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U.S. Department of Justice

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Interview Session Number:
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Arabic/English Translation:

LS [REDACTED]

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

~~(S)~~ Prior to the start of the interview, Hussein was advised that today's discussion would be a continuation of the previous conversation regarding the disturbances or uprisings in southern Iraq in 1991 after the Gulf War.

~~(S)~~ Hussein stated that he was made aware of the details regarding the situation in southern Iraq in the same fashion as any leader of a country. Whenever faced with a situation, the Iraqi leadership assembled and consulted "quickly" about the best manner in which to confront an issue.

~~(S)~~ Hussein stated that, initially, those who carried out acts during the uprisings in southern Iraq were among "those who had crossed the border from Iran." Others from Iraq committed similar acts, while some were not involved at all in the incidents. According to Hussein, if the Iraqi government response to these actions had been slow and weak, some individuals might have shown sympathy and assisted the participants in the uprisings. Without such a response, they might have acted out of fear thinking that those who caused the disturbances would ultimately rise to power in the Iraqi government. In addition, other individuals Hussein described as "greedy thieves and robbers" might have participated in the uprisings.

~~(S)~~ Hussein asserted that it was the duty of the Iraqi government to confront the individuals participating in the uprisings. Hussein stated that although the "arms of the authorities had been severed" by the 1991 war, the Iraqi

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government "picked them up and struck the enemy." He added that those who would not be deterred by words would be deterred by weapons. The Iraqi leadership ordered the army to assemble as many forces as possible in order to confront "treachery" and the disturbances. Hussein acknowledged that incidents of looting by certain individuals "got mixed in" with the actions of those participating in the uprisings.

~~(S)~~ Regarding the decision to place certain individuals in charge of areas in southern Iraq during this time period and their assigned roles, Hussein replied, "I said our decision was to confront and defeat the enemy." The participants in the uprisings were to be "put in their place," if not by word, then by weapon. Hussein stated that a lengthy discussion of this matter was not required. The individuals who had crossed the border from Iran were members of the Dawa Party. They were assisted by additional Iranian forces. Together, these individuals killed, burned, looted, and committed other crimes. According to Hussein, one does not need to ask what actions should be taken when faced with such a situation. Procedure, however, dictated that the Iraqi leadership meet to discuss the matter. All members of the leadership held the same opinion regarding the Iraqi government response required to the deal with the situation.

~~(S)~~ When asked how information was communicated to him regarding events occurring in southern Iraq and regarding subsequent responses by Iraqi government forces, Hussein asked, "With Iraq being so small, is it possible we wouldn't know what was going on?" He added that the entire population of southern Iraq began migrating to Baghdad during this time period. Information from one of the Iraqi commanders in the south, Ali Hasan Al-Majid, was "cut off" and was not reaching the Iraqi leadership. Soon after, it became clear to the leadership that Al-Majid was "resisting" in Basra.

~~(S)~~ When asked whether reports were true that Al-Majid was actually trapped in Basra at this time, Hussein responded, "In the past, Iraqis did not respect law and authority." When called to military service, Iraqis generally failed to respond. When called for "questioning," Iraqis also generally failed to respond. According to Hussein, national rule was a relatively new concept during this time period. Even though most Iraqis were Arab, they were not accustomed to being ruled by an Arab,

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King Faisal at that time. He was "installed" into power by the British. The disregard for law was particularly prevalent in rural areas at that time.

~~(S)~~ Hussein then provided details of a story about an individual named Madhi Ubaid and his son who was wanted by the government. As the result of a police operation, Ubaid was captured and interrogated regarding the whereabouts of his son. Ubaid responded, "I have no son." The police asked, "Are you Madhi?" Ubaid replied, "No, I'm Fadhi." The police slapped him and told Ubaid "You are Madhi." Thereafter, Ubaid stated, "If the government says I'm Madhi, I'm Madhi." Hussein ended the discussion of Al-Majid's situation in Basra stating, "You heard what you heard. I heard what I heard."

~~(S)~~ Hussein stated that the threat to the Iraqi government in 1991 existed in both northern and southern Iraq. An uprising was even attempted in Baghdad. Hussein opined that those "sitting on the fence" joined in the uprisings upon seeing police stations and government offices attacked with no resistance by the authorities. As the Iraqi government reasserted control, the "enemy" went to a new area or reinforced in an old one. According to Hussein, the Iraqi military strength grew over time and "the circle started tightening around the enemy."

~~(S)~~ Hussein noted that the previous period of lawlessness he discussed, during Madhi's time, was in the 1920s. He added that the attitude of the Iraqis changed completely during the last 35 years under the Ba'ath Party. In Hussein's opinion, with a political party present throughout Iraq, the Iraqi people believed in the government agenda, had faith in their leadership, and were more disciplined than ever before. This led to an improvement in the situation in Iraq, particularly in the economy. According to Hussein, no "poor person" existed in Iraq in the 1980s. Widows, orphans, and the elderly were "taken care of and secure." Commercial products were relatively inexpensive. This Iraqi lifestyle diminished, however, around the midpoint of the Iran-Iraq War and later after the 1991 Gulf War. Hussein stated, "An embargo is an embargo." After the downturn in the economy, employees, and Iraqi citizens in general, were less disciplined. However, their allegiance did not change.

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~~(S)~~ Hussein acknowledged that Iraq was on its way to becoming economically strong in the early 1980s. He added that all the positive things in Iraq had been created by the leadership. Hussein further acknowledged that the economic situation deteriorated dramatically in the 1980s. Hussein agreed that the decline in the Iraqi economy at that time and the subsequent 1991 Gulf War which led to embargos and United Nations (UN) inspections lessened the economic strength of the country. He acknowledged that this decline was felt by the Iraqi people, especially among those in rural areas and among lower income individuals such as those living in southern Iraq. Hussein added that the central and northern areas of Iraq were also affected.

~~(S)~~ Hussein acknowledged that, as a general rule, the pressures of poverty can greatly strain a society possibly leading to revolution. However, he provided several examples of situations involving revolutions in Iraq and other countries in the Arab world which did not stem from economic conditions. Hussein stated that acts of insurgency without a political goal, such as those which occurred in 1991, are not revolutions.

~~(S)~~ The interviewer noted to Hussein that various neutral non-governmental and humanitarian organizations conducted investigations of the actions of the Iraqi military during the uprisings of 1991. One such investigation conducted by Human Rights Watch (HRW), a neutral non-profit organization not associated with any government, provided details about Iraqi military actions. The interviewer read Hussein a summary of an HRW interview of a resident of Basra who witnessed one such event in 1991. According to the witness, he saw a column of Iraqi tanks approaching Basra. The lead tank had three children tied to its front being forced to act as human shields. When questioned regarding his knowledge of such actions of the Iraqi military in 1991, Hussein replied that even though he believes this information does not deserve a reply, he would answer for the benefit of the interviewer. Hussein stated, "It's a lie." He added that, in Iraq, each child has a father, a mother, and family. Iraq "does not have orphans walking the streets." Regarding these three children, Hussein asked, "Who were their parents?" He questioned why the interviewer would accept that a tank commander would act so irresponsibly. Hussein further asked why the tactic of using children as human shields would have been considered effective against those who were already killing, looting, and burning. He added that a story about using children

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in this manner may have been fabricated by westerners. Hussein reiterated that the story did not deserve an answer from him and "the lie is clear."

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