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OUTGOING

BRIEF

[REDACTED]

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TOT: 180639Z MAR 91

[REDACTED]

BRIEF
TO: PRIORITY EUROPEAN BRIEF. 180639Z [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SUBJECT: HERewith SUPPORT CABLE FOR EUROPEAN BRIEF OCPAS
FOR MONDAY, 18 MARCH 1991

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[REDACTED]

FROM: DDI/O/CPAS

SUBJECT: EAST EUROPEAN BRIEF [REDACTED] FOR MONDAY, 18 MARCH
1991.

CONTENTS

1. IRAQ-KUWAIT: SITUATION REPORT [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: JAN 2001

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SHIA SHRINES DAMAGED

[REDACTED] BOTH OF THE SHIA SHRINES IN KARBALA HAVE BEEN DAMAGED DURING THE PAST WEEK IN THE FIGHTING BETWEEN REGIME AND OPPOSITION FORCES. [REDACTED]

COMMENT: THE DAMAGE TO THE SHRINES IS LIKELY TO PROVOKE HARSH CONDEMNATION FROM SHIAS IN IRAQ AND ABROAD. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] THE GOVERNMENT AND THE OPPOSITION WILL BLAME EACH OTHER. REGIME FORCES HAVE USED TANKS, ARTILLERY, MORTARS, AND HELICOPTER GUNSHIPS IN THEIR ASSAULT ON THE CITY, BUT THE REBELS ALSO HAVE SOME MORTARS AND POSSIBLY SOME TANKS AND LIGHT ARTILLERY. [REDACTED]

IRAN IS LIKELY TO INTENSIFY ITS CALLS FOR SADDAM HUSAYN'S RESIGNATION AND MAY BECOME MORE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE UNREST. TEHRAN HAS PUBLICLY WARNED BAGHDAD TO AVOID DAMAGING THE SHRINES, WHICH ARE AMONG THE HOLIEST SITES OF SHIA ISLAM. IF IRAN DECIDES TO GO BEYOND RHETORIC, IT MAY ANNOUNCE THAT IT WILL LET "VOLUNTEERS" FROM THE REVOLUTIONARY GUARD JOIN THE IRAQI RESISTANCE. TEHRAN PROBABLY WILL REFRAIN FROM OUTRIGHT INTERVENTION SO AS NOT TO RISK AN ACCIDENTAL CLASH WITH COALITION FORCES. [REDACTED]

SADDAM'S SPEECH HOLLOW

SADDAM'S PRERECORDED TELEVISION ADDRESS ON SATURDAY, HIS FIRST SINCE THE CEASE-FIRE, BLAMED IRAQ'S WIDESPREAD DOMESTIC DISTURBANCES ON FOREIGN AGENTS AND TRIED TO REVIVE HIS DWINDLING PUBLIC SUPPORT, AS WELL AS TO ASSUAGE PUBLIC ANGER OVER THE DEVASTATING CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR. THROUGHOUT THE RAMBLING SPEECH, SADDAM FREQUENTLY RATIONALIZED THE KUWAIT DEBACLE AND APPEALED TO IRAQI FEARS OF FOREIGN, PARTICULARLY IRANIAN AND WESTERN, DOMINATION. HE CLAIMED IRAQI SECURITY FORCES HAD CRUSHED THE SHIA REBELLION IN THE SOUTH, PREDICTED A GOVERNMENT VICTORY IN KURDISTAN, AND THREATENED HARSH REPRISALS FOR THE REBELS. SADDAM BLAMED THE LACK OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL REFORM ON FOREIGN AGGRESSION AND PLEDGED TO RESUME THE "REFORM" PROCESS HALTED LAST AUGUST, ESPECIALLY THE PROMULGATION OF A NEW CONSTITUTION THAT SUPPOSEDLY PROVIDES FOR A MULTIPARTY SYSTEM, A FREER PRESS, AND GREATER "POPULAR" POLITICAL PARTICIPATION. SADDAM ALSO ANNOUNCED THE FORMATION OF A NEW MINISTRY OF RECONSTRUCTION FOR THE RESTORATION OF BASIC SERVICES. [REDACTED]

COMMENT: SADDAM'S UNCHARACTERISTIC ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND MILITARY CHAOS IN IRAQ SHOWS HE VIEWS THE CURRENT SITUATION AS A SERIOUS THREAT. HIS RHETORIC PROBABLY WAS INTENDED PRIMARILY TO STIR UP IRAQI PATRIOTISM AND FAN HIS DIMINISHING DOMESTIC SUPPORT BUT ALSO TO WARN IRAN TO STOP

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SUPPORTING SHIA AND KURDISH INSURGENTS. DESPITE THE PROMISED REFORMS AND HINTS OF GREATER POWER SHARING, SADDAM WILL USE ALL MEANS TO KEEP HIS TIGHT PERSONAL HOLD ON POWER. THE REGIME ALMOST CERTAINLY WILL TRY TO MANIPULATE ANY REFORM PROCESS TO PRESERVE THE DOMINANCE OF THE BA'ATH PARTY, THE RULING TIKRITI CLAN, AND THE PERVASIVE SECURITY SERVICES. [REDACTED]

SOVIET VIEWS ON GULF SECURITY

IN REPORTING SECRETARY BAKER'S VISIT, TASS QUOTED GORBACHEV AS NOTING SIMILAR FEATURES IN CURRENT US AND SOVIET APPROACHES TO THE PERSIAN GULF. FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN CHURKIN OUTLINED THE SOVIETS' SIX POINTS FOR SECURITY IN THE REGION. WHICH, ACCORDING TO TASS, ASSIGN LOCAL STATES A KEY ROLE, AVOIDING THE CREATION OF BLOCK-TYPE GROUPINGS. CHURKIN ALSO SAID THE FOREIGN MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE REGION SHOULD BE REDUCED TO PRE-AUGUST LEVELS AND UN PEACEKEEPING FORCES SHOULD GUARANTEE THE PEACE. THE OTHER POINTS ENDORSED REGIONAL ARMS CONTROL, ECONOMIC COOPERATION, AND SETTLEMENT OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT. [REDACTED]

COMMENT: DESPITE GORBACHEV'S COMMENT, THE SIX POINTS PROBABLY WILL FORM THE BASIS OF MOSCOW'S ALTERNATIVES TO US PROPOSALS. THE SOVIETS PROBABLY SENT THEM TO A NUMBER OF ARAB COUNTRIES LAST WEEK BEFORE SECRETARY BAKER ARRIVED IN MOSCOW. THE POINTS SHOW THE SOVIETS STILL SEE SOME VALUE IN TRYING TO REPLACE THE US MILITARY PRESENCE WITH A REGIONAL SECURITY ENTITY UNDER THE UN, A MOVE THAT WOULD GIVE MOSCOW A GREATER ROLE. THE SOVIETS PROBABLY WILL SEND AN ENVOY TO THE MIDDLE EAST TO SEEK SUPPORT FOR THEIR IDEAS BUT WILL AVOID PORTRAYING THEM AS A SOVIET INITIATIVE UNTIL THEY GAUGE ARAB REACTION. [REDACTED]

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