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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 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 A-02 OPR-02 OC-06 CCO-00 SY-05 SYE-00
MCT-02 HA-05 SES-01 SSN-02 /075 W
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O 251515Z NOV 79
FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA
TO USLO RIYADH NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8062
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN IMMEDIATE
CHUSMTM DHAHRAN IMMEDIATE
DIA WAAHDC IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
USINT BAGHDAD IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DOHA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE
AMEEMBASSY MANAM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY SANA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 JIDDA 8119

USLO FOR AMBASSADOR AND POL COUNSELOR

DEPT PASS TO A/SY/CC/TAGS

REF: JIDDA 8095 DTG 241830Z NOV 79

1. (S - ENTIRE TEXT)
2. SUMMARY: IN A REITERATION OF THEIR NOV 24 REPORT (REFTTEL), AMERICAN PILOTSFLYING SUADI CIVIL DEFENSE HELICOPTERS ON CONTRACT TOLD POLOFF THAT FROM
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THEIR OBSERVATIONS AT GRAND MOSQUE AND VICINITY MORNING OF NOV 25, MOSQUE HAS NOW BEEN SECURED BUT SAG IS CONTINUING TO COMB MECCA AREA FOR ISLAMIC DISSIDENTS WHO ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE ESCAPED THE FINAL

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ASSAULT. DAO CONTACTS IN RIYADH, MEANWHILE, SUGGEST THERE MIGHT STILL BE SOME DISSIDENTS HOLDING OUT IN THE WARREN-LIKE BASEMENT, DESPITE EARLIER ASSERTIONS THAT UNDERGROUND PASSAGES HAVE BEEN CLEARED. SECURITY AT IMPORTANT INSTALLATIONS AND BUILDINGS IN RIYADH, JIDDA, TAIF AND MEDINA (INCLUDING THIS EMBASSY) REMAINS VERY TIGHT. THUS FAR, THERE HAS BEEN NO OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT FROM SAG THAT (A) A FINAL ASSAULT DID IN FACT TAKE PLACE NOV 24, OR (B) THAT SECURITY FORCES STILL PURSUING SOME OF THE DISSIDENTS WHO ARE FEARED TO HAVE ESCAPED IN CHAOS OF ATTACK. MOST PAPERS FOLLOWING GOVT LEAD EXCEPT AL-NADWA WHICH REPORTED MOSQUE RETAKEN NOV 24 AND PUBLISHED PHOTOS OF SOME OF DAMAGE. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED UNCONFIRMED REPORT THAT SAG IS NOW ATTEMPTING TO RECALL OUTSTANDING COPIES OF THIS NEWSPAPER. SMALL FRONT PAGE ARTICLE IN UKAZ ALSO REPORTS MOSQUE'S RECAPTURE. END SUMMARY.

3. IN NOV 25 DEBRIEFING, AMERICAN PILOTS (STRICTLY PROTECT) FLYING SAUDI CIVIL DEFENSE HELICOPTERS ON CONTRACT TOLD POLOFF THAT THEY HOEVERED IN VICINITY OF GRAND MOSQUE FOR 45 MINUTES BEGINNING 0700 GMT. MOSQUE GAVE EVERY APPEAREANCE OF BEING UNDER COMPLETE CONTROL OF SAUDI FORCES (APPARENTLY NATIONAL GUARDSMEN). BETWEEN 50-60 SAUDI SOLDIERS WERE MILLING AROUND OR SITTING ALONG ONE SIDE OF COURTYARD. ANOTHER 75 OR SO WERE ON ROOF. ATMOSPHERE WAS EERIE BUT QUITE RELAXED. EXCETP FOR SOME SMOKE NEAR

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NORTH SIDE OF MOSUQE, FIRES NOTED REFTEL EXTINGUISHED. DAMAGE TO BUILDING ITSELF CONSIDERABLE. MAJORITY OF WINDOWS OVERLOOKING COURTYARD HAVE BEEN SMASHED, AND SEVERAL OF LARGE GATES HAVE BEEN BROKEN OPEN. FIVE OF SEVEN MINARETS HAVE SUFFERED FROM LIGHT SHELLING, AS WELL. IN STREETS IMMEDIATELY AROUND MOSQUE, PILOTS SAID THEY SAW RELATIVELY LARGE NUMBER OF BOTH TRACKED (APCS) AND WHEELED VEHICLES (APPRENTLY V-150S). ALL WERE STATIONARY. SMALL NUMBERS OF WHAT APPEARED TO BE CIVILIAN ONLOOKERS WERE MOVING IN STREET SURROUNDING VICINITY OF MECCA. PILOTS SAID THAT NO SUSPICIOUS GROUPS OF PEOPLE WERE SIGHTED. AS NOTED REFTEL, SAUDI SOLDIERS APPEAR TO BE EVERYWHERE. MEANWHILE, SECURITY AT IMPORTANT INSTALLATIONS AND BUILDINGS IN JIDDA, RIYADH,

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TAIF, AND MEDINA CONTINUES TO BE VERY TIGHT. IN JIDDA, FOREXAMPLE, THIS EMBASSY, THE AIRPORT, AND THE OIL REFINERY ARE AMONG NUMEROUS PLACES BEING VERY CLOSELY GUARDED.

6. THUS FAR, THERE HAS BEEN NO OFFICIAL WORD FROM SAG THAT A) A FINAL VIOLENT ASSAULT DID IN FACT TAKE PLACE NOV 24, OR THAT B) SECURITY FORCES ARE STILL APPARENTLY PURSUING SOME OF DISSIDENTS WHO ARE FEARED TO HAVE ESCAPED IN CHAOS OF ATTACK. AL-RIYADH NEWS-PAPER TODAY PUBLISHED TEXT OF NOV 24 FATWA WHICH, IN PART, CALLS UPON GOVT TO USE ALL MEASURES NECESSARY TO REGAIN CONTROL OF MOSQUE IF THE "RENEGADES" DO NOT SURRENDER. ALL PAPERS GIVE PROMINENT COVERAGE TO INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNATION OF THE MOSQUE SEIZURE, AND AT LEAST THREE (AL-NADWA AND BOTH ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PAPERS) REPORTED SECTY VANCE'S STATEMENT ON SUBJECT. SPECIAL COUNSELOR SABBAGH ALSO CONVEYED STATEMENT DIRECTLY TO CROWN PRINCE FAHD.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 JIDDA 8119

USLO FOR AMBASSADOR AND POL COUNS

DEPT PASS TO A/SY/CC/TAGS

7. THE ONE PAPER OUT IN FRONT IN ITS REPORTING IS AL-NADWA WHICH, IN A BOLD HEADLINE DECLARED IN NOV 25 ISSUE THAT MOSQUE WAS RETAKEN NOV 24 AND THAT GOVERNMENT NOW TAKING STEPS TO CLEAN UP THE DAMAGE AND REOPEN THE MOSQUE TO WORSHIPPERS. MOST EXTRAORDINARY OF ALL, AL-NADWA PUBLISHED SEVEN PHOTOS OF MOSQUE APPARENTLY TAKEN NOV 24 WHICH SHOW DAMAGE TO MINARETS AND SMOKE RISING FROM WITHIN THE BUILDING. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED
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UNCONFIRMED REPORT THAT SAG IS NOW ATTEMPTING TO RECALL ALL OUTSTANDING COPIES OF THIS NEWSPAPER. UKAZ NEWSPAPER, WHICH WAS NOT DELIVERED UNTIL AFTERNOON NOV 25, ALSO CONTAINS SMALLER FRONT PAGE ARTICLE (NO PICTURES) WHICH ALSO REPORTS MOSQUE RETAKEN NOV 24.

8. COMMENT: PRESUMABLY, SAG IS WITHHOLDING FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE RECOVERY OF THE MOSQUE UNTIL IT IS CERTAIN ALL THE DISSIDENTS HAVE BEEN KILLED OR CAPTURED. THIS MAY NEVER BE POSSIBLE, BUT SAG WILL, AT A MINIMUM, WANT TO BE CERTAIN THAT NONE REMAIN HIDDEN IN THE VAST NETWORK OF TUNNELS UNDERLYING THE MOSQUE.
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