

SECRET

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ACTION SS-30

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1298
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
USLO RIYADH

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E.O. 12065: RDS-1 11/23/99 (ATHERTON, ALFRED L., JR.), OR-M
TAGS: PINS, ASEC, SA, EG, US
SUBJECT: COMMENTS BY VICE PRESIDENT MUBARAK ON SEIZURE
- OF THE GRAND MOSQUE AT MECCA

REF: JIDDA 8041

1. SECRET-ENTIRE TEXT.
2. DURING DISCUSSION WITH VICE PRESIDENT MUBARAK FRIDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 23, HE ASKED WHAT OUR LATEST INFORMATION WAS ABOUT THE SITUATION IN MECCA. WITHOUT REVEALING THE SOURCE, I DREW ON THE SUMMARY PARAGRAPH OF REFTEL TO GIVE MUBARAK WHAT WE PRESENTLY KNEW ABOUT THE GROUP THAT HAD SEIZED THE MOSQUE. MUBARAK SAID HE HAD INFORMATION THAT THERE HAD BEEN TROUBLE SIMULTANEOUSLY IN FIVE LOCATIONS IN SAUDI ARABIA (HE MENTIONED ONLY MECCA, MEDINA AND RIYADH BY NAME). MUBARAK ADDED THAT THREE MONTHS OR SO AGO HE HAD PASSED TO PRINCE TURKI INFORMATION RECEIVED BY THE GOE THAT THE SYRIANS WERE SENDING ARMS INTO SAUDI ARABIA. HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER THERE WAS

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ANY LINK BETWEEN THE RELIGIOUS GROUP WHICH HAD SEIZED THE MECCA MOSQUE AND THAT EARLIER REPORT, BUT EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT WHAT HAD HAPPENED IN MECCA AND OTHER SAUDI CITIES MIGHT BE MORE THAN AN ISOLATED ONE-TIME

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PHENOMENON.

3. I AM OBVIOUSLY IN NO POSITION TO EVALUATE THE FOREGOING BUT PASS IT ALONG AS SOMETHING THAT MUBARAK AT LEAST BELIEVES, AND AS A POSSIBLE PIECE IN THE LARGER PUZZLE THAT WASHINGTON AND JIDDA WILL BE TRYING TO PUT TOGETHER DURING THE PERIOD AHEAD.

4. FINALLY, MUBARAK TOLD ME HE HAD LEARNED THAT AL-AHRAM PLANNED TO BANNER HEADLINE THE REPORT OF DISTURBANCES IN FIVE SAUDI CITIES. HE HAD KILLED THE STORY, WHICH CLEARLY WOULD HAVE BEEN INTERPRETED BY THE SAUDIS AS PROVOCATIVE AND COULD ONLY HAVE DAMAGED EGYPTIAN-SAUDI RELATIONS. ATHERTON

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