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PRESIDENT BUSH'S MEETING WITH KING HUSSEIN: 16 AUGUST
SUMMARY

1. INITIAL ACCOUNTS SUGGEST THAT THE AMERICANS ARE ENCOURAGED BY HUSSEIN'S PERFORMANCE: HE DID NOT ATTEMPT A MEDIATION ROLE AND PROVIDED ASSURANCES ON SANCTIONS. DIFFERENCES REMAIN BUT RELATIONS PARTLY REPAIRED. DETAILED ACCOUNT PROMISED FROM GATES.

DETAIL

2. THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH KING HUSSEIN LASTED OVER TWO HOURS, WELL BEYOND THE ALLOTTED TIME, WITH BUSH EXTENDING THE DISCUSSION BY ACCOMPANYING HUSSEIN ONTO THE PLANE WHICH TOOK HIM FROM KENNEBUNKPORT. AS A RESULT, BUSH AND HIS ENTOURAGE WENT IMMEDIATELY INTO A FURTHER MEETING WITH THE SAUDI FOREIGN MINISTER AND WE HAVE THEREFORE BEEN ABLE TO OBTAIN ONLY A BRIEF READOUT SO FAR. THE NSC HAVE TOLD US THAT A FURTHER ACCOUNT WILL BE PROVIDED BY GATES, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, WHO IS LIKELY TO CONTACT LONDON DIRECT. MEANWHILE THE FOLLOWING COMES FROM WELCH (DIRECTOR NEAR EAST) AT THE NSC.

3. WELCH SAID THAT, CONTRARY TO ALL THE SPECULATION BEFOREHAND, HUSSEIN BROUGHT NO HIDDEN AGENDA, NO NEWS OF SECRET MEETINGS, SPECIAL REQUESTS OR MESSAGES FROM SADDAM. (BUSH HAS NOW CONFIRMED AS MUCH IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE: QUOTE THERE WAS NO INTERMEDIARY MISSION THAT I DETECTED AT ALL UNQUOTE.)

4. WELCH CHARACTERISED THIS MEETING AS BEING PRIMARILY ABOUT REPAIRING US/JORDANIAN RELATIONS, AND GETTING HUSSEIN SUFFICIENTLY BACK ON SIDE RATHER THAN A MEANS OF EXPLORING POSSIBLE DIPLOMATIC SOLUTIONS. TO THAT EXTENT IT HAD BEEN A MODEST SUCCESS. THE TWO MEN HAD GOT ON WELL TOGETHER AND THE MEETING HAD TAKEN PLACE IN A BASICALLY FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE. HUSSEIN HAD BEEN NOTABLY AT EASE SUBSEQUENTLY DURING HIS OWN PRESS CONFERENCE WHEN DEALING WITH QUESTIONS ABOUT HIS RELATIONS WITH THE PRESIDENT, AS DISTINCT FROM EVIDENT ANXIETY WHEN

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QUESTIONED OVER SUBSTANCE. SIMILARLY BUSH HAD PUT A POSITIVE COMPLEXION ON THE EVENT IN HIS OWN REMARKS TO THE PRESS: QUOTE WE'VE HAD SOME GOOD MEETINGS HERE TODAY ... I THINK HE'D LIKE TO FIND SOME WAY TO BE HELPFUL ... I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO TELL HIM THAT IN SPITE OF THE DIFFERENCES THAT MAY HAVE APPEARED TO BE GRIEVOUS A WEEK OR SO AGO, THAT ON THE PART OF THIS PRESIDENT, AND I THINK OF THE UNITED STATES ENTIRELY, WE'D LIKE TO SEE BETTER RELATIONS UNQUOTE.

5. WELCH SAID THAT THIS HAD BEEN POSSIBLE MAINLY BECAUSE HUSSEIN HAD TAKEN A GENERALLY ENCOURAGING LINE ON SANCTIONS INCLUDING ON SHIPMENTS THROUGH AQABA. HE SAID THAT JORDAN WOULD COMPLY WITH INTERNATIONAL SANCTIONS (THERE IS SOME DOUBT IN THE NSC AT THIS STAGE WHETHER HE ACTUALLY SAID QUOTE WAS COMPLYING UNQUOTE). AS WAS CLEAR FROM HUSSEIN'S PUBLIC REMARKS, THERE WAS SOME DISCUSSION ABOUT WHAT THE SANCTIONS COVERED, WHETHER HUMANITARIAN FOODSTUFFS WERE EXEMPT AND AT WHAT POINT SUCH EXEMPTION APPLIED. BUT WELCH ARGUED THAT SOME OTHER GOVERNMENTS ALSO HAD DOUBTS ON THAT SCORE AND WERE SEEKING CLARIFICATION FROM THE UN. IT COULD NOT BE DISMISSED AS AN ENTIRELY DISINGENUOUS POINT. HE THOUGHT THEREFORE THAT BUSH WOULD PORTRAY THE DISCUSSION ON SANCTIONS AS PROVIDING THE ASSURANCES THE AMERICANS REQUIRED (AS INDEED HAS BEEN THE CASE).

6. THAT SAID, THE PRESIDENT HAD EMPHASISED US OBJECTIVES AND HIS DETERMINATION TO SEE THEM THROUGH. HUSSEIN HAD NOT DISGUISED HIS VIEW THAT THE AMERICANS HAD DONE THE WRONG THING, THAT ARAB OPINION WAS AGAINST THEM AND THAT AN ARAB SOLUTION WAS THE RIGHT WAY OUT. HUSSEIN WAS DEEPLY WORRIED. THE PRESIDENT HAD REPLIED THAT THERE WAS NO ALTERNATIVE TO THE COURSE HE HAD CHOSEN. HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE HAD LOST ALL CONFIDENCE IN ANYTHING SADDAM HUSSEIN MIGHT SAY.

7. AFTER THE MEETING WITH HUSSEIN AND THE SAUDI, WE UNDERSTAND THAT BUSH IMMEDIATELY TELEPHONED PRESIDENT MUBARAK. INDEED THE ABOVE ACCOUNT WAS BASED MAINLY ON BUSH'S REMARKS TO MUBARAK, WHICH WELCH (PLEASE PROTECT) HAD MONITORED AS NOTETAKER.

8. FULL TEXT OF BUSH'S PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWS BY FAX TO EMERGENCY UNIT.

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