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Interview Session Number: 12
Interview Conducted by: SSA George L. Piro
SSA [REDACTED]
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Arabic/English Translation: LS [REDACTED]

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~~(S)~~ Saddam Hussein (High Value Detainee #1) was interviewed March 5, 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 previous discussions regarding Kuwait.

~~(S)~~ Hussein acknowledged that Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz met with US Secretary of State James Baker in Geneva, Switzerland in January, 1991. From the perspective of the Iraqi leadership, the goal of this meeting was to exploit any chance for peace regarding the situation with Kuwait. When the opportunity was made available to discuss this matter with an American representative, Iraq decided to pursue this avenue. The Iraqi leadership believed that any results from this meeting would "carry weight" in the international community.

~~(S)~~ According to Hussein, Baker provided no solutions for the Kuwaiti situation. Instead, Baker dictated to Aziz certain steps that the United States wanted Iraq to accomplish first. Baker added, "Otherwise, we'll take you back to the pre-industrial age." Aziz told Baker that the accomplishment of these steps would not be possible.

~~(S)~~ Hussein stated that the Kuwaiti issue needed to have been placed inside the framework of international law. This matter should not have been reduced to one in which the strong side (United States) dictated to the weak side (Iraq) the terms of the agreement. Iraq sought a format which did not portray it as defeated, but rather one showing respect for the Iraqi military and its people.

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Baghdad Operations Center

(S) Hussein stated, "We had a desire for peace." In a document dated August 12, 1990, Iraq expressed this desire through its first proposal. As stated in a previous interview, this proposal was not accepted by any member of the international community. Iraq wanted a guarantee of no further aggression directed against them and an end to the embargo against Iraq.

(S) Without existing in the framework of international law, Hussein reiterated that Iraq would have appeared as defeated with respect to the Iraq-Kuwait issue. Hussein considered the referenced Iraqi proposal for a peaceful solution regarding Kuwait as legitimate. As with any proposal, not all parts will be accepted. The Iraqi solution was never discussed, however. Hussein questioned whether the issue regarding Kuwait was more important than the Palestinian issue. He opined that Kuwait was deemed more important by the United States and the international community because Iraq was the opposing entity and because of the existence of oil in Kuwait. As stated in a previous interview, Hussein implied that Kuwait had "been taken" from Iraq. He added that the world did not "assemble and stop" when Yemen was reunited after many years of separation.

(S) Continuing the discussion of the Iraqi proposal of August 12, 1990, Hussein questioned why it was considered unusual for Iraq to have asked that United Nations (UN) resolutions be enforced with respect to lands previously seized by Israel and Syria. If these resolutions had been enforced, Iraqis would have believed that international law was being applied fairly to Iraq in 1991. Hussein stated that no one notified Iraq that certain paragraphs or sections of the Iraqi proposal needed to be changed or deleted. He stated that Iraq had seriously explored several avenues to achieve peace.

(S) Asked whether Iraqi leaders were surprised at the number of Iraqi prisoners of war (POWs), estimated at 86,743, captured by coalition forces during the 1991 war, Hussein replied, "No. This is war." According to Hussein, the Iraqi POWs were not captured in the classic sense. There were many factors leading to their capture including their loss of communications and transportation, a lack of food and a sense of disorientation. Because of these factors, many Iraqi soldiers traveled to Saudi Arabia for safe haven where they were picked up by coalition forces. In contrast, Hussein stated that the effect

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Baghdad Operations Center

of the attacks against Iraq in 2003 was much greater than that in 1991. Despite this, fewer Iraqi POWs were captured in 2003 and he attributed this to different factors which existed in 1991.

(S) Hussein denied that the Iraqi leadership was disappointed with the large number of Iraqi POWs in 1991. Hussein stated, "Nothing would shake our determination." He advised that war has fortunes and misfortunes and that this is God's will. Hussein denied that the large number of Iraqis captured by coalition forces influenced Iraq's ability to continue fighting. He claimed that the number of POWs indicates neither the stage nor the outcome of a war. He stated that Iraq had won the war against Iran despite Iran's capture of more POWs. In Hussein's opinion, the capture of POWs in any amount does not necessarily affect one's will to fight, nor does it necessarily force certain military decisions. Hussein acknowledged that Iraqi POWs were released by coalition forces in 1991 and allowed to return home after the cease fire agreement was signed.

(S) Hussein was questioned about the 45 coalition POWs and the purpose of the apparent compulsory appearance of two British pilot POWs on Iraqi television. The interviewer noted that the pilots appeared to have been physically abused and that the featuring of them on television was a violation of the Geneva Convention. Hussein stated that the POWs, especially the pilots, would likely have provided different details about their capture. Some would say they were captured by farmers or villagers while others would say by a "group of people." These Iraqis might have celebrated the capture of the coalition combatants by hitting and pushing them around. The Iraqi military was not always in control or aware of circumstances regarding captured individuals because communications between military units had been knocked out by coalition forces.

(S) Regarding coalition POWs captured in 1991, Hussein denied knowledge of any abuse of them by those serving in the Iraqi military or the Iraqi government. However, he clarified this statement by saying that he did not deny that others may have "behaved in a bad manner" and that he was speaking only about his personal knowledge of the matter. Hussein added that he would provide such information if he were aware of it. He stated that he subscribes to a document much older than the Geneva Convention, the Koran. The Koran and Arab tradition believe that it is "noble" to treat a prisoner well. Hussein

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Baghdad Operations Center

believes that the principles enunciated in the Geneva Convention should be respected by the entire world regardless of one's circumstances or nationality.

~~(S)~~ Regarding reports that all coalition POWs were tortured while in Iraqi custody, Hussein neither confirmed nor denied these reports. Instead, he stated this information is "on the conscience" of those who reported it and those who conducted the investigation. Hussein explained that leaders command by "communication instruments." Lower level commanders lead by "vision or voice." Without proper communication instruments, each entity behaves according to "how it sees things." Hussein reiterated that Iraqi communications systems were inoperative during the 1991 war. Accordingly, he speculated that some reported acts of physical abuse, such as the burning of a POW's hair, might have been the acts of a "simpleton." When it was pointed out that the abuse of coalition forces could reasonably lead one to believe this was a widespread practice conducted by the entire Iraqi military, Hussein replied, "I answered."

~~(S)~~ Hussein maintained that he does not question the accounts of abuse of coalition POWs and that he has no personal information to either confirm or deny these allegations. However, from a practical perspective, he does not doubt that the Iraqi people, after being attacked by coalition pilots, might have abused pilots especially if they had participated in their capture.

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