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GULF WAR DOCUMENTS: Meeting between Saddam Hussein and Ambassador to Iraq April Glaspie

March 17, 2013

Saddam-Glaspie meeting

Transcript of Meeting Between Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie. – July 25, 1990 (Eight days before the August 2, 1990 Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait)

July 25, 1990 – Presidential Palace – Baghdad

U.S. Ambassador Glaspie – I have direct instructions from President Bush to improve our relations with Iraq. We have considerable sympathy for your quest for higher oil prices, the immediate cause of your confrontation with Kuwait. (pause) As you know, I lived here for years and admire your extraordinary efforts to rebuild your country. We know you need funds. We understand that, and our opinion is that you should have the opportunity to rebuild your country. (pause) We can see that you have deployed massive numbers of troops in the south. Normally that would be none of our business, but when this happens in the context of your threats against Kuwait, then it would be reasonable for us to be concerned. For this reason, I have received an instruction to ask you, in the spirit of friendship – not confrontation – regarding your intentions: Why are your troops massed so very close to Kuwait's borders?

Saddam Hussein – As you know, for years now I have made every effort to reach a settlement on our dispute with Kuwait. There is to be a meeting in two days; I am prepared to give negotiations only this one more brief chance. (pause) When we (the Iraqis) meet (with the Kuwaitis) and we

see there is hope, then nothing will happen. But if we are unable to find a solution, then it will be natural that Iraq will not accept death.

U.S. Ambassador Glaspie – What solutions would be acceptable?

Saddam Hussein – If we could keep the whole of the Shatt al Arab – our strategic goal in our war with Iran – we will make concessions (to the Kuwaitis). But, if we are forced to choose between keeping half of the Shatt and the whole of Iraq (i.e., in Saddam's view, including Kuwait) then we will give up all of the Shatt to defend our claims on Kuwait to keep the whole of Iraq in the shape we wish it to be. (pause) What is the United States' opinion on this?

U.S. Ambassador Glaspie – We have no opinion on your Arab – Arab conflicts, such as your dispute with Kuwait. Secretary (of State James) Baker has directed me to emphasize the instruction, first given to Iraq in the 1960's, that the Kuwait issue is not associated with America. (Saddam smiles)

On August 2, 1990, Saddam's massed troops invade and occupy Kuwait. _____

Baghdad, September 2, 1990, U.S. Embassy

One month later, British journalists obtain the above tape and transcript of the Saddam – Glaspie meeting of July 29, 1990. Astounded, they confront Ms. Glaspie as she leaves the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.

Journalist 1 – Are the transcripts (holding them up) correct, Madam Ambassador? (Ambassador Glaspie does not respond)

Journalist 2 – You knew Saddam was going to invade (Kuwait) but you didn't warn him not to. You didn't tell him America would defend Kuwait. You told him the opposite – that America was not associated with Kuwait.

Journalist 1 – You encouraged this aggression – his invasion on. What were you thinking?

U.S. Ambassador Glaspie – Obviously, I didn't think, and nobody else did, that the Iraqis were going to take all of Kuwait.

Journalist 1 – You thought he was just going to take some of it? But, how could you? Saddam told you that, if negotiations failed, he would give up his Iran (Shatt al Arab waterway) goal for the Whole of Iraq, in the shape we wish it to be. You know that includes Kuwait, which the Iraqis have always viewed as an historic part of their country!

Journalist 1 – American green-lighted the invasion. At a minimum, you admit signaling Saddam that some aggression was okay – that the U.S. would not oppose a grab of the al-Rumeilah oil field, the disputed border strip and the Gulf Islands (including Bubiyan) – the territories claimed by Iraq?