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Printed By: Mary Davis 06/19/2002 02:32:23 PM

ABU DHABI 3044

From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI  
Subject: MEDIA REACTION: RADIO SAWA

MRN: 3044  
ICNbr: 05413777

Date/Time: 191413Z JUN 02  
Precedence: IMMEDIATE

Cable Text:

INFO: DSO-01 ARC-01 BVNE-01 BTV-01 HTT-01 HN-01 BVOM-01 HB-01  
BBG-01 BE-01 BEO-01 SEOP-01 PAFW-01 EYE-01 EZ-01 IIP-01  
IPNE-01 IFC-01 RMR-01 RNA-01

kgb usanalyst5:0 170/1515z (TOTAL COPIES: 20)

ACTION INR-00

INFO LOG-00 AMAD-00 A-00 BUR-00 UTED-00 FEDE-00 IO-00  
LAB-01 NEA-00 DCP-01 OIC-02 PA-00 IRM-00 SSO-00  
SS-00 TEST-00 USIE-00 BSG-00 IIF-00 DRL-02 SAS-00  
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O 191413Z JUN 02  
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4876  
SECNAV WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
GCC COLLECTIVE  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
COMUSNAVCENT  
USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL//CCPA//  
USCINCSOC MACDILL AFB FL//PA//

UNCLAS ABU DHABI 003044

STATE FOR NEA/ARF, NEA/F, INR  
SECDEF FOR OASD/PA.  
USCINCCENT FOR POLAD  
LONDON FOR GOLDRICH; PARIS FOR O'FRIEL .

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: OIIP, KMDR, TC  
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: RADIO SAWA

1. SUMMARY: TWO COLUMNISTS CRITICIZE RADIO SAWA. GHADA SLEEM IN "AL-ITTIHAD" OPINES THAT AMERICA HAS INVESTED IN RADIO SAWA LARGELY TO NEUTRALIZE ARAB YOUTH AND LEAD THEM TO DENY THEIR IDENTITY, LANGUAGE, TRADITIONS, AND CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS HERITAGE. SHE CITES A SENIOR ARAB OFFICIAL AS SAYING THAT ARABS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO BROADCAST TO AMERICA AND THE WEST, CONCLUDING THAT AMERICA'S INTERESTS AND OURS HAVE NEVER BEEN COMPATIBLE. OTHMAN MIRGHANI IN "AKHBAR AL-ARAB" PREDICTS THAT AMERICA WILL FAIL TO ACHIEVE ITS OBJECTIVE WITH THE NEW SERVICE. END SUMMARY.

2. GHADA SLEEM WROTE IN SEMI-OFFICIAL ABU DHABI-BASED ARABIC DAILY "AL-ITTIHAD":

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"I HAVE BEEN LISTENING CAREFULLY TO THE MUSIC SAWA RADIO HAS BEEN BROADCASTING, AND MY MIND IS MONITORING WHAT ITS NEWS HAS BEEN CARRYING. MANY YOUNG MEN HAVE ALREADY SWALLOWED THE BAIT BY FIXING THEIR RADIOS ON SAWA'S FREQUENCY IN SEARCH OF ITS ARAB AND WESTERN SONGS, BUT WITHOUT ASKING: 'LET'S GO TOGETHER - BUT WHERE TO?' RADIO SAWA IS THE NEWBORN BABY OF THE INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING BUREAU, WHICH IS FINANCED BY THE BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS IN WASHINGTON, A U.S. GOVERNMENT AGENCY THAT BROADCASTS ON SHORT AND MEDIUM WAVE TO THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING AMMAN, THE WEST BANK, KUWAIT, DUBAI, ABU DHABI AND THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN. IT IS ONE OF THE ARMS OF U.S. POLICY IN THE REGION WHICH SEEKS TO PENETRATE AS FAR AS POSSIBLE AMONG THE YOUTH, WHOM AMERICA CONSIDERS THE SEEDS OF TERRORISM AND FUTURE EXTREMISM IN THE WORLD."

3. "IN ITS PLAN TO ATTRACT YOUTH, RADIO SAWA USES REPETITIVE IDIOMS SUCH AS 'TELL YOUR FRIENDS,' 'YOUR WINDOW ON THE WORLD OF MUSIC,' 'THE STARS OF THE ARAB AND WESTERN MUSIC ARE TOGETHER ON SAWA ('TOGETHER') RADIO'. HOWEVER, WHAT IT USES TO ATTRACT THE MORE MATURE YOUNG MEN ARE PHRASES SUCH AS 'WE PRESENT TO YOU EVENTS IN SOUND TO COMPLETE THE PICTURE FOR YOU,' 'KEEP IN CONTACT WITH THE WORLD,' AND 'A DISTINCTION BETWEEN NEWS AND SEMI-NEWS'. THERE IS NO PROBLEM WITH COSMETIC PACKAGING OF PROGRAMS USING NOBLE GOALS SUCH AS WARNING YOUTH ABOUT THE DANGERS OF DRUGS AND ALCOHOL. HOWEVER, THE DANGERS NATURALLY DO NOT EXIST IN THE SONGS THE RADIO PRESENTS BUT IN THE NEWS IT INJECTS (LIKE POISON), BECAUSE NEWS USUALLY BEGINS AS UNBIASED AND NEUTRAL, BUT GRADUALLY MOVES TOWARDS WORDS, IDIOMS AND PHRASES THAT SERVE AMERICA'S POLICIES IN THE REGION."

4. 'ON THE WEBSITE OF RADIO SAWA THERE IS THIS SENTENCE: 'RADIO SAWA SERVES U.S. LONG-TERM INTERESTS THROUGH PUBLIC COMMUNICATION IN ARABIC WITH THE PEOPLE OF THE MIDDLE EAST VIA RADIO.' 'LONG-TERM' MEANS A SLOW PENETRATION OF IDEAS AND IDIOMS THAT WILL BE TRANSMITTED FROM ONE GENERATION TO ANOTHER THROUGH THE LANGUAGE OF THE MEDIA. SUCH LANGUAGE DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEET WITH OUR NATIONAL INTERESTS AND OUR VISION OF EVENTS. AT THE HEIGHT OF THE CRISIS IN THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY, I WAS LISTENING TO RADIO SAWA AND WAS ALERTED TO THE PHRASE "ARMORED PALESTINIANS BESIEGED AT THE CHURCH." THIS DOES NOT REFLECT REALITY: THE ISRAELIS OUTSIDE THE CHURCH WERE ARMED, WHILE THOSE INSIDE WERE INNOCENT AND UNARMED; THE PROOF IS THAT NO EXCHANGE OF FIRE TOOK PLACE; RATHER, THE ISRAELI SNIPERS WERE HUNTING DOWN ANYONE WHO LEFT THE CHURCH IN SEARCH OF FOOD."

5. "RADIO SAWA ALSO USES IDIOMS SUCH AS 'PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST.' THIS IS VERY DANGEROUS; IT SHOWS THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE AS A CONFLICT BETWEEN TWO NEIGHBORING PARTIES, DENYING IT THE STATUS OF A CAUSE OR WAY OF REGAINING THE HOLY SITES IN PALESTINE...WORSE, IT SHOWS THE PALESTINIANS AS SEPARATE FROM THE REST OF THEIR ARAB BROTHERS, AS IF TO TELL THE YOUTH THAT WHAT IS HAPPENING THERE IS MERELY A SMALL PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED BY THE PARTIES INVOLVED; (IT'S TELLING THEM) DON'T BOTHER YOURSELF; LET'S STAY TOGETHER, STAY WITH US."

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6. "...AMERICA IS INVESTING HUGE AMOUNTS IN NEUTRALIZING ARAB YOUTH AND DEPRIVING THEM OF THEIR IDENTITY, THEIR NORMS, TRADITIONS, CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS HERITAGE, AND SEPARATING THEM FROM THEIR HISTORIC CAUSES. THIS STARTED WITH THE ARABIZATION OF MAGAZINES SUCH AS NEWSWEEK, CNN'S WEBSITE, AND RADIO SANA, AND VERY SOON AN AMERICAN NEWS CHANNEL THAT WILL BROADCAST IN ARABIC. I RECENTLY MET AN ARAB OFFICIAL WHO HEADS A LARGE MEDIA OPERATION IN A BROTHER ARAB COUNTRY. MY ENTHUSIASM IMPELLED ME TO ASK HIM ABOUT THE INABILITY OF THE ARAB NATIONS TO DIRECT A RADIO FEED IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES TO EUROPE AND AMERICA. TO MY SURPRISE, THE MAN LAUGHED AS IF HE HAD HEARD SOMETHING NAIVE, AND TOLD ME THAT THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE BECAUSE AMERICA PREVENTS US FROM THAT. IT FORCES US TO RECEIVE ITS OWN FEED AND PREVENTS US FROM BROADCASTING OURS. WE SHOULD NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE AMERICAN MEDIA'S ROLE IN

THE ARAB REGION, AND WE MUST REMEMBER THAT OUR INTERESTS AND AMERICA'S HAVE NEVER BEEN 'TOGETHER.' TO ALL THOSE LISTENING TO RADIO SANA, STOP AND ASK YOURSELF: '(TOGETHER) - BUT WHERE TO?'

7. UNDER THE HEADLINE "AMERICA'S NEW RADIO STATION," OTHMAN AL-MINGHANI WROTE IN ABU DHABI-BASED PAN-ARAB NEWSPAPER "AKHEAR AL-ARAB" 5/19:

"THE U.S. IS ABOUT TO START TRANSMISSION OF ITS NEW RADIO STATION DIRECTED AT THE ARABS IN AN ATTEMPT TO EXTEND ITS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION WITH THEM AND TO ELIMINATE THEIR HISTORICAL SUFFERING AT THE HANDS OF AMERICA AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE...IT SEEMS THAT THE U.S. HOPES TO INFLUENCE ARAB PUBLIC OPINION SO AS TO ALLEVIATE PSYCHOLOGICAL ACCUMULATIONS TOWARDS AMERICA AND THE WEST IN GENERAL. IT HAS ALSO BEEN REPORTED THAT AMERICA HAS REQUESTED CHANGES IN THE CURRICULA OF THE RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS IN PAKISTAN SO THEY WILL STOP PRODUCING YOUNG MEN SEARCHING FOR DEATH IN THE CONFRONTATION WITH THE WEST. ALTHOUGH THE MEDIA REPRESENT A STRONG TOOL FOR SHAPING NATIONAL SENTIMENT...AMERICA'S ASSUMPTION THAT IT CAN RESHAPE ARAB SENTIMENTS THROUGH THIS NEW SERVICE IS DOUBTFUL, FOR MANY REASONS...EXPERIENCE HAS PROVEN THAT ATTEMPTS TO DECREASE EXTREMISM AMONG YOUTH BY BROADCASTING LIGHT MATERIAL WHICH APPEALS TO THE EMOTIONS AND AROUSES DESIRES IS USUALLY COUNTERPRODUCTIVE, RESULTING INSTEAD IN REBELLION... IT IS NOTICEABLE THAT YOUNG MALE GRADUATES IN FIELDS SUCH AS ENGINEERING AND MEDICINE ARE USUALLY MORE EXTREME IN THEIR RELIGION THAN THEIR COLLEAGUES WHO MAJOR IN ISLAMIC STUDIES."

WAHBA

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End Cable Text

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