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Meeting between Saddam Hussein and Unidentified High Ranking Officials Regarding US Plans to Attack Iraq, Irrigation Projects, and other Military Issues

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Summary:

This undated audio file is of a meeting chaired by Saddam Hussein. It contains information on the United States and its efforts to shape international public opinion, U.S. and Iraqi military capabilities, Husayn Kamil, the run-up to the Gulf War in 1990-91, U.S. and coalition air raids, the Republican Guard, logistical issues, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Hosni Mubarak and other Arab leaders, and the Soviet Union.

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Arabic

Contents:

Transcript - Arabic

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Key: UM = Unidentified Male Speaker**Translator comments, clarifications, and additions are italicized in brackets**

Saddam Hussein: [*Already speaking*] On television, how the United States prepares the public, how they mobilize troops, and what's the size of the troops. We now know how many America brought, how many France brought, and how many England brought. So, if they don't need all this mobilization—won't they need at least half of them [*troops*]? If there is a ground battle, then they will need at least half of them. So, only 20 or 30 thousand soldiers in addition to the media and... talking about aerial threats was not necessary; it could have led to a conflict but not necessarily—it wasn't necessarily, conclusively leading to a conflict. However, we, the politicians, maneuver along with our goals — whatever these goals are, we maneuver based on them. Even lately with this issue with Hussein Kamil, we started noticing their reports. They were trying to scare the Iraqis more than they were preparing for a serious military conflict. Yet, we can't completely exclude a conflict because we can't tell for sure if there will be a military conflict or not. I say it can happen at any moment. But if they want to attack us by ground and by air, then they would need to account for things much bigger and more complex than what we are seeing so far. This is based on our experiences. We fought them before [*in 1991*] so we are not just saying this theoretically. We fought them and we saw how they are. It's true that our military was bigger than now and its combat capabilities before the aerial attacks for a month and half were better than now, but in any case they have to put at least half of the troops they mobilized at that time. They mobilized more than 400,000 at the time, I think, in ground forces.

UM1: About 750,000.

Saddam Hussein: Pardon?

UM1: Sir, about 750,000; approximately 750,000 including service providers and combatants.

Saddam Hussein: Anyway, they will need half of that. So, how much will that be? If not half, then they will need at least a third if they put the whole [*Iraqi*] military aside and just account for the Republican Guard. Because the Republican Guard is not currently weaker, I mean not less powerful, than what it was [*in 1991*].

UM2: No, Sir. God willing, it's more powerful.

UM1: Thank God.

Saddam Hussein: Even if it's at 80% of the capacity it had back then, they would still need to consider an attack force for the Republican Guard. That's if they are accounting for the Republican Guard only, then they would still need to consider it. Thus, so far, all the talk that's been going on—before that [*in 1991*] they disregarded all the flexibility we showed. We talked about an Arab solution and they killed it. We talked about the possibility of withdrawal based on the solution proposed on August 12th and they killed that too. The French President said something that we wanted and welcomed and so forth and they killed it again. All this happened because they were already determined before August 2nd to strike Iraq. However, we now see that they keep escalating and escalating and escalating things and wait for something. I mean, we

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haven't done anything lately. We only deescalate the Hussein Kamil issue because when someone commits betrayal, we should not be surprised by anything he does. Therefore, one of the things we expect is that whatever is on his mind or whatever he is hiding or whatever he knows from someone, all will be given by him to them [*Americans and Jordanians*] and so we told them up front to come here and get it. Thus, we deescalated this whole thing and we left him no informational value, not even technical value. This is what happened as a result. Otherwise, what else did we do? We are just sitting here in our place while they keep talking and talking until they lose their voice! They lost it [*their voice*] and so did their King and they all stopped. They stopped by themselves. We didn't do anything! I mean that time, they said, "The Republican Guard must withdraw" and what have you, we accepted. Then, the Russians came to take responsibility and claimed they had a political plan, but it all turned out to be empty talk. Otherwise, if we had recognized it was all empty talk, then we would've done things differently.

[Time Stamp 05:20]

However, this time we didn't do anything! Every one of us is in his place, yet they are the ones who quit! If they had a plan and were about to strike and so forth, then why did they quit? We didn't do anything. We didn't take any large scale measures, except for some small scale political strikes and through the media and that's it, nothing else. So, war is not something impossible for them but it's also not something to be easily done by them. They have a lot of things to account for in the region, they have balances to maintain, and they are starting to have concerns for us and for others. They have to account for each case and balance our weight with the weight of the others, in addition to what we have and how much will we bleed and how much others will do. But still, they're mostly scared by us despite everything they have done. We want to diminish their fear down to the level of fear for any other nation, but they are unwilling. But this is not a simple issue—if it were a simple and easy issue, then their goal would have been explicit. Their goal has been explicit for a long time now, why haven't they attacked then at all times? So it is not as easy as it seems. They want to make it a cover, or to show their capabilities, or to make people pay money for it.

One of the things that burdened us last time was that there were many people who provided money for it. The entire Arab financial safes were open to them [*Americans*]. Egyptians, Hosni and his policies—Egypt is the largest Arab country and he encouraged them. The largest country financially, Saudi Arabia, also sided with them. Additionally, we did not have someone to protect us, as the Iraqi saying goes, and no one looked at us so things were upside down. It is very hard to face one mass arranged with this much monetary power directed against one party; one mass that has all this military power and technology against one party in addition to directing all the media, political influence, and international opinion toward one party. How can it be arranged? It happened only to us! [*Strikes his hand on the table*] All this coincided with the crowning of America as the most powerful nation on earth. It never happened before and it will never happen again. It all fit together. But it happened, so all other things [*pauses*]

UM2: Sir, if I may, God willing we will meet your expectations. Truthfully, I feel embarrassed to stand in front of you and say this, but I want to explain to you some of the obstacles facing our troops. They're simple obstacles and Mr. Supervisor [*Supervisor of the Republican Guard*]

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visited our troops and met the soldiers. Our supply situation is kind of [*pauses*]. Sir, we need some support.

Saddam Hussein: What aspect of the supplies are we talking about?

UM2: Sir, the only supplies given to soldiers are ceremonial shoes and a ceremonial uniform. Otherwise, our soldiers have torn uniforms.

Saddam Hussein: Yes, I know about this and sometimes I see some painful things.

UM2: Sir, the Military Industrialization had 30,000 work uniforms and we called them but didn't get a response.

Saddam Hussein: 30,000 uniforms for what?

UM2: For iron and armor workers, Sir.

UM1: For the armored branch, Sir.

Saddam Hussein: Well, if it's for the armored branch and you took them for the non-armored branches, then what about the armored branch?

UM1: [*Inaudible*]

Saddam Hussein: Or do you want it for the armored branch?

UM2: We wanted them for the armored branch, Sir.

UM3: It is similar to the armored branch uniforms. It is also made of silk so they have similar characteristics.

Saddam Hussein: They must be keeping them for their workers?

UM1: Sir, we wrote to [*inaudible*] and he ordered the Ministry of Finance to do it accordingly.

Saddam Hussein: Call the Minister of Finance by phone.

UM1: Sir, this year they gave us 5,000 uniforms for the Guard. Each corps got 5,000. However, I now have a combatant force of 120,000, thank God. In addition, we also now have missile regiments and aviation. So, frankly, we are suffering when it comes to the basic needs of the soldiers. Sometimes we see soldiers in full uniform wearing torn shirts or torn shoes. Additionally, Sir, we have some needs for the electrical and mechanical engineering. In fact, the Presidential Diwan gave us 750 [*inaudible*] for the rest of the year. We wanted to ask Your Excellency for some basic necessities, and the same for repairing equipment. Also, the troops are moving back to the camps which need some improvements and [*have*] administrative issues.

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[Time Stamp 10:45]

Saddam Hussein: The thing that I agree on when it comes to repositioning is that we have to improve the site even before the troops move. I mean, there should be a task force sent to just check the site then the rest [*of the troops*] can all come and reposition. Or you may decide to do a partial repair of the small things that may have been stolen, and then you wait until the unit has fully moved and they will be responsible for it. This has to be done with anything that we decide. As for the other things, we will transfer you to the Ministry of Finance which will discuss each issue with you all so that there won't be just oral orders but from now on we have to go into details according to the law.

UMI: One more thing, Sir, regarding tires. In our last meeting I talked about how we have some units that have critical needs for tires, especially tires for the Eva [*Russian-made military trucks*]. Sir, I only received 200 tires while we have a total of 7000 trucks in the Guard.

Saddam Hussein: We'll check what we have. Abid [*Abid Hamid Mahmud, Saddam's secretary*] check what we have and what the government plan for distribution is so I can check it too.

UMI: Sir, I have one last point to make and it's for the good of the public. Sir, Your Excellency previously ordered, based on a recommendation from Mr. Supervisor, the construction of a dam inside Hemreen Lake.

Saddam Hussein: Yes.

UMI: Sir, the dam is seven kilometers long and very high. Your Excellency visited the area when I was the commander of the 2nd Corps in 1989 and you saw how the area had low water levels. The area around it is completely dry in July and August when the dam is open for water. Sir, the height of the road around it for the bridge on that strait is 97 meters above sea-level. Hemreen Dam, Sir, at Hemreen Lake, has a height of 108 meters above sea-level with a maximum water level capacity at 104 meters. Sir, as Brother Abu Mustafa may recall, we talked to Mr. Minister for his opinion. The water level annually gets low around this time in October but the road around it was never repaired. The dam will start storing water in a week for the new year. We presented a proposal and I mentioned that our road can work if they store 102 meters instead of 104. This will guarantee the road functionality for civilians and it is a huge mountain that we spent a lot of money to get fixed but that is now becoming non-accessible for no reason. In fact, we spent about 50 million on it -- [*Interrupted*]

Saddam Hussein: But they said it is all bad now.

UMI: No, Sir. This year they stored 104.5 meters. I begged the manager of the project not to do it and I asked him why are you doing this?

Saddam Hussein: Because Iraq needs water storage! [*Laughing*]

UMI: That's fine, Sir. But you know that the water level is now a meter high above the bridge. Yesterday I visited troops from the Fatih al-Mobeen Corps and passed on the road. The road was

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open. So they can store up to 102 meters instead of sinking the road and [inaudible] during the rainy season. They can do -- [Interrupted]

Saddam Hussein: [Talking to Abid] check why that is happening?

Abid Hamid Mahmud: Yes, Sir.

UM1: Sir, honestly, this is a strategic road and -- [Interrupted]

Saddam Hussein: Water is now more strategic to us than the road because of the sanctions. Otherwise, how would we get food [agriculture] without water? So it is a must.

UM1: Sir, they wanted to do it for 8 billion. We finished it for 50 million. Did they really need 8 billion?! Now it's a similar thing with the 2 meters of water! It's not fair for the people.

Saddam Hussein: [Laughing]

[Time Stamp 15:09]

UM1: Sir, I swear some are charging 50 dinars for people who want to cross in a boat to the village behind the dam. Sir, when we opened the road, I swear people came out in masses cheering. When the road was damaged, they [dam management] refused to repair it. Even the [regular Army] Corps there refused to repair it! I usually don't talk bad about my people, but I've never seen such laziness! It wasn't until we were authorized by Mr. Supervisor to take a shovel truck that we opened the road. This is happening as if the Guard were the only ones who use the road, I swear. So I talked to the project manager the other day and told him that instead of storing 104.5 meters, he can store 102 or 103 meters. The road is 107 meters high, Sir, but it's close to the surface of the lake and the winds get water on the road. They want 8 billion to construct a concrete bridge while we did it for 50 million and all it needs is maintenance. I even called Mr. Governor of Diyala and I told him this bridge is not just for the Guard, they can at least send a shovel truck to maintain the road but they still don't. One time, the commander of the Corps had his car broken on the bridge and he couldn't repair it. God bless you, Sir.

[Silence from 16:18 to 17:10]

Saddam Hussein: I think we've made you dinner and you can all eat. Abid, let the guys wash up while the dinner is prepared.

Abid Hamid Mahmud: Yes, Sir. [Whispers]

Saddam Hussein: In the name of God. Wash up and then join me for dinner.

[End of Recording]