party. In the 1950's and 1960's, the Party accepted primarily young people and only a few older individuals.

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Some Party members such as Kazzar questioned the allegiance of newer officers to the Ba'ath Party.

~~(S)~~ The interviewer mentioned to Hussein that many people believed Kazzar's plan to kill Bakr went awry after Kazzar learned that President Bakr's plane had been delayed and then incorrectly assumed that his plot had been exposed. The interviewer continued stating that Kazzar then kidnapped Ministers Shihab and Ghaydan as hostages and fled to the border of Iran where he was captured by Hussein. Hussein responded by saying, "Your information is not specific. According to my information, President Bakr's plane was not delayed, and his guards were awaiting his arrival." Hussein waited at the airport for Bakr and after Bakr arrived, he accompanied him to the Presidential Palace where the two drank tea together. Hussein later excused himself so that Bakr could visit with his family. Hussein was then driven by his staff through Baghdad. As they were driving, they heard an announcement on the police radio that a coup had been attempted by Ministers Shihab and Ghaydan. Because of the importance of this matter, Hussein pushed his driver to the side and proceeded to drive the car himself to his residence which was located near the President's residence. Near the gate of his residence, Hussein used a telephone to call Bakr, who asked where Hussein was located because he had something very important to relate. Hussein answered that he was nearby, and that he had heard the news. Hussein met with Bakr at his residence. Bakr told Hussein that Ministers Shihab and Ghaydan had attempted a coup, saying that he had tried calling Minister Shihab, but received no answer. Hussein advised Bakr that he had an "intuition" about Kazzar and believed it was Kazzar who had attempted the coup, not the two Ministers. Hussein subsequently asked Bakr to call the Military Division and prepare to go after Kazzar and "to hit him before he crossed the border into Iran."

~~(S)~~ Near the borders of Iran were tribes where Hussein and Sa'dun Shakir used to go hunting. After the revolution, Hussein had given these tribes many rifles. An announcement was put out on the radio to arrest Kazzar and inform the nearest Ba'ath Party unit. Members of a tribe who became aware of this through the radio, saw Kazzar's caravan, surrounded it and detained him. Special Operations helicopters were then dispatched to pick up Kazzar and return him to Baghdad.

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~~(S)~~ After Bakr obtained a clear picture of what had occurred, he started crying, picked up his belongings and went from his palace to his residence. According to Hussein, Bakr said that he did not want to be President. Bakr told Hussein he wanted Hussein to remain in the government so he could "slip out." Hussein claimed to have made a similar statement to Bakr about also wanting to leave the government.

~~(S)~~ Following this, Hussein told people not to bother Bakr and to let him stay at home. Hussein then began arresting the alleged conspirators of this coup. He called Bakr to inform him that some of the conspirators were members of the Ba'ath Party leadership. Hussein then began organizing a meeting between himself, Bakr and leaders of the Ba'ath Party Central and National Committees.

~~(S)~~ Hussein was asked how he knew that Kazzar would be fleeing to Iran. He answered that when the announcement went out on the radio to look for Kazzar, people started calling in sightings of him. Gradually, it was those periodic sightings that led him to believe that Kazzar was heading towards Iran.

~~(S)~~ Hussein was asked if Kazzar called President Bakr, and he said, "No." Hussein said that apparently Kazzar's vehicle had become stuck in the mud. When he solicited the assistance of local farmers, they called for help. It was around this time that Kazzar shot Ministers Shihab and Gaydan. Shihab survived by pretending that he was dead.

~~(S)~~ Hussein was questioned whether Kazzar had called President Bakr to negotiate the release of the hostages, and at the same time selected Abd Al-Khaliq Al-Samarra'i's residence as a place to meet. Hussein denied this, stating that there was announcement on the emergency radio band that a coup had been attempted and that all party members should meet at Abd Al-Khaliq Al-Samarra'i's residence. Hussein did not know why this house was chosen as the meeting location, but suspected that the Party members were being called to one location to be arrested. When asked whether Samarra'i was implicated in the coup simply because of the meeting, Hussein answered that a "committee" took care of this. Hussein does not remember who headed the "committee," including whether it was Izzat Ibrahim Al-Duri. Hussein stated, "I do not want to make a mistake on the details regarding something which I am not one hundred percent sure." Hussein

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acknowledged that Samarra'i had been a Ba'ath member since 1968. When asked if Samarra'i spoke out on issues, Hussein said, "The Ba'ath Party talked freely. This is only a media interpretation that people could not talk." Hussein stated that there are members of the Party still available, and he suggested that the interviewers talk to them. Hussein was asked if he was surprised by the allegations against Samarra'i. He responded, "When we give someone in the Party something to do, we trust them. These and other things happen in a revolution."

~~(S)~~ Hussein then stated, "Whether I am the first person or the second person, all the questions come back to me. I am not afraid of taking responsibility in front of the law or the people. You have to put blame not just on the leadership, but also on the people who conspired such as Samarra'i." Hussein added, "I want you to understand clearly about the situation. Yesterday, we talked about the fact that Nayif and Hardan were killed overseas. Ibrahim Daud was not killed. If the Iraqi government is being accused of all this, why did they not kill Daud?"

~~(S)~~ Hussein stated, "As I recall, Bakr ruled until 1979 but was not called a dictator, but after I ruled, they called me a dictator." Hussein then asked, "After 1979, who was killed or assassinated inside or outside of Iraq? Who was executed from the Ministries or out of the leadership after 1979?"

~~(S)~~ Following these questions, the interviewer said that these are unanswered questions which needed to be clarified for the sake of history. Hussein said, "It's not enough to ask me. You should ask other leaders. I advise you to talk to others." Hussein said he was not worried about answering questions.

~~(S)~~ The interviewer told Hussein that he (Hussein) was answering the questions for the same reasons they were being asked, for the sake of history. Hussein replied, "Sometimes, you see me upset because some things are dark. During this period, we had good and bad times. We laughed and joked. Samarra'i served, and we made jokes with him. He made mistakes. We moved on. I hope you will be just in what history you (the interviewers) write."

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~~(S)~~ The interviewer told Hussein, "Fortunately or unfortunately, I will have a major impact on your history." Hussein agreed and replied, "Nobody can say I have no bias. People think what they want. Everyone has his own opinions. People are not a computer. We all have flesh and blood."

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