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Interview Conducted by: SSA George L. Piro  
Arabic/English Translation: SSA [REDACTED]  
LS [REDACTED]

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~~(S)~~ Saddam Hussein (High Value Detainee #1) was interviewed March 13, 2004 at a military detention facility at Baghdad International Airport (BIAP), Baghdad, Iraq. Hussein provided the following information:

~~(S)~~ After the cease fire of 1991, Hussein stated the goal of the Iraqi leadership was the rebuilding of the infrastructure of Iraq destroyed during the war. This included reconstituting agricultural and economic programs. Hussein stated that Iraq rebuilt "almost everything" and started new programs in the areas of agriculture, education, and health. However, Iraq's efforts were hampered by the embargo, particularly affecting the health and education sectors.

~~(S)~~ When noted to Hussein that several changes were made in the Iraqi government around this time including the appointment of individuals to new positions, Hussein stated, "This is natural." In his opinion, such changes are a "regular" occurrence not only in Iraq but also in countries such as the United States. One such appointee, Abid Hamid Mahmoud, became Hussein's personal secretary at this time replacing the previous secretary who had been appointed as Iraqi Minister of Education. Hussein referred to Mahmoud as a "senior companion of mine" who had served as a member of the President's protective detail in the Himaya and Murafiqeen. Another individual, Tariq Aziz, was named as Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister. Hussein described Aziz as one of the early Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) members. In Hussein's opinion, Aziz "did not gain anything" with this appointment. Hussein stated that he told the Iraqi leadership if he (Hussein) was to also have the title as Iraqi prime minister, he would need assistance from others. Thus, Aziz and Taha Yasin Ramadan were named as deputy prime ministers.

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~~(S)~~ Hussein explained that the duties of a personal secretary include arranging the schedule of the person for whom the person is working. A secretary must be precise in executing his duties. Hussein selected Mahmoud as his personal secretary because he was "suitable for the position." He added that this was his own choice and not a matter of historical significance. Hussein reiterated that Mahmoud had served in the Himaya and Murafiqaen, and that both organizations were composed of Hussein's relatives. At the beginning of the Revolution, only one of his relatives served in an Iraqi government political position. At that time, Hussein's relatives had limited education and primarily served in the Iraqi army and other military services.

~~(S)~~ Hussein pointed out that members of his protective detail did not necessarily dictate the details of his movements. He claimed that at times, he taught them ways to improve their performance and be more successful. He recalled joking with them that he could perform their job better. He felt it was very important that detail members not to be "rough" when Hussein "mingled" with the people. In his opinion, the detail would have failed in its mission if it "isolated" him from the masses. It was also important that the detail be able to alter their duties and behavior to accommodate Hussein's nature. As further evidence of his teaching abilities, Hussein stated that if requested, he could provide advice regarding the writer's interviewing duties. When asked to expound on this statement, Hussein stated, "A doctor does not chase people asking them what is wrong. They come to him."

~~(S)~~ Hussein stated the most important thing is to look at one's position, whether executing or planning, to determine how to perform duties. A person executing orders must be precise and quick. One who supervises must allow those under him to exercise initiative. The "margin for initiative" differs between civilian and military situations. Hussein stated, "The eyes in the field are different than those at headquarters." Often, the "field eyes" are more accurate in understanding a particular situation than headquarters components.

~~(S)~~ Regarding character traits he seeks in subordinates, Hussein stated, "A human being is not like merchandise." One may think an individual is suitable for a position only to later discover that he does not possess the

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desirable traits. According to Hussein, a particular situation may require the selection of a particular individual even though, under other circumstances, this individual may not be considered the best choice. This is particularly true in the context of selecting the right person for military operations.

Hussein explained that the selection or dismissal of individuals for particular military or governmental positions often involves consideration of the perception of one's family or tribe. Another factor to consider is the strength of the Iraqi psyche and sense of "individuality." Although a particular situation may necessitate the removal of an Iraqi from his position, a leader must consider how this individual's removal may be perceived. For example, relatives of an individual removed from office may question the individual's character. Some will ask "again and again" why the individual was dismissed. Others may ask, "Was he a coward?" These questions may even be asked when an individual decides to retire under normal circumstances. The families of such individuals may feel "tainted." Under some circumstances, such actions may cause families to hate the government. Hussein explained that in having to consider these feelings and attitudes, military and governmental leaders were often limited in making personnel changes, even if they were deemed necessary.

(S) When asked about the commonly reported uprisings which occurred in southern Iraq after the war in 1991, Hussein claimed that he had not heard of such uprisings. When it was pointed out that many interviews and reports had documented the uprisings, Hussein asked, "Have we not discussed this matter?" He stated, however, that within a day of the cease fire of 1991, "some elements" had initiated sabotage operations in the southern Iraq cities of Basra, Nasiriyyah, and Amarah. Later, this activity spread to the northern cities of Suleimaniyyah, Erbil, and Kirkuk. Hussein stated that the groups conducting these operations were "pushed by Iran," and that Iraq captured 68 Iranian intelligence officers who were later exchanged for Iraqi prisoners.

(S) At the time of the uprisings, most bridges in Iraq had already been destroyed. Electricity did not exist. Water service was sporadic, and food supplies were minimal. In the aftermath of the war, these factors contributed to general unrest in the country. Hussein stated the "elements" participating in

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the uprisings were a mixture of thieves, rebels, and "those from Iran." The latter group included individuals from Iranian government services, Iraqis of Iranian origin, and Iraqis who had "escaped" to Iran. Their nationalities were difficult to determine with any degree of certainty because many had intentionally destroyed their citizenship documents.

~~(S)~~ Hussein stated that after deciding to reassert government control of the country, the Iraqi leadership considered the southern area of Iraq to be a high priority. It was in this area where Iraqi forces encountered and fought primarily Iranians. After order was restored in southern Iraq, government forces focused on the northern region where Iraqi forces met little or no resistance. The fighting in northern and southern Iraq lasted approximately two months. Hussein stated, "God made us victorious." Thereafter, according to Hussein, Iran continued to insert groups of ten to fifteen people into Iraq to conduct operations against the government. However, these individuals were, for the most part, thwarted by members of the local population. Ultimately, following an agreement between Iran and Iraq, these hostile operations ceased.

~~(S)~~ Hussein characterized the uprisings in 1991 as insurgent activity conducted by "outlaws and thieves." He did not consider the insurgents to be revolutionaries. When asked what factors allowed these disturbances, Hussein answered that it was support from Iran, weakness of the Iraqi government after the war, and possibly assistance from coalition forces. He noted that all government institutions including the police and the military had been weakened as a result of the war. Gradually, however, the Iraqi military grew in strength, and they were eventually able to overcome these rebels. According to Hussein, the Iraqi military's "blade got longer and longer." He acknowledged, however, that the weakened state of the Iraqi military had been the main factor which provided the opportunity for this lawlessness in the first place.

~~(S)~~ Hussein believed the goal of the insurgent activity was to control Iraq. In his opinion, this tactic was utilized in 1991 after Iran had been unable to accomplish this goal through its previous war with Iraq. Iran had wanted to control all or at least a part of Iraq, particularly the southern portion. It was Hussein's belief that Iran also wanted to extend its power to eastern Saudi Arabia and into the entire Gulf region.

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(S) The RCC gave the Iraqi provincial governors control of the military during the uprisings in order to protect the people and the state and to re-establish security and a "normal life." The people and the nation were threatened by widespread killings, theft, arson, and general destruction, all of which had to be brought under control. Hussein denied knowledge of the methods used by the governors and the military to reassert control. Hussein stated, "They were given the authority, and they carried it out." At the time, he did not ask for details of the operation, but he did request and receive status reports regarding the progress of operations.

(S) Regarding limitations placed on the Iraqi military by the leadership during this time period, Hussein asked, "What do you mean by limits?" Hussein denied that the Geneva Convention applied to this situation, claiming it only applied to wars. Hussein claimed that with respect to internal conflict, the Geneva Convention applied only to situations when an occupying power is another country. He claimed that the Geneva Convention was applicable to attempted coups or internal unrest involving crimes such as burning and looting.

(S) The interviewer pointed out to Hussein that international law does not permit the targeting of civilians even when the location of a military objective is populated by civilians and that certain laws of humanity always apply. When asked again what restrictions were placed on the Iraqi military during the 1991 uprisings, Hussein replied that an Iraqi, whether civilian or military, knows what is acceptable as humane behavior, and there is no need for someone to have to tell them how to behave.

(S) Hussein stated, "I am responsible for what I decide." He added that he is not responsible for how an Iraqi acts. Hussein claimed that if an Iraqi wanted to use him (Hussein) as the justification for his actions, he would accept that assertion so long as it does not harm Hussein's reputation. In Hussein's opinion, a leader is responsible for the actions of a subordinate if he becomes aware of that subordinate's transgressions and confronts him about the wrongfulness of his actions. He stated that each individual is judged based on his own law and constitution.

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