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Interview Session Number: 3
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 10, 2004 at a military detention facility at Baghdad International Airport (BIAP), Baghdad, Iraq. Hussein provided the following information:

~~(S)~~ Hussein provided his comments regarding the Palestinian situation. Any attempt to understand the roots of the problems surrounding the Palestinian issue should be made from the viewpoint of an Arab, and not just as a Palestinian. The problem is not only a Palestinian one but also an Arab one. In the 1960s, many revolutions occurred in Arab countries with the uprisings generally taking place as the result of the dissatisfaction of the people with the rulers of those times. Part of the reason leaders were removed was their failure to address the Palestinian issue adequately or ignoring it altogether. Any solution to the problem should be based on fairness and international law. International law, and its application, created the problem in 1948 upon formation of the separate Jewish state of Israel from lands previously claimed by the Palestinians. A solution, from foreigners and those "internal" to the issue, must be presented in that scope. Everyone has been looking for a solution. However, Hussein stated, "A solution that does not convince the majority of Palestinians will not be successful." The foundation of any such solution, and the final outcome, must be the establishment of a separate state of Palestine.

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~~(S)~~ When questioned about a speech he once gave regarding the 1968 revolution in Iraq, Hussein agreed that he commented in the speech "we did not revolt against a person, we revolted against the system of government." He further agreed that he stated the revolution was undertaken "to move Iraqi people, the country, the Arab world as a whole, and the Palestinians forward." Hussein added the Ba'ath Party was the only political party that demonstrated against the Iraqi government in 1967.

~~(S)~~ Regarding the Six-Day Arab-Israeli War in 1967, Hussein stated that Arabs had hoped that lands lost in 1948 would be won back. Hussein stated, "We were sad when that did not happen." Although expectations were low for success, the news was especially disheartening when details were provided about the rapid defeat of the Egyptian and Syrian military forces. People of the Arab world became "sad and depressed" and developed a feeling of revolution.

~~(S)~~ Even though the 1967 war was lost, Hussein still respected Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser after the war. In Hussein's opinion, Nasser "could represent the Arabs to the world" while others were "weak." At that time, Nasser was the only ruler with a close relationship to the "Arab masses." Despite losing the war, Nasser did not lose the respect of the people. The hopes of the people, however, were greater than the result Nasser could deliver. Losing the war showed the limits of the capabilities of Nasser and the Egyptian military forces. Hussein pointed out that the war also exposed internal issues in the Egyptian leadership. Abdul Hakim Ammer, head of the Egyptian military, would not permit Nasser's "interference" in military matters "even though Nasser was head of the country." When Nasser later resigned, millions of Egyptians protested for him to resume his duties as President. Hussein opined that it seemed "Nasser depended on international politics rather than preparation of his military and people" leading up to the war. When he died in 1970, citizens "cried for him."

~~(S)~~ Regarding the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, Egyptian President Sadat, who served as Vice President under Nasser, "could not bring back the hopes of the Arabs." Sadat seemed not to have a specific cause or aim and was unable to do anything about 1948 and the "rape of Palestine." Because Sadat was not a "man of cause," Egyptian soldiers were not "motivated" by him.

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Similarly, the people of Egypt were not motivated. In fact, during this time, Egyptians mocked their own soldiers making jokes about the military saying they did not fight in 1967. Sadat did, however, through his own personality, make the United States and Israel believe he could win a war with Israel.

~~(S)~~ When questioned about Sadat's ability to ultimately do more for his people than Nasser, particularly with respect to bringing peace and reclaiming territory, Hussein stated Nasser's effect was "nominal." Hussein added, "If you tell Iraqis Kuwait will be a part of Iraq, they will be happy." The Arab nation, from poor to wealthy individuals, is one nation with the same language, common borders, and the same aims. There is one Arab world, from the "simple person to the lawmakers and thinkers." The strength of any person in a "family" comes from cooperation with and love of each other in the "family." If a member of the "family" does not understand this, he will be "weak and fall." Sadat was not faithful to "family" matters. Prior to the 1967 war, the West Bank and Jerusalem were under control of Jordan while Gaza was under control of Egypt. Sadat's peace agreement with the Israelis failed to return the territories to the rightful owners, the Palestinians. Thus, Sadat was a "traitor to the cause." Israel only willingly returned the Sinai Peninsula as it was a "military burden" and was an easy "political move."

~~(S)~~ Sadat lost honor as a result of agreements made with Israel. Additionally, the Egyptian economy worsened significantly under his leadership. In contrast, Egypt's economy flourished under Nasser with its markets opened to all Arab countries.

~~(S)~~ Hussein stated, "Being at peace is not easy." Peace without a cause will create a change in balance. Regarding a comment made to a British journalist approximately two years ago, Hussein did not mean peace could be achieved by losing faith and prestige. On the contrary, any peace should be negotiated to a "favorable position of power."

~~(S)~~ Hussein stated Iraq fought in the 1973 war on two fronts, with its air forces contributing in Egypt and Syria and ground forces fighting in Syria. When asked whether Iraq could have done more, Hussein responded, "What more could we have done? We sent all of our military to fight under Egyptian and Syrian command." Prior to the war, Egypt had sent then Vice President

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Mubarak to Iraq to request aircraft and pilots for use in attacking Israeli surface-to-air missiles sites. Iraq provided the aircraft though they were already fighting the Kurds in the north. The Syrians requested Iraq's assistance just after start of the war saying Israel would occupy Syria without Iraq's help.

~~(S)~~ Regarding the reported failure of the Syrian military to "openly welcome" Iraqi forces in 1973, Hussein stated, "No one is as generous as Iraqis." Hussein was further asked for his comments regarding the failure/refusal of the Syrian military to provide Iraqi forces with maps, communications equipment, and other assistance needed to fight the war together. Hussein replied, "A loser does not know where his head and feet are. It was a difficult situation, to come together like this." Hussein postulated, "Perhaps the Syrians did not have maps." Iraqi officers were accustomed to different treatment in their own military ranks.

~~(S)~~ Iraq has always accepted Palestinian refugees into the country, during Hussein's time and previously. These influxes of refugees include after 1948 upon formation of Israel, after September, 1970 (Black September in Jordan), and in 1991 after the first Gulf War. Hussein stated, "We welcomed them, gave them jobs, and gave them the right to own land and a house." The latter policy regarding homes was in contradiction with the doctrine of the Arab League which did not permit Palestinians to own residences. In Hussein's opinion, Arab League members assumed that Palestinians would not leave if they owned their own residences. Hussein did not agree with this policy for "humanitarian reasons." When presented by Hussein, the Iraqi leadership agreed with this position. For Palestinians in Iraq, "this helped life be normal."

~~(S)~~ Hussein acknowledged that Iraqi government built and/or rented homes for Palestinians from Iraqi landlords. Hussein stated, "We were concerned about everybody in Iraq. We would not have let them live on the streets. Things such as food, work, and a home are needed for the sake of pride." Hussein stated some people accused Iraq of trying to remove the Palestinians. Hussein added, on the contrary, we "could not kick a guest out."

~~(S)~~ Hussein does not remember whether the Iraqi government paid all or a portion of rent, for all or a certain

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amount of time, for the Palestinian housing in Iraq. Hussein has no knowledge of home owners suing the government for unpaid rent, particularly in the early to mid-1990s, and losing such a case to the government. Hussein stated, "If we promised to pay, we would have done it. If the case was lost, the government must not have promised to pay." Hussein denied there was a law permitting the government to "rent" homes without actually paying rent to the landlord. He said, "That's not true. There was no such law. That's rape or jungle law." Hussein asked to see the law on paper.

~~(S)~~ Hussein provided comments about the 1974 Rabat Summit where it is reported that the Iraqi government gave up its belief in an "armed struggle" for Palestine and accepted a "phased strategy." Hussein stated this was the first conference he had ever attended. Usually, the Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs attended on behalf of the government. At the summit, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) presented a general strategy asking Jordan for the West Bank as a homeland. Previously, the West Bank and Jerusalem were under control of Jordan and its ruler King Hussein. Hussein stated, "We approved this after a speech by King Hussein." In Hussein's opinion, King Hussein did not object to the plan "but seem unconvinced." Also at this time, Iraq agreed that the PLO would be the only legal representative of Palestine.

~~(S)~~ Hussein acknowledged that Palestinian groups, including Al-Fatah, had offices in Baghdad. In 1978, however, Al-Fatah closed its offices and reportedly distributed leaflets. Hussein does not know the details of the message on the leaflets but heard it was negative towards the Iraqi government. The relationship between the Iraqi government and Al-Fatah "was not good." Regarding the objectives of other Palestinian organizations, which seemed to differ from those of the PLO and Iraq, Hussein stated friction between individuals or groups regarding the same matter often results in differing ideas being put forth. According to Hussein, the Palestinians needed "central control." The individuals comprising the leadership of the various Palestinian groups were "not on the same page." As for the Iraqis, the leadership met and decided not to interfere in the internal affairs of the PLO. Hussein stated it was decided that Iraq would "help as we can." The Palestinians were told, however, the limitations of the Iraqi government. Thereafter, direction regarding Iraqi assistance to Palestinians,

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and limitations, was provided to all Iraqi government sectors. Hussein described relations with the the PLO during the period 1978-2003 as "good."

~~(S)~~ Hussein stated representatives of the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) and Abu Nidal Organization (ANO) were present in Iraq at times. Hussein stated, "We accepted them as guests." They were directed not to conduct activities against Iraq and to refrain from terrorism. PLF and ANO members were told not to interfere in the internal affairs of the PLO. At one point, the ANO was warned to cease terrorist activities.

~~(S)~~ Hussein acknowledged the presence of Mohammed Abbas, aka Abu Abbas, in Iraq at some point. Hussein did not admit to specifically assisting Abbas. He stated, "If we accepted someone as a guest, we must help them. A guest cannot, however, demand what he wants for breakfast, lunch, and dinner." Hussein reiterated that Iraq considered the PLO as the official political organization for Palestine and all other groups were secondary.

~~(S)~~ Hussein was told the details of a videotaped meeting which took place approximately two years ago between Abbas and Tahir Jalil Habbush, Director of the Iraqi Intelligence Service. At the meeting, Abbas requested Iraqi assistance, including money, training, weapons, and transportation, to carry out missions to attack Israel. Hussein was told the videotape was seen by the interviewer. Hussein was questioned as to whether these actions planned against Israel constituted a legitimate defense of Palestine or terrorism, thereby exceeding the normal assistance provided to a guest. Hussein asked, "What did the Iraqi government do? If you have the recording, you know." Hussein stated that his position is one where attempts are made to regain all Arab lands, including those "raped and taken." He stated this is neither a secret nor is it something which brings shame. Hussein added, "If Habbush and Abbas met, that's something else. We call for a military struggle to regain Arab lands. The principles are the same as that which we have talked about before." Hussein continued, "If Abbas asked for these things, it does not mean we gave them to him. If Abbas carried out any attacks in Israel, that means we helped him. If he did not, we did not help him." When told Abbas carried out attacks in Israel, Hussein replied, "Those occurred before asking us for assistance. That was their choice." Hussein stated, "At

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any time, we have the ability and the right to help in the struggle. I'm not talking about Abbas, I'm talking about organizations in Palestine. Outsiders are not serious." Hussein asked for the answer provided by Habbush to Abbas. The interviewer told Hussein money was provided to Abbas, but not as much as requested. Hussein stated, "This is intelligence work. We have been open about Palestine."

~~(S)~~ Hussein was questioned whether assistance to Abbas would help achieve the goals of Palestinians or whether it would work against such aims. Hussein stated since he was a "young struggler" in the Ba'ath Party, he believed any organization should fight from the inside, not the outside. Per Hussein, any attempts from the outside are just "talk" and "not serious." Hussein suggested further details regarding Abbas could be obtained from Habbush or from further review of the videotape of the meeting between the two.

~~(S)~~ Regarding whether the Director of the IIS would meet without the approval of the Iraqi leadership to discuss such a matter with Abbas, Hussein replied, "Does the American Director of Intelligence call President Bush every time before meeting someone?" Hussein agreed that the President, in both the United States and Iraq, sets policy for all branches of government. Hussein stated, although Abbas reportedly asked the Iraqi IIS Director for 1-2 million dollars according to the interviewer, he would not have given him even "\$10,000." Hussein added, "Any Palestinian who wanted to train and to go fight for Palestine, I said train him. Money and weapons are different from training." Because of sanctions against Iraq, the government could not offer as much assistance as previously provided. Hussein stated, "If the IIS had the ability, it is not wrong as long as the struggle is on the inside."

~~(S)~~ Hussein was questioned whether Iraq's stated position of recognition of the PLO as the sole representative of Palestine conflicted with support provided to other groups and individuals including Abbas. Hussein responded, "I didn't say I helped Abbas. Don't put words in my mouth." Hussein added, "I think the questions should be in the context of a dialogue, not an interrogation." Hussein continued saying, "If the IIS helped Abbas, and he fought for Palestine, that is not wrong. If a person says he wants to struggle against Israel, and that person is not officially representing Palestinians, there is no conflict

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with Iraqi policy." Hussein said any such person who stated he wanted to "negotiate" would not be supported by Iraq as that is the role of Arafat and the PLO.

(S) At the end of interview, Hussein was asked about his movements when hostilities began in March, 2003. Hussein stated he remained in Baghdad until April 10 or 11, 2003, whereupon it appeared the city was about to fall. Prior to his departure from Baghdad, he held a final meeting with the senior Iraqi leadership and told them "we will struggle in secret." Thereafter, he departed Baghdad and began gradually "dispersing" his bodyguards, telling them they had completed their duty, so as not to draw attention.

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