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E.O. 12065: GDS 11/28/99 (WEST, JOHN C) OR-M
TAGS: PINS, ASEC, SA

SUBJECT: (S) DISCUSSION WIT [REDACTED]: MECCA EVENT

1. -ENTIRE TEXT).

2. SUMMARY: [REDACTED] GAVE ME A SUMMARY OF
EVENTS AT MECCA AND THE ROYAL FAMILY'S REACTION TO THEM IN A
TWO-HOURS SESSION ON THE EVENING OF NOV 27. [REDACTED] JUDGMENT
IS THAT THR RELIGIOUS DISSENTERS' ATTACK ON THE HOLY MOSQUE
WILL IN THE LONG RUN STRENGTHEN THE ROYAL FAMILY AND SAG
BECAUSE IT HAS FAILED TO EXCITE ANY SYMPATHY OR SUPPORT WITHIN
SAUDI ARABIA OR THE MUSLIM WORLD. AT THE SAME TIME, SAG RECOGNIZES
THAT PRECAUTIONS HAVE TO BE TAKEN TO PREVENT MINORITY GROUPS,
RELIGIOUS OR POLITICAL, FROM SEIZING POWER, AS A CONSEQUENCE,
THERE WILL BE LESS ACCOMMODATION OF RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL
DISSENTERS FROM NOW ON WITHIN THE KINGDOM. EXTENSIVE INTERROGA-
TIONS ARE UNDERWAY OF THE CAPTURED TERRORISTS WITH LITTLE
INDICATION SO FAR OF A POLITICAL CONSPIRACY; HOWEVER, SAG
AUTHORITIES HAVE NOT RULED OUT POSSIBILITY OF RUSSIAN
INFLUENCE THROUGH PDRY IN INSTITUTING AND SUPPORTING
INCIDENT. MOPPING UP OPERATOONS ARE CONTINUING AT
MECCA WITH SOME 25 TO 30 PERSONS STILL HOLDING OUT IN
BASEMENT. END SUMMARY.

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3. [REDACTED] SPENT APPROXIMATELY TOW
HOURS WITH ME ON HE EVENING OF NOV 27. HE CAME TO THE
KINGDOM BECAUSE OF A SCHOLASTIC HOLIDAY AND REMAINED AFTER
THE PROBLEMS BEGAN AT MECCA. HE HAD TOLD ME EARLIER ON HIS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: SHARON E AHMAD
CLASSIFICATION: SECRET REASON: 25X6
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 1 JAN 2020
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ARRIVAL THAT HE WOULD COME BY FOR A VISIT PRIOR TO LEAVING.

4. [] HAS BEEN AT MECCA WITH HIS FATHER AND PRINCE NAYIF DURING THE ENTIRE TIME. HE STATED THAT THE OCCUPATION SURFACED MANY PROBLEMS, INCLUDING:
- A. THAT SAG HAD NO CONTINGENCY PLAN TO MEET SUCH A SITUATION. THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ARMED SEIZURE OF A HOLY PLACE WAS SO FOREIGN THAT CORRECTIVE MEASURES WERE NOT INCLUDED IN ANY CONTINGENCY PLANS.
 - B. THE PRESENCE OF SOME 50,000 PILGRIMS WHO WERE TAKEN HOSTAGE AT THE TIME OF THE SEIZURE.
 - C. THE RELUCTANCE OF SAG AUTHORITIES TO DAMAGE ANY PART OF THE MOSQUE, ESPECIALLY THE BAABA.
 - D. THE STRENGTH OF THE INSTALLATION ITSELF -- THE DOORS COULD NOT BE BROKEN DOWN WITH TWO MISSILES AND OTHER HEAVIER HOWITZERS (110 MILLIMETER) HAD TO BE BROUGHT IN.
 - E. THE FANATICISM OF THE TERRORISTS WHO WERE NOT ONLY WELL ARMED BUT WELL PROVISIONED, AND IN SOME CASES BROUGHT THEIR WIVES AND FAMILIES WITH THEM.
 - F. THE NECESSITY OF SUBDUING THE TERRORISTS ALMOST ON AN INDIVIDUAL BASIS - NOT ONLY IN THE MINARETS BUT IN THE 222 ROOMS THAT CONSTITUTE THE BASEMENT.

5. [] REPORTED THAT THE TERRORISTS WERE NOW DOWN TO 25 OR 30 AND THEY WERE IN INDIVIDUAL ROOMS IN THE BASEMENT. HE SAID THAT ATTEMPTS WITH CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS, INCLUDING TEAR GAS AND GRENADES, HAD NOT BEEN COMPLETELY SUCCESSFUL; THAT THE LATEST TACTIC INVOLVED BURNING TIRES AND HAVING THE

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SMOKE SWIRL INTO THE OCCUPIED AREAS; AFTER A TIME TEAR GAS WOULD BE THROWN IN FOLLOWED BY GRENADES; IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE GRENADE EXPLOSIONS, TWO OR THREE VOLUNTEERS FROM THE SAUDI FORCES WOULD GO IN WITH GAS MASKS AND NIGHT VISION EQUIPMENT. IN THIS WAY THEY WERE ABLE TO KILL OR CAPTURE THE TERRORISTS -- 11 OF WHOM HAD BEEN TAKEN THAT DAY ALONG WITH TWO SAG PARATROOPERS WHO HAD BEEN CAPTURED AND HELD HOSTAGE SEVERAL DAYS BEFORE.

6. [] STATED THAT THEY WERE TRYING THEIR BEST TO TAKE AS MANY PRISONERS AS POSSIBLE TO INTERROGATE THEM TO FIND ALL POSSIBLE INFORMATION ABOUT HOW THE OPERATION WAS PLANNED. HE STATED THAT STILL HAD NOT CAPTURED THE TWO RINGLEADERS BUT HAD THE FAMILIES OF AT LEAST ONE (MOHAMMED ABDULLAH) IN CUSTODY. HE RELATED THAT THE PRISONERS WERE BEING INTERROGATED

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"ACTIVELY". HE HASTENED TO ADD THAT NO PHYSICAL TORTURE HAD BEEN USED BUT SOME HAD BEEN GIVEN TROUTH SERUM (SODIUM PENTHOL). HE SAID RESULTS UP TO NOW INDICATED AN AMAZING SIMILARITY OF ANSWERS, ALL HAVING TO DO WITH RETURN TO RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALS. HE ADDED THAT BECAUSE OF THIS SAMENESS OF RESPONSE, THERE WAS A FEELING THAT THERE HAD BEEN "INTENSIVE BRAINWASHING" AND THAT SAG HAD NOT RULED OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF COVERT RUSSIAN INFLUENCE THROUGH THEIR PDRY SATELLITE, ALTHOUGH EVIDENCE TO PROVE THIS WAS STILL LACKING.

7. [] STATED THAT THIS GROUP OF RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISTS HAD BEEN FAIRLY WELL IDENTIFIED AND KNOWN TO SAG AUTHROTIES; HOWEVER, A MISTAKE HAD BEEN MADE IN ALLOWING THEM TO CONTINUE THEIR ACTIVITIES AND DISREGARDING THEM AS HARMLESS RELIGIOUS FANATICS. HE SAID THE REAL BRAINS BEHIND THE OPERATION WAS JUHAIMAN AL-OTAIBI ALONG WITH MOHAMMED ABDULLAH, WHO PICTURES HIMSELF AS THE MADHI. QUITE A COINCIDENCE (OR IS IT?) THAT PROPHET MOHAMMED NAME WAS ALSO MOHAMMAD BIN ABDULLAH* [] SSAID THAT JUHAIMAN AL-OTAIBI HAD WRITTEN ARTICLES AND BOOKS BUT NO ONE FELT THAT HE WOULD BE ABLE TO AMASS A FOLLOWING TO TAKE SUCH A DRASTIC STEP AS SEIZING THE MOSQUE BY FORCE.

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8. [] FELT THAT IN THE LONG RUN THE INCIDENT MAY HAVE BENEFICIAL EFFECTS FOR THE KINGDOM. HIS REASONING WAS AS FOLLOWS:

A. THAT THE ATTACK ON THE HOLY MOSQUE WITH FORCE AND BLOOD-SHED COMPLETELY ALIENATED ANY SUPPORT WHICH THIS GROUP MIGHT HAVE GOTTEN FROM OTHER ELEMENTS OF SAUDI SOCIETY OR THE REST OF THE ARAB/MUSLIM WORLD;

B. THAT THE RESTRAINED ACTION IN PUTTING DOWN THE TERRORISTS HAD VIRTUALLY UNANIMOUS SUPPORT OF ALL OF SAUDI ARABIA AND THE REST OF THE WORLD WITH NO RPT NO SYMPATHY BEING EXPRESSED FOR THE INVADERS;

C. THAT SAG WOULD LEARN FROM THE INCIDENT NOT TO BE COM-PLACMENT OR TO TOLERATE DISSENT FROM RELIGIOUS OR POLITICAL GROUPS.

9. WITH RESPECT TO THIS LAST POINT, WE HAD AN EXTENDED DISCUSSION COMPARING THE SITUATION WHICH THE SHAH FACED IN IRAN TO THE PRESENT SITUATION HERE. [] JUDGMENT WAS THAT THE SHAH, IN RECENT YEARS, TRIED TO BE BOTH TOUGH AND

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LENIENT, WITH THE RESULT THAT HE APPEARED WEAK AND FASCILLATING, WHICH LED TO HIS DOWNFALL. HE SAID THAT HE RECOGNIZED THAT SAG HAD TO CHANGE WITH THE TIMES BUT THAT THEY COULD NOT AFFORD TO LET ANARCHY UPSET A REGIME IN WHICH LAW AND ORDER NOW PREVAILED; THEREFORE CHANGES HAD TO BE GRADUAL, INSURING THAT THEY CAME ABOUT FAST ENOUGH TO SATISFY THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE TIMES BUT NOT SO FAST AS TO PRODUCE AN UNSTABLE SITUATION. HE RECOGNIZED THAT THE PATH WAS NOT EASY.

10. HE INDICATED IN THE COURSE OF THE DISCUSSION THAT THE
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INCIDENT HAD TENDED TO UNIFY FURTHER THE ROYAL FAMILY. HE SAID THAT PRINCE ABDULLAH WAS TURNING MORE AND MORE TO HIS FATHER [REDACTED] FOR SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE AND THAT FAHD HAD DEVELOPED AN EXTREMELY CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH ABDULLAH AND SULTAN IN WHICH HE WAS VERY COMFORTABLE, AS WERE THEY ALL. WEST

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