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Interview Session Number: 5
Interview Conducted by: SSA George L. Piro
Arabic/English Translation: SSA [REDACTED]

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~~(S)~~ Saddam Hussein (High Value Detainee #1) was interviewed on February 15, 2004 at a military detention facility at Baghdad International Airport (BIAP), Baghdad, Iraq. Hussein provided the following information:

~~(S)~~ Prior to any questions being asked, Hussein stated that he wanted to ask a question. He then asked what kind of changes have taken place in the world, i.e., with China and Russia, and in international politics. The interviewer related that there has not been a lot of significant changes, that efforts are underway to rebuild Iraq and this includes support from Russia and China, and that things are moving forward rapidly.

~~(S)~~ Hussein then explained that since he has been in prison for one or two months, he does not have a picture of what is happening. He indicated that he had intended to ask the interviewer this question two days earlier. Hussein discussed a movie he saw, based on a book, A Tale of Two Cities, which he had read long ago, in which a British man imprisoned in a French jail is likewise out of touch with what is happening in the outside world. According to Hussein, the author of this book was critical of French authorities for this treatment. Hussein noted that nothing had changed since that time. The interviewer responded that "Over time, some things have changed; others have not."

~~(S)~~ The interviewer informed Hussein that today's session would be a dialogue about the 1968 takeover by the Ba'ath Party, in particular trying to distinguish fact from legend. Hussein responded by stating in effect that in 1968, Iraq was living in a primitive way and could only advance itself seriously by understanding two concepts. The first was to recognize that the country had historical precedence for change as demonstrated

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in previous ages. The second concept involved the recognition that Iraq could learn by examining the way the rest of the world operated. Accordingly, Hussein and others traveled to other Arab countries. In comparing themselves with other locales, they discovered that Cairo and Damascus were far more advanced than Baghdad. Hussein had many friends who traveled to Damascus who believed that Iraq could reach the level of development in Damascus, but they could not imagine reaching the level of development of Cairo.

~~(S)~~ Iraq's manufacturing ability at the time was limited to making blankets and to operating a canning factory in Karbala which needed to import its materials. Aside from these, there were only a few other simple attempts at manufacturing in other fields. However, Iraq was motivated and had the energy to advance itself. Early efforts resulted in mistakes, but these were corrected. As they progressed, they continued to send people to countries around them in order to gain experience. Among the countries which Hussein and others visited were the Soviet Union, France, Spain, Iran, Turkey and all the Arab countries. In all of these, Hussein believed that the Soviet Union was the closest match to Iraq in terms of the social life of its people. However, this did not mean that Hussein took sides between the East and the West. Hussein stated that while looking at the ways in which others live, we "don't forget we are Arabs and Iraqis and that Iraqis have their own way of co-existing and relating with other Arabs." Hussein added, "Looking at our aims to develop, we tried going for development in all aspects including, political, economic, technological and industrial."

~~(S)~~ Concerning the Ba'ath Party takeover, Hussein acknowledged that they had help from the military who were members of the party. He also acknowledged that Colonel Ibrahim Abd Al-Rahman Da'ud and Colonel Abd Al-Razzaq Nayif, non-Ba'ath members of the military, helped with the takeover. He added that the two had not played an important role in allowing the takeover to be undertaken without resistance or bloodshed.

~~(S)~~ Hussein stated that the decision not to have bloodshed was done at his request, that it was his belief that "we had to forget the past and not have more bloodshed." He claimed that this matter was discussed at a meeting at the home of the Minister of Health, Dr. Mustafa. A few members disagreed

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with Hussein, especially party members who had been tortured by the previous regime and wanted revenge. A dialogue ensued and Hussein said that he, too, had been tortured. Eventually, an agreement was made that there would be no bloodshed. As evidence that this decision was honored, Hussein pointed out that the Ba'athists did not harm President Abdul Rahman Aref, but just expelled him. Additionally, he advised that his party made a decision to release prisoners from all parties including nationalists and communists. Concerning Colonel Da'ud and Colonel Nayif, Hussein related that they chose not to harm them either, but simply to expel them.

~~(S)~~ When asked about Colonel Da'ud's role in the military, Hussein stated that it was Abu Haitham (Ahmad Hassan Al-Bakr) who had a stronger voice than Da'ud, who had no real voice.

~~(S)~~ Hussein advised the Presidential protection, the Republican Guard, consisted of three divisions: Armored, Infantry and Special Forces. Colonel Da'ud's responsibility was not to clash or fight with the Armored Division. This was his only role. Hussein said, "We controlled the Armored Division; I commanded a tank and fired on the Presidential Palace." He said, "Practically, we could have done without both Da'ud and Nayif."

~~(S)~~ Hussein stated, "We got news in the afternoon before the attack that Nayif was offering to join the revolution. Apparently, Da'ud had told him about our plans even though we had told Da'ud to keep our plans a secret. As a result, several members wanted to postpone our plans. At the first stage of the revolution, we discovered that Nayif and Da'ud had been planning among themselves and that they had been contacting other officers outside our line of communication. So, we took removed them on 31 July. It was me who led the operation."

~~(S)~~ According to Hussein, Da'ud was sent to Jordan on a military assignment. Hussein added, "We could have taken him anytime. I went to Nayif with a gun; I didn't have an automatic weapon. With one gun, I took all the weapons from Nayif and his staff." Since Da'ud was serving with a military corp in Jordan, Hussein sent Ba'ath members to arrest him and bring him back to Baghdad. "However, he said that Da'ud and Nayif "were like a knife in our back."

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~~(S)~~ Contrary to popular accounts of Nayif's arrest, Hussein advised that Nayif was not invited to lunch at President Al-Bakr's house. The arrest actually took place at the Presidential Palace. According to Hussein, "We had lunch at the Presidential Palace everyday during the thirteen days after the revolution because decisions had to be made. We were always in the Palace as was President Al-Bakr. Others attended when meals were served. When Nayif arrived, I pulled a gun on him. He carried a gun too. It was like a movie. I put Barzan Ibrahim Hasan, my half brother, in the room to guard Nayif. When I arrested Nayif, he said, 'I have four children,' so I told him that his children would be taken care of. I told him to sit there and then I asked him where he wanted to go for an assignment as an ambassador." At first, Nayif said he wanted to go to Lebanon. Because Hussein considered Lebanon to be a place where conspiracies are made, he told Nayif to choose another location. Nayif then asked to go to Algeria, but Hussein denied this request because Algeria was having their own revolution. Then, Nayif asked to go to Morocco, and Hussein agreed. Hussein took Nayif to the airport in a car and sat beside him. Other Ba'ath members were in the car as well. Hussein told Nayif, "When I promise something, I do it. We promised that nothing would happen to President Aref and nothing happened. Friends know I keep my word." Hussein told Nayif that "he would be in a safe place, that no one would hurt him, but that he would have to obey."

~~(S)~~ Hussein laughed as he recalled the story about Nayif and wanted to relate to the interviewer additional details. He remembered telling Nayif, "When the guards salute, you salute back. If you try to think about doing something, remember I am next to you." He told Nayif, "When you go as an ambassador, act like one. We'll notice if you are planning something or not." Hussein recalled that at the time of Nayif's departure, they (the new Ba'ath Party) failed to ask Moroccan officials for permission before dispatching Nayif as ambassador. At the time, Hussein and others were young student revolutionaries and did not know about such things.

~~(S)~~ As Nayif boarded the plane for Morocco at the Rasheed Camp (military airport), Hussein returned Nayif's gun to him. Hussein described the scene as being, "just like a movie."

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~~(S)~~ Hussein was asked why, if Nayif represented a potential threat to the Ba'ath Party, he was appointed as ambassador. Hussein repeated that they did not want bloodshed anymore. He stated that during the 1959 coup, Ba'ath Party members were tied to cars and dragged through the streets until death. Virgins were hanged on electric poles. There was killing in the streets. When the Ba'ath Party came to power in 1963, people were executed out of revenge. Hussein reiterated that it was his opinion at the time that they needed to forget about the past and prohibit revenge. Hussein stated, "As part of this thinking, we started our arrests of Da'ud and Nayif and went on. Da'ud wanted to be the Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, so we sent him there."

~~(S)~~ In the early 1960s, there was a lot of violence against Ba'athists by the communists. Hussein maintained that when the Ba'athists subsequently took control, however, they did not do to the communists or others what the communists had done to them, at least not to the same extent. He advised that they took the communists to court and acknowledged that some (approximately five or six) were executed. He advised that they released communists, Nasserites, Kurds and members of the Muslim Brotherhood who had been previously imprisoned!

~~(S)~~ Hussein acknowledged that Nayif was killed on his doorstep in London and that following this, thirteen Iraqi diplomats were expelled from the country. When Hussein was told that some people believe that Nayif was executed by members of the Iraqi Security Service, Hussein answered, "God killed Nayif. Nayif started acting in a way against the country. He gave his word that he wouldn't act against his country. He went to Iran, then met Barzani in Northern Iraq, and according to information, he met with Moshe Dayan (Israeli Defense Minister). These were all considered bad acts. As to who killed him, that's something else. Only God knows." When Hussein was asked if he knew who killed Nayif, Hussein answered, "I told you, God knows." Pressed further, Hussein said, "I told you in a very clear way." As to Da'ud's fate, Hussein stated, "maybe he's still alive, but he wasn't treasonous. There was nothing recorded against him." When asked what the Iraqi government's action was regarding Nayif, Hussein stated, "I am not sure, but I think we warned him. I cannot remember." Hussein was then asked if Nayif could have been arrested, imprisoned and punished, instead of executed, and that some people believe that an order was given to execute him.

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Hussein replied, "What people think is something else, but I gave you my answer."

~~(S)~~ Hussein acknowledged that after the revolution other key figures such as Salih Mahdi Ammash and Hardan Al-Tikriti were removed. Asked if they were removed because they were viewed by the Ba'ath Party as a threat, Hussein answered that compared with coups elsewhere in the world, fewer officials were removed from the government. Hussein stated, although positions may change, relationships do not. As an example, Ammash's daughter became a member of the leadership. His half brother, Barzan, was a revolutionary who rode in the same tank as Hussein which fired on the main gate of the Presidential Palace on the 17th of July. He took many positions but never moved up again. Hussein pointed out that other revolutionaries "ran out of gas," and fewer were able to serve for a long time.

~~(S)~~ Hussein was asked about Izzat Ibrahim Al Duri and Tariq Aziz. Hussein described Aziz as being an old-time comrade, very respected in the party, but he was not one of the revolutionaries. Hussein said, "I am talking about seventy persons who went into the Presidential palaces." Hussein identified Izzat Ibrahim Al Duri and Taha Yasin Ramadan as having been in the revolution from the beginning until now. He said they had struggled, but that they continue in leadership to this day.

~~(S)~~ Hussein brought up the subject of Sa'dun Shakir who he claimed to be his lifelong friend. Shakir helped Saddam escape from prison. He stated, "Shakir was waiting for me in the car when we fled, actually, we didn't flee; we had an agreement with the guards". Hussein stated, "Shakir was the driver. He's very dear to me". He added, "When he had nothing more to give, we kept our friendship and love and then we went on from there. It happens. The right people are picked at the right time."

~~(S)~~ Asked about his comment that some revolutionaries run out of gas and that few are able to serve the revolution for an extended period of time, Hussein replied that there were only about six or seven such individuals. When pointed out that some may consider that he, Hussein, may have "run out of gas," Hussein laughed and said, "I don't get upset at questions that go for the truth. First, I wasn't in the government from the beginning. If you were talking about me as President, then no one was saying I

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had run out of gas. I only started in 1979. Before that, there was someone above me. The two individuals within the leadership that could have told Hussein he no longer benefited the Party were Hardan Al-Tikriti and Salih Ammash.

(S) Considering the time since Hussein was in the tank that fired on the palace through his assumption of leadership in the RCC and his presidency, Hussein was asked, "Your service has been one of the longest; Is it coincidence?" Hussein replied, "They could have said that. This subject is more deep than the details that you give. A leader is not made in a factory in Europe. Leadership is developed gradually. This was done underground." Hussein's opinion at the time was that Al-Bakr should be the President. Hussein stated that he was elected as Deputy Chairman of the Party before the revolution. Hussein said, "I don't like the government, but I like to be in the Party. Notice my speeches, I never say the government; I always say the Party."

(S) Hussein advised that he considers himself to be a revolutionary, not a politician. In both 1968 and 1974, he asked the Party to allow him to be excused from his official position. However, the Party refused his request.

(S) Hussein was asked about Hardan Al-Tikriti being killed in Kuwait and was told that people blamed the Iraqi Security Service. Hussein said that Hardan had not been sent to Kuwait, that he thought Hardan had been appointed as an ambassador somewhere else, perhaps Spain. In any event, Hussein denied knowing the reason why Hardan was killed nor did he acknowledge that the Security Service killed him.

(S) Hussein was asked about Iraqi leaders being killed in different parts of the world. The interviewer asked whether these leaders posed a threat, was it merely a coincidence, was it purposeful, or did he find it strange? Hussein replied by saying, "The question should be asked of the Kuwaitis."

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