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NODIS SIERRA - SPECIAL ENCRYPTION

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PEPR, US, SA, JO, XF
SUBJECT: BANDAR REVIEWS LATEST CONTACTS WITH HUSSEIN AND
ARAFAT
REF: RIYADH 00713

1. (~~S~~-ENTIRE TEXT)

2. SUMMARY: IN HIS AMMAN MEETING WITH HUSSEIN MARCH 3, BANDAR FOUND THE KING UNIMPRESSED BY BANDAR'S REPORT OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PLO'S POSITION AND UNHAPPY ABOUT THE OVERALL STATE OF SAUDI-JORDANIAN RELATIONS. ARAFAT TOLD FAHD MARCH 5 THAT HE STOOD BY THE POSITIONS HE HAD DESCRIBED TO BANDAR IN THEIR FEBRUARY 26 TUNIS MEETING. MARCH 25 REMAINS THE SAUDI TARGET DATE, AGREED ON WITH ARAFAT, FOR HUSSEIN TO ANNOUNCE HIS READINESS TO ENTER NEGOTIATIONS, BUT BANDAR SOUNDED LESS OPTIMISTIC IN OUR MARCH 7 MEETING THAT THIS WOULD OCCUR. HUSSEIN'S NERVOUSNESS, IF ACCURATELY DESCRIBED BY BANDAR, IS WORRISOME. END SUMMARY.

3. BANDAR MET WITH HUSSEIN IN AMMAN MARCH 3-4. (THERE WAS NO LONDON MEETING.) HE WAS STILL RELUCTANT TO GO INTO PRECISE DETAIL WITH ME BUT SAID THAT HE HAD CONVEYED TO HUSSEIN ARAFAT'S READINESS FOR HUSSEIN TO NEGOTIATE

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FOR THE WEST BANK/GAZA. HE THEN LAID OUT TO HUSSEIN THE TIMETABLE CULMINATING IN A MARCH 25 ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE KING. HUSSEIN REACTED TO HIS PRESENTATION WITH SUSPICION ABOUT PALESTINIAN MOTIVES. (BANDAR SAID HE HAD THE FEELING THAT HUSSEIN WAS IRRITATED THAT THE SAUDIS HAD GOTTEN MORE OF A COMMITMENT FROM ARAFAT THAN THE JORDANIANS HAD BEEN ABLE TO DO IN THEIR DIRECT TALKS.) HUSSEIN SAID THAT HE AND ARAFAT SHOULD MAKE A JOINT ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT HUSSEIN'S READINESS TO ENTER THE TALKS. BANDAR SAID HE HAD REACTED TO THIS WITH SURPRISE, SAYING THAT A JOINT ACKNOWLEDGMENT WOULD APPEAR TO BE IN CONFLICT WITH EVERYONE'S POSITION, INCLUDING THE AMERICANS, THAT HUSSEIN SHOULD MAKE A DRAMATIC UNILATERAL STATEMENT OF HIS READINESS TO NEGOTIATE LEST THE ISRAELIS BE ABLE TO DOWNPLAY THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS DECISION. HUSSEIN STILL MAINTAINED IT APPEARED TO HIM THAT ARAFAT WAS SETTING HIM UP FOR A FALL BY NOT AGREEING TO A JOINT INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT.

4. HUSSEIN WAS ALSO CLEARLY SURPRISED AND NOT PLEASED BY THE FACT THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD NOT FORECLOSED IN HIS LETTER TO FAHD THAT THE FEZ RESOLUTIONS COULD BE A BASIS FOR ENTERING THE NEGOTIATIONS. HUSSEIN NOTED THAT HE HAD CONSISTENTLY ARGUED THAT THE USG WOULD SUPPORT NEGOTIATIONS ONLY IF 242 WERE THE BASIS FOR THE TALKS. I SAID THE SECRETARY HAD MADE OUR POSITION CLEAR IN PUBLIC AND IN PRIVATE: WE WANTED TALKS TO START AND WERE NOT IMPOSING OR ACCEPTING PRECONDITIONS.

5. BANDAR SAID HE HAD ATTEMPTED IN HIS MEETING TO KEEP THE FOCUS ON THE NEED TO START THE NEGOTIATIONS. HUSSEIN HAD COUPLED HIS REPEATED ASSERTION THAT TIME WAS SHORT AND TALKS MUST START TO A LONG LIST OF PROBLEMS FACING

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HIM IN AGREEING TO ENTER THE TALKS. THESE INCLUDED AGREEMENT ON THE WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN FORCES FROM LEBANON AND A WEST BANK SETTLEMENTS FREEZE. HUSSEIN HAD THEN REVIEWED WHAT HE DESCRIBED AS THE GENERALLY UNSATISFACTORY STATE OF SAUDI-JORDANIAN BILATERAL RELATIONS. BANDAR MENTIONED IN THIS CONTEXT THAT THE KING HAD RAISED SAUDIA AIRLINES' LACK OF COOPERATION WITH THE JORDANIAN NATIONAL AIRLINE ALIA. (COMMENT: HE WAS NOT MORE SPECIFIC ON THIS POINT.) BANDAR ENCOURAGED HUSSEIN TO PUT ALL HIS THOUGHTS IN WRITING TO FAHD. THE RESULT WAS A THREE-PAGE LETTER; THE FIRST TWO AND A HALF PAGES CONTAINED RINGING ASSERTIONS OF HUSSEIN'S SENSE OF URGENCY AND DESIRE TO MOVE INTO NEGOTIATIONS BUT WITHOUT ANY SPECIFICS. IN THE LAST TWO LINES HUSSEIN SAID HE FELT SAD AND CONCERNED ABOUT "OTHER MATTERS" WHICH BANDAR WOULD EXPLAIN ORALLY TO FAHD. WHEN FAHD READ HUSSEIN'S LETTER, HE MERELY LOOKED UP AT BANDAR ON READING THESE LAST SENTENCES AND SAID, "DON'T BOTHER TO EXPLAIN: I KNOW WHAT HE IS REFERRING TO."

6. HUSSEIN DESCRIBED AT LENGTH TO BANDAR JORDAN'S FINANCIAL CRISIS. BANDAR HAD, AS HE HAD PREDICTED TO ME IN OUR FEBRUARY 28 CONVERSATION, COME EMPTYHANDED, AND UNABLE TO MAKE ANY NEW CONCESSIONS OF SAUDI FINANCIAL AID. HE ASSURED HUSSEIN THAT HIS REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE WAS UNDER SYMPATHETIC CONSIDERATION. HE REASSURED THE KING ABOUT THE SAUDI AND GULF STATE READINESS TO MEET THEIR BAGHDAD PLEDGES TO JORDAN, WHICH ADD UP TO OVER 1 BILLION DOLLARS ANNUALLY (SIC). BANDAR SAID HE HAD REFERRED TO U.S. READINESS TO BE GENEROUS ONCE HUSSEIN ENTERS THE PEACE PROCESS AND SAID HE HAD COMMENTED, "WITH A BIT OF HELP FROM THE AMERICANS AND A BIT FROM US, I AM SURE SOMETHING CAN BE WORKED OUT TO YOUR SATIS-

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FACTION."

7. BANDAR OBSERVED THAT HE FELT THE KING WAS "DANCING AROUND" THE ISSUE OF HIS ENTERING NEGOTIATIONS. ASKED IF HE BELIEVED HUSSEIN MAY BE BACKING AWAY FROM NEGOTIATIONS, BANDAR REPLIED HE HAD DRAWN NO SUCH CONCLUSION, BUT HE HAD RETURNED TO RIYADH TROUBLED THAT SAUDI ARABIA, INSTEAD OF BEING VIEWED BY HUSSEIN AS FULLY SUPPORTIVE OF HIS ENTERING ON THE BASIS OF A HUSSEIN/ARAFAT AGREEMENT, WAS BEING SEEN AS PUSHING HIM TO ENTER AGAINST HIS WILL. THIS HAS NEVER BEEN THE SAUDI POSITION.

8. WHEN ARAFAT CAME TO RIYADH MARCH 5 ENROUTE TO THE NAM SUMMIT IN NEW DELHI, HE HAD A LONG MEETING WITH FAHD. DURING THE COURSE OF THIS, FONMIN SAUD AND BANDAR PRESSED ARAFAT TO REAFFIRM WHAT HE HAD DESCRIBED AS THE PLO POSITION RE HUSSEIN IN HIS TUNIS MEETING WITH BANDAR. ARAFAT HAD DONE SO AND STATED IN PARTICULAR THAT THE PLO AGREED HUSSEIN SHOULD NEGOTIATE FOR THE WEST BANK AND GAZA AND THAT AN ANNOUNCEMENT TO THIS EFFECT SHOULD BE MADE MARCH 25. (AT ONE POINT IN THE MEETING, FAHD INDICATED THAT SAUD AND BANDAR SHOULD NOT PRESS ARAFAT TO BE MORE EXPLICIT, APPARENTLY FEELING THAT THEY WERE BORING IN TOO HARD.) ARAFAT SAID HE WILL RETURN TO

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RIYADH BEFORE HIS NEXT ROUND OF TALKS WITH HUSSEIN IN AMMAN, BECAUSE HE WISHED THE SAUDIS TO BE ABSOLUTELY CLEAR ABOUT PLO POSITIONS. (SAUD, BANDAR SAID, WILL PURSUE CONTACTS WITH BOTH HUSSEIN AND ARAFAT IN NEW DELHI.)

9. IN CONCLUSION, BANDAR SAID HE HAD TRIED TO GET ACROSS TO HUSSEIN THAT, WHILE THE SAUDIS WILL NOT TAKE A PUBLIC POSITION MORE FAVORABLE TO JORDAN THAN TO THE PLO, THE REALITY IS THAT THEY FEEL CLOSER TO HUSSEIN THAN TO THE PLO AND WILL SUPPORT HIM. HE HAD TOLD HUSSEIN HE SHOULD KNOW THAT ON THIS QUESTION THE KING AND HIS SIX FULL BROTHERS (SULTAN, NAIF, SALMAN, ETC.) ARE IN TOTAL AGREEMENT. (COMMENT: ALTHOUGH BANDAR DID NOT CITE CROWN PRINCE ABDULLAH AGAIN AS HE HAD IN OUR FEBRUARY 28 CONVERSATION, HE LEFT THE IMPLICATION THAT ABDALLAH, GIVEN HIS CONCERN ABOUT NOT ALIENATING SYRIA, STILL DOES NOT VIEW THE SAUDI/JORDANIAN RELATIONSHIP IN THE SAME LIGHT AS DOES FAHD AND HIS FULL BROTHERS.)

10. BANDAR EXPECTS TO BE IN WASHINGTON MARCH 9, PROVIDED THE KING SEES HIM FOR A FINAL BRIEFING EVENING OF MARCH 8. HE LOOKS FORWARD TO DISCUSSING HIS RECENT MEETINGS FULLY WITH THE DEPARTMENT IN THE NEAR FUTURE. HE WAS LESS EUPHORIC THAN AT OUR PREVIOUS MEETING BUT STILL PERSUADED THAT THERE HAS BEEN A DEFINITE ADVANCE IN ARAFAT'S POSITION AND THAT WITH CAREFUL MANAGEMENT A MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH IS STILL POSSIBLE BY MARCH 25.

11. COMMENT: DESPITE BANDAR'S CONTINUED IF SOMEWHAT MUTED OPTIMISM, I FIND HIS ACCOUNT OF HIS CONVERSATION WITH HUSSEIN WORRISOME. I REALIZE THAT A PIECE OF THE

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PUZZLE IS MISSING SINCE I DO NOT KNOW THE DETAILS OF ARAFAT'S UNDERTAKING AS CONVEYED TO BANDAR IN TUNIS. YET BANDAR IS TELLING US THAT HUSSEIN FINDS ARAFAT'S POSITION UNPERSUASIVE AND THAT HE MAY FEEL INSUFFICIENTLY PROTECTED TO MOVE AHEAD.

12. REQUEST DEPARTMENT REPEAT TO AMMAN.
MURPHY

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