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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: FRANK E SCHMELZER
DATE/CASE ID: 09 DEC 2004 200303827

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DOS-002140

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INFORM CONSULS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: KPAO, PREL, US, OIIP
SUBJECT: PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ALERT, MONDAY, JUNE 14, 2004

MEDIA/OPINION ABROAD

1. THROUGH THE WEEKEND, INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ATTENTION SHIFTED RATHER ABRUPTLY FROM LAST WEEK'S G-8 DELIBERATIONS AND UN RESOLUTION 1546 TO THE SECURITY SITUATIONS ON THE GROUND IN IRAQ AND SAUDI ARABIA. (THE EUROPEAN UNION ELECTIONS ALSO GARNERED COMMENT). DESPITE WIDE COVERAGE OF THE ASSASSINATIONS IN IRAQ, COMMENTARY FOCUSED ON HUMAN RIGHTS TOPICS: ABU GHRAIB AND THE KILLING OF CIVILIANS IN U.S. AIR STRIKES.

IRAQ:

-- THE GUARDIAN FEATURED A REPRINT OF A NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE ON HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH'S CLAIM THAT THE U.S. DECISION TO GO FOR "HIGH-PROFILE" STRIKES AGAINST INDIVIDUAL IRAQI LEADERS EARLY IN THE WAR HAD "RESULTED IN DOZENS OF CIVILIAN CASUALTIES THAT THE U.S. COULD HAVE PREVENTED HAD IT TAKEN ADDITIONAL PRECAUTIONS."

-- THE GUARDIAN AND BBC ALSO HEADLINED A "RED CROSS ULTIMATUM TO THE U.S. ON SADDAM": ACCORDING TO THE ICRC, SINCE THE U.S. REGARDS SADDAM AS A POW, WASHINGTON MUST RELEASE HIM BY JUNE 30 OR CHARGE HIM, SINCE UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW, UNCHARGED POW'S CANNOT BE HELD PAST THE TERMINATION OF AN OCCUPATION.

-- IN A STORY WIDELY "BOUNCED," THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH CLAIMED "FOUR CONFIDENTIAL RED CROSS DOCUMENTS IMPLICATING SENIOR PENTAGON CIVILIANS IN THE ABU GHRAIB SCANDAL HAVE BEEN PASSED TO AN AMERICAN TV NETWORK, WHICH IS PREPARING TO MAKE THEM PUBLIC."

-- "[GIVEN THE SECURITY SITUATION,] THE GREATEST CHALLENGE OF THE NEW IRAQI OFFICIALS IS JUST GETTING TO WORK.... IN SUCH CONDITIONS, RECONSTRUCTION RISKS BECOMING UNGLUED."
(LE FIGARO)

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-- "[ACCORDING TO THE 'MARCH 6, 2003 PENTAGON REPORT']...., AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, PRESIDENT BUSH WAS ABOVE BOTH DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL LAW.... EVEN TORTURE WOULD BE LEGAL IF ORDERED BY THE PRESIDENT IN THE PROSECUTION OF... A WAR. THIS NEW, SECRET DOCTRINE AMOUNTED TO AN ASTONISHING QUASI-MEDIEVAL CLAIM TO AN UNLIMITED PRESIDENTIAL EXECUTIVE POWER.... [YET] THE ADMINISTRATION IS NOW ASKING THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TO BELIEVE... THAT IT WAS NOT THOSE WHO HAD CONCOCTED A NEWFANGLED QUASI-LEGAL JUSTIFICATION FOR TORTURE... BUT SEVEN JUNIOR MILITARY GUARDS WHO WERE TO BLAME FOR ABU GHRAIB."
(THE AGE--AUSTRALIA)

-- "DESPITE THE MANY AMENDMENTS [TO UNSC 1546],... THE RESOLUTION CLEARLY ALLOWS THE OCCUPATION FORCES TO STAY IN IRAQ. THIS PROVES ONCE AGAIN THAT THE U.S. IS NOT SERIOUS ABOUT ENDING ITS OCCUPATION.... [1546] EXTENDED THE LIFE OF THE OCCUPATION IN ITS NEW CLOAK OF MULTINATIONAL FORCES MAINTAINING SECURITY...." (AL-THAWRA--SYRIA)

-- "A LEGAL FABRICATION HAS PROVIDED JUSTIFICATION FOR THE TORTURE OF DETAINEES BY U.S. FORCES IN IRAQI JAILS AND GUANTANAMO. UNDER THIS FRAMEWORK, PRESIDENT BUSH AND [OTHER OFFICIALS] CANNOT BE PROSECUTED FOR TORTURE.... HOW SHOCKING THAT THIS HAS HAPPENED IN THE U.S., WHICH HAS THUS FAR BEEN KNOWN AS THE CHAMPION OF DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS." (KOMPAS--JAKARTA)

-- "THERE SEEMS TO BE ENOUGH [EVIDENCE] TO SUGGEST THAT THE PATTERN OF PRISONER ABUSE STEMS FROM DECISIONS MADE BY THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION TO IGNORE THE RULES OF WAR AND THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS.... THE U.S. CONGRESS SHOULD APPOINT A SPECIAL INVESTIGATOR TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE U.S. GOVERNMENT AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE HORRORS OF ABU GHRAIB."
(NEW STRAITS TIMES--KUALA LUMPUR)

SAUDI ARABIA:

-- WRITING IN THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH, THE BBC'S WORLD AFFAIRS EDITOR SPECULATED THAT INFORMANTS IN "THE SAUDI INFORMATION OR SECURITY MINISTRIES" TIPPED OFF THE GUNMEN THAT ATTACKED A BBC TEAM LAST WEEK.

-- "AS FAR AS IT IS KNOWN... NOT A SINGLE TRIAL HAS BEEN HELD WHERE HOME TRUTHS CAN BE AIRED ABOUT THE MILITANT ORGANIZATIONS AND ANY POSSIBLE LINK THEY MAY HAVE WITH THE AUTHORITIES. INEVITABLY, THE MILITANTS DIE IN A HAIL OF BULLETS AND TAKE THEIR STORIES WITH THEM TO THEIR

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GRAVES.... LINGERING DOUBTS ABOUT THE AUTHORITIES'
WILLINGNESS AND ABILITY TO PROTECT THEM...COULD DRIVE
[EXPATRIATES] AWAY." (BBC)

-- THE WEEKEND'S SAUDI EDITORIALS WERE DEVOTED TO
DENOUNCING THE "SICK MENTALITY" OF QADDAFHI, AND ACCEPTED
AS FACT ACCOUNTS OF HIS ATTEMPT TO HAVE CROWN PRINCE
ABDULLAH ASSASSINATED.

2. MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.
POWELL

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