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SITUATION IN KUWAIT

SUMMARY

1. FOOD SHORTAGES, ABSENCE OF COMMERCIAL LIFE, POOR CIVIL ADMINISTRATION - KUWAIT A DYING CITY. ARMY MORALE LOW. NON-IRAQI POPULATION EVACUATING.

DETAIL

2. WE DEBRIEFED MOUSALLEM (LE II KUWAIT, PLEASE PROTECT) ON THE GENERAL SITUATION IN KUWAIT AS OF 20 OCTOBER. HE WAS BASING HIS COMMENTS ON CONVERSATIONS WITH IRAQIS (CIVILIANS AND SOLDIERS) AND RESIDENTS OF KUWAIT.

FOOD

3. THERE ARE SERIOUS BREAD SHORTAGES, WITH LONG OVERNIGHT QUEUES OUTSIDE BAKERIES IN YARMOUK, KAIFAN AND SALMIYA. PURCHASES ARE LIMITED TO TEN LOAVES PER PERSON THOUGH THERE IS NO ORGANISED RATIONING (EG COUPONS). LARGE AMOUNTS OF FOOD, PARTICULARLY FLOUR, HAVE BEEN TAKEN FOR THE ARMY AND THE POLICE. THERE ARE NO EGGS, NO FRESH FRUIT AND VERY LITTLE MEAT (250 IRAQI DINARS FOR 15 KILOGRAMMES OF LOW-QUALITY BEEF). SOME MILK IS AVAILABLE BUT IT IS NO LONGER OPERATING. THE DAIRY HERD IS DYING AND DEAD COWS ARE BEING LEFT TO ROT IN THE FARMS IN SULEIBIYA.

4. FOOD IS THOUGHT TO BE GENERALLY AVAILABLE BUT IT IS EXPENSIVE, HARD TO FIND AND OFTEN, IN THE CASE OF PERISHABLES OR FROZEN FOOD, PAST ITS EXPIRY DATE. THERE HAVE BEEN PRICE RISES OF UP TO 400 PER CENT FOR EG TINNED TUNA OVER THE LAST TWO WEEKS. MANY PEOPLE SPEND MOST OF THEIR TIME FORAGING FOR FOOD. THE PRICE THEY PAY WHEN THEY FIND THE FOOD IS, FOR MANY, CRIPPLING.

UTILITIES

5. THE WATER AND POWER SUPPLY ARE BEING MAINTAINED BUT THE QUALITY OF THE WATER IS DECLINING. RUBBISH IS NOT BEING COLLECTED AND IS ACCUMULATING IN STREETS. THIS IS NOW BECOMING A MAJOR HAZARD.

6. THE VAST MAJORITY OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS ARE CLOSE AND NO MORE THAN 20 PERCENT OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN ARE ATTENDING. MANY OF THE SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN TAKEN OVER BY THE ARMY AS BARRACKS OR HQ'S. THE ABSENCE OF SCHOOLS IS A MAJOR FACTOR IN MANY PEOPLE'S DECISION TO LEAVE.

7. THE COMMERCIAL LIFE OF THE CITY HAS ALMOST CEASED. BANKS ARE OPEN BUT NO DEPOSITS ARE BEING MADE. NO BUSINESSMEN ARE FUNCTIONING SINCE PRIVATE ENTERPRISES AND PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY HAVE CEASED. BOTH PROFESSIONAL AND NON-PROFESSIONAL LABOUR IS NOW DEPARTING. DESPITE THE RELATIVELY GOOD TREATMENT GIVEN BY IRAQIS TO THE PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY, THE MAJORITY, WHO WERE IN KUWAIT TO MAKE MONEY, ARE NOW RETURNING TO JORDAN HAVING DECIDED THAT THERE IS NO FUTURE FOR THEM IN AN OCCUPIED KUWAIT. THE ONLY COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY IS THE SELLING BY STREET VENDORS OF VEGETABLES BROUGHT FROM IRAQ. THE ONLY PEOPLE WORKING ARE BLACK MARKETEERS AND GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES. THE LATTER HOWEVER HAVE NOT BEEN PAID YET FOR SEPTEMBER .

MILITARY PRESENCE

8. THERE ARE HEAVILY DUG-IN POSITIONS ALONG THE SEAFRONT IN SALMIYAH AND BNEID AL-GHAAR. THERE ARE MANY ROAD BLOCKS AND SOLDIERS IN THE CITY CHECKING VEHICLES AND HOUSES. THERE ARE ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS ON THE TALL BUILDINGS ALONG THE SEAFRONT (GULF ROAD). IN AHMADI THERE ARE NO CIVILIANS AND THE STREETS ARE FULL OF SOLDIERS.

IRAQI MILITARY : MORALE

9. THE DETERIORATING SITUATION IN KUWAIT, THE ATMOSPHERE OF DECAY, THE UNCERTAINTY OF BOTH WHY THE IRAQI ARMY IS THERE AND WHAT IT MAY BE ASKED TO FACE, AND A GENUINE WAR-WEARINESS HAVE CONSPIRED TO UNDERMINE THE GENERAL MORALE OF BOTH CONSCRIPTS AND REGULAR TROOPS. IN ADDITION TO THIS, SERIOUS FOOD SHORTAGES AMONG THE TROOPS (ONE MEAL OF RICE AND BREAD A DAY) AND COMMUNICATIONS DIFFICULTIES MAKE KUWAIT AN UNPOPULAR POSTING. MANY SOLDIERS EXPRESSED WAR-WEARINESS, FRUSTRATION THAT THE ACQUISITION OF KUWAIT HAD BROUGHT SIMPLY MORE MISERY, AND THEIR GENUINE HOPE THAT THERE WOULD NOT BE

AN ATTACK FROM THE AMERICANS. AGAINST THIS THEY UNDERSTOOD THAT THEY WOULD HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO FIGHT AND THEY WERE, IN MOUSALLEM'S EYES, MORE AFRAID OF THEIR OWN GOVERNMENT'S OFFICERS AND THE BA'TH PARTY THAN THEY WERE OF THE ENEMY. THEY ARE ALL HUNGRY .

LOOTING

10. SOLDIERS ARE APPARENTLY FORBIDDEN TO LOOT AND THIS ORDER IS BEING GENERALLY OBEYED. HOWEVER, SOLDIERS ARE BRINGING THEIR RELATIVES FROM IRAQ TO DO THE LOOTING FOR THEM EXCLAM ALTHOUGH THE OPPORTUNITY TO LOOT KUWAIT WAS WELCOMED INITIALLY, THE NOVELTY HAS WORN OFF AND IN ANY EVENT THE RICHEST PICKINGS HAVE BEEN TAKEN. PRIVATE HOUSES AND APARTMENTS ARE NOW THE TARGETS AND MANY HOUSES ONCE THEY HAVE BEEN LOOTED ARE SMASHED. MOUSALLEM BELIEVED THAT OFFICIAL LOOTING WAS DONE BY PLAIN-CLOTHES OFFCIERS WHO CLEARED OUT A BLOCK OF FLATS OR AN AREA ONCE THE ARMY HAD SEALED OFF THE ROADS AROUND IT.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

11. MOUSALLEM DESCRIBED KUWAIT AS A QUOTE GHABA UNQUOTE (JUNGLE) IN WHICH THERE WAS NO RULE OF LAW AND ORDER AND IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO FIND ANY FIGURE OF CLEAR AUTHORITY. CIVIL ADMINISTRATION WAS CHAOTIC AND INEFFICIENT IN THE EXTREME. PEOPLE WERE ONLY ABLE TO RECEIVE IRAQI TELEVISION AND IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR THE MAJORITY WHO DID NOT HAVE SHORT-WAVE SETS TO LISTEN TO THE BBC OR SAUDI RADIO. THAT SAID, NOBODY BELIEVED THE IRAQI NEWS, AND EFFORTS WERE MADE WHEREVER POSSIBLE TO MONITOR THE BBC ON MEDIUM WAVE.

12. THERE IS A WIDESPREAD BELIEF THAT THE OCCUPATION WILL NOT CONTINUE AND THAT THE IRAQIS WILL WITHDRAW TO THE NEW FENCE ALONG MUTLARIDGE. MOUSALLEM ADMITTED THAT THIS WAS LARGELY WISHFUL THINKING AND THAT THE EVIDENCE OF ENTRENCHMENT GAVE NO INDICATION OF AN INTENTION TO WITHDRAW. HOWEVER, THE SHABBINESS OF THE PLACE AND THE RELUCTANCE OF THE SOLDIERS TO SERVE THERE HAD LED MANY TO BELIEVE THAT KUWAIT WOULD IN THE LAST RESORT BE HANDED BACK TO AVOID WAR.

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