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ACTION NEA-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AMAD-00	CA-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	USNW-00
	DODE-00	DS-00	EAP-00	EUR-00	FBIE-00	UTED-00	VC-00
	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	VCE-00	M-00
	NSAE-00	OIG-00	EPAU-00	PA-00	TFBI-00	IRM-00	TEST-00
	SA-00	FMP-00	BBG-00	R-00	EPAE-00	ECA-00	IIP-00
	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/001W	

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5528

WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY RIYADH

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCPA

INFO AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

RELEASED IN FULL

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 003588

DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN: MRUSSEL, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:
 STHIBEAULT, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD: ACASPER, NEA/PPD: MQUINN
 AND DBENZE, IIP/G/NEA
 WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
 CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KMDR, PREL, KPAO, OPRC, SY

SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/China, Iraq,
 Palestinian territories, Saudi Arabia (6/18-20)

1. Overview: President Asad's visit to China was the main focus in the Syrian press. All papers featured a statement by Chinese FM to the Syrian Arab News Agency in which he attached great importance to the visit and rejected US sanctions on Syria.

The tense situation in Iraq continued to be a major theme in the Syrian papers which headlined the visit of a US Codel to Baghdad and featured a statement by a senior US diplomat who revealed that more than 150 members of the US Embassy in Baghdad will serve as advisers to the Iraqi authority.

Events in the occupied territories were another press topic. Syrian papers reported EU leaders' refusal to recognize any change in the 1967 borders as stated in the final communique

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issued at the end of EU summit in Brussels. On (6/20) papers reported Israeli firing on a UN car carrying three British MPs in Rafah. UNCLASSIFIED

On (6/20) the lead item in Al-Ba'th was the Saudi forces' killing of Abdul-Aziz al-Muqren, leader of Al-Qaeda in the Gulf in the wake of the killing of the US hostage.

Editorially, most Syrian commentators focused on President Asad's visit to China and on Iraq. Dr. Haydar Haydar in Al-Thawra commented on the results of a US-supervised opinion poll in Iraq which purportedly indicated that the majority of Iraqis reject US occupation. Haydar said that "Iraqis know very well that the rule of the tyrant was replaced by a new kind of colonialism." Riad Zein in Syria Times criticized the designation of 150 US diplomats in the US Embassy in Baghdad to serve as advisers in Iraqi ministries describing them as "mercenaries" who will be used as "tools to sabotage the interests of the Iraqi people and to preserve US hegemonist interests."

Among items of interest in the regional papers is an article in Al-Hayat reporting that the majority of Syrian MPs have signed a draft law that would impose sanctions on the US. An article in As-Safir reported that Syria has handed over to France an Algerian Islamic suspect linked to Al-Qaeda, Sa'id Aarif. As-Safir also carried an article which denied earlier reports that Vice President Khaddam intends to resign.

End of overview.

2. Selected Headlines:

"Amid continuing Chinese welcome of President Asad's visit, Li Zhaoxing [Chinese FM]: Asad's visit is a big event in bilateral relations... Beijing rejects random sanctions and supports reactivation of the UN role" (Government-owned Tishreen, 6/20)

"Assignment of 150 US consultants in Iraqi ministries. Two occupation soldiers killed in Iraq. Assaults on British positions. Forty Iraqis killed, scores injured, in two car-bomb explosions in Baghdad" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 6/18)

"Negroponte admits the difficulty of his mission. Many obstacles face Iraqi oil exports. Women demonstrating in Baghdad call for releasing prisoners" (Government-owned Tishreen, 6/19)

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"A US Codel visits Baghdad. Reports on dispatching NATO forces to Iraq" (Government-owned Tishreen, 6/20)

"Eighteen Iraqis killed in a US shelling of Falluja. Ankara: No change in our policy on Iraq" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 6/20)

"US and British criticisms of occupation practices in Iraq. Senator John Edwards: Bush is personally responsible for chaos in Iraq" (Government-owned Tishreen, 6/20)

"Annan rejects exemption of US soldiers from International

Criminal Court prosecution" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 6/18)

"Occupation forces open fire on British MPs in Rafah. A Palestinian dialogue over administering Gaza" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 6/20)

"EU leaders will not recognize any change of the 1967 borders: Peace in the Middle East cannot be achieved without Syria and Lebanon" (Government-owned Tishreen, 6/19)

"US diplomats exert pressure on Saudi Arabia to stop boycott of Israel" (Government-owned Tishreen, 6/19)

"Saudi Arabia announces the killing of Al-Qaeda leader in the Gulf. Powell: Fleeing the Kingdom is a victory for terrorism" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 6/20)

3. Editorial Commentary:

"America, a Torch for Civilization or a Pickax of Destruction"

Dr. Haydar Haydar, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, commented (6/18): "Results of the US-supervised poll in Iraq were disappointing for Bush and Blair. Neither the claims about the weapons of mass destruction nor the allegations of freeing Iraq from a corrupt dictatorial regime succeeded in turning the eyes of the Iraqis away from the real reasons for the war..."

"The US Administration failed to find a connection between Al-Qa'ida and Saddam's regime..."

"The Iraqi people are resisting occupation using all..."

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possible means. The preachers of democracy and human rights failed the test after the Abu Ghurayb scandals. Facts prove the involvement of Halliburton and its brokers in the US Administration, and American investigation committees reveal new information about 'intimate relations' between Administration officials and the well-known company...

"Oil was the reason behind the war on Iraq... Democracy, human rights, saving people from poverty, and curbing Israel's aggressive onslaught are the last things on the mind of the American neoconservative leaders and their allies in Britain.

"The results of the recent poll show that the picture is very clear to Iraqis who know very well that the rule of the tyrant was replaced by a new kind of colonialism, and a vicious face by a false mask."

"Bush, between Criticism and Calls to Replace Him"

Ahmad Dawwa, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawrah, commented (6/18): "The criticism of Bush's foreign policy by a group of US diplomats and military politicians from the Republican and Democratic parties just few months prior to the presidential race is caused by their feeling of the danger this policy poses to the American people..."

"The new message indicates that the US Administration ignores US protests and sticks to its policy, which results in more mistakes.

"Those who pin hope on a US role to find a solution to the struggle in the region should read this message carefully and should stop making useless concessions."

"The International Criminal Court Once Again"

Fouad Mardoud, chief editor of government-owned Syria Times, commented (6/20): "Should an international war crimes tribunal be convened to try U.S. soldiers and agents? There is ample evidence of heinous crimes against Iraqis and many other nationals detained in U.S. detention camps. Only yesterday, a U.S. human rights group accused the Pentagon and the CIA of establishing more than 20 detention camps in

many countries around the world -- half of them are unknown. Also on Friday, the Pentagon announced the death of an Iraqi prisoner at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, claiming that the death 'was natural.' In establishing those prisons and torturing civilians, the American soldiers and agents clearly violated conventions on the laws of war...

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"The U.N. Security Council, which is debating the case, should responsibly address the international worries over the exemption of U.S nationals from the ruling of that international tribunal. The Council needs to resist U.S. pressure and attempts to put Americans above international law..._"

_"Spies"

Riad Zein, an analyst in government-owned Syria Times, wrote (6/20): "A senior American diplomat said more than 150 members of the US Embassy in Baghdad...will be 'advisers' to the Iraqi authority. The diplomat said 'vigilant and watchful' members of the Embassy staff will be 'consultants' at Iraqi ministries, 'giving advises' [sic] to officials of the ministries and to the US Ambassador on choosing projects as regards re-building [sic] Iraq, on how to steer financial aid and how to protect the wealth of Iraq..._"

"It should however be recalled that the US-designed 'Iraq re-building program' is directly supervised by the Pentagon through the US Embassy. The forthcoming ill-famed Ambassador John Negroponty will control the USD.18.5-billion-fund program. Any re-building project whatsoever will be carried out only with the approval of the Embassy. The projects hence are understood to serve the interests of the US and not to protect the wealth of Iraq. The mercenaries have been used as tools to sabotage the interests of the Iraqi people and to preserve the hegemonist interests of their masters..._"

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