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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00  
SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PM-06 H-01 INR-10 L-03  
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 A-02 OPR-02 SY-05 SYE-00 OC-06  
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FM AMCONSUL DHAHRAN  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 7581  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA NIACT IMMEDIATE  
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI IMMEDIATE  
USINT BAGHDAD IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY DOHA IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY MANAMA IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY SANA IMMEDIATE  
USLO RIYADH IMMEDIATE  
CHUSMTM DHAHRAN IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T DHAHRAN 1872

EO 12065: RDS-1 11/26/99 (LINDSTROM, RALPH E) OR-M  
TAGS: PINS, ASEC, SA  
SUBJECT: TENSIONS RISE AMONG SAUDI SHI'AS IN EASTERN PROVINCE

REF: DHAHRAN 1854 AND PREVIOUS

1. (S - ENTIRE TEXT).

2. I CALLED ON MAJOR GENERAL HUSSEIN MALKI, CHIEF OF GENERAL INTELLIGENCE DIRECTORATE FOR EASTERN PROVINCE, TODAY (NOV.26) FOR A BRIEFING ON THE CURRENT SECURITY SITUATION IN THE PROVINCE AS IT PERTAINS TO AMERICANS. MALKI, WHO

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WAS ACCOMPANIED BY HIS DEPUTY, COLONEL AHMED MULTANI, GAVE A CANDID RUNDOWN ON SITUATION AS THEY PERVEIVE IT, ALTHOUGH ADMITTING THAT THERE ARE GAPS IN THEIR INTELLIGENCE.

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3. ACCORDING TO GID OFFICERS, THREATS TO CONSULATE AND AMERICANS IN GENERAL COULD COME FROM (A) SHI'AS LIVING IN COMMUNITIES NORTH OF HERE SUCH AS QATIF, (B) THIRD COUNTRY NATIONAL MUSLIM WORKERS SUCH AS PAKISTANIS AND (C) UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, PARTICULARLY THOSE OF SHI'A PERSUASION.

4. GENERAL MALKI REVEALED THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MANY YEARS QATIFI SHI'AS, IN DEFIANCE OF LONG-STANDING SAUDI GOVERNMENT BAN, TOOK TO STREETS LAST NIGHT TO PERFORM THEIR SELF-FLAGELLATION RITUALS. POLICE FORCIBLY MADE THEM RETURN BACK INTO THEIR HOMES.

5. ACCORDING TO GID OFFICERS, DANGER PERIOD FOR AMERICANS WILL NOT REPEAT NOT END ON 10TH OF MUHARRUM (NOVEMBER 29) THIS YEAR A SHI'AS HAVE BEEN EXCEPTIONALLY AGITATED BY KHOMEINI AND OTHER OUTSIDE INFLUENCES. HE STRESSED, THEREFORE,

IT WILL BE IMPORTANT FOR CONSULATE AND OTHER IDENTIFIABLY AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS IN PROVINCE TO REMAIN ALERT AFTERWARDS. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE SHI'AS ARE PRESENTLY ABSORBED IN DISCUSSIONS AND IN PERFORMING THEIR EXHAUSTING RITUALS. THEY WILL REQUIRE MUCH CLOSER SCRUTINY, HE SAID, WHEN THEY RETURN TO THEIR JOBS IN THE OIL FIELDS OR ELSEWHERE AFTER THEIR RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS TO MAKE CERTAIN THEY HAVE NOT DECIDED TO ENGAGE IN ACTS OF SABOTAGE OR TERRORISM OUT OF RELIGIOUS ZEAL. THEY CAUTIONED US, INTER ALIA, TO WUTCH OUR CONSULATE SHI'A

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EMPLOYEES, WHO ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE WORKED HERE UP TO 30 YEARS, MAY HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO ALIEN INFLUENCES.

6. COL. MULTANI THEN ADDED SOME "PERSONAL ADVICE" THAT CONSULATE SHOULD GET WORD DISCREETLY TO AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN EASTERN PROVINCE (WHICH IS 25,000 STRONG) TO BE VERY DISCREET AND LOW KEY IN THEIR OBSERVANCE OF THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS. HE SAID THAT AMERICANS LIVING IN ALKHOBAR AND DAMMAM SHOULD BE PARTICULARLY CAREFUL NOT TO SEND NON-AMERICAN GUESTS (READ SAUDIS) AWAY FROM THEIR HOMES INEBRIATED THEREBY RISKING POSSIBILITY OF AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENTS OR OTHER INCIDENTS WHICH COULD BE BLAMED ON THE AMERICANS.

7. WHILE GENERAL MALKI NOTED THAT THERE APPEARS TO BE

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NO DIRECT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GRAND MOSQUE TAKEOVER IN MECCA AND PERSONS IN EASTERN PROVINCE, HE SPECULATED THAT IT COULD, NEVERTHELESS, HAVE BEEN AN OPERATION INTENDED TO DIVERT ATTENTION FROM THE MAJOR OBJECTIVE OF THOSE WHO MIGHT HAVE SPONSORED IT. DE DID NOT ELABORATE FURTHER.

8. GID OFFICERS AGAIN ASSURED ME THAT CONSULATE SECURITY IS BEING GIVEN HIGHEST POSSIBLE PRIORITY BY SAG SECURITY FORCES. ASIDE FROM NATIONAL GUARD, BOTH POLICE AND ARMY ARE PROVIDING SECURITY. COL. MULTANI SAID HE HIMSELF HAD SELPT IN THE OFFICE DURING TOE PAST THREE NIGHTS. I EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THIS EXCELLENT SECURITY SUPPORT AS WELL AS THE HOPE THAT ANY INCIPIENT DEMONSTRATIONS OR ATTACK AIMED AT CONSULATE COULD BE NIPPED IN THE BUD

SO AS TO AVERT SOME CONFRONTATION AT THE CONSULATE WHICH COULD POISON U.S.- SAUDI RELATIONS. THEY AGREED WHOLEHEARTEDLY.

9. COMMENT: FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MANY YEARS A SIGNIFICANT DEGREE OF ANTI-AMERICANISM APPEARS TO  
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BE EMERGING IN EASTERN PROVINCE, MAINLY AMONG SAUDI SHI'AS BUT PERHAPS AMONG SOME FOREIGN MUSLIM WORKERS AS WELL. WHILE SAUDI ARABIA'S SHI'AS ARE LIKELY TO REMAIN DEVOTED TO KHOMEINI IN A RELIGIOUS SENSE, THEIR PRESENT ANTI-AMERICAN INCLINATION WILL HOPEFULLY DISAPPEAR AS WE BECOME LESS INVOLVED IN IRANIAN AFFAIRS. RELEASE OF OUR HOSTAGES IN TEHRAN AND THE RETURN OF THE SHAH TO MEXICO WOULD PROBABLY HAVE A CALMING EFFECT HERE. WE WILL, IN ANY CASE, PASS WORD TO THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY DISCREETLY TO KEEP AS LOW A PROFILE AS POSSIBLE DURING THE HOLIDAYS THIS YEAR.  
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