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ACTION EUR-00

INFO LOG-00 NP-00 AID-00 AMAD-00 SRPP-00 E-00 UTED-00
 VC-00 TEDE-00 INR-00 IO-00 LAB-01 VCE-00 NEA-00
 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 PA-00 SP-00 TEST-00 USIE-00 IIP-00
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 FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3931

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RELEASED IN FULL

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E.O. 12958: N/A
 TAGS: OPRC, KMDR, BE

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION US;IRAQ;BRUSSELS

I. (US) PRESIDENT BUSH

"DIPLOMATS LASH OUT AT BUSH"

FOREIGN EDITOR PAUL DE BRUYN IN CONSERVATIVE
 CHRISTIAN-DEMOCRAT GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN
 (5/5) (CIRC.117,000) REMARKS: "THE STATE DEPARTMENT
 WARNED EARLIER AGAINST AN OVERLY UNILATERAL POLICY
 IN THE MIDDLE EAST. ENVY IS CERTAINLY PLAYING A
 ROLE: THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAS THE IMPRESSION THAT
 IT IS KEPT OUT OF THE GAME BY THE PENTAGON AND THE
 WHITE HOUSE. INSIDERS KNOW THAT THAT IS THE CASE.
 DIPLOMATS ALSO KNOW THE FIELD. THEIR WARNINGS
 CANNOT BE IGNORED JUST LIKE THAT.

"THE (DIPLOMATS') LETTER IS NO DIRECT DANGER. THOSE
 WHO SIGNED THE LETTER ARE NO LONGER ASSIGNED
 DIPLOMATS. VIRTUALLY ALL OF THEM WERE POSTED IN THE
 ARAB WORLD. THAT MEANS THAT BUSH COULD REFUTE THE
 CRITICISM BY SAYING THAT THEY ARE PREJUDICED.
 HOWEVER, SUCH A LETTER DAMAGES HIS PRESTIGE AND
 COMES AT A BAD MOMENT JUST BEFORE THE ELECTIONS.
 RECENTLY, BUSH HAS HAD TO COPE WITH A LOT OF BAD
 NEWS. MORE OF THAT IS THE LAST THING HE NEEDS."

II. (IRAQ) IRAQ

1.SENIOR WRITER HUBERT VAN HUMBEECK IN LIBERAL
 WEEKLY KNACK (5/5) (CIRC.135,000) COMMENTS: "HUMAN

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 REVIEW AUTHORITY: JOHN L MILLS
 DATE/CASE ID: 25 APR 2011 200908726

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RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS LIKE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH HAVE CLAIMED FOR MONTHS THAT PRISONERS IN IRAQ ARE SYSTEMATICALLY SUBMITTED TO TORTURE. THERE ARE SIMILAR COMPLAINTS FROM AFGHANISTAN. AT THE MILITARY BASE OF GUANTANAMO THE AMERICANS HAVE HELD THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE FOR ALMOST THREE YEARS WITHOUT ANY FORM OF TRIAL. THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAS NEVER REACTED TO A REPORT IN RESPECTED DAILY THE WASHINGTON POST THAT THE UNITED STATES REGULARLY TRANSFERS PRISONERS TO COUNTRIES THAT ARE LESS SENSITIVE TO HUMAN RIGHTS TO BE 'INTERROGATED' THERE UNDER CIA SUPERVISION - FAR AWAY FROM CURIOUS EYES AND THE GRIP OF AMERICAN COURTS.

"IN THE MEANTIME, THE OCCUPATION FORCE IS TRYING TO PUT THINGS IN ORDER IN THE MILITARY PRISONS IN IRAQ. SINCE THE IMAGES WERE SHOWN BY CBS, THEY HAVE BEEN ON THE SCREENS OF NEWS STATIONS LIKE AL-JAZEERA ALL THE TIME - QUITE RIGHTLY. WAGING WAR FOR DEMOCRACY AND VIOLATING ALL DEMOCRATIC VALUES AT THE SAME TIME IS EXCESSIVELY HYPOCRITICAL."

2. "VIETNAM-IRAQ: SAME IMAGES, SAME DAMAGE"

LEFT-OF-CENTER LE SOIR (5/5) (CIRC. 103,500) ON ITS FRONT-PAGE RUNS TWO PICTURES OF A GI PRAYING IN FRONT OF THE SUBMACHINE GUN AND HELMET OF A FALLEN COMRADE - ONE PICTURE FROM THE VIETNAM WAR AND ANOTHER ONE FROM IRAQ - AND OPINES: "AFTER THE PUBLICATION OF IMAGES OF IRAQI PRISONERS BEING TORTURED AND OF COFFINS OF FALLEN GIS, THE UNITED STATES HAS LOST THE WAR OF IMAGES. THESE RECENT IMAGES REMIND PEOPLE OF OTHER IMAGES, THOSE FROM VIETNAM. GEORGE W. BUSH HAS DONE HIS UTMOST TO AVOID PEOPLE MAKING ANY COMPARISON BETWEEN THE TWO, BUT THERE IS NOTHING HE CAN DO AGAINST IMAGES THAT ARE DEEPLY ROOTED IN PEOPLE'S MIND.

"ALTHOUGH HIS DEFENSE SECRETARY DONALD RUMSFELD ANNOUNCED THAT THE SIX U.S. SOLDIERS WHO TORTURED IRAQI PRISONERS WOULD BE SANCTIONED, THE DAMAGE HAS BEEN DONE. SINCE LAST DECEMBER, 25 PRISONERS DIED AS A RESULT OF MISTREATMENTS IN U.S. MILITARY PRISONS IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN. FOR MONTHS, THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION WAS ABLE TO KEEP THIS INFORMATION SECRET. ACCORDING TO AN AMERICAN MEDIA EXPERT, THE ADMINISTRATION WAS ABLE TO KEEP IT SECRET FOR SUCH AN EXCEPTIONALLY LONG PERIOD MAINLY BECAUSE OF THE SHOCK OF SEPTEMBER 11. BUT U.S. MEDIA ARE NOW WAKING

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UP."

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II. MEDIA REACTION PREPARED BY GASTON DE WINTER
(DUTCH) AND PIERRE MANDERLIER (FRENCH). TEL. 32-2-
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