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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 SY-05 SYE-00 A-02 OPR-02 OC-06 CCO-00
MCT-02 HA-05 SES-01 SSN-02 SPH-01 ANAE-00 (ADS) W
-----047948 011842Z /44

O 011434Z DEC 79
FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8133
INFO AMCONSUL DHAHRAN PRIORITY
USLO RIYADH PRIORITY
CHUSMTM DHAHRAN SA PRIORITY
DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY SANA

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 08277

DEPT PASS TO A/SY/CC/TAGS

EO 12065: GDS 12/1/85 (PLACKE, JAMES A.) OR-M
TAGS: PINS, ASEC, SA
SUBJECT: (U) MECCA UPDATE: SITUATION AS OF 1300 GMT
DECEMBER 1, 1979

REF: JIDDA 8219 DTG 281546Z NOV 79

1. (U) UNKNOWN NUMBER OF GUNMEN AND HOSTAGES STILL REMAIN
IN PART OF THE BASEMENT OF MECCA'S GRAND MOSQUE. SAUDI
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INTERIOR MINISTER, PRINCE NAYIF, STATED ON NOV 30 THAT
SAUDI SECURITY FORCES INTEND TO TAKE THE GUNMEN ALIVE,
IN ACCORDANCE WITH KING KHALID'S INSTRUCTIONS.

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2. (C) SPECULATION CONTINUES, HOWEVER, AS TO THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE RINGLEADERS OF THE MOSQUE OCCUPATION. AS REPORTED REFTEL, USDAO RECEIVED ONE REPORT ALLEDGING THAT THE PRINCIPAL LEADER, THE SELF-STYLED "MAHDI" (APPARENTLY ONE MUHAMMAD ABDALLAH AL-QAHTANI), WAS WOUNDED AND IN A RIYADH HOSPITAL. THIS HAS NOT BEEN CONFIRMED BY SAG, AND RUMORS PERSIST THAT AL-QAHTANI, ALONG WITH THE OTHER SUPPOSED RINGLEADER, ONE JUHAYMAN BIN SAYF AL-UTAYBI, ARE BOTH EITHER IN THE BASEMENT OF THE MOSQUE OR HAVE ESCAPED. DEPFONMIN AL-THUNAYAN TOLD AMB AND POLCOUNS NOV. 30 THAT BOTH LEADTILL IN MOSQUE BASEMENT.

3. (C) THERE ARE STILL NO ACCURATE FIGURES AS TO CASUALTIES RESULTING FROM THE MOSQUE EPISODE. EMBASSY HAS LEARNED THAT THE MODA MILITARY HOSPITAL IN RIYADH CURRENTLY HAS APPROXIMATELY 100 WOUNDED IN ITS CARE AND HAS BEEN ALERTED TO BE PREPARED TO RECEIVE UP TO 40 MORE. WOUNDED ARE BELIEVED TO BE FROM NATIONAL GUARD IN ADDITION TO REGULAR ARMY FORCES.

4. (LOU) MEANWHILE, THE CLEANUP AND REPAIR OF THE GRAND MOSQUE, BEGUN NOV. 27, CONTINUES AND SAUDI TELEVISION HAS SHOWN PICTURES OF SECURITY FORCES PRAYING AT THE MOSQUE. ACCORDING TO RESIDENTS, THE ROAD TO MECCA IS NOW OPEN, ALTHOUGH VEHICLES ARE RIGOROUSLY SEARCHED. TRAFFIC IS ONCE AGAIN CIRCULATING IN MOST OF THE STREETS OF THE CITY, ALTHOUGH THE AREA AROUND THE GRAND MOSQUE IS STILL SEALED OFF. SECURITY IN JIDDA, RIYADH, AND OTHER CITIES OF THE KINGDOM REMAINS TIGHT.

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5. (U) SAUDI MEDIA CONTINUE TO GIVE WIDE COVERAGE TO THE MECCA EVENTS. ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARAB NEWS PUBLISHED WEEK-END EDITION FOR SECOND WEEK IN A ROW NOV. 30 WHICH WAS PRINCIPALLY DEVOTED TO COVERAGE OF THE GRAND MOSQUE SEIZURE. FOCUS OF LOCAL REPORTING IS ON EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNTS OF THE EPISODE IN ADDITION TO ARTICLES DETAILING DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL OUTRAGE AT THE OCCUPATION. OTHER ARTICLES DESCRIBE THE ERRORS AND MISINFORMATION ASSOCIATED WITH LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL REPORTING OF THE INCIDENT.

6. (U) FOLLOWING BRIEF VISITS EARLIER IN THE WEEK BY JORDAN'S KING HUSAY THE LEADERS OF KUWAIT. BAHRAIN, AND QATAR; DELEGATIONS FROM UAE AND MOROCCO; AND THE PLO'S YASIR ARAFAT: SYRIA'S DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN

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MINISTER ABD AL-HALIM KHADDAM PAID A SHORT TWO-HOUR VISIT TO RIYADH ON NOV. 29, APPARENTLY TO LEARN THE DETAILS OF THE MOSQUE INCIDENT AND TO GIVE VERBAL SUPPORT TO THE SAUDI LEADERSHIP. SIMILARLY, YAR PRESIDENT SALIH TELEPHONED CROWN PRINCE FAHD ON NOV. 0 EXPRESS HIS DENUNCIATION OF THE OCCUPATION OF THE MOSQUE AND TO OFFER ANY HELP OR ASSISTANCE. WEST

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