

**“Meeting between Saddam Hussein and Top Political
Advisors to Discuss a Visit by Prime Minister Tariq
Aziz to the United Nations”**



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Key: UM = Unidentified Male Speaker.

Translator comments, clarifications, and additions are italicized in brackets.

Saddam: In the last meeting we heard Dr. Issam's opinion but they didn't listen to his opinion. Therefore, he drafted it in a letter. He wrote his opinion in a letter and we said the Cabinet must, as well, hear his opinion as is.

UM1: Only one clarification, Sir.

Saddam: Yes.

UM1: In reference to the numbers I received from the Ministry of Finance, the reality is, the amounts the Ministry of Finance reported were old debts from common mistakes made during the renewal of wire transfers from the central bank. I noticed that Dr. Issam asked for it to be withdrawn. Yesterday, or a couple of days ago, they asked for it to be withdrawn because it's not newly issued. We are working in accordance with instructions, but without wiring money to the account, our account will be depleted. These issues are old, not new ones. [*Referencing the currency change that took place in Iraq in the mid-nineties*]

Saddam: Dr. Issam.

Dr. Issam: Thank you, Sir. Sir, in regards to covering government agencies' expenses, we call it "automatically covering expenses," which means the department first spends the designated budget, and then it will be automatically transferred to the Ministry of Finance accounts. For example, when the Ministry of Finance debt reaches 20 billion, I will ask them to buy treasury bonds from me [*the Central Bank*]. Thus, it's not new debt, but it's covering old debts. Your Excellency, since I got to this position [*at the Central Bank*] nothing has changed and every time I ask to change something, they tell me everything stays as it is! All the work is according to the old instructions, just like your letter, Your Excellency, which is frozen. That's what I have been told at the Cabinet, the Economic Committee, and our daily work. I saw the letter, Sir -- [*Interrupted*]

Saddam: Noted [*in an angry voice*]. It's clear.

Dr. Issam: Sir, allow me one more word. Just like what the Minister of Oil said, which was beautiful, he said "The Commander President gives us more than what we deserve, so when he gets angry at us more than we actually deserve, it's a normal thing". Your Excellency you are the father and the guide -- [*Interrupted*]

Saddam: This is inevitable... inevitable because it has to happen from time to time. We don't want to pressure any one of you, it actually hurt us more than you when we do so. It's not a choice that came from anger with other alternatives, but sometimes to highlight the importance of an issue we need to do what we have done.

UM1: Sir with one correction, if they actually felt the pressure...

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Dr. Issam: Yes, yes.

Saddam: Alright [*in an angry voice*]. Comrade Tariq, tell the brother about your visit.

[Time Stamp 05:00]

Tariq: Sir, the communications that we had with the members of the Security Council during my last visit. If I may say, what happened in August and later on cast a heavy shadow. This shadow effected mostly who are our friends and the people in between [*between being friend and enemies*]. The widespread opinion even among our friends and especially the French; that the files, which were reopened, will take a very long time to be closed again. Hence the effect of implementing Resolution 22, for this reason Ekeus won't be able to submit his report during the next few months after the meeting with Lieutenant General 'Amer al-Sa'di and the brother Hassam Muhammad Amin. During the four months between August and until now, we explained to them how much we produced. Therefore it depends on our capability that what is left does not require a long [*period of*] time, and ranges from two to four months. We told them before that when Ekeus submits his report, we don't foresee Ekeus highlighting this progress in his report on the 15th of December for two reasons. The first reason is that Ekeus doesn't want to give us credit that quickly and the other reason has to do with the kind of work it is. For example, it is proven that we produced biological weapons. We have 200 bombs, and we must prove that they were destroyed. We supplied documentation to the individual who came to Baghdad at the beginning of the month to discuss with us, and we described the destruction of 157 of them. This documentation was sent to the lab to be examined by what they call "forensic analysis." This analysis will prove the date when the document was written. Now he explains the document has been submitted but he will not be able to mention before the council that 157 were destroyed. We're confident that we submitted the document but the final point on the subject will come from the laboratory, possibly after a week or two, or a month. Therefore, we are confident we can accomplish the remainder [*the gap between 200 and 157*]. The VX for example, is a subject related to the chemical weapons. We are about to prove to him that this was a failed project and it was among the Iraqi WMD projects. The failure is documented, and the last parts might need a scientific analysis. With the ongoing doubts from our known enemies, with the exception of our French friend—he's a special case that we will address—they all started listening to us. They started listening and being concerned with this information, and I can tell they've reached some [*level of*] comfort after long lasting depressing news. The Foreign Minister met with them during the general committee session and everyone encouraged us to continue with this agenda. One of the issues or matters that harmed us on our way there... the news about the equipment in Jordan which was supposedly coming to Iraq. Of course this is absurd... absurd From one side we're confirming the destruction of weapons and on another side we're importing equipment related to the missile industry that is forbidden according to the United Nations resolutions. Even if the missile that would be produced using this equipment falls in the allowed range.

[Time Stamp: 10:26]

Saddam: Even if it was within the range?!

Tariq: Yes Sir, there are two kinds, Sir. There is a ban on importing all military equipment. That's ongoing, and there is the ban on missile assembling equipment. Meaning, if we already have this equipment and used it to build missiles within the legal range, which is 120 kilometers, that would be fine. Right, General Amer?

General Amer: 150 kilometers. There are two sides to this. There's the absolute ban, and there's consistent monitoring. Meaning, even if we build missiles within the acceptable range, we should tell them [*the monitoring team*] about it.

Saddam: So these are acceptable?

Tariq: Yes, like we will manufacture this much. However importing it from outside the country is absolutely illegal, until the ban is lifted. Then it will be according to a special procedure. Here the violation is clear; therefore we provided clarifications and explanations. We told them that this equipment entered Iraq, and the responsible technician did not tell his superior General Amer about it. The technician told General Amer it was insignificant equipment.

Saddam: So what's the truth?

General Amer: Sir, this is the truth.

Saddam: Then this is the truth.

General Amer: Sir, an investigation was to take place today to give full picture about the incident. However, the primary information about the subject reveals: It is believed that one of the specialists and someone else, because of their knowledge of our relentlessness in causing any problem with the Special Committee [*UNSCOM*], they signed a contract to import regular equipment. However they [*the specialists*] did not mention anything in the contract about the gyroscopes, and they exaggerated the total cost of the contract. If I may, Your Excellency, I'm still waiting on the final investigation results, but they did exaggerate the cost of some legal regular electronic components many times to cover the cost of the illegal [*pieces of*] equipment, which were the gyroscopes. How did that happen? I asked General Amer al-S'adi, I asked him today when he returned since they [*the specialists*] are under his command. I asked him, do you remember such a thing? And he said he didn't know about it. It is possible that the betrayer Husayn [*Kamil*] is the one who told them, and it was old news, from May.

Tariq: Yes, this is an old subject. It happened in May.

General Amer: Yes, so all the equipment, the legal ones and the prohibited ones arrived in Amman. There are some minor details still missing until we finish the investigation with that person [*the specialists*]. However that person [*the specialists*] said, "It was clear; I agreed with so and so"—sorry Sir I don't want to bring up names—"I agreed with so and so, and I told him I will bring you gyroscopes, and everything was clear. You can look at the contract where I entered this component cost five dollars instead of one dollar. Is there anyone who doesn't know that this only cost a dollar?! So I added a dollar here and a dollar and a half there to cover the other equipment costs [*the Gyroscopes*]." So our people knew that there's an investigation about the contracts and the accusations are real. One of these prohibited equipment boxes seems to have arrived in Baghdad. However when the traitor Husayn Kamil defected and we started to declaring everything he knows, they [*the specialists*] become really concerned and threw it [*the equipment*] into the river. We told everybody back then [*when Kamil defected*]: "please anybody who has any information or equipment, come to us and inform us about it, because this is the last

chance.” I think I said this in more than 10 meetings and Mr. Deputy Prime Minister said the same thing. After the 5th or the 6th time they [*the specialists*] started to believe the seriousness of the matter, and they went and told General Hussam. They told Hussam, “There is a big issue. Would you please tell General Amer?” But they didn’t tell him about the gyroscopes [*laughing*]. They told him it was just a couple [*pieces of*] insignificant equipment that came by mistake, and we were afraid that it would create a problem so we threw it in the river! Hussam told them if the issue is like this there’s no need to tell General Amer about it, according to his judgment. [*Time Stamp: 15:18*]

In the extended meeting number 7 or 8, we told them, “If you have anything, please tell us, because if you don’t tell us, you will be doing a favor to the American intelligence, because they will eventually know. So tell us, and we, as a command council, will take care of this issue because it’s important.” In that meeting that person told me, “I have something to say, Sir. I already told Hussam about it, but I would like you to know.” He told me there were some electronic devices. He didn’t say “gyroscope.” I told him, “Okay, report it to the Special Committee since they are here [*in the country*] now.” And Hussam told him to inform the Special Committee, as General Amer said. I gave my order based on [*the belief that*] they were not gyroscopes, but rather regular electronic equipment that came by mistake. It looks like here is where the fault occurred, Your Excellency, and I’m still waiting on the investigation to be completed. This is where the fault lies. They did not tell the Special Committee. It looked like they [*UNSCOM*] timed it for now, because it happened in June. Therefore, they have some minor issues that we didn’t tell them about. They hide them until the right time to reveal them. When Mr. Tariq and I travelled, they announced it, and you know all the other details, Sir.

Tariq: Of course, Sir, this incident cast a heavy shadow on our negotiations ... but --
[*Interrupted*]

Saddam: This incident reminds me of the bear story in our elementary school books, or something similar. The bear wanted to move the fly away from his beloved friend’s face, so he used a stone and smashed his friend’s face with it.

Tariq: Yes Sir, exactly. Sir, other than the French positions—the one I explained to you in person—nothing has changed

Saddam: You mean it didn’t have negative impact, meaning that it was positive.

Tariq: Yes, positive, and when I asked them what their position is on Resolution 120, they said, “Our position on Resolution 120 is that we will submit a suggestion when Ekeus submits his report.” So we told them that we have only one issue we were bothered by...this act that happened and the story of these gyroscopes that got us concerned and we are going to check it out. I even encouraged Moscow to look into what happened because these are actions to be ashamed of, smuggling and whatever else. But, it was clear and he dealt with Lieutenant General ‘Amer and Brigadier General Hussam and he listened to them very attentively and for their statements very attentively. He took notes and followed them, just like they did in the past. China ... the rest is of the same position, but all of us wanted to convey the details to him. He says leave me for now. He does not want...and the French detailed the same special position that

Your Excellency knows about.

Saddam: One... one.

Tariq: The meeting with the Egyptians was very good, and the meetings with the Czech delegation and with the Polish delegation were good. Dr. 'Amer al-S'adi participated in the meetings, as well, and he generalized by saying that the Security Council is not good. South Korea... a new composition, Sir, for the Security Council in the coming year...it's clearly better than the existing composition. Meaning, Egypt will enter instead of Oman. Egypt, as you know Sir, their politics are a lot better, and their ambassador is Nabil al-'Arabi. He's, like, he really was always at the heart of the crisis. The number of years he's spent going and coming, visiting me at my home...in my opinion, he is basically my brother.

[Time Stamp: 20:01]

Saddam: Family or friend?

Tariq: Between them it's like family and friendship. His views are good as a person. What is going on with the Baath? Are they good? Dr. Amer told me that they were meeting, talking, and debating in a serious manner regarding aide... Nabil al-'Arabi. Poland instead of the Czech Republic. Poland is better than the Czech Republic... South Korea, the ambassador came and he told me, "I know you, and I'm here to visit you." While I was wandering around Baghdad, somebody told me that they are perusing bilateral relations, and he told me that they have an interest in Iraq and an interest in lifting the embargo. He told them that they want to help themselves in the field of petroleum for a company associated with the Oil Ministry and we are ready to sign a \$50 million deal if they sign the contract.

UM1: Sir, it's \$100 million.

Tariq: It has become \$100 million? So, this means my information is old... It's a country that is concerned with Iraq's situation and the lifting the sanctions off of Iraq for their benefit, but we also hope for that situation. Chile... the ambassador is an excellent person. He is cultured and part of a party that is progressive towards returning to an empire, and he has progressive ideas. It's not like, if you allow me to tell you, this is [inaudible]. That Argentinean said he worked with Albright, and she was Czech as well, we have a previous relationship... and also...

Saddam: Their president is [inaudible].

Tariq: Yes, Sir... the same school in Africa... Guinea-Bissau instead of Rwanda... Guinea Bissau and said that we need our relationship with Iraq and we remember that you helped us during our hard time. Afterwards I asked... They said that it's evident from France, so I asked the French prime minister who met with him after our meeting last year to talk about isolation. Then I asked him how are the relations between you and Guinea Bissau? He said very well. So I told him I want you to pay attention to us so they could be on our side and he promised to do that. So I'm expecting that the atmosphere in the council next year will change a bit to our benefit if we do more in regards to Ekeus. The French were vigilant in reference to the subject of

Ekeus and decision 986... They were very vigilant and he said you are not going to Paris, and there he went to figure out the situation with the government. So, in Paris, when he arrived two days before his appointment, he made new revelations about the ambassador through what he was told by his friends in the French Foreign Ministry. In France, there is an atmosphere of preservation... meaning on our side... He said that the chief of the Middle East Department wasn't there during his visit, Sir. So he returned to Baghdad because there wasn't any hope in implementing Resolution 22. It's possible for us to change Resolution 986 and tie my visit to Paris on the condition that we accept Resolution 986. In my opinion, if communications with the president don't happen, we won't be successful in the relations with the foreign minister and that would be bad because he has all the previous knowledge on the subject. Through him... tell him if it's possible for me to secretly see the president. He told me that would be hard, so I told him, "Go tell him if he can't see me, let's speak on the phone." [Time Stamp: 25:05]

The next day he told me, "You're coming, and tell whoever is with you to bring a cell phone..." Sir, that's what they stipulated, but I must keep you in the picture. I used the phone and spoke with the president so he started on high. He told me that he wants to help us. So, I spoke with him about what's needed. I told him what it is that we need now. I told him, we now have been waiting for 11 months and we've been in need of a meeting and until we meet we need to give you information. Ekeus will submit his report if you all don't create pressure to counter that of the Americans which targets Iraq. I explained to him other points. Without hesitation he said, "I'm going to give information to the Foreign Ministry to give all of you complete access to the exchange of information and analysis. We are going to cooperate with you all. We're going to call our ambassador in New York so he can return and get ready for you regarding this subject, in particular." Yesterday, in the evening after a meeting in the Foreign Ministry, the prime minister said, "Do you want a one-on-one meeting?" I told him that the meeting with the Foreign Minister was great or not bad. I told him, "When you were the foreign minister, you used to do all these things for us. We used to call Ekeus to ask him when he'll be done with this and that. The Iraqis are cooperating and your ambassador in New York is doing his work." He said that at that time... "Foreign relations were hot and cold but now they have dissolved because of what Chirac informed me of today. Analyze these procedures and inform the minister and the ambassador and relieve your worries regarding this subject because it will be concluded." So, the man was certain of what he promised during the phone conversation. So, I believe after my visit to Paris, that the French position went back to the way it was in the past... he has a desire to cooperate and work together to get the completed files closed. It was affective to the point that they agreed to welcome a technical team under the command of Lieutenant General 'Amir Muhammad Rashid or Lieutenant General al-S'adi to go during November to update them on the latest news so they could be on top of things. From this perspective, I believe that he obtained some priority. Wherever we go, the talks will include Resolution 986. We also discussed whatever we could discuss regarding this matter.

Saddam: [Inaudible]. Mr. Minister of Information...

Minister of Information: Today, Sir, the London based *al-Hayat* newspaper mentioned that Dr. -- [Audio cuts off at 29:50]

End of Recording