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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 SY-05 SYE-00 A-02 OPR-02 OC-06
CCO-00 MCT-02 HA-05 SES-01 SSN-02 CIAE-00 PM-06
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 /075 W
-----016081 271657Z /64

O 271633Z NOV 79
FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8083
INFO AMCONSUL DHAHRAN IMMEDIATE
USLO RIYADH IMMEDIATE
CHUSMTM DHAHRAN IMMEDIATE
DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
USINT BAGHDAD IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DOHA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MANAM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MUSCHAT IMMEDIAE
AMEMBASSY SANA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T JIDDA 8180

DEPT PASS TO A/SY/CC/TAGS

E.O. 12065: GDS 11/27/85 (PLACKE JANES A) OR-M
TAGS: PINS ASEC SA
SUBJ : (S) OCCUPATION OF GRAND MOSQUE:
SITUATION AS OF 1300 GMT

REF: (-) FBIS LD261932, (B) JIDDA 8119

1. (S - ENTIRE TEXT)
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2. SUMMARY: GUNEN OCCUPYING GRAND MOSQUE NOW CONFIRMED
TO PART OF BUILDING'S BASEMENT. SAG SEEMS INTENT TO
TAKE AS MANY AS POSSIBLE ALIVE. SAUDIS ARE MOVING TO

ASSERT THEIR COMMAND OF SITUATION. END SUMMARY.

3. STATEMENT BY INFORMATION MINISTER YAMANI (SEE REF A) HAS STATED THAT ALMOST ALL OF GRAND MOSQUE HAS BEEN RETAKEN. SMALL GROUP OF GUNMEN IS STILL HOLDING OUT IN PART OF BASEMENT AREA OF MOSQUE, WHICH, WE HAVE BEEN INFORMED, IS HONEYCOMBED WITH ROOMS AND TUNNELS.

4. DAO SOURCES CONFIRM THAT SOME DISSIDENTS CONTINUE HOLD OUT IN MOSQUE BASEMENT AREA. EMBASSY SOURCES INDICATE THAT SAUDIS FEEL THERE IS POSSIBILITY SOME GUNMEN MAY HAVE ESCAPED.

5. MINISTRY OF DEFENSE (MODA) HAS TOLD USMTM THAT 60 TO 70 PEOPLE MAY REMAIN IN BASEMENT AREA, INCLUDING UNKNOWN NUMBER OF HOSTAGES. MODA HAS ASKED FOR US ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE IN OBTAINING TEAR GAS AND/OR SMOKE EQUIPMENT WHICH WOULD BE EFFECTIVE IN CATACOMB-LIKE AREA UNDER MOSQUE. (EMBASSY COMMENT: YAMANI STATEMENT AND OTHER REPORTS INDICATE SAUDIS NO LONGER FEEL ALL-OUT ASSAULT TO END SEIGE IS WARRANTED. DESIRE TO AVOID FURTHER CASUALTIES AMONG HOSTAGES AND TROOPS IS DOUBTLESSLY A REASON FOR THIS. IT IS ALSO LIKELY THAT SAUDIS WANT TO CAPTURE ALIVE AS MANY OF REMAINING DISSIDENTS AS POSSIBLE. PRISONERS ARE WANTED FOR INTERROGATION, ESPECIALLY IF SAUDIS BELIEVE ANY OF GROUP'S LEADERS ARE AMONG HOLDOUTS. IN ADDITION, SAUDIS WANT MAXIMUM NUMBER OF GUNMEN TO BE BROUGHT BEFORE ISLAMIC COURTS AND RECEIVE PUBLIC PUNISH-
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MENT, I.E. BEHEADING, PROMISED IN FATWA ISSUED BY ULIMA. END COMMENT.)

6. YAMANI STATEMENT ALSO DEFENDED GOVTS MEDIA TREATMENT OF OCCUPATION. ABSENCE OF DAILY STATEMENTS TO PRESS WAS EXPLAINED AS STEMMING FROM DESIRE TO RELEASE ONLY FACTS AND AVOID EXCITING PUBLIC UNNECESSARILY. UNITY OF ROYAL FAMILY IN FACE OF CRISIS WAS STRESSED. YAMANI ALSO NOTED THAT KING KHALID DID NOT ORDER ASSAULT UNTIL RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP (ULIMA) HAD ISSUED LEGAL OPINION (FATWA) DECLARING IT WAS LEGAL TO STORM MOSQUE AND PROMISING SEVERE PUNISHMENT TO ITS VIOLATORS.

7. SAUDIS ALSO MAKING EFFORT TO GIVE IMPRESSION OF BUSINESS AS USUAL. VISIT OF SECTY MILLER,

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ACCOMPANIED BY CODEL, TOOK PLACE AS PLANNED. IT RECEIVED WIDE COVERAGE BY SAUDI MEDIA, AS DID NOT 26 VISIT BY RULERS OF KUWAIT AND BAHRAIN (A DEMONSTRATION OF GULF ARAB SOLIDARITY), THAT OF BRITISH SECTY OF STATE FOR TRADE, AND BRAZILLIAN MINISTER OF PLANNING.

8. SECURITY REMAINS VERY TIGHT AT OIL REFINERY NEAR JIDDA, AS WELL AS AT AIRPORT. SPECIAL PROCEDURES FOR BAGGAGE HANDLING ARE IN EFFECT AT LATTER.

9. EMBASSY HAS LEARNED THAT UKAZ EDITOR SHUBUKSHI, WHO CRITICIZED EARLY US STATEMENT ON MOSQUE OCCUPATION IN ARTICLE PUBLISHED YESTERDAY, HAS BEEN REPRIMANDED BY SAUDI GOVT, APPARENTLY FOR GOING BEYOND CURRENT PRESS GUIDANCE.

10. AS REPORTED BY BBC NOV 27, OBSCURE ORGANIZATION CALLING ITSELF "UNION OF SONS OF ARABIAN PENINSULA" (USAP) HAS CLAIMED, FROM BEIRUT, THAT IT WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR ATTACK ON GRAND MOSQUE. EMBASSY HAS NO INFO WHICH WOULD SUBSTANTIATE THIS CLAIM. FROM WHAT IS KNOWN SO FAR ABOUT THOSE WHO SEIZED MOSQUE, USAP, WITH ITS
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KNOWN LEFTIST AND BAATHI CONNECTIONS, IS UNLIKELY BEDFELLOW OF ISLAMIC EXTREMISTS WHO ARE BELIEVED TO BE BEHIND MECCA INCIDENT.

11. EMBASSY COMMENT: NOW THAT IMMEDIATE CRISIS OF MOSQUE OCCUPATION IS ESSENTIALLY OVER WITH REMANANTS OF GUNMEN TRAPPED OUT OF SIGHT IN BUILDINGS'S CELLARS, SAG WILL MOVE TO UNCOVER AND ROUND UP ANY PEOPLE ASSOCIATED WITH THIS GROUP THAT ARE STILL AT LARGE. IN ADDITION, SAUDI INTERNAL SECURITY EFFORTS IN GENERAL ARE LIKELY TO BE GREATLY INCREASED. AS NOTED ABOVE, SAG IS PRESENTING IMAGE OF UNITY AND BUSINESS AS USUAL, AS WELL AS PUBLICISING UNIVERSAL CONDEMNATION OF MOSQUE SEIZURE. TRIALS OF DISSIDENTS WILL PROBABLY BEGIN SOON AFTER LAST GROUP IS CAPTURED. THESE TRIALS, AS WELL AS REQUEST FOR FATWA BEFORE ORDERING ASSAULT ON UPPER

STORIES OF MOSQUE, INDICATE THAT SAG REMAINS VERY SENSITIVE TO RELIGIOUS ELEMENT OF ITS LEGITIMACY. ATTACK UPON HOLIEST SHRINE OF ISLAM STRIKES AT SAUDI ROLE AS PROTECTOR OF ISLAMIC HOLY PLACES. THIS OCCURS AT A TIME WHEN SAUDIS ARE FACING CHALLENGE FROM KHOMEINI TO SELF-PROCLAIMED ROLE AS CHIEF DEFENDER OF THE

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FAITH. SAG CAN BE EXPECTED TO SEEK FURTHER WAYS TO
REASSERT ITS ISLAMIC LEGITIMACY. WEST

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