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Interview Session Number:
Interview Conducted by:

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SSA George L. Piro
SSA [REDACTED]

Arabic/English Translation:

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(X) Saddam Hussein (High Value Detainee #1) was interviewed on February 18, 2004 at a military detention facility at Baghdad International Airport (BIAP), Baghdad, Iraq. Hussein provided the following information:

(S) Prior to the start of interview, Hussein was informed this session would be a continuation of the two previous discussions. Topics to be covered would include a discussion of Sa'dun Shakir, among others.

(S) Hussein acknowledged that Shakir was an example of someone in the Ba'ath Party (the Party) who had "served out his abilities." Nevertheless, Shakir was someone with whom Hussein maintained contact after his departure from service to the Party.

(S) Hussein first met Shakir in the Taji Prison near Baghdad. Both Hussein and Shakir had been sentenced to prison upon change of the Iraqi government in late 1963 when a coup led by Abd Al-Salem Aref overthrew the Ba'ath government. During 1965 or 1966, Hussein and Shakir were transferred to Prison # 1 also near Baghdad. At some point, Shakir was released but continued visiting Hussein in prison. During this time, their friendship continued and developed more. Eventually, Hussein and Abd Al-Karim Al-Shaykhli escaped from prison with the assistance of Shakir, who served as their driver during the escape.

(S) After escaping from prison, Shakir was still a member of the Party and served in that capacity. During this period, Hussein continued friendly relations with him. He described Shakir as a very trusted person whom Hussein considered as a friend to him and to his children. Shakir was one of the original seventy "revolutionaries" of 1968.

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~~(S)~~ When questioned regarding positions held in the Party by Shakir, Hussein commented that, like any other leader, Shakir would accept any assignment. Hussein does not remember any of these assignments and stated this was not important. He was a friend and that is what is important. Hussein suggested that the interviewer should ask Shakir in order to confirm this information.

~~(S)~~ Regarding whether Shakir was Director of the Iraqi Intelligence Service (IIS), Hussein replied it is well-known that he was the IIS Director. The interviewer opined that it is generally accepted that someone in charge of an organization such as an intelligence service should have certain qualifications and abilities prior to appointment to such a position. Hussein replied, "We were all young revolutionaries." As such, they did not have the necessary experience and learned "on the job." Hussein added that regarding management matters, they learned from the Party. Hussein stated leading people is the most difficult thing in life. Whoever can lead people in the Party, and the masses, will be effective in their jobs. Hussein continued saying Party members "gave it a try" with some succeeding and some failing. Party members continued in their positions until the responsibilities of their work overcame their individual abilities. At this point, they were replaced. Regarding Party members with a military background, Hussein noted this military experience was limited and did not necessarily translate into something useful for governmental affairs.

~~(S)~~ Hussein acknowledged Shakir served as IIS Director at an important time of the revolution. He noted, however, that the entire history of a revolution is important. Perhaps, Shakir did not serve at the most critical time. Hussein added, "Difficulties become larger when the job becomes larger."

~~(S)~~ The interview then turned to a discussion of Shaykhli. Hussein acknowledged Shaykhli was a fellow revolutionary and a friend. Hussein and Shaykhli participated in the assassination attempt against Iraqi President Qassem in 1959. Each escaped Iraq and fled to Damascus, Syria. There, Hussein and Shaykhli's friendship and brotherhood continued and grew stronger. After Syria, their friendship continued upon moving to Cairo together.

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(S) After the first Ba'ath revolution of 1963, Hussein and Shaykhli returned to Iraq together. Upon return, Hussein worked with farmers and Shaykhli worked investigations at the Qasr Al-Nihayya (The Palace of the End). Later, Shaykhli was appointed military attache to Lebanon.

(S) Upon overthrow of the Ba'ath government by Aref in late 1963, Hussein and Shaykhli went "underground" together. They remained "underground" until the July, 1968 revolution in Iraq and the resumption of power by the Ba'ath Party. Thereafter, Hussein and Shaykhli served in the Party leadership together until 1971.

(S) Hussein commented that Shaykhli had a very good mind but did not concentrate and focus on the job at hand. According to Hussein, Shaykhli liked to "live and entertain himself." Hussein told Shaykhli how the Party perceived him. Later, the majority of Party leadership voted to remove Shaykhli from his position. He was later murdered in Baghdad in 1980.

(S) The interviewer pointed out that Hussein had omitted some details of his relationship with Shaykhli including the fact that the two of them had served in prison at the same time after the 1963 overthrow of the Ba'ath government, becoming friends. As is commonly understood, the interviewer also noted Shaykhli once saved Hussein's life. Hussein responded, "In what sense?" The interviewer then relayed the details of an incident during the "underground" years of the Ba'ath between 1963 and 1968. According to the story, Hussein was at Shaykhli's apartment late one night. Hussein decided to leave the apartment and spend the night at a location where weapons for the Party were stored. However, Shaykhli convinced Hussein to remain at his place. Later, the same night, the weapons storage location was raided by the police. Some believe Hussein might have been killed, or at a minimum, arrested if he had been at the location.

(S) Hussein acknowledged this story is true and that he was with Shaykhli at this time. However, he stated the police could not have captured or killed him. With Shaykhli driving, Hussein went to the weapons location the next morning. Upon arrival, a policeman at the location put the barrel of his machine gun in Hussein's side as he rang the bell of the house. Simultaneously, Shaykhli sped away from the location in the car.

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Hussein explained that although Shaykhli was a brave man, people react differently in different situations.

~~(S)~~ At that time, Hussein was not widely known and was someone who would not have been recognized. As such, the policeman did not recognize him. Hussein pretended not to know anything and asked whether this was "Mohammed's" residence. Hussein was not concerned about being shot or killed as the police in Iraq do not kill someone easily, unless their life is seriously threatened. Additionally, people in Iraq generally "know each other" and there are many tribal influences. Even if the law permits such conduct, tribes will seek revenge. Hussein continued his story saying he surprised the policeman by pushing his machine gun aside and pulling a pistol which he (Hussein) had concealed under his shirt. Hussein ordered the policeman to place his hands on Hussein's car, which had been previously left at the location and was likely the reason the house was discovered. Hussein did not want to kill the officer, but decided to fire a round in the air over the policeman's head. The gun malfunctioned, however, and Hussein "reloaded." He told the policeman he would fire one round over his head, and if he moved, a second round into his body. He then fired a round over the policeman's head and the officer "became like a dog." A standoff then occurred as some of Hussein's "comrades" had been arrested by the police inside the house. These "comrades" heard all the activity outside and told the police their comrade Saddam had arrived with a big group and would kill the policemen. Simultaneously, one of the men in the car with Shaykhli returned to the house with a machine gun. The police then acquiesced to the "comrades" in the house asking them for their help and to be saved from Hussein and his men. Thereafter, the standoff ended without bloodshed. Hussein ended this portion of the discussion saying there are many stories from the "underground" period, all of them like "scenes in the movies."

~~(S)~~ Hussein was told that Shaykhli was described, similar to Hussein, as a prominent and popular Party member at that time. Hussein responded there is no need and it is not important to compare one person to another. Each person is different, one is not better than the other.

~~(S)~~ Hussein acknowledged Shaykhli served as Foreign Minister until 1971, whereupon he was removed from this position by the leadership. Hussein stated that removal of any individual

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from a position requires a decision by the leadership. Not all may agree on the removal, but a majority was required. In Hussein's opinion, Shaykhli could have continued his service to the Party and the government. At that time, Hussein believed Shaykhli could have been "criticized" and given the chance to correct his behavior. Shaykhli would never have been elected as a Party member without the support of Hussein. Because of Shaykhli's lack of concentration on his work and failure to accept criticism, the Party leadership was "not convinced" of him and decided on his removal.

~~(S)~~ Regarding whether Shaykhli was viewed as a potential successor to President Bakr, Hussein did not agree and said this statement was too strong. Hussein commented that it appeared as if the interviewer was implying that he removed those from leadership viewed as a threat to Hussein's position of leadership. From the underground days, Hussein was already in charge. While in prison, the Ba'ath leadership sent a letter notifying Hussein of their recommendation that he become a member of the Ba'ath Party Central Committee. Hussein answered the letter, "What good am I in prison?" He asked the Party to find someone else, however, they did not listen to his opinion. Thereafter, Bakr and Hussein served as two members of the Central Committee, a body considered above the Regional Committee and all other Party components. Bakr served as Secretary General and Hussein served as Deputy Secretary General while "underground."

~~(S)~~ Hussein commented that it is embarrassing to talk about one's own positions. His status in the Party was known, even before the revolution. All those appointed to Party positions, dead or alive today, deserved these appointments. Basically, it came down to who was elected. Hussein stated, "It is difficult to talk about myself." Within the Party, members do not like to talk about themselves. Hussein had recommended that members not talk about themselves.

~~(S)~~ The interviewer pointed out that it is commonly believed, both inside and outside Iraq, that Hussein's potential rivals in the Party were eliminated during the period between the 1968 revolution and Hussein's ascendancy to the Presidency in 1979. Hussein denied that those on the inside of Iraq would say or believe such information. He agreed that this information could have come from outside Iraq. According to Hussein, this

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conclusion is the opinion of these people and not necessarily a fact.

~~(S)~~ Regardless of the information, Hussein stated any examination of this idea needs to be conducted logically. Hussein stated there are many examples in history throughout the world of similar ascensions to power after a revolution. In Egypt, Nasser and Sadat were the only individuals who "stayed" with the revolution, with Nasser eventually becoming leader of the country. In France, a single soldier, Napoleon, became the leader of the country after the French Revolution when others gave up. American history is also full of examples of this phenomenon. In Hussein's opinion, these are the "revolutionary ways."

~~(S)~~ According to Hussein, previous uprisings, such as the French Revolution, were tragedies when compared to the times in which we now live. Revolutions are a new step in government, not a "liberal way" where someone is chosen and groomed to be a leader. Revolutions come from the people.

~~(S)~~ The 1968 revolution in Iraq included seventy "revolutionaries." Very few of them continued in government and/or Party service after the revolution. Some were appointed to positions and performed well, some did not. All of them did not have the ability to lead and be professional. Some continued in service while others dropped out over time. Hussein stated they all were servants of the people.

~~(S)~~ When questioned whether he believed Nasser became a dictator, Hussein replied that he did not agree. Upon responding to a request from the interviewer to define dictatorship, Hussein stated this is a form of government where one person rules alone, without a parliament, council, or committee. Hussein did not agree with the characterization that Nasser's government fit this definition. Hussein stated Nasser had a parliament. However, a parliament is not possible at the beginning of a revolution. Normally, a revolutionary council is first established and is later followed by a parliament or people's committee. Hussein does not like comparing Iraq and its 1968 revolution to Nasser and Egypt. Nasser was a military person who did not have a political party. In Iraq, the Ba'ath had a Party ranging from the cells in villages all the way to the leadership as well as a

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parliament elected by the people. The leadership of the Party and the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) discussed everything.

~~(S)~~ When asked whether Hussein and Shaykhli remained friends after Shaykhli's departure from Party service, Hussein stated his friends were among those with whom he met regularly in the leadership. He did not have any friends outside of the Party and the leadership. A true friendship has "obligations." Hussein considered Shakir as the person closest to him after the 1968 revolution. Whenever Hussein needed to discuss something, he would send for Shakir and they would have lunch together and talk. After Shakir left government service, Hussein does not remember how many times they met. Hussein stated Shaykhli "kept up good relations" with his sons Qusay and Uday. Regarding Shaykhli and the period of time after his departure from government service, Hussein's feelings of friendship remained the same, but the two did not spend the same amount of time together. Due to the demands of work, Hussein did not have time to associate with those outside of work, the Party, or the leadership.

~~(S)~~ When questioned whether he had special feelings about Shaykhli, who was shot and killed in Baghdad in 1980, Hussein stated, "Yes." Regarding whether Shaykhli's killer(s) were captured, Hussein responded, "I don't think so." An investigation took place, but the crime was not solved. Hussein stated that not all crimes committed are ultimately solved. He added that other crimes, including those committed against his cousins and those involving the deaths of various Iraqi dignitaries and ministers, remain unsolved. Hussein noted that not all crimes are solved elsewhere in the world, such as in America, France, or Italy. When questioned whether it was unusual for a crime involving the murder of a former government minister, a former revolutionary, and a former friend of the President of Iraq to go unsolved, Hussein retorted, "What do you want to say. Why are you going around the subject?" There are others who were close to Hussein in the leadership who were targets of assassination attempts, including Tariq Aziz, Uday Hussein, and others. These crimes remain unsolved as well. It happens in Iraq, just as it happens elsewhere in the world.

~~(S)~~ Hussein ended the session acknowledging the possibility that some people may say Shaykhli was killed by the Iraqi government. He added that some people might say anything.

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Logically, those who would say this are probably the same people who said Shaykhli could have become President.

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