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Interview Session Number: 11
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 March 3, 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 Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

~~(S)~~ Hussein stated that he devised the plan for the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Because the geography of Kuwait is essentially open land, neither specific tactical planning nor special assets was needed to effect the operation. Any person with basic military knowledge could have put together an effective invasion plan.

~~(S)~~ The invasion of Kuwait was accomplished within two and a half hours, equivalent to that previously estimated. Hussein stated it should have taken no more than one hour. He believes it should have occurred more quickly than originally estimated due to support for the invasion from the Kuwaiti people. Hussein reiterated a previous statement to the interviewers that Iraq was asked by the Kuwaiti people to invade their country in order to remove the Kuwaiti leadership. When asked to clarify how the Kuwaiti citizens communicated their desires to the Iraqi government prior to the invasion, Hussein stated some, not all, Kuwaitis felt this way. He added, "We felt they were asking."

~~(S)~~ Regarding the assault on the coastal city of Khafji and who designed this attack, Hussein stated, "Me." He added that he would not shift the blame to his friends. Hussein stated that military planning was easy after eight years of war with Iran from 1980 to 1988. Any military operation requires

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knowledge of the geography of the area and knowledge of the weapons and the capabilities of the enemy as well as one's own capabilities. Other important factors include the training, logistical support, and morale of the troops. With such knowledge, the military operation against Khafji was simple to plan. The land was open, similar to southern Iraq, and provided no "complications." The only concern was enemy air power capability.

~~(S)~~ When questioned whether the purpose of the assault on Khafji was to force the coalition forces into a ground war, Hussein replied that military experts knew that any ground attack against the Iraqi Army was a difficult task. He opined that two million troops would have been needed to fight the Iraqi ground forces. Aircraft, however, could be used to strike Iraqi forces and thereafter return to base. The preliminary information available to Iraq indicated that coalition ground forces were in the vicinity of Khafji. For this reason, Iraqi forces decided to attack the location and to "force a fight." Hussein stated that it seemed that coalition forces withdrew upon attack by Iraqi forces. Thereafter, Iraqi ground forces remained in the area. As time passed, Iraq lost soldiers, ammunition, and equipment. Many Iraqi soldiers died as the result of repeated coalition air assaults without ever seeing the enemy approaching over land.

~~(S)~~ Hussein denied that Iraqi forces were defeated at Khafji, forcing them to withdraw. Hussein stated Iraq did not intend to occupy the city. Iraqi ground forces went to the location to fight with coalition ground forces. Upon encountering little to no ground resistance, Iraqi forces withdrew on the second day, of their own choosing. Hussein noted that it seemed coalition forces were not aware of the Iraqi withdrawal for a few days. Hussein acknowledged that coalition forces had air supremacy.

~~(S)~~ Regarding whether one of the Iraqi objectives of the assault on Khafji was to capture American prisoners of war (POWs), Hussein stated one of the principles of war is to kill or capture the enemy. After fourteen days of coalition bombardment of Iraqi forces, Iraq wanted to force casualties upon coalition forces. However, Iraq preferred to capture coalition personnel. In Hussein's opinion, this would have had a "lot of effect" on the enemy. Hussein acknowledged that the assault on Khafji may not have been effective and may have shown coalition forces

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Iraq's strengths. This may have led to prolonged coalition air strikes and a delay in the ground war.

~~(S)~~ Hussein believes Iraqi forces should have conducted their ground assault even earlier. The operation was delayed an additional week, creating an opportunity for the coalition to conduct additional air strikes which weakened the Iraqi ground forces. Hussein denied that there was a plan to capture American POWs as a method of trying to prevent continued coalition air attacks.

~~(S)~~ Hussein stated that he, and no one else in the Iraqi government or leadership, gave the orders to fire SCUD missiles at Israel. He stated, "Everything that happened to us was because of Israel." Hussein added that all the "bad things" for Arabs came as the result of Israeli actions. He opined that Israel "pushes" US politicians and "fills them with hatred." Israel first attacked Iraq in 1981 destroying the country's only nuclear reactor. As far as Iraq was concerned, the war with Israel was "still on." During the conflict in 1991, Hussein reasoned that the United States would stop the war if Israel was "hurt." He also wanted to punish the country that he considered as the source of all the problems. Hussein denied that one of his reasons for striking Israel with SCUD missiles was to cause Israeli retaliation, a collapse of the coalition, and withdrawal of Arab support for the coalition. According to Hussein, the Arab countries which supported the coalition had been "shamed." Thus, any withdrawal of their support against Iraq was inconsequential.

~~(S)~~ Hussein stated there were two reasons for the war in 1991, oil and Israel. He added that Kuwait would not have considered doing anything against Iraq unless "pushed" by another country (the United States). When the interviewer pointed out to Hussein that historians believe Iraq acted first, Hussein replied that this was the result (of Kuwait's actions) and not the reason (for the war).

~~(S)~~ Hussein denied that Iraqi forces withdrew from Kuwait following their defeat. He insisted Iraqi forces withdrew as the result of an official proclamation. This cease fire, including the Iraqi withdrawal, was negotiated by the Russians and accepted by Iraq. Coalition air attacks against Iraqi ground forces occurred while troops were retreating under official

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orders from the Iraqi leadership. Hussein denied that Iraqi forces would have been eliminated if they had not withdrawn.

~~(S)~~ Hussein stated an Iraqi plan of withdrawal existed as early as August 12, 1990. However, Iraq found no government in the international community nor in the Arab world which would agree to negotiate the terms of this plan. The President of France expressed support for the plan, but subsequently withdrew this support after receiving pressure from the United States. Thereafter, Iraqi accepted the previously discussed Russian initiative. Hussein denied that the plan was accepted because of huge Iraqi military losses.

~~(S)~~ The interview then turned to a discussion of a letter dated February 19, 1991 from Hussein Kamil, in the name of Iraqi President Hussein, to Ali Hasan Al-Majid. The letter stated, in part, that the Iraqi military should remove any and all property from Kuwait which will aid in the rebuilding of Iraq. Hussein stated the normal method of conveying directions from the President would be via letters from the Presidential Diwan. Kamil was not a secretary, but was simply one of the Iraqi Ministers. Kamil was "known for his way of doing things." Upon being read the letter by the translator, Hussein asked whether the document referred to items used by the Iraqi military in Kuwait or to things from Kuwait itself. He added that he never instructed the Iraqi military to remove items, either their own equipment or Kuwaiti items. Hussein opined that the letter may refer to equipment in Kuwait that was utilized by the various Iraqi Ministers for critical services such as electricity, water, transportation, and telephone service. He stated the letter was dated nine days before the cease fire. Hussein denied that the letter referred to Kuwaiti property. He stated it was simply a letter from one minister subordinate to another minister, asking for the return of materials taken to Kuwait by Iraqi forces. Hussein stated that he did not issue the letter. He asked what items or materials were taken from Kuwait after this letter was published.

~~(S)~~ When questioned whether members of the Iraqi leadership were allowed to issue letters in the name of the President without his knowledge, Hussein stated, "There are bad elements everywhere. He (Hussein Kamil) is dead now." Hussein denied knowledge of whether other members of the Iraqi leadership acted on authority of the President without actually having power

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delegated to them by Hussein. Hussein acknowledged that the referenced letter was not conveyed in an official manner. He reiterated that the official method of issuance of such a letter, upon orders from Hussein, would have been to send a communication from the Presidential Diwan to Ali Hasan Al-Majid, in this case. This letter would have specifically enumerated the powers to be delegated to a particular individual, in this case, Hussein Kamil.

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