

November 15, 1986

**Saddam Hussein and His Advisers Discussing
Reagan's Speech to the Nation on "Irangate"
(Iran-Contra) Revelations (Part 2)**

Citation:

"Saddam Hussein and His Advisers Discussing Reagan's Speech to the Nation on "Irangate" (Iran-Contra) Revelations (Part 2)", November 15, 1986, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Conflict Records Research Center, National Defense University, SH-SHTP-A-000-555
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/110092>

Summary:

This file contains a transcript of a meeting led by Saddam Hussein on Ronald Reagan's speech regarding US arms sales to Iran. The participants discuss the arms sales and their rationale, the Iran-Iraq War, the Israeli role in US policy, the Iranian intelligence services, and the state of Iraq's relations with other Arab countries.

Original Language:

Arabic

Contents:

Translation - English

“Saddam and His Advisers Discussing Reagan's Speech to the Nation on ‘Irangate’ (Iran-Contra) Revelations (Part 2)”



Document Date: 15 November 1986

CRRC Record Number: SH-SHTP-A-000-555

SH-SHTP-A-000-555

Key: UM = Unidentified Male Speaker**Translator comments, clarifications, and additions are italicized in brackets.****Classification markings and parentheses are from the original Arabic document.**

Saddam Hussein: *[Already speaking]* the actions of the White House and Israel in relation to selling weapons.

Tariq Aziz: Sir, we're saying *[reading a prepared statement to be released from the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs]*: "The President *[Reagan]* ignored the role of Israel and the deals they're making with the leaders of Tehran during his speech on Nov 13th. However, the American administration has full knowledge of Israel's goals in regard to the war that Iran is carrying out against Iraq, which contradicts the goals that President Reagan announced in his speech. The Zionist role in this operation is one of the reasons that causes our strong reaction and casts doubt on the authenticity of the announced goals and the secret communications with Tehran. Thus, there must be clear steps taken to remove any of these doubts. Thank you." So this is a way for expressing that the Zionist role -- *[Interrupted]*

Saddam Hussein: But now we want to confirm our doubts regarding the American interference in all these events.

Tariq Aziz: Yes, Sir.

Saddam Hussein: I mean between Zionism, with its known hostility toward Iraq and their well-known goals, in connection to America's behavior.

Tariq Aziz: *[Re-reading a sentence from the prepared statement mentioned above]* "The war that Iran is carrying out against Iraq, which contradicts the goals that President Reagan announced in his speech." What he announced were goals to get to a quick ending of the war.

Saddam Hussein: You find a style for it.

Taha Yassin: Yes. In fact, my opinion about this issue has to do with the intentions and what is behind this behavior—which when we look at them in detail there is not much to them, but they are indicators of dangerous intentions. Before Reagan's speech, during our meeting held last Wednesday, I considered the issue a conspiracy and I still do. Hearing what Reagan had to say, I could not imagine that he would speak this way. Some of the passages are really—I mean, the way he deals with the situation and his interference in the situation, in my opinion, serves our purposes and it is more for our benefit than it is against it. However, in my opinion, the American actions that came immediately after restoring relations between us and them—I would call these actions a conspiracy if they had happened before our relations were restored. But practically, the first contact *[between Iran and America]* came after restoring relations *[between Iraq and America]*, which indicates this is an intentional goal for this conspiracy. I mean, it was even intentional for our relationship to be restored after everyone calmed down and everything went back to normal -- *[Interrupted]*

Saddam Hussein: Abu Ziyad *[Tariq Aziz]*, take notes while you're in this meeting to help you write them *[Americans]* the letter.

SH-SHTP-A-000-555

Taha Yassin: So that is why, Mr. President, if you would allow me, I am now convinced that I can compare the American position in this situation to the Soviet position at the beginning [*of the war*]. The Soviet position at the beginning [*of the war*] has some history to it, and what's hidden in there is more than what's out in the open. However, the American position now, what is out in the open contradicts what is hidden. I mean it is not just different, starting from the restoration of relations until now. When we talk about the European and American position and how it has developed toward the war, we first put the U.S. and then everything else. This is how they are behaving now in a despicable way. I mean, Your Excellency knows that in international politics there's some space for not telling the truth, but differing 100% behind the scenes is something we should not do.

When I describe this as an intentional conspiracy, it is not so that we can fool ourselves. No, it is so that we may know how to behave calmly in front of our people, the U.S., the international community, Iran, and with regard to the war. But among ourselves and while we are here sitting together, we can truthfully ask what the current U.S. behavior means. I do not want to take it easily, not at all, so that I and others remain immune to such things. In my opinion, our people's immunity toward the situation with the Soviet Union could amount to 5% or 10% more than their immunity toward the European or American parties, and that's why we must put this situation in its right perspective. So -- [*Interrupted*][*Time Stamp 00:05:26*]

Saddam Hussein: The danger of the U.S. behavior, Comrade Taha, is that since 12 months, or 14 months, or 18 months and until now, it's even up at the President level that they're drawing the plan for exporting weapons to America.

Taha Yassin: Iran.

Saddam Hussein: I mean to Iran. So how much time do they need to come close to achieving their goals which Reagan has professed and to achieve the desired influence? Therefore, the war according to the U.S. desires will go as long as it is based on weapons. The new relationship—I forgot to say this, we want to write this, Comrade Tariq. As long as the key to this new relationship is weapons, then it is our right to remain suspicious that the U.S. will always consider the weapons issue the primary key to wielding influence and to getting close to the new regime, which Reagan set forth in his speech. Since weapons have become more valuable as the war drags on, then we have the right to be suspicious of the U.S. call to stop the war.

Tariq Aziz: You want this in the statement?

Saddam Hussein: Well, I want these details in the message. That now, we are suspicious of the U.S. calls in a practical way. Reagan said that we are getting closer to Iran through weapons. A nation like Iran needs weapons more when it is at war. So therefore, how many more years does Reagan need the war to continue so that he can get close to achieving the goals he has set and the influence he wants to get in Iran? This is the dangerous point in the conspiracy. If he is going to answer with, "No we do not need war for these goals," then it is our right to be suspicious of the way in which you want to stop the war. This is connected to our old suspicions and they've been always there. Comrade Tariq and I have always communicated about these details and how he should be careful and pay attention to every expression, especially the difference between stopping the war and ending the war, so you see how sensitive we are about this issue. We have

SH-SHTP-A-000-555

been monitoring the Americans and that is why I tell you that I am not surprised. However, the low standard of immoral behavior at this level is new. Otherwise, I swear I am not surprised because I have even noticed this among the nations in this region. There is a Zionist desire for the war to halt, but not to end; and this is true even among some of the people in the nations of this region.

Taha Yassin: Yes.

Saddam Hussein: Because they want Iran to keep asking for their friendship as long as the war continues. They want to continue dealing with Iranians with some measure of flexibility, and they want Iraq to continue dealing with them with a measure of flexibility at the expense of our principles. This goes for the Western nations and the nations of this region. They want some of the leaders, who they created illegitimately in this region, to remain outstanding and influential, which happens as long as Iran fears that Iraq would return to war and Iraq fears that Iran would return to war. That is what the conspiracy is currently about, to cease fire and negotiate. Because now our lands are in the hands of Iran and we keep negotiating while our lands remain with Iran, and the U.S. keeps creating fear in the Iranians. Consequently, weapons will remain as the main ingredient that would give Reagan the desired influence on Iran and bring him closer, as long as the war halts without truly ending. The war must either continue or stop without ending for Reagan to get to the desired level of influence in Iran, according to his speech. But this situation, in all cases, will not be at the expense of Iraq and it can only be *[allowed]* as a conspiracy against Iraq. What would a conspiracy look like? The continuation of the war and the blood spill—that is a conspiracy. And stopping the war while maintaining a state of war is also a conspiracy. *[Time Stamp 00:11:05]* Go ahead, Comrade Taha.

Taha Yassin: Mr. President, concerning the essence of the issue, I can compare this to the Soviet position at the beginning of the war, which was not supplying us with weapons. That was a bad and hostile situation. However, there is a well known history behind this, and there were many connected reasons. They were explaining in their media that there is no reason for the war and that Iraq wanted the war. However, in our situation with America, we restored diplomatic relations. There were calls for the war to end and that they *[Americans]* know Iraq wants peace, while Iran is a terrorist state, which is a fact and so on. Thus, there are differences in the behavior and the essence of the issues, which can be compared between the two situations. Especially since this one came after six years, while the previous case came during a period of uncertainty despite the history between us and the Soviet Union before the war since 1977. That first year of the war a lot of the Arabs and our allies did not consider the war something we started and that we were doing what we had to do by attacking in a large scale. This is in addition to hostile parties' positions, and so forth. However, now after six years comes this type of behavior from America so there is a great difference. For that reason, I label it a conspiracy.

Mr. President, I read between the lines of Reagan's speech an additional thing that gives marginal importance to Iran over Iraq. This means he is ready to give areas from Iraq to Iran in order to win over the new leaders *[of Iran]*. He was focusing on how important Iran is economically, and I don't know what.

Tariq Aziz: *[Inaudible]*

SH-SHTP-A-000-555

Taha Yassin: That's okay. I want to get to the conclusion about the American behavior and its intentions that are coming up now—not from some government branch, but directly from the White House so that's it! Even when the Secretary of State said, "I do not know about this" [*Irangate*], Regan responded, "No he is lying. I told all my secretaries and advisors." They are liars. Looks like the Secretary of State did not think that Reagan would rush back to respond, so it seems that they are under tremendous pressure, or else why would he rush to respond? He [*Secretary of State*] was acting like this is strange and that he would not accept this situation—that was his statement, Shultz's [*George Shultz, U.S. Secretary of State in 1986*].

So, there's a big focus in his speech on the importance of Iran which indeed adds something new to how deep the conspiracy is. Because if he were selling weapons to Iran just as a way to renew the connection and return a couple of hostages, then what would happen if he got influence inside Iran? He needs to offer them something, and this something has to be from Iraq so that the new leadership in Iran can look strong and popular for achieving something in Iraq. This will be a clear continuation of what Your Excellency always mentions in regard to the issue of a ceasefire. The ceasefire means that there will be parts of our land in Iran's hand, which is very important economically and strategically, as well as many thousands of POWs that we have, and so forth. Mr. President, I see that regarding our public response which you were just talking about and developing, especially in some of the points because the developments are tied to his speech. I believe that even in the part concerning terrorism, he [*Reagan*] says that if people doubt our efforts in fighting terrorism, they can ask Gadhafi. This is such a stupid point, if I may say so. [*Time Stamp 00:15:48*]

Saddam Hussein: I mean, we now also doubt America's behavior toward Gadhafi.

Taha Yassin: Yes [*terrorism*] is not the real cause, this is not the cause.

Saddam Hussein: It is not the real cause. There are reasons that are different from the publicly announced reasons, which have become apparent to us. Meaning, there are reasons other than the declared reasons, not just terrorism.

Taha Yassin: Yes, because we know that the role Iran plays in terrorism is larger than that of Libya's role.

Saddam Hussein: Yes, it plays a greater role in terrorism.

Taha Yassin: At least the Libyan man denies he is a terrorist while doing it. But the Iranian man depends on terrorism as an ideology and spreading terror in order to export what is called -- [*Interrupted*]

Sa'doun Hummadi: Their terrorism relates to America specifically!

Taha Yassin: It is related to America specifically, so why would they strike the poor Libyans while they go beg the Iranians and give them weapons? We should say this in public, to be honest. I don't know, what do you think?

[*Several people in the background sound like they are objecting to Taha's suggestion*]

SH-SHTP-A-000-555

Taha Yassin: Well, we won't be defending Libya, but we doubt that they are against terrorism because this affects Europe too.

Tariq Aziz: No, we will do it in other ways.

Taha Yassin: I do not know. The important thing is that I -- *[Interrupted]*

Saddam Hussein: We should not put distortions *[in the statement]*. I mean, we'd lose the focus. But maybe we can say it in the media in one of many ways at a later, determined time.

Taha Yassin: Honestly, Mr. President, I support developing this point but at the same time I do not know how much we should mention our concerns and analysis in our message to the American administration now. Should it all be at the same time? Or should we somehow slowly expand on the public record and also wait? If they us explanations, wouldn't we accept them? Let us see what they have to say, maybe they have something worse, or maybe they will say something we haven't mentioned.

Saddam Hussein: I prefer that we do it before their explanations.

Tariq Aziz: Their excuses will be even worse than their actions.

Taha Yassin: I don't know. Would it be beneficial for the Americans to know all of our analysis and thinking? I would give a priority to the subject of asserting the connection of Iranian entities and Iranian politics with America. Because, Mr. President, those *[Iranian]* regime advocates identify themselves by hatred for America. So now that this issue has been revealed, I think that talking about it in the media and the opposition media will not strengthen the values of the Iranian people. On the contrary, that nation has built its strategy upon its animosity to the Great Satan, so once the details of this relationship come out then this issue will tear apart their domestic situation.

As for Iraq, we will explain the aspects of this issue but we will not make a big deal out of it as it will alter the balance of the war. No, we will add a hint of doubt. Meaning, we'll make it about Iran's leaders and how they claim that they are against America and Zionism. However, since the first year of war until now there is more evidence day after day about their relations with Zionism and America. We can clearly see the manner of it in the dialogue and secret communication, and so forth. This improves the standing of our nation, asserts that it is on the right path, is independent, and deals with powerful nations with a high measure of equality which serves its own interests. We should not magnify the issue in a way that these weapons will develop Iran's capabilities, which may affect us militarily. I personally think that this is not in our interest. Our talk should be political by ruining Iran's image and deepening this distortion more than giving weight to the amount of American aid, which will affect the balance of the war. In fact, I am with Dr. Sa'doun on this subject, in regard to the Arab countries which we believe enjoy friendly relations with America more than some other countries and even explain --
[Interrupted]

Saddam Hussein: The framework and the subject.

[Time Stamp 00:20:20]

SH-SHTP-A-000-555

Taha Yassin: For the others who are not involved with this issue, *[we should]* clarify this issue and reassure them. I see this as very important. But, Mr. President, concerning the Soviet Union and the discussion on this subject, should we have a discussion with them or should we just issue this statement on what will happen? I don't know.

Saddam Hussein: No, we do not need to campaign with the communist nations.

Taha Yassin: No, we do not need to talk, because in my opinion -- *[Interrupted]*

Saddam Hussein: In my opinion, we should campaign with some European and Arab countries more than with the communist nations, because some people would interpret that wrongly.

Taha Yassin: Yes, it would be interpreted as something different than it is. However, for example, if I were to travel to Bulgaria or to Czechoslovakia tomorrow and began a discussion -- *[Interrupted]*

Saddam Hussein: But if they ask for an explanation from us -- *[Interrupted]*

Taha Yassin: If they ask for a discussion, we would say -- *[Interrupted]*

Saddam Hussein: When you go travelling to them in an ordinary diplomatic mission, then yes, we can say the same analysis.

Taha Yassin: Yes, we would say this but not in an explicit mission to discuss this issue. It can actually happen in a month or two. We will be able to meet them and we can talk about it in an unplanned way which will serve the same purpose. Thank you, Sir.

Saddam Hussein: Comrade Adnan.

Adnan: Sir, it's been 18 months going back and forth about the signals that the American president gave in 1983 -- *[Interrupted]*

Saddam Hussein: Khamenei does not consider the intelligence agency as part of the government. I mean they don't consider intelligence an official authority. *[Laughing]*

Adnan: They say it does not belong to any official in the government.

Saddam Hussein: So the Iranians will say, "Let the Americans say who they contacted!" But the Americans will not say it because there are so many things that they do not want to say. Despite that the intelligence agency is inside Iran, not outside of Iran *[Laughing]*. It is an official body of the Iranian regime apparatus and it is a political organization. I mean, it is a political intelligence tool and that's how the *[Iranian]* intelligence agency describes its mission, composition, goals, and ways. Such an apparatus does not usually work without an order from the supreme political authority, unless each body in Iran operates as it wishes—then it is another issue. Comrade Latif *[Minister of Culture and Media]* should take notes about this.

Taha Yassin: Especially in Iran because they've made it as a ministry.

Saddam Hussein: Yes. Yes, Comrade Adnan.

SH-SHTP-A-000-555

Adnan: Mr. President, I doubt that the issue started with the exchange to free the hostages because the American president is clearly saying in his speech that this issue started after Khomeini came to power. The situation happened after Khomeini came to power and in the presence of Khomeini, I mean, even from an ethical side when the President talks he is being heard by the whole world, including Khomeini himself hearing it. So it is a big deal. Now if we are explaining the sudden blow up of this issue -- *[Interrupted]*

Saddam Hussein: It seems like Khomeini is not going to last because they are not caring much about Khomeini's response.

Adnan: So, Mr. President, they ended the issue by saying that the first shipment was all defensive weapons and military spare parts. Your Excellency talked about every little detail regarding the way they behave. Israel officially said that two or three times they transferred Stinger *[portable surface to air]* missiles out of 150 missiles originally agreed upon. This goes along with what the American president was saying about the defensive. Today or yesterday, I don't know if it was you, Sir, or one of the comrades, someone told me that the Israelis announced that they did all this under an American umbrella *[agreement]*.

Tariq Aziz: They always say it.

Adnan: Right?

Tariq Aziz: Sharon said it about two years ago. He said that all the weapons we sold to Iran were done with an American approval.

Adnan: I think the Israelis are more precise than the Americans.

Tariq Aziz: Yes, that was when Sharon was the Minister of Defense.

[Time Stamp 00:25:10]

Adnan: Mr. President, in my opinion, they *[Israelis and Americans]* have agreed on a full scenario ready now for a post-Khomeini era and the future of their agenda in Iran. If the Americans were true to what they are saying now that they want to stop this war and the spilling of blood to look for a peaceful resolution that preserves the sovereignty of both countries, then I would like to mention two things. One is the question that Your Excellency raised in our last meeting, which is that maybe the Americans are misinterpreting our flexibility in the international community when we say yes to every peaceful resolution and every logical step coming from anywhere.

Saddam Hussein: Dr. Sa'doun talked about this and I said yes, maybe they are misinterpreting us.

Adnan: So, based on this Mr. President -- *[Interrupted]*

Saddam Hussein: Because when we deal and practice politics, they *[international peace mediators]* come here asking us to publicly say yes because the Iranians are insane and stubborn idiots. So this is what always happens.

SH-SHTP-A-000-555

Adnan: So, Mr. President, I think they agree even on the manner of ending the war because the suggestions in the American president's speech are much closer to the Iranian point of view than to the Iraqi point of view. The proof is when he says, "In this meaningless conflict we can help achieve a ceasefire," not ending the war [*inaudible, jet plane flying overhead creating noise in the background*] which matches Your Excellency's analysis that they want a ceasefire without going back to the original borders as they were. [*Inaudible*]

Adnan: This is clearly approaching the Iranian position while they [*Americans*] are totally distancing themselves from the Iraqi interest. Mr. President, we can conclude from what is written by his [*Reagan*] advisors who went back and forth. Mr. President, in my opinion, this position is more than just based on the balance of power or the military balance. In my opinion, Mr. President, this position may not be at the level of conspiring to attack Iraq, but they want the war to end through sweet-talking and caring for Iran at the expense of Iraq. They are convinced that Iraq is not easy to deal with, as Your Excellency mentioned, so they are satisfying Iran and focusing on it because maybe they have some other hidden arrangements and that's why this is happening.

Saddam Hussein: I mean this is a speech from the head of a state [*Reagan*] talking about two sides in a military conflict. It is true that the issue, in terms of the scandal, is not related to both of them [*Iraq and Iran*], but in terms of the situation they are both related to a war against each other. So when he [*Reagan*] gives more importance to a certain party [*Iran*], it means that he is ready to act at the expense of the other party. This is clear!

Taha Yassin: Because they are not friends of Iraq. They are not friends originally.

Saddam Hussein: Because he is talking while the war is going on, the two parties are clashing, and the subject of the issue is about weapons delivered to the other party. He gave a strategic analysis about the importance of the other party for the American interest. So this is clear when he did not talk about the importance of the other party, not in a regional manner, or regarding a security balance, or anything else. If he did not talk about the war, just this issue [*Irangate*], then it would have been okay. But he also said that we want to stop the war, and so on. That's fine, but the war is between two parties! When he ignores talking about the other party and its importance, then this indicates he may agree to sacrifice that party at the expense of the other party.

Taha Yassin: This is clear.

Adnan: As for the subject of influence that he talked about, Your Excellency elaborated on it so I won't talk about it because it is clear. The creation of influence and deepening it inside means they are interfering in the war, and the issue of supplying weapons will continue in other ways.

Saddam Hussein: Of course.

[*Time Stamp 00:30:18*]

Adnan: They didn't even try to cover it up. Iraq, Sir, has been fighting for four years inside its sovereign territories because Iranians are in it. For four years, Iran has been attacking aggressively, while Iraq is defending. Iraq responds to all peace calls, while Iran is stubborn.

SH-SHTP-A-000-555

Taha Yassin: Yes, yet he [*Reagan*] says we're giving them [*Iranians*] defensive weapons.

Adnan: Why is he giving them defensive weapons? Who is the one on the defensive line?

Saddam Hussein: I mean, we deserve these defensive weapons more.

Taha Yassin: Yes, we deserve it more.

Saddam Hussein: [*Laughing*] Right? I mean, whoever talks like this should give it to his brothers who need it first. He should support his brothers on the defense, not his bothers on the offense. [*Laughing*]

Taha Yassin: Iranians are saying they are attacking, not defending.

Saddam Hussein: It's because they were brothers with the Iranians before us.

Tariq Aziz: One of his [*Reagan*] friends told him that Goldwater [*Barry Goldwater, U.S. Senator*]. He [*Goldwater*] said if we're giving weapons then it should be for Iraq. [*Laughing*]

Adnan: This is politics, Mr. President. First, they [*Americans*] were angry at them [*Iranians*] because of the hostages at the embassy and until now, while we had good relations with them [*Americans*] for about two years now -- [*Interrupted*]

Saddam Hussein: It's Zionism, Comrade Ali. Zionism. They know all the talk of the Ayatollahs. They [*Zionists*] know where it starts and where it leads, and they know who the real danger is to them. [*Saddam is suggesting that Zionists know Iran is just bluffing about being hostile to Israel and that Iraq is the real danger*]

Taha Yassin: Correct.

Adnan: So it is clear, Mr. President. But God willing, we will not be easy to get rid of and we will prepare our people and leaders for this.

Saddam Hussein: It is Zionism.

Adnan: During the first National Party Convention, I said something that Comrade Tariq did not agree on.

[*Recording is blank from 00:32:19 to 00:32:34*]

Tariq Aziz: [*Already speaking*] stable relations with the West and the East as well, because its essence contradicts Western and Eastern values.

Adnan: I do not know it this way, Mr. President. The simplest thing, when Americans meet Iranians, the Iranians give out copies of the *Quran*, even though the Americans do not believe in it.

Saddam Hussein: The rich countries of the third world are mentally closer to the West when they are at a neutral point of view—they are closer to the West than the East. I mean, not only under these conditions, but for many other reasons.

SH-SHTP-A-000-555

Adnan: *[Inaudible]*

Saddam Hussein: These are conflicts, Comrade Adnan.

Saddam Hussein: I mean those who held the hostages are something different than those who struck the Tudah Party *[Iranian Communist Party]*. I mean, inside Iran, there are many things and unbalanced forces. Iran from now on, for the coming 20 years, will keep fighting within itself.

Taha Yassin: Correct, not even one *[Iranian politician]* is looking for something beneficial to Iran.

Adnan: Sir, if I may say, in conclusion, the speech of the American President *[inaudible]* logically, and he has nothing more to say. If we apply this American talk to the next era, then their agenda will be something influenced by many parties, and friends and allies of America, and Iran. In my opinion, Mr. President, there is a lot more that America does not want us to realize, but the Americans are psychologically and mentally ready in their leadership regarding a peaceful resolution at the expense of Iraq, not Iran.

Saddam Hussein: True.

Adnan: Thank you, Sir.

Saddam Hussein: Yes, Comrade Abdel Ghani. Comrade Hassan will be after him.

[Time Stamp 00:35:11]

Abdel Ghani: Yes, Sir. I want to talk about something that Your Excellency mentioned a while ago before this issue about selling weapons. The American President said that 18 months ago they started a concentrated diplomatic effort and during this time period, Sir – *[Interrupted]*

Saddam Hussein: If he told us that it took them *[Americans]* a month to send *[the Iranians]* one cargo plane then we would be worried, but it took 18 months *[laughing]* to send one cargo plane! So it will take a long time before it will affect the war.

Tariq Aziz: If it has been eighteen months, then that means they started around January of last year!

Saddam Hussein: No, we are just joking about it! If it took 18 months to send them only one cargo plane and they still haven't achieved anything, how long would it take them to send all of what they agreed on?!

Tariq Aziz: He meant everything that they sent is worth one thing, which is the hostage. The first dispatch went in September 1985 in return for the first hostage released last year.

Taha Yassin: This is separate from the dispatches coming from the Jews *[Israel]*.

Tariq Aziz: Of course this is different from the ones coming from Israel. This is from America.

SH-SHTP-A-000-555

Adnan: Sir, what he [*Reagan*] said is something that you've mentioned before. They sent a cargo plane with spare parts for radars, air-to-air missile systems, and surface-to-air missile systems. So they are also important parts, Sir.

Taha Yassin: Of course.

Adnan: I mean, things like valves, transistors, screws, brakes, and harnesses for airplanes.

Tariq Aziz: [*Inaudible*]

Adnan: It is true that it is not an airplane Mr. President, but it helps them [*Iranians*] maintain airplanes for like 2 years.

Tariq Aziz: The Israeli shipments, according to news reporters, were huge. So the Americans would tell the Iranians, "Whatever you need from us, you can buy it from Israel and you can buy all kinds of sophisticated weapons from them!" So the American shipments were in small boxes.

[*Another jet plane passing*]

Adnan: Yes, they're small boxes—maybe ten, with each weighing no more than two kilos.

Saddam Hussein: Yes.

Abdel Ghani: In this same period of selling weapons, we were in Al-Faw. Your Excellency has previously mentioned in one of your analyses about the American support in logistics and how they tried to trick us, all in the same 18 month period, as we know now. There is a signal in this speech about the American decision makers. We will be greatly mistaken if we think that American decision-making is limited to their president and a few of his secretaries. The American intelligence [*apparatus*] is a big decision-maker in America. Thus, I will mention again what Comrade Tariq said after coming back from the United Nations and meeting a couple of American officials. I say that all the American decision-makers have participated in this issue of standing against Iraq for Iran. We don't have to distinguish between the head of the American intelligence and the Secretary of State, because they are all decision-makers and it is clear how they are affected by Zionism in this regard. Regarding Reagan's speech, I do not think that generally -- [*Interrupted*]

Tariq Aziz: I agree with Comrade Abdel Ghani about this last point, Mr. President.

Abdel Ghani: Sir, what I want to say is that sometimes we think there is one source, for example, to have a conversation regarding Iraq, and sometimes we think that there are currently many people in American decision-making having discussions with the American president about helping Iran against Iraq. However, I think that the decision-making in America is unitary -- [*Interrupted*]

Tariq Aziz: I did not get what you said about when I got back from America.

Abdel Ghani: Yes. What happened at the time after Comrade Tariq held talks with the Americans is that some of them signaled that they don't know about the weapons deal or

SH-SHTP-A-000-555

something like that. I don't remember exactly, Sir—the talks about a weapons deal, or an American position about something -- *[Interrupted]*

[Time Stamp 00:40:07]

Saddam Hussein: We did not talk with the Americans about them supplying weapons to Israel, I mean Iran.

Taha Yassin: They would have said no.

Saddam Hussein: But some of their *[American]* allies did. We told them that the Iranian military machine had some Western components and we had information that some allies were providing Iran with these components. They *[Americans]* said we don't know, maybe it happened.

Adnan: They said we don't know anything about it.

Saddam Hussein: Yes.

Tariq Aziz: The Americans were telling us that they are leading a campaign against providing Iran with weapons.

Abdel Ghani: It was a large deception campaign in this case regarding what happened.

Saddam Hussein: No, this was not a deception campaign, but a plan to isolate Iran from the weapons sources so that they *[Iranians]* would agree upon an American deal that would have a strong affect to get favorable terms. That's it.

Tariq Aziz: Yes, because this is their situation.

Abdel Ghani: What I want to say, Sir, is that American decision-making is all united and affected by Zionism. Regarding the Arab situation, I think that the Arab Gulf countries will have a reaction after Reagan's speech, so we need to encourage them as you said, Sir. Regarding Europe, I think that there was an indication in Reagan's speech that he denied Iran's relation to terrorism.

Saddam Hussein: Let your people at the news agency announce that this afternoon there will be an official statement from Iraq regarding the American position about the new situation, so that the news agency will help prepare the people psychologically.

Abdel Ghani: On the other side, Sir, Reagan is denying that Iran is involved -- *[Interrupted]*

Saddam Hussein: You can go out of the meeting to let them *[the news agency]* know and then come back.

Latif Jasim: Yes, Sir.

Saddam Hussein: *[Inaudible]* Yes, Comrade Abel Ghani.

SH-SHTP-A-000-555

Abdel Ghani: The American President is making Iran look innocent about getting involved in terrorism in European countries, while all the European nations are issuing continuous statements saying that Iran is an obvious source of terrorism in the world. I think that this is important to mention in any communication with them. Regarding our internal situation, I think, Sir, that it is important for us not to magnify the issue internally in regard to the American weapons and to keep mentioning it. We should have an approach toward building our nation and empowering our efforts in mobilization, while we continue it without exhausting these efforts with the current news.

Saddam Hussein: I mean, when the American weapon was at its peak in America, I mean Iran, we were able to destroy it and we turned it into garbage. That was when our Air Force was only a third or a fourth of what we have now. We were able to destroy all these *[American]* weapons, so what else can they do now with these weapons?

Abdel Ghani: Regarding our internal situation, I think we should only pay attention to mass mobilization in a serious and continuous manner in this direction. Thank you, Sir.

Tariq Aziz: Sir, I have a remark regarding this issue about the weapons. I mean, regarding our internal situation, when the people ask us, "What is going to happen if Iran comes at us with U.S.-made weapons?" we should tell them that, These American weapons, just as Mr. President said, have been in use for 18 months now."

Saddam Hussein: It is there.

[Several people talking at the same time]

Tariq Aziz: So this won't be a big game-changing factor. It is not something surprising. Two weeks ago -- *[Interrupted]*

Saddam Hussein: When they *[Iranians]* had all kinds of American weapons there, Iran had 600 warplanes and we were able to destroy them. All their missiles were working, yet what did it do to us? Huh?

Tariq Aziz: 550-600 warplanes.

Taha Yassin: Half of them were shot down.

Adnan: In all cases, they won't have as much *[American weapons]* as they did back then.

Sa'doun Hummadi: About the Iranian warplanes, they used to come during Friday's prayers.

Saddam Hussein: *[Laughing]*

Sa'doun Hummadi: So that they could be heard by more people leaving Friday prayers. Yet we destroyed them even more.

[Time Stamp 00:45:08]

Saddam Hussein: Yes, Comrade Hassan.

SH-SHTP-A-000-555

Hassan: Thank you, Sir. Sir, in the previous meeting, you pointed out that America's position is conspiratorial, and that the conspiracy has continued since the start of the Iranian aggression by supplying weapons to Iran from different sources up until America's current position, which is the last episode of this conspiracy before the end of the war. We also pointed out in our talk to the other countries which supply Iran with weapons, to keep the war going, which is a part of the conspiracy. If they really want to stop the war, then these countries should stop providing Iran with weapons. Sir, through reading Reagan's letter, there is a complete and obvious bias toward Iran. It seems like Reagan's announcement in this letter is—in addition to being under the American public pressure—I think that he wants to continue this approach because he said that, “Our goals were and will always be to restore our relations with Iran.” So what they offered in terms of weapons is the start of political bribery to Iran to get influence inside Iran. Therefore, Sir, I also think that this letter is also a form of terrorism against the region, especially the Gulf countries. Perhaps after these countries become aware of America's position, they might show consent or be worried or reluctant or passive toward Iraq. Thus, I think that we should hurry to mobilize a quick diplomatic effort to stop this situation at a certain point so that these Gulf countries understand Iraq's position and that we continue to expose America's position.

Sir, at the moment we need, just as Dr. Sa'doun said, a clear action plan to expose the American scandal on the international level and use all of our Arab outreach, including our organizations, our friends, and the writers in Europe from our European friends and in America, in addition to the Arab communities abroad, as Your Excellency mentioned, to expose America and sway public opinion against America's policy, especially about this issue. Thank you, Sir.

Saddam Hussein: So let's continue this way, we'll do a letter and a statement. In this issue, regardless of how enthusiastic we are, we have to deal with it ultimately in a confident, calm manner. Because we are all humans and when an event is close and quick to us and isolated from many other things, it always leads the speakers and the decision-makers to a situation that we have to be calm about so that we can react properly and take things within the proper perspective. Let's talk about what is new in the American policy. I mean, personally, I was never convinced, not even for one day, that America is not providing Iran with weapons. Not even one day, never. Because we can see the Iranian weapons in action in front of us, so would I be convinced by what Rafsanjani is saying about Iran manufacturing missiles and I don't what?! It is not something invisible to us. We can see all that because we've been dealing with them for more than seven years now and we know these things, just like Iran will never be convinced that the Soviet Union is not providing weapons to Iraq.

[Time Stamp 00:50:00]

Tariq Aziz: You were never convinced of the information we tell you.

Saddam Hussein: Never, because continuously -- *[Interrupted]*

Tariq Aziz: You were the person with the most *[doubts]*—I even sometimes thought that your doubts were unreasonable.

Saddam Hussein: I mean why did I say recently that I doubt the Americans? I mean, in the last three or four years of the war. In the beginning of the war it was less but within six months of the

SH-SHTP-A-000-555

war, I started growing more and more suspicious because there were some things that were very obvious. What we can't hear from them, we can feel it from the general situation in the region as a whole. So the Americans, my comrades, were supplying the Iranians with weapons before now. The new thing is what Comrade Tariq said, that the President of the White House comes out to explain the deal, because now the price of the deal became higher. Okay then, why did he as the President of the White House get into this situation? He got into it for the following considerations: first, Iran is in a position of weakness and not of strength, just as Comrade Tariq said. Second, a post- Khomeini Iran is coming soon. I mean, Khomeini will not live for a thousand years. He is 87-years-old at the moment. Give him three more years to live—wouldn't this be soon? He will soon be 90. So practically, at the moment, Khomeini is becoming an outsider in decision-making. I mean, the decision-maker today, and the one making Khomeini's decision regarding vital, applicable, and practical daily decisions, is his son Ahmad—not Khomeini himself.

Taha Yassin: True.

Saddam Hussein: The vital aspect of Khomeini's character as a leader in the political decision-making is over. So when he sees something happening that he doesn't like, wouldn't he have the capability to influence it? The answer is yes, he still has the ability to influence decision-making, but his influence is general and not in the details. You all have been state officials for over 18 years now and know how influential a person can be if all he does is preach. Now let's take me, your Comrade Saddam Hussein, as an example. If he [*Saddam*] would only come to sit in a meeting just to preach and then leave the meeting, what would be the result? Consequently -- [*Interrupted*]

Tariq Aziz: We will not do what he [*Saddam*] says!

Saddam Hussein: Consequently, the decision maker is each individual within his own sector [*are of responsibility*] and you won't be able to even come up with a group decision. Because as long as the main individual is not doing his role in the decision-making to clear up the ideas, then no decisions will be made. There won't be any decisions, but actions within each one's sector [*responsibility*].

Taha Yassin: The area of acting alone will increase.

Saddam Hussein: Meaning that everyone will act within their ministry, within their sector, within their party, and within their organization, and so forth.

Tariq Aziz: He [*Khomeini*] was like a big hat on their heads -- [*Interrupted*]

Saddam Hussein: So Khomeini has been like this from the very first day he came to power. He is a preacher, not a decision-maker. He won't sit to talk and discuss agriculture to come up with decisions for the industry, or make decisions for the defense, and so on. He is a preacher. He is a preacher, and as he grows old he gets more isolated from the daily happenings and less influential in decision making [*Jet plane noise in the background*]. He just communicates every now and then with four or five people who show him on TV like you're seeing him now. So Khomeini is now more of a legacy. He only influences public opinion against what he sees as wrong according to his opinion. He also has influence as a preacher, not as a practical leader—he

SH-SHTP-A-000-555

does not have this ability. Currently, decisions are in the hands of his son and Rafsanjani, in a mutual alliance. The others have influence within their own sector and have their say in it, and so forth. Yet their influence and authority is not comparable to the influence of Ahmed Rafsanjani, pardon me, I mean Ahmed Khomeini and Rafsanjani. Thus the post-Khomeini era is coming soon. We have taken this era into account, and the Soviets work on that basis too, and so do the Americans—because as a superpower—how can they not work based on it? They must take it into account. Thus, what happened is not surprising but its manner is surprising.

[Time Stamp 00:55:31]

Saddam Hussein: Our fear is that Americans in particular, and with their allies, conspire at the expense of Iraq. I mean, they will pay for the Iranian stubbornness at the cost of Iraq's sovereignty, and this has always been on my mind since the war started and up to this day. It has always been on my mind, and we are careful about it down to the detail. Even with the Islamic Committee, Comrade Tariq may have noticed that I was extra sensitive about it and I told him to kill their efforts because it's a conspiring committee to stop the war in exchange for giving something to Iran at our expense. I told him to kill the committee's efforts because Americans were involved in it as well.

Taha Yassin: Yes, they had influence in it too.

Saddam Hussein: That was a while ago, like a year or a year and a half ago. He [Tariq] killed their efforts in the Fes [Moroccan City] Conference. Yet again, they came up with these ridiculous conspiratorial decisions that we all know.

Tariq Aziz: That was their last meeting, like a couple of months ago.

Saddam Hussein: So, there is nothing new and we shouldn't overreact. It's true that the Gulf countries are friendly with America in a manner of sharing ideas to keep up good relations, according to the common political principles of our time, but don't think that the Gulf countries are not cautious with America.

Taha Yassin: Of course not.

Saddam Hussein: Don't think something like that. We also should not think that the Gulf countries have no ability to make decisions independent of America to some extent when they are not afraid of America and whenever they can clash with America. No, they also have the ability to think and analyze. In any case, the Gulf countries are not willing to ignore the fact that Iraq is a counter balance for Iran and Syria, while Syria and Iran also keep Iraq in balance. They are not ready to ignore this fact, all of them from Dubai to Saudi. They all have this situation under consideration, so they will always have this situation in their minds and will not be moved away by any American behavior. But such behavior can partially influence this situation in the same manner we've been talking about, which is the Iranian stubbornness that may be paid for by Iraq's sovereignty, or Iraq's interest, or both.

Also, this has always been the American policy. Their president said that the issue was all about weapons while we [Iraqis] are at war with Iran. But do you think that they, Americans, will be closer to the desired influence inside Iran if Iraq collapses? You, as analysts or as outsiders, do

SH-SHTP-A-000-555

you think a weaker Iraq will get the Americans closer and make the weapons issue more important for Iran? Or will that happen with a strong Iraq?

Taha Yassin: A strong Iraq, of course.

Adnan: A strong Iraq so that Iran will not take it over.

Saddam Hussein: I say they'd prefer a mildly strong Iraq to a weak Iraq, if I was in the American position regarding the weapons issue to gain influence inside Iran according to a future vision about the relations with Iran. This is how I see things as an analyst. *[Time Stamp: 59:43]* So the sure thing is that we must ask ourselves to what extent the Soviets believe that extending the war would give them influence inside Iran or inside Iraq? How much do the Americans believe that extending the war will give them influence inside Iraq or inside Iran? This question has always been asked and it is not new to us. I told that Soviet man who is a friend of the Arabs and always comes here, or let's say he is the man who understands Arabs more than others—what is his name?

Tariq Aziz: Primakov *[Yevgeny Primakov, a former Soviet politician and diplomat]*

[Time Stamp 01:00:20]

Saddam Hussein: Primakov. I told him, "You say that all you want is to end the war. So tell me specifically, wouldn't this create an Iran that is free to be against you in Afghanistan and the other Islamic Republics of the Soviet Union? How are you going to solve that?" If the war stops, Iran will not be busy. He said, "Of course this is a practical and legitimate question, but we calculate the total cost and see that it is better to stop the war than to continue it." So, the man did not deny it. He did not deny it and he didn't say that they never think like that, or that this is not their principle, and so forth. He didn't deny it because he knew that he was talking to someone who understands these things. This discussion did not occur in 1969, it took place, I think, in 1983 or 1984.

Then the Kuwaiti Minister of Finance *[Abdulrahman Salem Al-Atiqi]* came here, the one who the Kuwaitis and the Syrians wanted to kill. He came here and I told him to send my greetings to Sheik Jabber *[the Kuwaiti ruler]* and tell him that I need Kuwait to solve a problem for me which I still have not discussed with my command. I really had not talked about it with you yet. I told him, "We understand why the Americans would not provide certain weapons to Jordan, because Jordan is on the border with Israel. We also understand why they will not provide certain weapons to Iraq, because Iraq can harm Israel if any other country on its geographic border goes to war with Israel, and Iraq is convinced about it. But, what I don't understand is why the U.S. would not give you weapons because who will you harm? You cannot harm Israel, and it is well-known that you are not a threat to the region due to your size and capabilities." I wasn't embarrassed to tell him that, and I said it very well. He said, "Why are you asking?" I told him that, "I am confused as to why the US refuses to give the Kuwaitis weapons."

Tariq Aziz: They can do it.

Saddam Hussein: At that time, I gave him the name of a specific weapon. I told him that such things do not make me feel comfortable about the American behavior. Does this mean that the

SH-SHTP-A-000-555

Americans intend for Kuwait to be weak in the face of Iranian threats and the Iranian danger? Do they want to corner Kuwait in a danger zone with Iran to force Kuwait to give more concessions to the Americans? So, as you see, my mind never stops thinking and it is mulling even over the little things and taking everything into account. Of course I am convinced with what the man said that they [*Americans*] believe the Kuwaitis have a special psychological effect, and even though the Saudi financial affect is great, the Kuwaiti psychological effect is even greater.

So he meant to say, "Yes, they [*Americans*] want even more certain privileges than what we have already given in the Gulf, and they believe that they need to pressure Kuwait on this issue." But I did not go to the extent where I would tell him all my fears. Yet, in spite of this, what the man said in his analysis means that he is a logical man and he said, "I will convey your talk to your brother Sheikh Jabber, but what I told you is my personal opinion."

Taha Yassin: I am sure he told him.

Saddam Hussein: So we have been observing the Americans for a long time. They are scaring the Gulf countries so they can get privileges. Since the Faw issue occurred, I have been convinced that there is something going on. I told Al-Atiqi that regarding the Faw issue, the Americans played a deceptive role that was brought to our attention. So what are their goals? Their goal is to bring the danger closer to the Gulf states so they get even more from them, in addition to the issue of Iraq and the marginal issue that we discussed. Because everyone thinks in the same manner, and not only them [*Americans*]. The Japanese think the same way, the Soviets think in the same way, and the Arabs as well. They think that this stubborn state [*Iran*] needs to be pressured in a -- [*End of Recording*].