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FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8205
INFO AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
USLO RIYADH

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 08428

EO 12065: GDS 12/6/85 (WEST, JOHN C.) OR-M
TAGS: PINS, SA
SUBJECT: (C) MEETING WITH PRINCE ABDALLAH: RETAKING OF
THE GRAND MOSQUE, MECCA

1. (S - ENTIRE TEXT)
2. DURING MY MEETING WITH PRINCE ABDALLAH (OTHER SUBJECTS COVERED SEPTELS) HE PROVIDED SOME USEFUL DETAILS ABOUT THE SAG EFFORT TO OUST DISSIDENTS FROM THE GRAND MOSQUE IN MECCA.
3. ABDALLAH TOOK PRIDE IN THE WAY THE NATIONAL GUARD (SANG) HAD CARRIED OUT THEIR DUTY. PERSONNEL NOT SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE OPERATION WERE UNABLE TO REPRESS THEIR SHOW OF DISAPPOINTED FEELINGS, THEIR DEVOTION TO A TASK CONSIDERED SACRED WAS SO HIGH.
4. WHEN THE MOSQUE WAS SEIZED ON NOVEMBER 20, ABDALLAH HAD BEEN ON A VISIT TO MOROCCO. HIS IRE AND CHAGRIN OVER THE LENGTH OF TIME REQUIRED TO RETAKE THE MOSQUE WERE OVERCOME SOON AFTER RETURNING TO SAUDI ARABIA, HOWEVER.

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HE RECOGNIZED FOUR CONSTRAINTS IN THE RECOVERY OPERATION: THE NEED TO PRESERVE THE HOLY KA'ABA; THE NEED TO SPARE THE HOSTAGES HELD BY THE DISSIDENTS; THE NEED TO MINIMIZE CASUALTIES AMONG THE SECURITY FORCES; AND THE DESIRE TO

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TAKE AS MANY DISSIDENTS ALIVE AS POSSIBLE. THUS, ABDALLAH FOUND HIMSELF UNABLE TO FINISH THE JOB AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. WITH "MORE THAN 1000 HOSTAGES" INVOLVED, HE HAD HAD TO MOVE VERY CAREFULLY. FURTHERMORE, THE BUILDING FOUNDATIONS OF THE KA'ABA WERE SUFFICIENTLY PRECARIOUS THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO AVOID POSSIBLY RUINOUS DAMAGE TO THE SHRINE FROM REVERBERATIONS OF EXPLOSIONS, ETC.

5. THE SO-CALLED "MAHDI" WAS FOUND DEAD AND WAS IDENTIFIED BY HIS BROTHER. SAUDI TELEVISION WOULD SHOW THE BODY ON ITS DECEMBER 5 EVENING PROGRAM (AND IT DID). DISSIDENTS TAKEN PRISONER WERE SHOWN ON THE DECEMBER 4 PROGRAM, AND, BY POPULAR DEMAND, THE FILM WOULD BE RUN AGAIN DECEMBER 5.

6. WITH UNMISTAKABLE RELIEF, ABDALLAH SAID "THANK GOD, IT'S OVER." NOT SURPRISINGLY, HE DESCRIBED THE DISSIDENTS AS RENEGADES, TYRANTS, CRIMINALS, AND HEARTLESS PERSONS DEVOID OF REASON.

7. COMMENT: CLEARLY ABDALLAH WAS SEEKING TO IMPRESS UPON ME THAT HE HAD HELD A KEY ROLE IN THE RECOVERY OF THE MOSQUE, THAT HIS SANG HAD PERFORMED CAPABLY, AND THAT THE DISSIDENTS WERE TO BE REGARDED BY US AS AN UTTER ABERRATION ON THE SAUDI SCENE. EXUDING HIS USUAL SELF CONFIDENCE AND DETERMINATION, ABDALLAH GAVE EVERY INDICATION OF HAVING TAKEN THE MECCA CRISIS IN STRIDE AND UNSCATHED.
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