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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

FOR: SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

FROM: ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS (Mr. Peter W. Rodman (b)(6) *PWR* 19 SEP .2001)

SUBJECT: My Meetings in Egypt, 10 - 11 September

I was in Cairo 10 - 11 September 2001 for a regular session of the U.S. - Egyptian Military Cooperation Committee (MCC). This was the 18th meeting of a forum that began in 1982. My counterpart was Chief of Staff LTG Magdy Hattata, though I also met with Minister of Defense Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi (twice), Presidential National Security Advisor Osama El-Baz, and Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher. My meetings had just wound up when the 11 September attacks occurred here.

Bilateral Relations

The contrast with the Saudis was clear. The Egyptians were eager to demonstrate publicly and privately, even amidst (and perhaps even because of) the Palestinian turbulence, that their security relationship with us was solid. El-Baz (who knew all about the Saudi cancellation of their similar meetings with me) told me that some Arabs were "shy" about their relations with us; they acted as if "caught with their pants down" when the subject was raised. But not Egypt. Crown Prince Abdullah had admitted to him that the Saudis were shaken by the regional TV coverage and by the Friday sermons, which they saw as a "threat to the regime".

The Egyptians, of course, still hoped for high-level U.S. participation in BRIGHT STAR in October, including congressional representation. They stressed the irreversibility of their historic turn towards peace and towards the United States. While they spent time telling us of the popular pressure they felt over the Palestinian issue, the bilateral business of the MCC meetings (military sales, R&D cooperation, BRIGHT STAR) went smoothly.

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Regional Threats

We also discussed Iraq and Iran. The Egyptians readily agreed that both were threats. Iran was feared for its support for radical Islamism and WMD, Iraq for its conventional weapons and for its pretensions to be leader of the Arab world. We, in turn, stressed the near-term danger that Saddam too posed because of WMD. The Egyptians seemed surprised to hear about Saddam as a WMD threat - and clearly we need to make this particular point more emphatically, even to friends who share our general view of Iraq. But Egypt's attitude toward a stronger U.S. policy against Saddam was clear: (b)(1)

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After the Attacks

After the attacks in New York and Washington, we canceled the final dinner, but I met with the Chief of Staff one last time in a small group to say farewell. He offered condolences with genuine emotion. Then the Defense Minister showed up, unscheduled, to do the same. The Chief of Staff and Defense Minister told us that President Mubarak had issued orders to all military districts to increase security and take additional measures to ensure the safety of Americans in Egypt, including those coming for BRIGHT STAR.

The Egyptians seemed quite shaken by the event. Precisely because of what they have invested in the United States, they seemed worried that we might be weakened.

I suspect that they would be heartened by a demonstration that we were not.

COORDINATION: Next Under