

# **“Transcript of an Armed Forces General Command Meeting on the Iran-Iraq War and Al-Faw”**



**Document Date:** 26 May 1988

**CRRC Record Number:** SH-PDWN-D-000-730

**Key: Translator comments, clarifications, and additions are italicized in brackets.  
Classification markings, parentheses, and ellipses are from the original Arabic document.**

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Presented to the Supreme Supervision Committee on 09/07/94

*[Signed]*

Staff Lt. General  
Dhia'a Tawfiq Ibrahim  
09/07/94

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Meetings of the General Command of the Armed Forces  
And  
Speeches of the Leader Mr. President, may God bless him and take care of him  
At  
The General Command of the Armed Forces

The Fifth Committee

1. Retired Staff Lt. General	Dhia'a Tawfiq Ibrahim	Committee Chairman
2. Staff Lt. General	Ismail Abdul-Qadir Hamid	Member
3. Retired Staff Lt. General	Hazim Hassan al-Ali	Member
4. Retired Lt. General	Kamel Mahmood Khatab	Member
5. Retired Staff Lt. General	Talib Ali Abdul-Latif	Member
6. Retired Staff Lt. General	Faisal Farid Amin	Member
7. Retired Staff Br. General	Fadel 'Abbas Rahim	Member
8. Staff Br. General	Kadhim Dhaher Jabir	Member
9. Retired Staff Br. General	Saleh Hussein Jar-Allah	Member
10. First Lieutenant	[Redacted Name]	Military Security Representative

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Tape Number 1  
Recording Date 5/26/1988

Attendees

1. Staff Field Marshal	Saddam Hussein	President of the Republic and Commander In Chief of the Armed Forces
2. Staff General	Adnan Khair Allah	Deputy Commander In Chief Of the Armed Forces and Minister of Defense
3. Staff Lt. General	Abdul-Jabar Khalil Shenshel	State Minister of Military Affairs
4. Mr.	Latif Naseif Jasim	Minister of Culture and Media
5. Staff Lt. General	Nazar Abdul-Kareem al-Khazraji	Military Chief of Staff
6. Staff Lt. General	Alla'a al-deen Kadhim	Secretary General of the General Command of the Armed Forces
7. Staff Br. General	Ghalib Ahmad Hasoon	Navy and Coast Guard Commander

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(Side One of the Tape)

**Mr. Minister of State, Staff Lt. General Abdul-Jabar Khalil Shanshal:** The cost of two boats is more than a hundred million rubles which amounts to one hundred fifty million dollars. So, there are two points: first the missile.

**Mr. President:** It seems like whoever does not manufacture weapons must leave the armament world and start his own.

**Mr. Minister of State:** Sir, they are just two boats... but the cost of the missile is very high. The latest price was four hundred thousand rubles or six hundred thousand dollars per missile. I tried to get them to two hundred and fifty [*thousand*] but I wasn't successful.

**Mr. President:** We can buy a small quantity of these missiles. Then we will start manufacturing them here.

**Mr. Minister of State:** If this is the case, then we have to continue working with them regarding the purchase of these two boats. The price per boat is reasonable, approximately 25-26 million rubles excluding shipping. The price will be approximately 27-28 million rubles with shipping included. I think this is a high price and is in addition to the issue of shipping. They prefer to deliver the boats to one of their ports, and then they will ship it to us. This made me suspicious of their intentions, especially when they apologized for not delivering them directly to us. Also, leaving the boats like that at their ports is not right. I wanted to work better with the negotiations delegation. So, I put more in the deposit than usual, and Your Excellency can take a look at the attached report.

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**Mr. Minister of State:** We can make use of this amount according to the agreement and until we include the discount of [*paying in*] rubles which is 14% in case we decide to do so. It is now up to you Your Excellency. If you wish to purchase the boats from them, they are available. We are thinking, in terms of operations, the boats could be utilized beneficially by using them in the deep waters inside the Gulf. There, the role of the Air Force in protecting their movement will become prominent, as well as protecting them around the nearby coasts. Sir, their role will be significant.

**Mr. President:** From a practical standpoint, there are difficulties protecting their movement for a long period inside the Gulf. Let's assume the boats are sailing with warplanes in the air protecting them. All hostile targets will be beyond our radar range making it difficult for our warplanes to engage enemy warplanes because the enemy has the advantage of using his radar, especially if the time required to provide protection is long. How many times do you have to change planes because they run out of fuel just getting to the boats' location?

**Mr. Minister of State:** From an operational aspect, its role will be limited... If we talk about the operational aspect in the north of the Gulf, we have two locations that are continuously subjected to enemy attacks and they are al-Bakir Port and the Deep Port. If the enemy attacks by small boats, we could deal with it using conventional weapons like anti-air artillery or anti-tank artillery or conventional artillery. Here, the role of an artillery boat will be significant.

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**Mr. Minister of State:** It is not logical to deal with these small boats that attack the port with a missile that is equivalent to an artillery boat in cost. We are left with this comparison, Sir... The Navy is consistently insisting on buying these boats. The only thing left is the decision [*to buy them*]. Therefore, I was lenient with the negotiations delegation and kept a deposit amount in the agreement so that if we decide to buy them we have the money for them.

**Mr. President:** Yes, go ahead.

**Secretary General, Staff Lt. General Alla'a al-deen Kadhim:** Sir, the fact is, the Iranian Navy has some French boats of the [*unclear*] type. If they resume relations with the French and were able to obtain spare parts and missiles from them, they may be able to operate these boats... So, our navy is taking into account the possibility of the enemy being able to operate these missiles. Our navy will need missile boats to confront that... I can't remember now exactly the situation with our naval missile boats but I recall that we signed for two missile boats and I think they are still available.

**Mr. Minister of State:** Yes, two boats in 1984.

**Mr. President:** They increased the range of the missiles; I think it is now 40 km.

**Mr. Minister of State:** Maybe the maximum range for the boat...

**Navy and Coast Guard Commander, Staff Lt. General Ghalib Ahmed Hasoon:** Sir, both of them have a range of... I don't remember the exact number.

**Mr. President:** I think the range of the Russian one is 40 km.

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**Mr. Minister of State:** The Russian one, yes.

**Secretary General:** Sir, I talked to our brothers at the [*Iraqi Directorate of*] Military Manufacturing and Armament. They asked for the Chinese coastal [*missile*] type, the one that is placed on boats. As for the Russian missiles, we didn't get anything back from them.

**Mr. President:** They developed both types and the Chinese [*missile*] successfully reached a range of 150 km.

**Secretary General:** Its original range is 80-90 km.

**Mr. President:** I also think they doubled the [*range of the*] Soviet type.

**Secretary General:** I don't remember, Sir.

**Mr. Minister of State:** The problem, Sir, is in controlling it [*the missile*] in long ranges. Your Excellency knows it's a transatlantic missile.

**Mr. President:** Yes, when it is out of the...

**Mr. Minister of State:** When it [*the missile*] is out of direct radar control range, it requires us to control it with an aerial device guiding it to the target.

**Military Chief Of Staff, Staff Lt. General Nazar Abdul-Kareem al-Khazraji:** Sir, the main task of a missile boat is to [*illegible*] by the navy. Although the navy wishes to acquire these boats, I didn't see a clear reason for it throughout my discussions with them.

**Mr. President:** No. Anyway, don't be hasty in things like these, especially big purchases.

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**Mr. President:** Alright. We wanted to meet today to discuss the next step... The enemy still has large concentrated pockets in the north while we are continuing our successes in crushing enemy forces. However, with these successes, we didn't give the enemy a chance to maneuver the forces located in the north. The battle didn't last more than three or four days which would have given the enemy a chance to maneuver its forces in the north. This doesn't mean that we should extend the battle tactically so the enemy can maneuver his forces. No, because our operations are successful and the quicker the battle is, the more we are draining the capabilities of the enemy and our losses are minimized. Our attack forces will be ready for any future operations. Indeed, the forces used in executing these operations, whether they were Republican Guards or any other branch, are considered ready at this moment to execute a similar operation particularly so that, praise the lord, our losses are very minimal and the morale is high.

However, we noticed that the enemy, in spite of these continuous operations and the intensity of our strikes, is still powerful. The enemy did not maneuver their current forces located in the north to spread them as we expected.

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**Mr. President:** This means, in addition to the great losses they suffered, that they know very well we have a large force in front of them and that we are still continuing our activities in the south. Thus, it will be more beneficial for us to recapture our lands in the north. So, they [*the Iranians*] are compelled to continue their large presence [*in the north*] to defend the gains they made in the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps sector.

We can conclude that the enemy is still intending to launch a large attack on select priority targets. They think that they can shift the balance of a possible loss due to us recapturing our land.

So, after our successful Tawakalna Ala Allah [*in God we trust*] military operations in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps sector, we have to think of two quick points. First, how can we strengthen the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps to lessen the risk of the enemy weakening us or taking us by surprise? Second, what is our next mission? Where is the next strike going to be? We have to ask if the enemy's concentration in that area provides us with an opportunity to strike it in a serious way to confront and crush them.

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**Mr. President:** Meaning that we do not wait for their attack. We bombard them with artillery and all kinds of weaponry to keep draining them to the last breath before expelling them from our lands. That way we destroy the main concentration and deprive them of this possibility [*of a counterattack*]. Or should we continue engaging them with all kinds of weapons until we get them to the point of total exhaustion without distressing our main forces [*not embarking on a major offensive*]? The meaning here, is that we have to adopt one of two solutions. We take a strong defensive position and concentrate our fire, which means not leaving matters in the hands of the corps commander but under the responsibility of the General Command [*of the Armed Forces*] because we all have previously agreed not to leave major operations, including attrition operations, in the hands of corps commanders. If we leave it to them [*corps commanders*] alone, their vision will be limited to conventional methods of firepower and regular means while we need to use non-conventional methods. In other words, we need to use tactics according to our national capabilities not just the capability of the corps by itself. Tactics should include all that is new as far as envisioning the situation of the enemy and confusing them.

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**Mr. President:** So, regardless of which solution we choose, the General Command has to get involved in drawing up the plan. If we resort to the attrition tactics and strong defense, we will draw up a wise plan for that. If we resort to attacks and confrontation methods then we have to strengthen our defensive forces during the first phase. Then, we do reconnaissance and assign the sectors such as this is for the Republican Guards and this is your sector, this is for the attack forces and this for the counterattack forces - I mean a counterattack [*defensive*] force in case the enemy attacked and in the meantime an attack [*offensive*] forces for these targets. You are another force, this is your sector, and you are here. An attack and counterattack force... After we complete our preparations, we start to devise a plan to exhaust the enemy and we do have the capabilities to exhaust them...

We currently have 31 artillery regiments located at the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps sector. We can also reinforce them with another 50 regiments making a total of 80 regiments, in addition to the mortar fire which can be sent according to needs just like Major General Salah 'Abboud did when he amassed 800 82mm mortars. We also have land superiority. I mean, we can confuse this [*Iranian*] mass concentration and destroy it. Afterward, we can work freely in other sectors.

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**Mr. President:** Another possibility when resorting to an attrition war is that we keep engaging the enemy with artillery and other weaponry without letting them distress our forces. Then, we hit them with a decisive strike. These are the two scenarios we have.

We wanted to discuss these ideas in a timely manner because time will work against us and give the enemy an opportunity because they know very well by now that our strike will be coming in the south. So, they may do something soon. Thus, the faster we work, if we choose the second option which is defense and attrition by constantly striking them in other sectors or even if we choose the first scenario when they are faced with a force, their situation will be different while we should be kept on alert. I find myself obligated to remind you about the conventional methods we resort to... Thus, we must stay alert because amassing in large groups in some location may give the enemy an opportunity to strike somewhere else. We have to stay alert... Yes, Comrade Adnan.

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**Mr. Minister of Defense, Staff General Adnan Khairallah:** Mr. President, since I am the first one to speak, please allow me, Your Excellency, to be technical in my discussion and add something to what you have already mentioned so that my discussion will be an introduction for the other comrades with a better military understanding. Mr. President, through the last eight years, if we look at the magnitude of the military operations, we will see that the enemy has two very important interests.

**Mr. President:** Call on the Minister of Media to attend this meeting. There are a lot of things he can use in the media and stay updated about the war.

**Mr. Minister of Defense:** We fought remarkably in big battles in the south sector. We can say that we fought in a lesser capacity yet with great effort as well in the north.

Someone may ask, why the enemy didn't consider [*attacking*] Baghdad through the middle axes across Khanaqin — Baqubah, leading to the central command and control in Baghdad which is more important, as Your Excellency mentioned. I think that the nature of the enemy's mentality is more like how it has been described by the media and written about in the press regarding [*the Iranian plan*] to redraw the region. I also think that it has something to do with the aftermath of the 1973 [*Arab- Israeli*] war.

Your Excellency talked in one of your analyses about how they [*Iranians*] considered Sadat [*former Egyptian president*] a national hero for successfully implementing The Crossing [*also known as Operation Badr, a joint Egyptian-Syrian military operation in 1973 to cross the Suez Canal*] which was in return for five undeclared conditions that were achieved subsequently:

1. Removing the Soviet presence from Egypt.
2. Reopening the doors for the Americans, after they were closed for ten years between the 1967 and 1973 wars.
3. Giving a larger significance to American-Arabs within the borders.
4. Recognizing Israel's existence within secure borders starting at Kilometer 101 [*the UN checkpoint between Egypt and Israel in 1973*].
5. Controlling the revolutionary ambitions in the area which we are part of, though we are not at the top of the list.

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**Mr. Minister of Defense:** Your Excellency knows the Syrian position. If we look at the so called radical regimes: Iraq / Syria / Libya /South Yemen... The Syrian position is well known and Assad's opinion about us is also well known. Qadafi's position is well known, although he has his own way but he is sticking to where he is, and South Yemen seems to be internationally accepted. So, there is the big horse left, Iraq. The intentions were to divide Syria into three states, Lebanon into three states, and Iraq would also become three states: Kurdish in the north, Sunnis in the middle, and Shiites in the south.

Thus, they [*Iranians*] fought in the south to create a state that would be loyal to their regime in case they failed to take over all of Iraq. If this also fails, they may try to create a state in the north or in the mountains. This means that the general plan is to create more mini states in order to divide the Pan-Arab region. They are trying to achieve a country-wide goal by dividing Iraq and getting rid of this evil while at the same time they are dividing the whole region into mini states according to the general plan. This is why they focused on the southern and northern sectors. There [*in southern Iraq*] they will find a state that will be loyal to the Iranian mentality while over there [*in northern Iraq*] will be a state that will contemplate the national Kurdish ideology, which is also harmful to the Arabs and will lead to the division of Iraq as I mentioned earlier...

Before the battle of al-Faw, the enemy was causing us a lot of pain because al-Faw is a major area, al-Shalamaja was a major concern and close to al-Basra, and the northern and southern Majnoon [*oil fields*] were also of great concern. This is all in the southern sector. As far as the northern sector, Your Excellency remembers some of my visions about that and Your Excellency added to them as well.

In my opinion, we can say that they are trying to seize the Suran region [*Erbil, Iraq*], so they can then control Darbandikhan from the south up to Bazian and Rayzan to surround Dukan from the north and up to the dividing line between Qalat Diza and Mawt.

This is the Jalal region. They want to seize two big dams [*Darbandikhan and Dukan*] in addition to one province [*Erbil*] and its suburban cities. Your Excellency, Mr. President, after the migration operations [*forceful migration of Kurds*], all the migrating villagers came down from the mountains to the plain areas and we placed them in an organized way.

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**Mr. Minister of Defense:** Currently, Mr. President, they [*the displaced Kurds*] are stretched from Sulaymaniyah to inside Bazian, and even in front of Bazian from the direction of Chamchamal. It all became a city next to another city, from Shaharזור to Sayed Sadiq and until Halabja. Mr. President, you will see a continuous city from Halabja/Serwan/Sayed Sadiq and even to Arbat which was just a small village of no more than 150 mud houses but now this valley to the left and to the right of the main highway is full of inhabited cities where people came from the mountains to occupy the valleys. The issue is not about one city or village. It is a number of cities, one after another: Halabja/Serwan/Sayed Sadiq/Shandri camp, which was recently demolished, and Arbat to Sulaymaniyah including the main road towards Dukan and leading to Kirkuk. Here, Mr. President, I have a point to make. If we were the Iranian leadership, and in the aftermath of al-Faw battle and Tawakalna Ala Allah [*in God we trust*] which we [*Iraqis*] successfully won, the greatest concentrations of the enemy are currently in the north... So the question now is, according to the available information and adding in the assessments and other assisting factors, will the enemy return to al-Faw again after all that happened there?

Mr. President, in my personal opinion, from now and up to a year, I don't think that the enemy will go in this direction because of what happened to them in al-Faw within 35 hours of entering which cost them a lot of blood. In my assessment, they will not return to al-Shalamaja either, although I don't totally take it out of their strategy but it's not a priority.

Now, at the Majnoon [*oil fields*], they may attack us and take southern Majnoon to regain their former position. For your information, Your Excellency, we are now in the southern Majnoon [*field*], which is bigger than the northern Majnoon [*field*]. What is left in the hands of the enemy is only the northern dam while we are around it from the right, left, east, and the west so all that is left is the buffer zone between us and the enemy.

In light of the success achieved in al-Faw and in al-Shalamaja, we now think, like Your Excellency said, that the operations to recapture the northern Majnoon – if we don't get attacked by the enemy according to Your Excellency's expectations in the northern area – then I could see the northern Majnoon coming back to us just like al-Faw and al- Shalamaja.

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**Mr. Minister of Defense:** So, now we have to be strong and we are currently strong in the area of al-Faw, Mr. President. Yesterday, we completed the 2<sup>nd</sup> line of troops assigned in al-Shalamaja to protect al-Basra. We also have an operation in northern Majnoon and we have now divided Majnoon between us and them. I don't expect any surprises from the enemy here but I wouldn't totally dismiss it either. But if the forces here – or we can say in this meeting that if we can't regain northern Majnoon we should at least be strong about it.

Other than that, Mr. President, before we start on our mission in the north, let's assume that the enemy will attack us with its concentrated forces. Then what is going to happen and where? How big will their casualties be and how much will it cost us to get them out? It is not a secret that keeping their concentration of forces in the northern area makes me worried and we can't explain the reason for this concentration. However, until now – one of the conclusions that Your Excellency mentioned from the Halabja battle that I want to talk about again is that the Iraqi soldier, defending Kurdistan and its women in Penjwin, gets injured [*by the Iranians*] only to be killed afterward by the saboteurs [*Kurdish insurgents*] in the same area! The soldiers will immediately think about the sacrifices they're making to defend those ungrateful people despite the fact that they're in Iraqi lands. Your Excellency previously mentioned it to the comrades in the Command. However, until now, Mr. President, I feel that this is relevant because Kojar took us four hours [*to regain*] when by my estimation it should have taken thirty minutes. They even divided it for us until 830 hours [*military time*]. The same happened in Ahmed-Rumi, Qashan, and other areas... Mr. President, the enemy is now in the Sheik Muhammad area.

**Mr. President:** Did they perform any activities yesterday?

**Speaker:** Our forces had limited activities.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, they did have [*activities*] four days ago on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, and 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Mr. President:** Welcome Abu Anmar (Minister of Culture and Media, Mr. Latif Naseif Jasim). Welcome.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** In the Tawakalna Ala Allah [*in God we trust*] operations, we relied in our action on small effective activities down to the platoon level. Four platoons in four directions.

**Mr. President:** [*Greeting Mr. Latif Jasim*] God bless you.

**Minister of Culture and Media, Mr. Latif Naseif Jasim:** God bless you, Sir.

**Mr. Minister of Defense:** Thus, Mr. President, the possibility still stands as long as this [*Iranian*] concentration of force exists in addition to what happened in the Halabja sector. I expect that if they come with a large force, they will be able to achieve something in Darbandikhan. And likewise, I expect that they can achieve things similar to Halabja in Qalat Diza to hold the Sanksar strait, Kiwarush, and the mountain range in front of Abu Muthana, Asoos, and the Qalat Diza valley. Their interest in Sheikh Muhammad, Mr. President, led us to think that in two military operations they may return to the Sabotage [*the Kurdish insurgency campaign*] headquarters where Jalal Talabani was and end up east of Dukan or they will hold on to the mountain range leading to Sanksar from the south...I was hoping I could explain this clearly on a relief map so you can see it.

**Mr. President:** I can say that I generally have a good image of the area in my mind.

**Mr. Minister of Defense:** Qara Dagh and Zimnako are mountains with the Darbandikhan dam inside them and we are confronting the enemy in front of us. Behind these areas is where we did al-Anfal operations in Qara Dagh and removed the enemy. From Qara Dagh, a mountain range extends to the north, crossing Sulaymaniyah and extending to the west of Dukan. We will put Dukan-Sordash road on our right where we will gain this mountain range and put Chamchamal to the left and continue toward Dukan into the Little Zab.

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**Mr. Minister of Defense:** Sir, this is one basin. The other basin from the south of Dukan to its lake, Waheeba-Sultan, and the basin of Jawara curving to the east of Shaheedan and in front of it is Kiwarush mountain range and Qalat Diza. This is the other basin.

Mr. President, I expect the enemy will work equally around three axes. The three axes will provide similar results to each other. In the south wing, let's call it like this, Mr. President, which is Darbandikhan, they will achieve great results and Your Excellency can clearly see the results obtained by gaining the mountain range. The other one [*axis*], Mr. President, is if they consistently push, by utilizing their success, from Sheik Mohammed in the direction of Katito and from there --

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(Side Two of the Tape)

**Mr. Minister of Defense:** -- they will surround Qalat Diza basin from the south, to establish something in the direction of Suran, as well as from the northern edge with the possibility of moving to another direction like Qaladze and holding Kiwarush then doing a similar operation. Exactly as it happened in Halabja.

So, Mr. President, Darbandikhan is a strategic target and Dukan is a strategic target in the eyes of saboteurs and the collaborators of Iran, while Qaladze doesn't give results like these larger ones. However, Qaladze basin and Qamrina are well known. If the enemy organized two military units and took control of this strait, we would have a battle similar to the battle of Halabja. However, we took precautions and I think we also reinforced the troops in Dukan with an additional brigade. This is of course a common military move which may cause positive or negative effects, and until now the counter procedures came only from us.

There is one additional thing. It is the collaborators' community who can still taste the bitterness of the [*defeat*] in the Fifth al-Anfal operations.

**Mr. President:** The other al-Anfal?

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, the sixth al-Anfal.

**Mr. President:** How is their situation now?

**Military Chief of Staff:** Good, Sir.

**Mr. Minister of Defense:** As a result of the successful strikes in the Fifth al-Anfal operations, a new alliance was announced between the forces of sabotage [*Kurdish insurgency*].

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**Mr. President:** The defeated forces. You arrived late, it would have been better if you had arrived earlier.

**Mr. Minister of Defense:** Mr. President, for that reason, I will go back and give a more inclusive picture. There is a possibility that the enemy recaptures the southern Majnoon with an attack now which will create a threat for us especially if they surrounded us like this and we stopped them (pointing at maps). It will create a bigger threat if the enemy acts based on one of the three possible scenarios. This concentration of forces may be moving equally powerful on two axes, which will make the final results dependent on the collaborators group especially in the mountains.

Simply, Sir, I suggest something that guarantees us that the 6th Corps will strictly hold its sector in the southern Majnoon while monitoring the nearby edges of the al-Haweza marshes so that we can agree on the current defenses of the southern sector as it is now, Sir.

As for the locations of al-Zubaidat, Sheikh Saad and Sanoba, I expect them to be in our hands at any time, but even if these cities fall in our hands now it will not have any direct impact on the strategic or even operational level. Their only importance is that they will affect the forces that are moving forward from them in the south. Sanoba is still in their [*Iranians*] hands but it has no significance other than it is our national land. al-Zubaidat is an oil target but it is not as important as the southern Majnoon or the other Majnoon. Thus, Sir, I do not expect the return of the enemy here on the southern sector because, if we may say, it is not psychologically beneficial for them.

**Mr. President:** Those Iranians don't get bothered as we do. They are something different.

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**Mr. Minister of Defense:** Thus, I expect that if the enemy is trying to achieve results – although Your Excellency remembers that when the military Chief of Staff was doing his Umrah [*Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca*] we received some information that the enemy is possibly oblivious to the middle axis so we reorganized the theater of operations around the mountains of Darwishka and Hamrin and the locations and positions around Hamrin lake and the Heedan roads north and south of it. The Iranian goal is to come down to the flat terrain where, as Your Excellency knows, they can use infantry walking on foot and thus they won't be able to achieve any strategic goals. However, the weapon that we are most afraid of in here is armor because in general we all know how the armor of the enemy is and how our armors' situation is. So, I don't expect the enemy to be able to do anything more than surrounding the city of Khanaqin and entering it.

**Mr. President:** There are no other close targets?

**Mr. Minister of Defense:** Yes, Sir, there are no close targets. Thus, if we follow priorities, we find that our new obstacle is the situation with the collaborators [*Kurdish insurgents*] in the northern area. If we were in the Iranian leadership, what are our opportunities? What are the priorities and why? If we take Darbandikhan, what is going to happen if we targeted Sheikh Mohammed with the help of the collaborators' pockets when the enemy is on the mountain and returns to Kanitoo and its surrounding areas or gets closer to Dukan again? I think it would be good for propaganda in the media and simpler if they concentrate on Sanksir. They will come out with an operation similar to Halabja. So, Sir, these general plans are acceptable. This will be enough for me now and I leave it to the brothers to feel free to participate, after your permission. Thank you, Sir.

**Mr. President:** I will add some other things to what you've mentioned, from the political and military aspect as well. For the Iranians, Basra now is just as far from the borders as Baghdad.

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**Mr. President:** Psychologically, for them, Baghdad is closer to the border than Basra. Of course, this is at the current time and this factor will change with time and circumstances because there is nothing constant in such situations. Everyone was all excited to chase the enemy and enter the Iranian territory which now bothers us psychologically. The same thing will happen with them in a shorter period of time regarding al-Faw as a target and Basra as a target and so forth.

They were focusing on Basra as a political target to create a situation that would put the Arabs of the Gulf on one side and the Shiites of Iraq on another side. When they tried this, they started hating the Iraqi Shiites more than their hatred toward the Iraqi Sunnis. They even started hating the groups that were helping them, like al-Hakim's [*Mohammad Baqir al-Hakim*] group, because their presence there was just for decoration. They wanted to break his legs and they hated him. We will leave al-Hakim's group but I think they now hate Iraqi Shiites more than they hate Iraqi Sunnis because they found out that the Iraqi Shiites are not serving their purposes and they are with their president, Saddam. "Welcome, welcome" etcetera. [*Saddam is referencing an Iraqi chant where people welcome him out in the streets*] While they [*Iranians*] are saying every now and then that they want to reach Karbala and liberate such and such to form a Shiite state.

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**Mr. President:** Yet, they [*Shiites*] are against them [*Iranians*]. Aren't they serving in the Iraqi military? Aren't they Iraqi soldiers and not imported mercenaries? Despite all the bad groups that appeared here and there, the enemy, as you said, is annoyed of Basra and the people of Basra. These bombs they are dropping on Basra are an indication of their anger at the people of Basra. This is how I feel about it. But now, what makes them [*Iranians*] comfortable psychologically is the people of the north because over there, despite the Iranian sectarian claims, the [*Kurdish*] people are imposters and will do anything to get what they want even if it means helping Persians create a racist Persian empire. Historically, there is a connection between the people of the north and the Iranians, especially the people of Sulaymaniyah. This means there are people in the north siding with us and there are some loving Iran by heart and mind in their common, short-term goals.

So this is the space that Iran is looking for. A space to build a mini state or something to preoccupy Iraqis to weaken our ability to fight in other areas during the war and keep us preoccupied even when the war stops officially at the frontline while it continues as it was during the time of al-Barzani between Iraq and the rebellious pockets [*referring to the First Iraqi-Kurdish war of 1970*].

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**Mr. President:** They [*the Iranians*] went to al-Faw and they found no one there to help, no Shiites to form their state. They brought this al-Hakim group [*to al-Faw*] which they host to drop their bombs and then they cross the Shatt al-Arab again, returning back [*to Iran*]. They just prayed and returned [*they stayed for a very short time, barely doing a prayer and crossing back to Iran afterward*].

So, Basra didn't give any hope for them to reach it, at least during this phase. I mean they are not jackasses. Instinct will even compel a jackass to move it away from danger and it moves them [*the Iranians*] as well.

I mean, it has been eight years and these are the results. We fought them for forty-five days in al-Faw, yet they lost it in thirty-five hours! For three months and a couple days, we fought against them in eastern Basra, all in one battle from the Great Day [*an Iraqi occasion*] to the Birthday [*Saddam's Birthday*]. In eastern Basra, we have been fighting since 1982, but all that they obtained is about five kilometers deep and eight kilometers of the frontline wide, yet they lost it in three hours because officially the battle was between 3-4 hours long and the rest of the time was just forces advancing forward whether it was infantry or armor.

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**Mr. President:** General Hussein insisted on ending the battle quickly and we replied, “Why the hurry?” There was no resistance to be mentioned except when soldiers reach the tip of the Shalha, the only area that they needed some time to get to and God willing they will get there quickly because the last four hours have been nothing but marching for the troops to reach there. This was the first phase of the collapse of the Iranian forces in front of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps and its soldiers. The battle ended between Jasim River and al-Da’iji, everything else was just troops advancing, whether it was armor or infantry. Just like that, the three and a half month long battles ended in four hours! In previous years, they used to attack eastern Basra and take casualties daily, and then finally, in four hours it was all over and we won. Thus, we were a factor in psychologically angering them in one way or another, though this wasn't similar to our psychological anger because they are different by nature. Being cautious is a must, but we shouldn't exaggerate it in these sectors: seventh/third/sixth.

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**Mr. President:** We have to fiercely defend here but not on the account of the other forces which didn't psychologically annoy the enemy until now where they have great ambitions like the northern sector. Those [*Iraqis*] with enemy forces, who call themselves the opposition and join enemy forces, this mob, whether they are Sunnis or Shiites, the enemy knows them very well. But the rest of the Iraqi people are fighting with their military and nation. They tried creating things like what they called the Mahdi Brigade and so forth but it was useless. These [*Iraqi traitors*] became blood thirsty because they lost their positions and their fate is threatened. What does it mean when Jalal al-Talabani receives monetary aid from Hafiz al-Assad who in turn begs for this aid from others only to give it to Jalal? He gets it from Qadafi, America, Russia, and other places. Everyone who gives monetary aid will ask for something in return. He [*Jalal*] is now outside the borders of Iraq, yet why is he still receiving aid? Why does he get as much as he wants? He needs this aid because he wants to form a state and has ambitions to build the nation of Kurdistan over which he will preside. The same thing goes for the Communist party and all others alike, the known ones and the unknown ones.

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**Mr. President:** Those Barzanis were also affected by the battle of al-Anfal which is still continuing and they were crushed by it, you've seen their collapse. So, to defend the fate of their group, they try daily to make things look nicer by saying this and that, like the Sulaymaniyah people are discontent and they want to cheer for you [*Iranians*]. The Halabja battle encouraged them [*the enemies*]. They were encouraged by the treasonous people, Halabja people, who are all traitors. Historically if not all of them, the vast majority of them are traitors because they met the Iranians with cheers. That is what encouraged them and thus they are reconsidering their position in the southern sector which caused them psychological anger for the Shiites of the south or the Sunnis of the middle. So they're going to the Kurds of the north and maybe they can come up with a result while continually striking the south and the middle. They [*the Iranians*] may be able to achieve a goal they weren't able to achieve in the south which is creating an opposition state, whether it's Shiite or Kurdish, depending on this mob of criminals to form the basis of a temporary government to end Iraq and then it is all over. They justify the long war to their people by claiming that Kurdistan had created a new situation which will be spreading all over Iraq.

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**Mr. President:** They [*Iranians*] say just like it happened in Kurdistan and we were able to achieve something, we will gradually be able to get Kirkuk and later the middle and the south. Thus, I think that after what happened, their [*Kurdish and Iranian*] fate is now connected and they are thinking that joint force is now achieving results without losses and they will ultimately get everything step by step. Yet, in Halabja, they thought they got it and they were fighting for it but we got it back like nothing happened.

So, we must keep this fact in mind when we are defending and when we are attacking because it is an analytical fact based on proof and not general expectations; live proof from the ground. What's important here is that all the forces are enjoying very high morale except for the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps. Naturally, the enemy will target such situations to reach its objective of destroying the Iraqi military spirit which they were able to do in Halabja when they captured the commander [*of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps*] and many more. Isn't this a destruction of the Iraqi military spirit? Militarily, the Iraqi military spirit will not be destroyed by casualties. That is not going to destroy a military spirit. For example, the German military spirit wasn't crushed. They kept on fighting to the last moment.

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**Mr. President:** In Berlin, no one could claim that they defeated the German Military. Destruction of the military spirit is the result of unqualified leaders, not the fighters that join the military to fight. That's the reason.

So, first of all, we have to raise the morale of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps as quickly as we can. As for how we are going to raise the morale, we will do so by providing superb defensive abilities as well as providing superb offensive abilities, or in any other way we can. This has to be the first thing because the enemy will not be able to achieve its goals unless it destroys the spirit of the Iraqi military with a series of operations where the Iraqi military is not able to achieve results. The Iraqi military was only able to achieve these results behind the frontline in al-Anfal. These results raised the morale of the people in this nation and weakened the morale of those siding with the enemy, but it didn't raise the morale of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps as much as we wanted because when they attacked the enemy, nothing happened. I mean, even Sheik Mohammed which was

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**Mr. President:** recaptured by the military and the National Defense fighters who turned it over to the 1st Corps, which then consequently lost it without a fight. These are the military facts as they are in front of us.

**Military Chief of Staff:** It was recaptured by an air assault. Then snow started falling while two regiments were there and we inflicted a lot of losses upon the Iranians.

**Mr. President:** Yes, our forces captured it and our forces lost it. It was captured with a battle and then lost without a battle. Isn't this right? I don't care about this. I would rather lose Baghdad than destroy the Iraqi military spirit. I want the military values to thrive. I want an army that fights to the last moment in al-Anbar and then we come back and kick them out of Baghdad, and we reach Khanaqin to get to the borders again. The determination is there, the patience is there, the energy is there. The only thing is for the military not to collapse just like that. This Sheik Mohammed area, how did they retreat from it? Just by talking? We need to raise the morale of the 1st Corps as soon as we can while negatively affecting the morale of the enemy. What are the means to do so? Is it more conventional troops for reinforcements or is it something other than more troops? I personally lean toward sending the Republican Guards and the Armed Forces Reserves while leaving us some troops for any surprise attacks that we think may happen, and all the military firepower. We keep them and put a plan into place.

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**Mr. President:** We keep the artillery firing on them until the Republican Guards troops arrive to change the situation. Then the troops in the northern sector feel that there are three Republican Guards Corps outside their positions and moving around as a counterattack force with specific assigned duties as a defense force and as an attack force, each with a different commander and different assigned sectors. One for the Guards commander and the other for the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps commander Staff Lt. General Sultan. Each is independent of the other. The reserves are to be used as follows: one will move as a counterattack force moving within the plan. The first quick phase is to move as a counterattack force and the second phase is when we get to the plan. Then, you [*the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps*] will move to liberate, and the competition will be between you and the Republican Guard, starting at the beginning and until the final results.

This is our plan, to drain the enemy. Execute it step by step in detail and there should be absolutely no deviation as it should be executed to the letter. We keep attacking them [*the Iranians*] while our forces are available and ready for any emergency or surprise.

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**Mr. President:** After these troops arrive, the balance has to shift and we will deny the enemy any element of surprise, while in the meantime we work on raising the morale of our troops. If the enemy tries to change its positions, we will adjust our plans. If they don't change, we have to do something. In other words, not just sit there, doing nothing and getting stuck in this cycle but rather we start other attacks that we have planned previously and we activate our other local strikes such as the southern Majnoon and the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps will come up with some activities. The southern Majnoon has a special propaganda effect as it is known to everyone. So when we announce it's been captured, no one asks how much of the southern Majnoon is liberated or anything like that. The liberation will be total and we are now only a few steps away from the northern Majnoon so, God willing, in the next operations we will capture northern Majnoon. We'll do anything we can do to lower the morale of the enemy and raise the morale of our forces.

We keep draining the enemy and we kick them out with their large concentration of forces. We should not keep waiting for a surprise. We should use the firepower plan to secure the collapse and the destruction of this concentration with intense firepower. If they reinforce their positions with ten soldiers instead of two, then this will be to our advantage as well because the bomb that could have killed two Iranians will now kill ten Iranians.

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**Mr. President:** We have no other choice but to use a smart and efficient firepower plan of action to destroy the enemy. Then we turn to these defeated forces and we will kill and capture no less than five thousand of them. If we break their spirit by an attack, take territories from them, and destroy their forces, then this will be our final objective. Afterward, with God's help, our forces will not suffer any more casualties than what we suffered in the battle of al-Faw or maybe a little bit more. Let our forces be the big stick [*we use*] to kick the enemy out with. And here we have choices to make. We either reinforce the current troops, and throughout the discussion you can convince me that reinforcements will give us the element of surprise without involving the Republican Guards, or should we involve the Republican Guards for assault purposes?

As a first stage of defense we could coordinate between reconnaissance and attacks on enemies. Despite the enemy's presence, we will deal with the Iranian forces in the rear using airpower to isolate them and then we keep striking them for ten days. We won't even give them a chance to eat or drink. We will do daily bombing of targets within our reach using Grad missiles for the near targets and airpower for the far targets in the rear in addition to artillery fire until we exhaust them [*the Iranians*]. Let our firepower plan be for a week long, not hours long, in a smart and well studied way.

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**Mr. President:** After we exhaust them, our troops will have finished their reconnaissance and preparations for the assault whether it is at night or during the day. Then, we will target the Iranian concentration of forces and attack them continuously in battles of attrition for a period of twenty days utilizing hit and run tactics. [*After which*] we will finalize the battle within two hours. So, when we get to that phase, I think I would prefer the second option [*sending the Republican Guards*] and [*directly*] attacking the big concentration of forces to finish this obstacle forever instead of leaving our troops vulnerable to a surprise attack that might negatively affect our northern sector. If they affect our northern forces, we will have to --

(End of Side Two of the Tape)

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Recording Number: 2

Date of Recording: 5/26/1988

Attendees

- |                           |                       |   |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| 1. Staff Field Marshal    | Saddam Hussein        | President of the Republic and<br>Commander In Chief of the<br>Armed Forces  |
| 2. Staff Lt. General      | Adnan Khair Allah     | Deputy Commander In Chief<br>Of the Armed Forces and<br>Minister of Defense |
| 3. Mr.                    | Latif Naseif Jasim    | Minister of Culture and Media   |
| 4. Staff Lt. General      | Nazar Abdul-Kareem    | Military Chief of<br>Staff  |
| 5. Air Force Maj. General | al-Hakam Hassan Ali   | Head of the Army Aviation   |
| 6. Staff Lt. General      | Alla'a al-deen Kadhim | Secretary General of the<br>General Command of the Armed Forces             |

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(Side One of the Tape)

**Mr. President:** -- instead of putting ourselves in a position vulnerable to a surprise attack where they will harm the northern troops, which will then force us to defend and drain resources of our artillery and the Republican Guards... as the Arabic saying goes “Do everything fast and faster while we are still in a good shape.” We are still ready. We will quickly move our troops reinforced by artillery. We will move them without discussion. The soldiers will turn around from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps sector to the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps sector and let the enemy know openly that we are coming for them. The Kurds will tell them [*the enemy*] and they can do whatever they want. But let the first phase be with the largest group of infantry in case the enemy decides to do a quick counterattack, then our boys will be there. After that, we maneuver in a normal manner with some armor in the 4<sup>th</sup> Corps which is beyond our defensive capability – I mean beyond the expected capability of the corps. And while we are there, we can significantly take advantage of our armor and what is left of our infantry in two significant places inside the 4<sup>th</sup> Corps and its initial targets at al-Zubaidat and its surroundings.

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**Mr. President:** Then we take southern Majnoon. If the enemy notices the 4<sup>th</sup> Corps and is forced to confront it that is an advantage as well. If the enemy won't confront us, then we're moving on to an Iraqi target and we will recapture it as long as the enemy is busy and under our control in the north since we came to confront them with a plan to destroy them and not just to appear in front of them. In the past, we used to wait for them, but now, Praise the Lord, we have enough determination and optimism to not wait for them. We go right into their positions. We will stop there for awhile, as much as the plan allows. Then, we completely secure the area and remove their forces. We defeat his concentrated forces and this is our chance. We have superiority with firepower, air force and army aviation so we can destroy them after we put a wise plan together to use firepower and other resources correctly. Then we advance to this concentrated force wherever it is and destroy it. We will infiltrate their formations and destroy them to destroy their morale. This is better than just thinking of a place to strike them and waiting for a large scale counterattack which may hurt us before we respond.

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**Mr. Latif Naseif Jasim, Minister of Information and Media:** Sir, the fighting yesterday was close to Basra and the Iranian enemy is now asking for help from the people of Isfahan.

**Mr. President:** Yes, what's the story there?

**Minister of Education and Media:** I told Comrade Hamid, I said, "Fawzi can't even bring a member of the National Command in two hours, so how are they going to bring the people of Isfahan?"

(Laughter)

**Mr. President:** In the past, when our families sent us to our uncles and relatives to get used to working with them, you know how we would ride the boat at night? We would sing loudly, not for fun, but because we were scared. That was the age of 5 or 6 years old. So the same thing goes for the Iranians, Isfahan is so far from Basra!

(Mr. President leaves the meeting for a short time)

**Minister of Information and Media:** Congratulations to you and our brothers the members of the General Command for the big victory. May God bless you with victory.

**Minister of Defense:** God willing, this victory is for all of the righteous people.

**Minister of Information and Media:** The people are indescribable, high with morale and happiness. It is a victory. I mean, we finished the month-long battles in a few hours. It is a great victory from God and a sign of more to come.

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**Secretary General Alla Ad-deen Kazim Hamad:** [*To the Minister of Defense*] Sir, in fact, during the General Command's meeting on 20 August 1988 and according to the instructions from Mr. President, God bless him, regarding the situation in the north, we can send a significant force from the Guards assisted by troops from the corps to do joint operations in multiple spots. We can send troops from the 4<sup>th</sup> Corps, naturally with significant artillery, to the north. His Excellency has suggested that we move three infantry brigades to the north in addition to an armored brigade, plus 10 artillery regiments lead by a force from the Guards.

Of course, these are general instructions to be studied according to the circumstances before the battle of al-Shalamaja. I mean, these instructions were given before the battle of al-Shalamaja.

Sir, now, the northern Majnoon is in an island surrounded with water as Your Excellency [*referring to the Minister of Defense*] knows, so will they [*the Iranians*] leave it and move forward towards southern Majnoon and then advance by land?

I mean, it is within our reach and we can get it any time we wish after we prepare for it. But the danger now is in the north and Your Excellency has clearly pointed out the dangerous targets that the enemy is moving toward the northern area, in addition to the political situation that the President, God bless him, had pointed to.

All these factors currently indicate that the enemy intends to start something in the north, so we have to attack before they attack in order to cut off the road for them and destroy them there. Thank you, Sir.

**Staff Air Force Major General al-Hakam Hassan Ali, Head of the Army Aviation:** Sir, northern Majnoon is now almost connected to the Iranian land.

**Minister of Defense:** Lt. General Hakam, the drying out of lands to the east of the northern Majnoon and up to al-Dasim dam--

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**Minister of Defense:** -- made all this area dry land. But they [*the Iranians*] wanted to get rid of the flooding so they opened the water gates which caused this land to drown again. Otherwise, their original plan was to execute well-prepared operations over the last three years to turn al-Haweza marshes to an Iranian dry lake in their hands, and their big hope is to make up for it by taking Majnoon field.

(Mr. President returns to the meeting)

**Mr. President:** So we said that we will use an avoidance strategy. We will surround the enemy using medium-sized forces and paratrooper air assaults wherever possible. You all have troops and active army aviation. You all have very determined troops. Your plan now should be courageous and able to take some risk. It is possible that we may get disconnected from some regiments, but didn't they [*the Iranians*] capture a division commander and a number of brigades in Halabja? So we can sacrifice [*an Iraqi*] regiment if in return we capture two of their [*Iranian*] divisions after surrounding them since the terrain in the north allows that. I want the commanders to fix things quickly and understand that the soldier at the mountain top can't see what is below him in the valley or the foothill.

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**Mr. President:** The conventional regular military method says we can't advance from here while the enemy is above us, making our soldiers in the critical areas withdraw just for seeing these mob criminals at the foothills behind them and firing a few rounds in their direction while telling our forces that they're surrounded. Why are they staying put in their positions until the morning? They need to see what is around them, not retreat from their position just because a few enemies reached the foothill and fired a few rounds, claiming that they surrounded you. They can't see anything at night and darkness is scary at the mountain tops because anyone at the top is not able to see down the foothill without a light. So, we have to deal with this problem by planning and informing.

I am done with what I have to say.

**Minister of Defense:** Brother, Military Chief of Staff, do you have any comments? Maybe the Deputy [*the Chief of Staff*] for Operations? Go ahead.

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**Staff Lt. General Nazzar Abdul-Kareem, Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, we have looked into the nature of the enemy movement, considering what they would gain from our strategic weaknesses in Iraq. We discussed them before and we could summarize them in three points, though there may be other points too. The first point is simply the strategic depth of Iraq, especially in the south [*Iraq is fighting too deep inside its own territories*]. The second point is the existence of a sectarian vibe and the willingness for treason in the northern area. The enemy used these points. They used the first and the second at the beginning of the war until 1987, in a fundamental way. In 1987, the direction became clearer towards the second point in light of the agreements and the collapse of our peace with the group of Jalal Talabani. Last year, they [*the Iranians*] announced an agreement with Jalal, not based on operations but they announced the creation of a new frontline.

**Mr. President:** They announced it [*the agreement*] but it practically fell apart.

**Minister of Media:** Pardon me, Mr. President. Then, again, 15 days ago they agreed to it in Syria.

**Mr. President:** Yes, I am aware of that.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, the real hard work started in the northern direction in March or April of last year, which was immediately after their large attack in the southern area. In the northern areas, in addition to its special circumstances, we have strategic targets affecting the Iraqi state as a whole.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** These [*strategic targets*] are water resources, dams, and the Kurdish people, in addition to Kirkuk's oil which will always be one of the enemy's strategic targets. We have learned from you, Sir, that the northern area is still a wild field for all parties involved [*unpredictable*] and nothing has changed about it in regard to international alliances. The Baghdad Pact [*the Central Treaty Organization*] which consisted of Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan in addition to Iraq, has not changed anything. It may be possible that Khomeini will play the same role [*sign treaties with the above countries*] since Iranian relations with Turkey and Pakistan are still good.

**Mr. President:** For a long time politically – actually, you are military men so let me explain to you without going into politics. Let's leave politics aside. From now on, the superpowers will conspire against us more and I am prepared for that. I told some of the politicians that when Iran weakens and our army gets stronger with our strikes intensifying, people will get jealous and conspiracies by some countries against us will increase after our victories in al-Faw and al-Shalamaja.

In the past, these conspiracies were in a way that might not be as serious, though they were as dangerous. I mean, America conspired with Britain against us in al-Faw. They cooperated with the Iranians in capturing al-Faw. This cannot be wrong. It is impossible for this to be wrong.

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**Mr. President:** Even if there is nothing subjective, we can still see how they tried to trick us right before our eyes. Until the seventh day [*of al-Faw battle*], they [*the Americans*] and their allies [*who were helping Iraq*] were insisting that this is not the main direction [*of the Iranian military*]. Why? Is there anything more dangerous than this?

No, Zionism will not accept an Arab army that will take its land by force. This is a danger to Zionism because the existence of such an army will end Israel one day through direct field operations.

Israel is an extension of the United States of America and the English. Those are the two main political players and their wheels will start spinning faster, politically and militarily, to revive Iran by all means.

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**Mr. President:** So, the area in northern Iraq has additional importance within this political analysis. I mean, from an aspect that interests you [*as military commanders*], the Director of Intelligence should be aware of why we devised a plan for counter intelligence. I assure you now that we have to be aware of America and its satellites and tools more than the Iranians. Because they [*the Americans*] are now like a police force, protecting Iran, and anything they find out about Iraq will be delivered to Iran.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, the operations started in the north in 1984 as secondary operations. Then it took a more important role with the Jawarteh operations. However, since April of last year, in accordance with this analysis, the operations in the north attained equal importance to the ones in the south. Now, as we see the northern area in light of your analysis, which was also in our minds, the northern direction is now more serious, even according to their analysis.

**Mr. President:** This is not new to us. We expected it before it happened. We have been planning to confront them since February. We said we will confront them in the north.

**Military Chief of Staff:** This direction is becoming the main one and it may now be the main one and is a high priority.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** Their control of our water springs and our people in the north in addition to Kirkuk's oil will put them [*the Iranians*] above us in a superior strategic position.

**Mr. President:** How far is the axis that leads to Kirkuk's oil?

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, it depends. From Darbandikhan, it is about 100 km while it is a little bit more from the direction of Sheik Mohammed and even more from the direction of Bedniyan. So, in my estimation, the next operation the enemy launches will be one of the following three directions.

The direction mentioned by the Mr. Deputy General Commander [*Minister of Defense*] which is Darbandikhan, then pushing from Darbandikhan toward Kirkuk along the road between Qader Karam-Sinkao and up to Kirkuk.

The second direction is divided into two branches. The first is pushing from "Sheik Mohammed" toward Kurat Besra which leads to the mountain of Kurat Sard and Hanjira Mountain in Dukan. Then they will try to attack Dukan which will put us in a situation similar to the current situation in Darbandikhan, without the need to go inside the operations area of al-Anfal operations area. This direction needs another branch attack from Soona Sheena to Kiwarush and the northern Sanksar road before crossing into Sanksar.

These two directions will lead to total control of Qalat Roz plains and Bekla plains. From there they will target Dukan. This will be coordinated with help from saboteurs in the direction of Qurnavo and Besenteen, in addition to the direction of Wesi from the south.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** The other direction is from Dukan to Kirkuk. They will go after Dukan to the areas of Dukna and Kuktipeh since we don't have any defenses there, then to the area of Khalkhalan and then Kirkuk. This is a long way but it could be done because it is difficult to fight defensively in these directions.

The third direction is the direction of Behdeniyan and Seedikan then to Howidan and Sbeelk strait, then to the new road of Harir – Khoshnaw area which leads to Taq Taq – Shwan and then to Kirkuk. In this direction, we also have one or two areas of defense to fight in and afterward they will push in this direction in which we have no defenses. So the enemy is not only trying to control the Suran area but rather the whole northern area with all its valleys.

This will lead to them controlling Kirkuk, in addition to the water resources, which will put an important part of Iraq in their hands, preparing them for victory and controlling Iraq which is the goal of the enemy. In my assessment, Sir, this is what is going on in the minds of the Iranian military and political leadership.

**Mr. President:** You, military people, I ask you not to use these terms like this. Even if they reached Baghdad, they can't control Iraq.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, these are the goals they are planning for.

**Mr. President:** You should say, “And by that they would have achieved a strategic goal that will -- [Interrupted]

**Military Chief of Staff:** That will harm Iraq. Yes, Sir.

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**Mr. President:** I mean, let's disregard the idea of them taking Kirkuk. How will they control Iraq?! Iraq is huge.

**Military Chief of Staff:** These are the goals they have set.

So, how would we deal with this situation? This situation, Sir, is important because troops from the Khomeini Guards and their regular military are in these directions. The other indicator that gives this expectation a high probability is the frustration they suffered as a result of al-Faw, as Your Excellency said, and the Tawakalna Ala Allah [*in God we trust*] area of operations. So, it is possible that in the next operation, they will move parts of these forces [*from the south up to the north*]. Thus, based on this, how are we going to deal with this situation in a way that guarantees balance [*for Iraqi forces*] and failure of their [*Iranian*] operations? This will lead us to be in a superior position to reach victory, God willing.

Sir, as Your Excellency mentioned, these things were expected in our minds but not implemented in a clear way as it happened in the last three or four weeks. These ideas are implementing in the direction of Seedi Kan. We reached a procedure or a method of operating by dividing operations into a timeline. After al-Faw, al-Shalamaja will be next, then the areas of Majnoon and al-Zubaidat, along with some other smaller spots in the middle area. We will do an attack in the coming months of May, June, and July in these areas while we are actively defending the northern area.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** After we are done with these targets, we will move on to attack in the northern area while defending effectively in light of the achievements we will gain in the middle and southern areas. That way we keep some type of balance. Sir, we are acting in light of these expectations and the resources we have in accordance with the required tasks in the desired direction. We concluded that if we finish these tasks in the middle and southern areas, we will have extra forces that we could use effectively in the northern area.

Otherwise, if we wanted to leave things as they are now in the middle and southern areas and deal with the northern area, the size of the troops and our support resources will not be sufficient to work effectively in both directions. Thus, we will be on hold and not able to achieve our objectives in either direction.

Currently, we specifically have infantry of 132 brigades and out of these brigades there are 16 commando brigades. In the sector of 1<sup>st</sup> Corp, we have 47 brigades and at the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps sector, we have 17 brigades, so a total of 64 brigades. This is approximately half of the infantry in the military which is what we need to effectively control the territory against the Iranian troops in these directions. If we add to this any additional forces for attacks in the north, we would have a problem. In some areas, we now have the minimum level or even below the minimum level of troops for controlling the territory. So, if the enemy attacks with what they currently have, this will create a problem for us. What we have at the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps sector is 47 infantry and armor formations as follow: 38 infantry brigades, 4 commando brigades, 2 mechanized brigades, and 2 armored brigades.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** This is a huge force and we have never had at any time this many troops in the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps' sector. I also think that the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps has 17 formations, including: 11 infantry formations, 4 commando brigades, 2 mechanized brigades, and 13 commando regiments. Yet, even with all of this, we are not feeling comfortable that we are strong enough as required to normally defend in this area to match what the enemy has, including the [*Iranian Revolutionary*] Guards and considering they may use them [*the Guards*] effectively to attack in this stage in these areas. I specially note that the distribution and availability of the enemy troops in the northern area is deep inside Iran and I currently do not see any specific movements from the enemy for us to strike its forces.

**Mr. President:** It doesn't matter. We will destroy them and force the enemy to bring new troops. If all of these [*Iraqi*] forces are not able to do anything, then what is the solution?

**Military Chief of Staff:** If I may Sir, we are expecting activities in the northern sector but even if we send out all our main forces, it will take a long time and there will be no quick results of this fight.

**Mr. President:** Correct, correct.

**Military Chief of Staff:** We may fight in the northern sectors all summer long and during the upcoming winter without accomplishing our goals of kicking out all the enemy forces. We may achieve some tactical gains here and there.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** We will be successful in an operational manner in one direction and then we have to switch to another direction because we have areas like Darbandikhan and the direction of Halabja that are so far apart. This area is about 360 km long. I mean, even if we fight heavily there, this direction is going to be part of this area.

So Sir, I see the following: First, we do not work in two directions (northern and middle/southern) or vice versa, because the enemy is able to work in both directions. The enemy is now located at Majnoon in front of the 4<sup>th</sup> Corps sector and in front of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corp sector. They [*the Iranians*] are able to operate in a manner that will force us to defend fiercely and pull a number of formations to these directions. Also, the enemy has the ability to work in the northern area and they could bring in more forces.

So, to preserve a balance as much as our resources allow us especially regarding infantry, we have to end one of the directions, the northern or the middle/southern. The situation has to stabilize while not giving the enemy a chance to recover from our strikes in al-Faw and al-Shalamaja. We have to make them believe that they lost these areas forever and we have to control them fiercely and with fewer forces. We still have our attack forces ready there. The enemy is still at Majnoon and they can surround us and work on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps. So, if we use all of our forces in the north, this may cause problems for us.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** We as the General Command can assess our forces. Our main focus is in the northern area while the enemy with its operational capacity can do something in the middle and southern area. Thus, we have to make our goal putting the enemy in a similar situation as it was in al-Shalamaja, especially in the southern direction and to a certain extent in the middle so we can move our main forces to the northern area when we feel comfortable that we are first holding the territory with the least possible number of troops and second that the troops we don't need in the northern area are here which are mostly armored forces and mechanized infantry. Then we will be ready there to work heavily and for a longer period [*of time*] because our operations in the north may take all summer and the upcoming winter.

The enemy is not expecting us to fight during winter. If within the next two months, June and July, we could achieve our targets in the middle and southern areas then we could free ourselves and focus mainly on the northern area. We as a General Command assess the situation so that our troops will be in a better position. We defend effectively and do not allow the enemy to achieve any success in the northern area while we maneuver some of the formations which will put us in the position I just explained. We continue striking the enemy in the Majnoon sector especially al-Shalamaja and other smaller operations whether they are in the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps or 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps sectors to end the situation in these two directions. Then we firmly defend these two directions before pushing forward with armored Guards formations that are available within our main formations while we secure all things required in the northern direction to engage in long battles that may take all summer and the upcoming winter.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** In my opinion, if we can do that, then we will achieve success while we are comfortable and focused on this direction. Now, the situation is dependent on two things. We have to do something here and we have to fight --

(End of Side One of the Tape)

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(Side Two of the Tape)

**Military Chief of Staff:** -- the enemy can operate.

**Mr. President:** We said we defend in all sectors and attack in the north. We didn't say...  
(Interjection)

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir... the operational position of the enemy in Majnoon and al-Zubaydat allows him to attack better than us.

**Mr. President:** Let me ask you this. From a tactical point of view, how is the enemy in a better position than us? We are now present in the southern Majnoon with excellent defenses. Some [*soldiers*] have been there for months and others for years. So if we have a presence in both the southern and northern Majnoon, we will have a bigger area and we will be forced in any case to assume that the enemy may come from behind us and come down to the northern Majnoon and "southern Majnoon with boats. He might have also attacked us from water or land via the bridge if we had not destroyed it.

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**Mr. President:** As for the Zubaydat sector, if we advance forward, what would the tactical benefits for our troops be? They will need a month to reorganize their positions and get back to the same shape I left them in. Isn't this correct?

So really, we have to have forces there all this month as a precautionary measure. This is the situation at the tactical level. I mean, when we occupy it, we will need more troops except for in one case, the front defensive position. It is going to give us a position of control for a wide plain between us and the enemy. This is the proper military thinking. However, practical experiences... What is our position and what is their position now? Aren't they now on top of Kardamand peak while we are at its foothills?

Then what is keeping our presence in this location while they come down to the foothill to make the no-man's land 300 meters as it is now at Harran Strait. What is the reason? Is there contradictory logic?

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**Mr. President:** When I said we must defend all areas, this is no less important. In other words, the attack will not provide us with a large number of troops to be released to the north as we can release from them now. If there is a problem with what I am saying, then what you said is correct. But, if there is no problem, I mean from the military point of view, we are here and will defend al-Zubaydat. We have extra armor from the Republican Guard and the Armed Forces along with the corps' resources that we will use to face any counter activity.

If the enemy thought about that, the same thing applies to southern Majnoon. I need to understand, if we continue to attack in the 6<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup> Special and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps, whether by the order of their positions or not, what would the troops that these operations provide us do to confront the enemy in the north?

This is the first requirement. The second requirement, as you have mentioned, is that our defense in the north is not reassuring now although we have 47 formations in the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps and 17 formations in the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps, which is a state that we have never reached before.

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**Mr. President:** In order to reach the level we are comfortable with, we have to add more formations to the defense. Is this true? Adding these formations to the defense will weaken our ability to attack in one way or another. Is this correct? I mean they will be taken from the general force.

**Military Chief of Staff:** That is correct, Sir.

**Mr. President:** It does not matter. Three or four formations from the general force can possibly be used in the attack. Is this correct? In addition, the presence of 3 or 4 formations...  
(Interjection)

**Military Chief of Staff:** For an effective defense, Sir.

**Mr. President:** I can't. I am not comfortable with that... Do you know why? Because now we have an effective defense in the 4<sup>th</sup> Corps... Yes... We now have an effective defense in the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Corps and in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps even though they didn't succeed in the last operation. So, I say yes. As for the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps, I am not comfortable because I see an Iraqi military situation that is not reassuring there. This is the main factor.

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**Mr. President:** Therefore, even if we send four or seven formations, what would guarantee us that the enemy is not going to launch a wide attack from now until the end of the seventh month? And then the situation will be... These goals are not completely achieved and we will confront them in a unified fashion. This is a vital point.

The other and last point is, also commenting on what you said so that the discussion continues. How big is the enemy that is making this situation exceptional, even though we likewise have an exceptional defense facing it?

I mean, what situation in the north can we compare it to? Mathematically speaking, like the Penjawin battle or others? This is just a question, not a main factor.

There is another psychological factor I must mention to you because I pay attention to the psychological aspect more than any other tactical issue.

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**Mr. President:** I believe that all operations we will carry out will not add anything to the significance of the attack. Its significance has now reached its apex and there is no higher summit to register. I think the significance of the blow will not remain at this level if we continue with similar operations along with sacrifices. So, you can't collect spirits like snow balls that will explode in the enemy's face in the north, but you will go to the enemy with medium [*level*] spirits because when we attack in Majnoon we will have to have casualties; the same thing in al-Zubaydat, Sanoba, and Sayf Saad. In your plan, you anticipated that these operations shall take place over a one and a half month period, which is a short period. They are not mechanical men to go daily and give casualties. Besides, how about their families with no vacation from one battle to another? I believe we will lose these spirits. It is my duty to warn you as a specialist in this...

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**Mr. President:** You are not dealing with robots here. If we had a choice, we would have given the entire Republican Guard a long vacation after we had waited for two weeks before sending them to the north. But, being forced is what made me approve a proposal like this. Go ahead.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, the enemy prepared the Majnoon theater of operations in a way that will make us reduce [*the number of*] our troops because they connected the area to northern Majnoon. So, we are going to be able to reserve our troops. As for the al-Zubaydat sector, with a number of formations and a big operation, we can benefit from controlling the features [*hills*] without using the Republican Guard.

**Mr. President:** You can't... yes... without the Republican Guard, you can't... this is my military and I use it to fight, and I know it. We have tried in the past but we couldn't.

**Military Chief of Staff:** It is less difficult than the northern Majnoon.

**Mr. President:** There has to be [*Republican*] Guard forces. If you had told me to prepare troops from the two corps, train them and make them compete, I would have said... yes.

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**Mr. President:** If you had said troops from the corps and the [*Republican*] Guards, I would have answered you... yes. But, to assign only six or seven formations from the 4<sup>th</sup> Corps to achieve these goals and reach the plains, I am not comfortable with that.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, I expect the first action of the Iranian enemy to be in the direction of Qalat Dizah because Sheikh Mohammed area will require transportation roads to connect it with its bases in Kalalah.

**Mr. President:** Pardon me, I don't have any objection to what you mentioned since I don't have any contrary information and this requires fighting for a long period of time or all summer and winter. As we are saying, I can't imagine fighting for this long period of time, but rather fighting the enemy and defeating him in weeks.

This is my conception in which I disagree with you. But, with continuous discussion of course, I will be convinced either with my conception or yours. When I say fighting for weeks I mean it can be one day to a month and no more than that.

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**Mr. President:** What do we have to do during this time? I don't mean attacking the enemy everywhere. When I say destroy the enemy, I know that the enemy force is not all on one line but we will take the more dangerous parts of it. Aren't we saying this is the direction of the enemy and if he comes from this direction and reaches us he will put us in a difficult situation?

Okay then, let us kick him out and make him miss the chance to reach here and put us in a precarious position. I mean they are here and if he reaches the hill they will put us in a [*bad*] situation... Fine, let us kick him out from here so that he would go to another hill, where he will not be able to put us in a precarious position. The fact that the enemy is unable to use all his efforts in one direction because of the nature of the terrain and the fact they are forced to use their forces in segments is not a point of strength for them, but rather a weakness because it is going to make me direct all of the national firing capacity I have on targets while continuing to penetrate them.

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**Mr. President:** In other words, I will not wait as it is now in traditional planning which is occupying the high points one after another in a conventional fashion. When our forces are close to their assigned points, the other force that is assigned to another point should be close to the foothills as well. And when we receive the green light from that force, we will attack, denying the enemy the opportunity to concentrate his firing on one area and forcing him to distribute it over three areas. This way we will put him [*the enemy*] in a different position. This strategy shall continue in the same approach we had in al-Faw. We continue and we might attack with three brigades in one day instead of attacking with two or three corps, along with the use of the national firing capacity. We shall strike with three brigades and hit using the Air Force and the entire army aviation or a part of it. We shall strike with fifty artillery regiments and with mortars firing capacity that is equal to the fifty regiments. It is true they are three brigades but they will advance with ease. When we execute the operations like this, I don't believe we will fight all summer and winter... why?

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**Mr. President:** You have tried this with limited resources and you were able to recover a large area of land and hills within days or weeks. It is not a continuous 45 day battle, but [*quick*] operations and then we stop... then... this was your effort only as a corps commander, while I was with you on the phone only for morale support. We gave you a number of regiments to help you, but now we are giving you the support of the whole country.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Even with that, Sir, it will take a long time because the operational fronts are numerous.

**Mr. President:** I approve of this. I have such an idea but it is not definitive. But, why are you finding it difficult and anticipating the fight will take all summer and winter?

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, it requires much effort because the fronts are numerous, transportation roads are limited, and the work there is slow, not quick. It will take longer periods [*of time*]. The secret to the Iranians' success is morale and good reconnaissance.

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**Mr. President:** No, they do not need reconnaissance. They are living with the residents of the area. So, this guy wearing the turban could be an Iranian Colonel and he is the one who waving [*his hands*] to our ranks when they pass by.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, when we expelled them out of the Sulaymaniyah sector, they started sending unmanned planes. When they lost the element that used to provide them with detailed information, they started sending unmanned planes because they lost the power they had.

[*Now*] we incorporate the operations of al-Anfal. Sir, the operations of al-Anfal will deny the Iranian enemy some of the strategy he used in the northern region. I mean the operations made the enemy lose the element of power he had in the northern area. Yes, some of our troops are late in this regard.

**Mr. President:** Of course, when we start the work, we will use a large part of the al-Anfal operations' forces, whether it is regular or irregular forces.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, in spite of the existing elements of power he [*the Iranians*] possesses and the favorable elements he has inside, the enemy has prepared. Therefore, he started early in the year, in spring. The enemy anticipated reaching relatively warm areas so that he can fight in winter as well. He knows that we have been fighting for months on a small hill.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** We didn't leave a hill without fighting for months in all directions. When the enemy captures a hill or part of it, the fighting continues on it, unlike what is happening with the enemy now or like we fought him in the past. So, he started early, thinking that he will continue with offensive operations in the north throughout winter. That is why it is going to be a long battle, Sir. Therefore, Sir, after we finish our job in the center and the south and the troops rest during these two months...

**Mr. President:** If you take all of the army resources except for the Republican Guard forces to the north, and the Corps has sufficient self-defense, will you be comfortable?

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, now we have practically taken the majority of the military's resources, 47 brigades from the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps and 17 brigades from the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps. This is half of our troops or maybe a little less.

I previously discussed this with Your Excellency a while back, and we said we would attack in the south during the sixth and seventh months, while we will keep on defending in the north. This will take a very long time.

In my opinion, Sir, and in light of the details available in the northern area, if we attack in the north, it will take a very long time and may exhaust our troops.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** When we exhaust our troops, the strike will not be strong enough, not even with the [*Republican*] Guard forces. They will enter the battles with certain capabilities that will not have the same capabilities half-way through or near the end of the battles because the battles are going to take a long time and entail numerous directions.

Therefore, Sir, I still believe we should strengthen the northern sector because we are not expecting the enemy to have activities in all directions.

**Mr. President:** I want to improve the psychological state of mind of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps... how [*can we do this*]?

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, right now there is no danger. If we send another brigade to Qalat Dizah sector, our position will be more solid there. If we give two brigades to the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps, the corps will be in a counterattack or defensive position... efficient defense.

**Mr. President:** You mean three brigades?

**Military Chief of Staff:** Three brigades and it may need an additional brigade if the intentions escalated in the direction of Sedi Kan.

**Mr. President:** So, from three to four brigades?

**Military Chief of Staff:** Yes, four brigades in the northern direction.

**Mr. President:** Do you think this will guarantee not putting us in an uncomfortable position? Is it going to raise the morale of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps?

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**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, there is nothing. Also, the enemy cannot execute any quick operations in the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps area and any operation from Sheikh Mohammed area in the direction of Dokan would be dangerous. However, the enemy will not have the capability to attack from this direction before a month or a month and a half... He has to reach the road... Why was the performance of the 76<sup>th</sup> and 442<sup>nd</sup> Corps bad? It is because their maintenance was all by aircraft because there are no roads.

**Mr. President:** For sure, fighting in the north is different, especially when it comes to physical fitness.

**Military Chief of Staff:** If the wind is strong and the weather is bad, he [*the soldier*] will be isolated. When we want to open a road, in our opinion, the road will take about three months to reach this direction. However, opening it from the Iranian side is easier, but it requires about a month to open a road in the direction of Sheikh Mohammed. If they are able to open a road in the direction of Sheikh Mohammed, they can work effectively but they cannot continue for a long distance because the only means of transportation will be walking by foot. So he can reach Qara Sard but he cannot advance to the front because he needs a road. He will start opening another road to allow him to advance.

Working in the north has its precedence. Based on topography and action, we can say that they are going to attack in such a direction...

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**Military Chief of Staff:** The enemy is now ready to work in Qalat Dizah area... The enemy is smart. He will open a new front for us in Seedi Kan and this will make us...

**Mr. President:** The enemy is now ready to work in the direction of Qalat Dizah. Okay, what are the measures [*that we can take*] that will help us deny the enemy the opportunity to inflict heavy losses on us [*there*]?

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, for example, we occupied Qalat Dizah sector in the past with three brigades and sometimes with four. But now there are seven brigades and we are thinking of adding another brigade.

**Mr. President:** The brigade will have only one Division Headquarters and it is not distributed over more than one Division Headquarters.

**Military Chief of Staff:** No, Sir. We decided we must be to a certain extent in a better position in Haybat Sultan and Susangard. If we had another brigade, our reserves toward any Iranian action would have been better. We are now clearing up the area of Qara Toka and the rest of the areas to eliminate any presence that may help the enemy to work in this direction... I mean if we are sending a brigade to Qalat Dizah then we are supposed to conduct effective battles... Now, the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps commander, Sir, is one of the commanders that can fight in the north.

**Mr. President:** Yes, I don't have any objection to that but, the situation of the troops...

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**Military Chief of Staff:** Actually, he [*the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps commander*] was surprised in a big way at Sheikh Mohammed, more than we were expecting. But, we felt this will lead to a situation even though we were ready for it. What matters to us is the road but they [*the Iranians*] are present in all areas.

**Mr. President:** They are present there... Yes. Of course.

**Military Chief of Staff:** If we reach the road within a month, this will pave the way for future work for us. We can't do anything beyond the Sheikh Mohammed area due to the lack of roads.

The road is the decisive factor in the north. That is why he [*the commander*] was surprised in spite of his big enthusiasm and was able to crush two Iranian regiments with a partial landing operation.

So, I swear not to bring back anyone from the 448<sup>th</sup> Brigade as their performance was terrible even though they were controlling the area.

It is true, Sir, that despite the psychological effect of being isolated, they were sustained with helicopters, and if it happens to be high winds, the aircraft cannot reach them. Their performance was terrible while the performance of the 76<sup>th</sup> Brigade was distinguished. However, it was over for him practically because the enemy was behind him and passed him following the fall of the 448<sup>th</sup> Brigade positions.

**Mr. President:** What was the answer of the 448<sup>th</sup> Brigade when asked... why this position?

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, when they returned, they were very ashamed because they were on a hill full of rocks.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** So, they could not withdraw from there unless they came down from it [*the hill*]. Only a few of them made it back. The corps commander interrogated them and he said he will not forgive anyone.

They were in a good control position. Sir, we don't give them any credit. This was the work of saboteurs.

**Mr. President:** That is why they knew all the details.

**Military Chief of Staff:** The loyal ones helped the Iranians cross a road we weren't even aware of.

**Mr. President:** The Kurds brought them... yes.

**Military Chief of Staff:** We Iraqis, when we settle in a position, we don't investigate the paths that lead to it. He was a good commander but what about the bad brigade and regiment commanders... they don't even try to improve their position which was already made for them?

**Mr. President:** Well, there are unqualified commanders and they are the reason for these failures. They are really mediocre. The type that doesn't pay attention to the land around them to the extent they don't even scout the areas in front of their sector to see what is out there.

**Military Chief of Staff:** For that reason, Sir, we stay in some locations for a long time and when we expect something is about to start there, then we start scouting.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** What we see from some commanders is that there are some paths that have not been improved or areas that they didn't think of ways to retake them. When the hill is behind the position, he will consider it new to the point that he starts scouting it again as though he had not seen it before.

These kinds of things, Sir, they cause problems, and of course the facilities he provided... Sir, you remember I told you once when I was appointed to be 1<sup>st</sup> Corps commander?

**Mr. President:** General Nazzar, if General Sultan comes and tells me the mental status of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps is going to be very good if we assign three brigades to it, I will be convinced and will continue attacking gradually because three brigades is not a big number for the Iraqi army.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, in my opinion, we are placing large [*numbers of*] troops under the command of leaders who are unqualified to manage them.

**Mr. President:** Yes... correct... That is why I look at the situation as a whole. I don't look at General Sultan's situation by itself... I know General Sultan. He is an excellent commander and has expertise in dealing with mountains.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, even among the commanders that are there, it is difficult to find a commander qualified to fight. There should have been competent staff personnel to lead these formations.

If we give him three formations, the type Your Excellency talked about, for an area that needs mobilization... If you give three formations to a commander, I will feel comfortable with that. But, if you give to a commander five, I would be worried about him because this will be difficult for him to manage. So what is the situation going to be like if you assign him ten brigades? We will lose one hundred percent.

**Mr. President:** Correct... that is a correct assessment.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, we will discuss it with General Sultan and Major General Ayad, as well.

**Mr. President:** Why Major General Ayad?

**Military Chief of Staff:** Staff Major General Ayad is the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps commander.

**Mr. President:** I thought you were talking about Staff Major General Ayad, the commander of the [*Republican*] Guard forces!

**Military Chief of Staff:** Qalat Dizah falls within the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps' responsibility. The 5<sup>th</sup> Corps now has two wings as it is in the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps, that is comprised of Darbandikhan as one wing and Sheikh Mohammad is the other wing.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** They will not attack the Sulaymaniyah... no, this is indisputable. From now on, the Iranian enemy will not be concerned with the mobilization level of 1<sup>st</sup> Corps, but he has before his eyes the strategic issues... with a series of operations, he can start from the empty locations... They will break our shell [*break through a weak area*] in a certain place and then rush... I am confident of this. I mean he will break our shell and advance on Kirkuk.

The enemy has no target other than Kirkuk, Shahrazour plain in Halabja, and Qalat Dizah-Bangard -and Diana plains currently, and then to Kirkuk-Taqtaq to the right and Qader Karam to the left. This is the clear direction of the Iranian enemy.

**Mr. President:** How much time will it take him to reach Kirkuk?

**Military Chief of Staff:** It will take [*all*] summer and winter. It is a series of continuous battles that will be long and in phases... The only phase is Qalat Dizah.

**Mr. President:** I consider northern Majnoon the most important land the enemy was able to control in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Corps' sectors... This is in war books... Therefore, we must guarantee a defense that will not make us face a position that puts us in a bad situation.

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**Mr. President:** Otherwise, why do we go to these hills and deploy our troops... why don't we strike the big bite [*the largest concentration of Iranian forces*].

I don't remember who told me that we need to do something in Halabja. I said to him, "No, we let the enemy chew on this bite, as he will not be able to digest it, and then we keep hitting him on the head in other areas."

"End of Recording"

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Recording Number: 3

Date of Recording: May26, 1988

Attendees

- 1- Staff Field Marshal Saddam Hussein, President of the Republic and General Commander of the Armed Forces
- 2- Staff General Adnan Khairallah, Vice President and Minister of Defense
- 3- Staff Lieutenant General Nazar Abd al-Karim, Military Chief Of Staff
- 4- Staff Lieutenant General Hussein Rashid, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations
- 5- Staff Lieutenant General Ni'ma Faris, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Training
- 6- Major General Hussein Kamil, Republican Guard Supervisor
- 7- Staff Major General Saber Abd al-Aziz, General Military Intelligence Director
- 8- Mr. Abd al-Jabbar Muhsin, Political Guidance Department Director
- 9- Staff Colonel Sabbar Khalaf Saleh, Republican Guard Artillery Commander

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(Side One of the Tape)

**Mr. President:** Let's keep on hitting the enemy in other places. However, I want to be reassured that we will not be surprised and be ready to totally confront the enemy.

**Minister of Defense:** If Your Excellency allows me, I have a small interjection...

Your Excellency agrees with the Staff Lt. General Military Chief of Staff. I mean if we were of the opinion of the Military Chief of Staff and gave him between 4 -5 formations and secured an effective defense position, which you have mentioned, Sir - and do what we did in the operations of Tawakalna Ala Allah [*in God we Trust*] and Ramadan Mubarak and regained northern Majnoon - then the operation ends. Afterward, this sector will become a strong defensive position. We don't want to do what Your Excellency had mentioned to go and liberate northern Majnoon....We are being cautious regarding the enemy's situation after we destroyed his ambitions in the southern sector to try to form a small state, loyal to him in sect, and control the nationalist emotions of the Gulf to prevent them from assisting us and the consequences entailed here... But, after he lost that, he still had a similar card. In addition to what Mr. President said, there is one front and one enemy in Basra, whereas in the north, the defense is 360° and the ground road to Kirkuk or from Toz Khormatu to Kirkuk, even deep in the northern region must be monitored while firing is continuous from all directions.

Mr. President, I will answer the question and say when it arrives...?

He may arrive in a year or two months. However, I say we might become then like saboteurs and attack the Iranian convoys that come to Kirkuk.

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**Minister of Defense:** But the situation is not like that. It is the capacity of the enemy in the northern region now... Why and what does he want?

He [*the enemy*] went there to create a [*bad*] situation for us because the population there is cooperation with him and so the process is easy.

What Mr. President wants is to know how to go there and crush the head of the snake as a first priority. As for northern Majnoon, we are not going to liberate it today, but after three months.

**Mr. President:** Despite its importance.

**Minister of Defense:** We are taking into account all the situations we talked about and which one will pave the way for a situation for us in the northern region... We keep fighting from one peak to another, from one point to another, and from one false peak to another, and we drain the Iraqi army there.

So, in order to prevent this situation from happening, we ask the General Commander what is the solution? It is to accept defense in certain areas in the center and the south that will not create a situation for us where we have to use all of the Republican Guard's and the Armed Forces General Command's reserve, as Mr. President alluded to. We continue hitting the enemy in the areas. Anything we can drain by fire, we continue hitting him just like we did in Halabja and then we say where is the enemy going to stand firm? We say in Wadi Zulm and what is his strength there? We say such and such... Okay... if you directed firepower toward him for two hours, they [*the Iranians*] will be wiped out and I can occupy Wadi Zulm. But, I won't do that. And the next day, Mr. President, the enemy will come with some similar number and I will carry out the same strike, where they will be wiped out and I will pull more of them and so on. This way, I will make it a grinder until I make sure that the enemy forces in front of me are crushed. Then, it will be possible to occupy the target and kill whatever is left of the enemy forces with spears. The same applies to other areas in the northern sector.

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**Minister of Defense:** Therefore, I believe Mr. President that General Nazar may have intended to strengthen the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps with 6 or 8 extra brigades, establish an efficient defense, and go to Majnoon and recover it.

**Military Chief of Staff:** We finish it and then come back.

**Minister of Defense:** Analyzing all indications shows that the line is now located in the northern region, where the population is cooperating, the terrain is bad, and the roads are limited. The target that we gain in al-Faw with three brigades, we would need up to ten brigades to occupy a similar target in the north, in Qashan for example, and you know that...

Based on the inquiry of Mr. President, how are we going to put the Iranians under this fiery grinder to crush them and then launch one strong assault on them and exterminate them? This is how I understand what you said, Mr. President. If we faced them, they will face us. However, we are not going to attack them because they are not going to bring all of their forces but only a part of them. They will even come with enough [*forces*] to control [*the territory*] and put a sufficient reserve behind them.

We said okay, we will keep on firing at them and they will continue replacing their forces until we destroy them while we remain in our places... If we assumed this, then how are they going to enter the north to take Halabja...?

Therefore, Mr. President, we must get ready as we continue the operation of al-Anfal. Then, we can say that we have defeated their intentions in the northern regions and the only thing left is the national land they still control in the central and southern regions. We will regain these areas with planned operations just like the ones we planned before. Subsequently, we will liberate these areas by force, one after another.

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**Minister of Defense:** Sir, I am taking into account the northern region and the current facts. Technically, I disagree with the Military Chief of Staff that five or even ten brigades of concealed defense will protect us against the blow that I am expecting in the northern sector.

If we just keep waiting and do not implement what Your Excellency has suggested, to hit [*them*] with an iron fist, and according to this elaborate study, I expect us to have three situations that we don't want them to be in the north. Even if we strengthened the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps by five or six brigades, this will not be the case [*sufficient*] in my opinion.

**Republican Guard Supervisor Major General Hussein Kamil:** So, it is a problem of training. Right now, Sir, if a battle erupts in the north, the Republican Guards will not be able to fight. They will be defeated before they even start fighting.

**Minister of Defense:** The mountain is different than the plain, Abu-`Ali. (His Excellency meant Major General Hussein Kamil.)

**Mr. President:** Yes... Yes... that is why I said the fighter needs three weeks to get his feet accustomed, to learn how to climb and come down the mountain.

**Minister of Defense:** Sir, he will be (reluctant) like a horse entering a river for the first time. In order not to drag out the discussion Sir, I say... (Interjection)

**Mr. President:** No... Even with that Abu-`Ali, let's take our time in this discussion. I am now leaning toward this opinion even though I am not convinced that it is the only opinion as long as this discussion is still open...

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**Mr. President:** The Military Chief of Staff thinks that our largest group should be involved in the last battle in the north, not just in any battle, because he thinks the battles are going to be long in the north and are going to take the remainder of the summer. This will even make us consider using the Republican Guard. This is not how the Republican Guard ought to be used, going to the north and spending all summer and winter... No... Because then their situation will turn into a situation similar to the military, I mean in terms of performance and even their state of mind... Right now, it is Republican Guards in name only. How close is it now to the Presidential Palace? It is far from here [*the Presidential Palace*] but we want it to stay this way.

In my planning, I believe we should formally bring some formations for a two week period [*to Baghdad*] and tell them that they are a Republican Guard and then return them to their original units so they will have this state of mind. This is the situation that plays the main role in making them perform at this level. However, if they spent six months in the north alone in a corps sector, we shall consider them finished and their situation will change.

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**Mr. President:** So, let's just let the ideas become clear [*manifest*] today and see what we can accomplish. In light of that, we invited the commanders of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Corps tomorrow to discuss this and go back, instead of calling for them now in which case they would not get here until late at night. However, we have to finish this quickly and not take too long because the enemy knows that all of our forces are there now and if he has a plan for an imminent attack, in other words, we must agree on reinforcements starting from this moment. Reinforcement is not going to be different if we considered the choice that the Minister of Defense and I are leaning towards so far. Three brigades; we wanted to say all the brigades. So, to get things rolling, I say that you issue orders for them to move today, so we can go strengthen the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps, and then continue the discussion for another day or two without losing any time.

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**Mr. President:** From now on, and due to some overlap between the opinion that you have and that of the Military Chief of Staff with regard to these brigades, an order shall be issued for them to move, relying on God. Their orders shall be issued in complete secrecy as we don't want the enemy to do anything before these brigades arrive there. Also, they are in need of an opportunity to scout their positions. The later the enemy finds out about them the better, so that the enemy would not discover them before they arrive.

We shall let the enemy find out about them when they arrive because it is better than him finding out about them while they are in their positions... Yes.

**Military Chief of Staff:** If you allow me, Sir.

**Mr. President:** Continue.

**Military Chief of Staff:** So, Sir, we are not disagreeing except for the priorities. I expect the upcoming battle to be here and we will engage in it, as it is a major battle because the Iranian enemy....

**Mr. President:** No... This is a major one.

**Military Chief of Staff:** This is our main concentration of forces.

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**Mr. President:** This is a major battle.

**Military Chief of Staff:** I fight the enemy there while he still has something here, I mean with balance. I mean...

**Mr. President:** He doesn't have anything. He no longer has anything left. May God's curse be on him if he has... What does he have left?

**Military Chief of Staff:** He doesn't have anything left. His army is destroyed.

**Political Guidance Department Director 'Abd-al-Jabbar Muhsin:** Mr. President, please allow me...

**Mr. President:** Lieutenant General Nazar... What does the enemy have left in the midland and the south?

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, if you allow me, I didn't say anything about this subject.

**Mr. President:** Never... I give you and the others all the freedom and feel free to do [*what you please*].

**Military Chief of Staff:** I agree with all the directions and the dangers. I am familiar with the area and I know it very well, Sir. We are happy that these directions, which are becoming clear to us, are well known to us and we are in complete understanding of what the enemy is going to do.

Sir, I say let's achieve this mission as we planned for it during the sixth and seventh month, and have an efficient defense in the north using all we have in that direction.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** However, we have some requests where Your Excellency ordered to form 15 artillery regiments as well. This is an extra force that we have and Your Excellency knows that. We have talked about it.

**Mr. President:** By the way, Hussein... Increase our [*Republican*] Guard regiments.

**Republican Guard Supervisor:** Sir, we have finished forming four new regiments.

**Mr. President:** Increase them again. You said the [*Republican*] Guards prefer increasing their regiments. This note came from you. How many regiments do you have now?

**Republican Guard Supervisor:** What we have now, Sir...

**Mr. President:** Thirty-five regiments?

**Republican Guard Supervisor:** No, Sir, 36 regiments... 34 artillery regiments and 2 cylindrical. We are now in the process of forming two regiments, we finished one on the 16<sup>th</sup> and it joined the team, and the other one is on the verge of completion. We have 12 batteries ready now, making a total of 42 regiments that we have in the formation, Sir, and the current...

**Mr. President:** Are 42 regiments enough for the [*Republican*] Guard?

**Republican Guard Supervisor:** (Answering concurrently with the Military Chief of Staff) Sir, as far as the artillery, we decided to accommodate all their requests...

**Military Chief of Staff:** According to their size.

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**Mr. President:** That is not much. Make it 45 regiments.

**Republican Guard Supervisor:** Yes, Sir... It is not limited to the size [*of artillery regiments*] but the [*Republican*] Guards support them sometimes. In my opinion...

**Mr. President:** Yes...

**Republican Guard Force Supervisor:** When the [*Republican*] Guard provides support, this means the [*Republican*] Guard regiment fires 18 cannons when it fires. Whereas when we tell regular regiments to fire, they will fire 13 of 18 cannons. I tried this. Also, the range of the [*Republican*] Guard regiments...

**Mr. President:** It has [*experienced*] failures.

**Republican Guard Supervisor:** Well, Sir, there are some inoperable ones and the mental state of mind, and the reasons are numerous.

**Republican Guard Artillery Force Commander, Staff Colonel Sabar Khalif:** As far as the artillery, our firing is continuous.

**Mr. President:** Of course, every situation has its own level of confidence because the regiment is part of the formation.

**Republican Guard Supervisor:** Sir, the new formation is considered an additional force.

**Mr. President:** Which means its numbers reached 45 regiments.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, we have the commandos' regiments that the corps misuse. In general, we maneuver with brigades...

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**Mr. President:** We are the ones who added them. We destroyed them. We are the General Command, not the corps...

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir... what else can we do? We had an attack and we sent this size [*force*]. The entire sector of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps from Qalat Dizah to.... (Interjection)

**Mr. President:** The commandos...

**Military Chief of Staff:** They are 47 brigades.

**Mr. President:** The order of forming the commandos within the division stipulates not to maneuver with them outside of their division, except for urgent need when they can be used for maneuvering within the corps. We maneuvered with them outside of their corps and that is how they were destroyed.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Where do we take [*them*] from?

**Mr. President:** No, I don't want to get into a discussion, but I want to say that this experience could have been very successful and saved you from a lot of situations because it was born strong, yet you destroyed it in four months.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, may God protect you...where are we going to come up with an extra thirty brigades?

**Mr. President:** As you remember, my idea was to take a brigade from the division and leave a commando regiment to the division because the brigade can work outside of its division, but a commando regiment cannot fight outside of its division.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, a feature on the road like Taslooja requires...

**Mr. President:** Why am I discussing this with you when I established this theory based on eight-years of experience in war? I mean from my perspective, taking into consideration that my perspective hasn't changed and I have reached this conclusion. But, we will consider the case closed if you and the corps commanders or some of them have reached this conviction to change them into brigades.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Infantry brigades, we will have approximately 25 infantry formations and this is good, Sir. But, what is going to happen if we leave them in the operation sectors, Sir? One of their brigades from the 7<sup>th</sup> Corps for example has 12 battalions; they will turn into four infantry brigades.

**Mr. President:** I don't know. How are you going to secure brigade commanders, staff officers, and equipment for 25 brigades?

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**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, what are we going to do then? We don't have the personnel. We are doing this to be on better ground. We now have 60 brigades in the northern area that may increase to 70 brigades. What is the solution?

The enemy changed directions to the north and unfortunately, those saboteurs were with the enemy. Then we had these defeats where more troops were used because the front was in this situation... What are we going to do?

We have to provide the corps commander with the necessary things for the battle along with the general plan, but sometimes they do not do well...

**Mr. President:** Yes, continue with your ideas so as to ignore the issue of the commandos.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, the requirements of the artillery and formations... continuing with the national defense regiments and as soon as we are done with the central issues, then the internal security body will take over the responsibility where the saboteurs will be, here and there.

**Mr. President:** Anyone who will assume the responsibility should have a reserve force along with helicopters so they can chase and strike.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, what we always prefer in the central and southern sectors is to have control of the armored brigades' power and form extra reserves in place from these brigades. Also, if the situation allows it, Sir, to position some of the [*Republican*] Guard's formations, the armored ones in particular, in specific locations, so that they secure for us the southern and central fronts while we are in the north and after finishing the task at hand. This is my inclination and my conception on how we will work during this phase and the next phase...

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**Mr. President:** Yes, Lieutenant General Hussein...

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations Lieutenant General Hussein Rashid:**  
Sir, the truth is, as you know, the main factors in the north are the roads and the Iranians are aware of that. When they occupy any hill, they have to secure a road to it which will need to withstand the load of continuous support to the troops holding the hill, instead of progressing in their attack.

The second point is human interaction with the residents in the area and this is clear to Your Excellency.

The third point is working with small detachments. This is a point of weakness for us and an advantage for them. The enemy can work with small detachments because the northern area is ideal for these detachments, due to the availability of caves and water resources in addition to their self-sufficiency of food and water.

Indeed, Sir, what happened in Sheikh Mohammed, I am sure that they came out of the caves and attacked them because, Sir, I may walk right next to a cave but I can't tell if someone is hiding in it or I may not even notice the cave itself.

Sir, before this became clear to us, I was thinking we have to balance between our targets in the center and south and our targets in the north. I consider our targets in the south to be more significant for certain reasons... One of these reasons is that I wish the Iranians would keep weighing longer [*remain perched*] on the chest of the Kurds.

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**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** Your Excellency may accept or reject this opinion. The longer they stay, the more likely a conflict is to occur.

Actually, Sir, conflicts that were not clear before the occupation of Halabja are now surfacing. We have vital targets in the north that we can mark in red, so we will not allow the Iranians to cross them except for... I think this is more harmful than beneficial to them, even Sheikh Mohammed, Sir.

If we limit them now and do not let them come down, this is going to hurt them Sir. When the winter comes, they will come down against their will because of the snow and the complete closing of the roads while we are in a safe place.

As for the Iranians reaching Kirkuk Sir, as an Iraqi of course, I discount that. When we are ready for them with roads for maintenance and support behind us, the Iranians will not be able to reach [*Kirkuk*]. Based on experience on a larger-scale, when we got ready, even though they took Kojar and Ahmed Roomy, the roads were wide open behind us and they couldn't take Bandoora. They haven't developed anything more than that. Also, Sir, there is the saying that if we leave this hill, we will not be able to defend the next hill. However, experience has proven this saying wrong.

**Mr. President:** No...No... These concepts existed before the war. They have changed now...

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** Sir, even with the Republican Guard forces, I used to hear...

**Mr. President:** As I told you, we have now become like the Iranians.

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**Mr. President:** This regular army that taught you these theories, which put you in the wrong position to confront Iran... You were leaving the peaks to remain at the foot of the mountain. What kind of military logic is this?

The war is long, the new technologies and facilities that are provided to the soldier were not available when some of these theories were written. If a soldier is limited today to the use of a pickaxe and a shovel, he will not be able to withstand at the foothill whatsoever. But, with the introduction of new equipment that quickly finishes the road to get the soldier there, and then dig [*positions*] for him, etc... He can stand firm in the plains.

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** Sir, we said in the past and I actually said to Your Excellency in one of the meetings that the enemy will attack from Sartak, from Baweesa, and will open a front from Meedan to Qarah Dagh and he will reach Kirkuk and Aldooz....etcetera.

However, now it is difficult because we have cleared Qarah Dagh, Qader Karim, and Sinkaw, and you will not find a soul or a saboteur there.

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**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** Also the area of al-Zab to Jamjamal Sir, these are almost finished because of the operation of al-Anfal. Therefore, Sir, the Iranian enemy will reconsider his position. It was true in the past, if the enemy reached the Darbandikhan dam, the area up to Kirkuk would be off limits for us. But now, Sir, the enemy is very cautious. In addition, we can occupy five or more defensive lines by the time the enemy gets to Kirkuk.

Therefore, Sir, these considerations and others... I think we shouldn't rush and sacrifice anything in northern Majnoon that may affect the morale of our troops at the present, as Your Excellency mentioned, and deprive the Republican Guard of training. However, we can in one way or another execute your directions in draining the enemy in the north by carrying out another activity, such as heavily moving our troops or just part of the Republican Guard that we want to train in the north as Special Forces or infantry.

With this said, Sir, after three days I will tell Your Excellency, if the Chief of Staff of the Military allows me, that a staff Major General in the army, the commander of the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps, is ready now to regain southern Majnoon.

**Mr. President:** I had this on my mind. It is within the capabilities of an army brigade and can occupy it any time. That is not a problem.

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** He was present at that time, but we told him that the operations will be in the north and to postpone the Majnoon operation. He needs only to keep them busy using the artillery.

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**Mr. President:** But, it appears that he didn't execute the plan of the platoons.

**Military Chief of Staff:** We stopped the plan, Sir, and we told them [*the brigade*], "After nine thirty in the morning they [*the Iranians*] will be able to see your fighters and they will be unreasonably destroyed by artillery."

**Mr. President:** Yes.

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** We told him... Just execute the firing plan.

**Mr. President:** Yes, we didn't pay attention and I observed the first timing.

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. President:** I forgot that the time has changed and they will see the platoons.

**Military Chief of Staff:** By artillery only.

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** Sir, the brigade is ready once you reinforce it with an additional force. We have 3-4 artillery regiments that we can move from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps without the enemy noticing. We can call for a Staff Major General on the front line to regain southern Majnoon while we are heading north. As for northern Majnoon, we are not in a hurry for it, and I am sure the Iranians have reconsidered their defensive plans.

**Mr. President:** Anything after al-Faw, including al-Shalmaja, we are not in a hurry for...

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**Mr. President:** Do you know why we hurried in regaining al-Shalmaja? We rushed so that we can tell the enemy to give up completely on Basra. We could have postponed the regaining of Shalmaja, leaving it with them until about two months before the end of the war, and then hit them. But, we wanted to tell Khomeini not to think about Basra, for which he fought for six years, from 1982 to 1988, and we took it back from him. Also, in order to provide our troops with more depth and to make them comfortable while, at the same time, we would save more of our troops which we need. Because no matter where it is [*located*], be it an Iranian or Iraqi territory, it provides a steady psychological state of mind for the soldier. It also saves us troops, which means we can defend with fewer forces because this territory is appropriate for defense.

So, let's take that burden off your back as there is no reason that requires us to be in a hurry after al-Faw.

It was in pain but now it is saved. It appears that what we [*the General Command*] endured in it [*al-Faw*] was much smaller than what the Iraqi people and the Arabs endured.

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**Mr. President:** The rest is not urgent... We don't want to exhaust our troops, but I want efficient measures that will assure we will not be taken by surprise which would put us in an uncomfortable situation in the north.

If we can ensure that, we will teach them, by God, a lesson they will never forget. We will show up every day in a different place and they will never know where we are attacking from... Sometimes, we may have a chance to attack but we don't. We may have a chance to attack and be victorious with few casualties, but again we will not attack. We just want to make them suffer painfully and get them to a point where if they see an Iraqi soldier, not a Republican Guard, a soldier from 1<sup>st</sup> Corps, then the Iranian soldier will abandon his shoes and flee, God willing.

The situation of the Iranians that assaulted us at the beginning of the war should be like this.

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** Sir, as for northern Majnoon, it is true, they had certain procedures and they built dams and headlands.

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**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** On the other hand, Sir, and in compliance with the directions of the General Commander Deputy [*Vice President*], we did some work even though it stopped for a period of time, but we built dams from Arsheeda to al-Rota so that our tanks will be able to fire at their positions from the side instead of the front. Sir, they have reconsidered their positions a lot, and now most of their positions are empty, especially at the northern dam of southern Majnoon that is across from us. They can't stay there.

Therefore, Sir, when the measures are repetitive in one way or another, they take that into account as well. Regarding the artillery triangle, Sir, I believe the Military Intelligence Director will support me in this. Our information confirmed the presence of artillery there, so we prepared the Air Force and helicopters to hit it. However, the air photography showed nothing. It appeared that they have completely withdrawn their artillery from that triangle.

Sir, this means they have started to take a second look at many issues of their situations, in light of the situations you have mentioned about al-Shalamja and al-Faw

In brief, Sir, I believe we should strongly defend the vital areas, such as Darbandikhan and Dokan and not allow any penetration by the enemy. Once we are well prepared, Sir, for example we have the 36<sup>th</sup> Division, I am sure the enemy will not be able to take even one step after we get ready, and the artillery opens [*fire*] and has hit targets.

**Mr. President:** After the enemy came and took a position from the 36<sup>th</sup> Division, they turned around, recovered that position and kicked the enemy out. Their morale became very good, I am now comfortable with the 36<sup>th</sup> Division because they defeated the enemy... Isn't that so?

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**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. President:** Even though it was a small battle, isn't that so Mr. Intelligence Director...?

**General Military Intelligence Director Staff Major General Sabir 'Abd-al-'Aziz:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. President:** The 36<sup>th</sup> Division had a battle; the enemy came and took a number of companies, maybe two, and kicked them out. Sometimes a small thing will completely change the morale of a division to become something completely different.

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** Sir, the Military Chief of Staff said that even Dokan and Kora Basira are vital areas... This is correct... and when the enemy reaches them, he will reach Qarah Sart and Dokan. However, we feel comfortable, Sir, because they have the appropriate transportation behind them. Sir, when a soldier feels that reinforcements will reach him quickly and the commanders are visiting him, redressing shortages happens quickly as well as evacuation. There is no need to worry about this.

As for Sheikh Mohammed, maintenance, evacuation, and reinforcement are done by aircraft. The battle happened at night. The soldier sees someone injured in front of him calling for help. He sees a martyr in front of him, but he does not evacuate the martyr. This soldier thinks he will end up in the same situation. We have faced this in Qashan Sir, and the picture has become clear to me now that no matter how heroic our fighter is, when he hears the sound of an injured...  
(Interjection)

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**Mr. President:** Emotional.

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** He retreats without fighting.

**Mr. President:** Emotional.

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** Sir, the helicopters can't work at night and they have the same issue in the morning. They can't work because the enemy is affecting them.

**Military Chief of Staff:** The enemy took some of the...

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** The situation became unsure, Sir. As for the 76<sup>th</sup> Brigade, why was its maintenance good? Because of the roads, even though they were [*in*] the same [*situation*] but they could come down easier. So, they came down and fought very well. They hurt them with hand grenades.

**Military Chief of Staff:** The enemy lost the battle when they got behind him.

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** Therefore, Sir, I am comfortable about Kora Basira because there are means of transportation behind it...

**Mr. President:** Did it withdraw with or without orders?

**Military Chief of Staff:** Who, Sir?

**Mr. President:** The 76<sup>th</sup> Brigade?

**Military Chief of Staff:** The 76<sup>th</sup> Brigade withdrew by orders, and cleared some of its positions. After that, it collapsed from the left wing due to the pressure the enemy put on it from this wing. It sustained a lot of sacrifices, but stayed to the last minute.

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**Mr. President:** I mean this is the way they handled matters --

(End of Side One of the Tape)

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(Side Two of the Tape)

**Mr. President:** For example, one brigade did not fight while another did. Even if it were inaccurate, the brigade still needs to be honored. We shall honor some [*members*] of them [*the brigade*] at least, so that they will feel that there were two brigades. One fought and the other one did not.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Lieutenant General Sultan, the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps commander, is very pleased with the 76<sup>th</sup> Brigade as much as he is disgusted with the 442<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, despite the fact that the latter was occupying the rocky points on top. As the Operations Assistant said, the saboteurs may have been hiding in the nearby caves.

**Mr. President:** Send a telegram to Sultan and tell him that 25 Bravery Medals have been reserved for this brigade because they fought and didn't retreat except when ordered. This is what you need to tell him as a result of his work... 15 medals for the most distinguished ranks and 10 medals for the officers. After consultation with the division leader and the brigade commander, he needs to tell [*us*] who the individuals who qualify for this distinguished bravery are, without exceeding this number. Therefore, he must not submit any other suggestion.

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**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** Pardon me, Sir, according to your instructions, exhausting the enemy in the north is possible. We can push troops and concentrate there. Even as I said to Your Excellency, we can send troops from the Republican Guard without the need for them to fight seriously, suffering casualties, and depleting their firepower. The troops that we send there will be a reserve. They will train away from the line of fire so our fighter feels, at least, that there is a force behind him, and the Iranian fighter feels that we are concentrating [*our forces*] for some operations. Sir, we shall deplete him [*Iranian fighters*] with artillery. After awhile, we will notice that they are trying to abandon the area and thin out, leaving only very few troops. In other words, they will think of controlling another path, and will not be able to attack, Sir, if they feel that we have reserves in certain areas, as they know that the reserves can get there quickly and hurt them.

Sir, I do not believe we should fight them seriously in the north or enter Halabja and go to Mawet and suffer casualties. This operation, Sir, this is how I see it. I believe, Sir, we are not in a hurry, and there might be a political agenda that we are not aware of.

**Mr. President:** That is our main objective. We should not rush in these territories. We should leave them like you said... Our hands are holding the mouth of the wolf and we keep hitting him until we kill him. But, I am not comfortable with the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps formations in terms of their psychological state... so tell [*me*]... What are the measures that we can take to improve the psychological state of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps formations?

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**Mr. President:** The Military Chief of Staff expressed his opinion and so did the Minister of Defense and I am in between both opinions. I was in favor of one opinion without taking into consideration that the situation is like this.

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** Sir, my opinion is to support them [*the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps*] with some formations and provide them with a reserve that trains away from the line of fire, so that fighters would feel the reserve is close to them in case something happens. We continue with the Anfal operation and the opening of roads that will serve our current positions. We shouldn't open many roads in other directions that may serve the enemy. Had we opened a road to Sheikh Mohammed, it would have been to our advantage. We did, however, secure a road for them to come down, at least.

Therefore, it will take them a long time while they cannot come down from Sheikh Mohammed easily, as they are under our monitoring... Thank you, Sir.

**Mr. President:** Yes, Ni'mah.

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Training, Staff Lieutenant General Ni'mah Faris:** Thank you, Mr. President. Sir, the discussion is clear, of course, and it is focused on three points. What to do next, how to strengthen the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps position, militarily and morally, and the third point is permanent caution in other sectors.

Of course, Mr. President, the clear facts indicate to us that the enemy is definitely going to continue his forceful defense in the sectors of operation, and he will be cautious in the sectors of operation after the Ramadan Mubarak [*Blessed Ramadan*] and Tawakalna Ala Allah [*in God we trust*] operations in terms of the Iraqi areas they are currently occupying... I meant Majnoon and al-Zubaydat and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps area [*of responsibility*].

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**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Training:** The second thing, I think in order for the enemy to cover up his failure in the face of the two major Iraqi operations, he will probably embark on some offensive operations or continue an ongoing offensive operation. It appears to me that the offensive operation in the northern sector may provide the enemy with great ease in achieving certain results.

Therefore, it is unlikely for the enemy to carry out any offensive operations in this phase, in the areas of al-Faw and the Shatt al-Arab. The Deputy General Commander will agree with me on this. Also, the enemy is unlikely to embark on a strong offensive operation in the Basra sector, and he will surely strengthen his defenses in the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps sector as well as the Majnoon sector because he will expect this to be the next phase. If it is not the first priority [*of the*] next phase, it will be the second priority. Based on my knowledge and my recent experience in the sector, the enemy will continue its offensive operations in the north in the direction of the attack.

In my opinion, the activity of the enemy is going to be in the direction of the Dokan region, especially Qalat Dizah sector. I believe the activity will not come from the front, but rather from the right wing of the axis of al-Zab and the right wing of the 24<sup>th</sup> Division in the direction of Kani Tou and Bangared. I am convinced that the main activity will very likely be from the left wing of the 24<sup>th</sup> Division from Shahedan sector and Your Excellency knows that the sector is in between the 24<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Divisions.

**Mr. President:** Excuse me... prepare a sand table for us in the northern sector, meaning the first priority for the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps and second priority for the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps.

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Training:** Sir, the left wing of the 24<sup>th</sup> Division until the 23<sup>rd</sup> Division in Haj Omran has no forces. I mean a 37 km long front with not even one soldier in it.

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**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Training:** This region is just an operation theater for the saboteurs and smugglers, the organized Khomeini Guards and the Iranian enemy are coming in and out of Iraq while we are not doing a thing. There are 4-7 national defense regiments in the sector, but to be honest with you, they are cooperating with the enemy.

**Mr. President:** The same thing.

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Training:** Yes, this is a major threat to the 24<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Divisions' sector. Mr. President, this is the main direction, of course, and I believe the enemy is staging in Darbandikhan area and is trying to rush in other directions, which is timed with his advancement in the direction of Dokan to get closer to the oil areas and impact it, at least with the artillery if they are able to reach this sector.

Mr. President, a secondary attack may accompany his main attack to scatter our defenses or forces in the northern area toward the region of Murka Sur - Barzan - Zakho. Of course, there is only the 502<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade in that area. It may have been strengthened at the present by another brigade, although the area is conducive to work in this direction. The Zakho area may create a vital target if the enemy gets close to it because of the international road, which is the main artery, in addition to the oil pipeline. Furthermore, if the enemy took this path, it is very likely, Sir, that we assign some troops, which will be at the expense of the Iraqi forces, as a result.

What we need to do at this time, Mr. President...In fact, we have two main points. I believe the military successes achieved now in the battles of al-Faw and Basra may be some of the very brilliant operations at the strategic and operational level that will turn the heads of military thinkers and institutions. We gained from these operations a great international and military reputation.

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**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Training:** I attended the Jordanian Embassy party last night, representing the Minister of Defense. I was standing in one area of the hall while the Soviet Ambassador was at the other side of the hall. I believe he noticed my rank and recognized me. He came up to me and asked me how we were able to occupy al-Shalmaja and the area in ten hours as reported in the statement... and the Iranians...

**Mr. President:** What is this Abd al-Jabbar... (he means Mr. Abd-al-Jabbar Muhsin, Political Guidance Department Director)? You put us in this predicament... we say between nine-thirty in the morning and six in the evening, while you say in one of the other statements 10 hours there.

**Political Guidance Department Director:** No, Sir, we corrected that when we revised the statement. They had a mistake.

**Mr. President:** Yes, is this a typographical mistake, Abd-al-Jabbar?

**Political Guidance Department Director:** I called them there, Sir and told them to correct the number.

**Mr. President:** Yes.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** It was 8.5 hours in the official statement.

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Training:** Sir... so the Soviet Ambassador came closer to me and started asking how we were able to occupy it in this short time when it took the Iranians more than three months.

**Mr. President:** The statement gave specific background.

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Training:** The Soviet Ambassador may have been surprised as to how the rest of...

**Mr. President:** When they ask you about the size of the enemy's force, tell them honestly five divisions plus the reinforcements that we have not been able to count yet, which was also of a large size... yes.

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Training:** Sir, this is what we have accomplished and I think it is appropriate to continue focusing on it. The second point that we achieved is raising the morale of the army and people and the Arabs as well.

**Mr. President:** We want to know how much impact this had on the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps. This is the only thing I am interested in. The spirits of the entire army and the public were high indeed, but I want to make sure that 60% of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps was impacted, for example, which is also a lot.

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**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Training:** In order to maintain and raise the morale of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps, I suggest facing the main threat of the enemy in the north by eliminating this threat first. Then, stopping the enemy from advancing deep into Iraq as a first priority and then, as a second priority, destroying as many of his troops in the north as we can, especially in the main areas of threat, which are the Dokan and Darbandikhan areas. The third priority is to try to kick the enemy out as far as we can from the borders.

Mr. President, this work is going to take a long time, especially since we are aware of the circumstances in the northern area.

We are going to need, Mr. President, to strengthen [*our forces*] in the Darbandikhan area as well as in the Seedi Kan area, as another priority.

As for defending the Qalat Dizah area, which is considered the main direction of the enemy towards the Dokan area, I think the measures we took after we were informed of the threats from this direction by the Military Intelligence Directorate -- the defensive positions at Qalat Dizah, are good because they were held by three brigades in the past, but now there are seven brigades distributed according to the areas of threat there...

Defensive [*forces*] were there, Mr. President, when I was with the corps. There were divisions, and I was defending at the top and at the valley with the same troops. I mean there were troops there, a company and two platoon headquarters, and the rest -- [*Interrupted*]

**Mr. President:** The presence of the force at the foothill and the valley is a security base for those defending at the top, and when they retreat they will find, at least, people to control the land for them.

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**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Training:** Sir, there is one case remaining in the Qalat Dizah sector, and that is the left wing of the 24<sup>th</sup> Division.

In fact, I am not comfortable with it because it is exposed. I mean there are no troops there, starting from the Shaheedan sector up to Haj Omran. I suggest then, instead of having seven brigades at Qalat Dizah, to bring in a couple of divisions. One will be in the Qalat Dizah sector and responsible for a number of brigades, say 4-5 brigades, while another division will handle the left wing of the 24<sup>th</sup> Division up to the Qandeel area, with at least 3-4 brigades under its command to keep the enemy from entering the northern region from this direction.

The other point is... of course, Mr. President, to continue the Anfal operation because the Iranians depend to a great extent on the saboteurs. Continuing the operation in this direction will limit the possibility [*of the Iranians*] benefitting from them completely. Therefore, for example, Arbil plain at Balisa and the Qalat Dizah areas and north of it should take in my opinion first priority in dealing with the saboteurs in this area.

As for the Republican Guards, Mr. President... We all know this is the main strike force of Iraq... In my opinion, we should not send this force at the present time to the northern region, which is known for its difficult topography, and the difficulty of winning battles there in a quick and short manner. This can lead to wasting the [*Republican*] Guard troops in this region.

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**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Training:** But, to strengthen the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps military capability and the state of morale, I see it is essential to support it with troops that are of similar capabilities to those of the Republican Guard in terms of performance.

In other words, the strengthening can be with either some of the Republican Guard troops and additional ones [*troops*] or with troops similar to the Republican Guard in terms of aptitude and morale, so the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps can stop the enemy, destroy however many enemy troops they can, and defend the vital targets. Sir, I am sure this is better done here by us with all of the north movements.

I don't think the north will end in one or two battles. A battle may take a long time in the north.

Therefore, protecting this main power of Iraq is vital and it must mainly be in the hands of the General Command. We may assign some of its troops to missions in the north. The main factor is that we maintain the situation as it is now while cementing other successes in the sectors, including the northern sector.

Thank you, Sir.

**Mr. President:** Director of Intelligence.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** Sir, the course of discussions to assess the situation and lay out plans is for the Intelligence Director to speak on first, so the facts will be in front of the planners to [*help them*] draw the right conclusions. In this meeting, Sir, Your Excellency did not allow me to speak first as everyone has the intelligence reports and a clear picture of the enemy.

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**General Military Intelligence Director:** But, what compelled me to raise this issue are two points brought up by the Military Chief of Staff.

The first point is him saying that the operational situation of the enemy... or the enemy is able to impact our operations in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Corps sectors.

The second point is the analysis of the Military Chief of Staff of the enemy's paths in the northern region. Therefore, if you allow me, Sir, to quickly review the capabilities and intentions of the enemy in the operation sectors.

As it is known and following his great defeat in al-Faw and Shalamja sectors, the enemy no longer has the capability to carry out any action, at least in the southern region. This means we should not rule out his ability to conduct limited, annoying operations at the Shalamja sector to impact our efforts to reorganize our troops in the region... in Majnoon region.

**Mr. President:** The enemy is trying to do some small operation by the dam.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. President:** No, what force does he have? Why was the Minister of Defense so enthusiastic and keen last night? Because there was nothing to remove. I mean, just like the enemy proceeded toward our group in the last phase, he could have proceeded toward them in the direction of the canal as well.

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**General Military Intelligence Director:** In the Majnoon sector, the enemy is very aware and he will surely increase his awareness after the Shalamaja operation.

**Mr. President:** Consecutively, one basket [*phase*] after another.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** The enemy has no intentions at the present in the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps operations sector. As for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Corps sector, the enemy doesn't have the capability, and I am not exaggerating when I say he doesn't even have the capability to conduct limited work due to lack of reserve troops in that direction...

The other point is that the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Corps sector is the responsibility of the regular troops, and the Republican Guard troops do not get involved in the sector of regular troops. This doesn't mean they cannot operate at the regiment or brigade level, which is now within the corps capabilities.

As Your Excellency and members of the General Command know, the enemy has maneuvered with a large portion of his troops in the northern region, especially after he occupied Halabja. But, the important thing I wanted to explain to Your Excellency, which we did not in fact explain then as we were unsure about it, is that the recruitment process of the Republican Guard troops is very low, to the point where we found out that a large part of the [*Republican*] Guard troops are just like skeletons [*weak*].

**Mr. President:** Skeletons?

**General Military Intelligence Director:** Yes, Sir.

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**Mr. President:** Some of them are not skeletons, but they only have a few soldiers. One battalion has 150 [*soldiers*].

**General Military Intelligence Director:** More than that, a battalion has 250. Sir, the enemy had planned a series of operations in the northern region, from [*illegible*] to Haj Omran. Many reasons made the enemy postpone carrying out these operations...

**Mr. President:** The reasons I have compiled about the enemy delaying his wide offensive in the north are our two surprise operations, they were not a surprise at the technical level but rather a surprise at the strategic level. This means the enemy was surprised by our capability to launch an attack of such a size in these locations and the boldness of the leadership and the army strategically.

I mean you have the capability to launch such an attack and this surprises them. So it came, one hit after another... until he studies the case of al-Faw so that he would know how to act should this operation happen again.

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**Mr. President:** This is one point. The other point is that the Chief of Staff is new and he needs to start with an action where it is impossible to fail because he is new. He needs to start at least with a successful operation... This is the nature of all leaders. It is human nature.

The third factor is our reaction along the path, and strengthening, as well as tactical awareness, which the enemy notices constantly in front of him, and the new things in the north.

The other factor is fear. It is true that I say I want to be reassured about the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps, but I am convinced that the enemy feared our use of daunting concentrated fire in the north. I mean he has fear inside of him. One of the reasons for his fear is not being able to concentrate in large numbers and get closer because of limitations imposed by the mountain. If there is not a road that will take all the equipment for size x troops, he cannot advance.

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**Mr. President:** Therefore, they [*the Iranians*] always try to concentrate their main forces out of the range of artillery, even out of the effective range of the Air Force if they can, or at least out of its most effective range.

The last factor is the Anfal operation, which also continued without interruption.

These are the factors. If you have other factors, add them in your own way.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** Sir, all of these factors that you mentioned, which I should have presented, there is proof of them [*these factors*] such as the quick anticipation and reinforcing of the threatened locations, including command posts.

Our information indicates that the enemy wanted to act quickly in Qalat Dizah. He thought he was capable of occupying the city of Qalat Dizah after taking over Halabja as anticipated.

However, the swift reaction of the General Command and the corps, including their study of the issue and their determination to move out of Besteet compound, which the saboteurs depended on Sir...

As for the Anfal operation, the enemy had planned to benefit a lot [*from it*], especially from the area of Qarah Dagh due to its proximity to Darbandikhan.

The [*illegible*] operations and the successful strikes of the Air Force in particular were indeed very good work that terrorized the enemy to the point that he had difficulty bringing his troops closer to the front...

On the other hand, the enemy believes that the presence of the 10<sup>th</sup> Division and the large concentration of troops in the northern region...

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**Mr. President:** We still want to launch an offensive.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** We want to launch an offensive on a major target in front of us. However, the enemy still has intentions in the northern region. The proof that assured us was the attempts of the Iranian counterintelligence and the other hostile intelligence agents to pull us away from the northern region. They made the Iranians look like...

**Mr. President:** They were trying to pull us away [*from attacking*] through [*forcing us to*] defend [*the north*]. But, instead of taking a defensive position, we started attacking. Also, their intention was to make us take a defensive position but the operation mainly was not here... Yes.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** Therefore, Sir, since the beginning of the war until now, we have been on the safe side of all operational sectors. The General Command's process of running the operations is based on the information we receive from Intelligence.

Now, we have the capability [*to launch an offensive*] in the center and southern regions, so do we attack in the northern region or in other regions... in Majnoon and in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps sectors?

In my opinion, Sir, we should attack in the northern region as soon as possible for the following reasons: the northern region has come to represent a major operation of attrition for us, and Your Excellency knows there has never been more than 20 brigades in the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps, even if there are hostile intentions against it.

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**General Military Intelligence Director:** Also, the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps didn't have more than 12-13 brigades and now it has 60 brigades. It will be fortified by three or more brigades as the Military Chief of Staff and the Deputy of Operations have explained.

Sir, I mean even 63 brigades are a major depletion for us. This is one point. The other point, Sir, is if the enemy attacks any area and even if we maneuver with 10 other brigades in the northern area, the enemy will achieve his goals for many reasons. The top reason is the one that you mentioned, Sir, the psychological factor.

Right now, his psychological state towards any attack by our troops, especially the Republican Guard, is similar to our situation in the northern area.

As for the issue of the Republican Guard dividing both sectors, which Your Excellency had mentioned at the beginning of the meeting... I thought you meant that the Halabja basin became the responsibility of the Republican Guard, and it is more suitable for the work of mechanized and armored troops, while the other sector is the north....

**Military Chief of Staff:** They are not fighting...

**General Military Intelligence Director:** You mean...

**Military Chief of Staff:** The first to be defeated.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** Yes....In my opinion, Sir, we should comply with this principle, which is that the best way of defense is offense. I think...

"End of recording"  
XX XX XXXX XX XX

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No.	Rank	Full Name	Position	Signature
1	Staff Lieutenant General retired	Dhia' Tawfiq Ibrahim	Fifth Committee Chairman	[Signature]
2	Staff Major General	Ismail Abd-al-Qader Hamar	Member	[Signature]
3	Staff Major General retired	Hazem Hasan al-Ali	Member	[Signature]
4	Major General retired	Kamel Mahmoud Khattab	Member	[Signature]
5	Staff Major General retired	Talib Ali Abd-al-Latif	Member	[Signature]
6	Staff Major General retired	Faysal Farid Amin	Member	[Signature]
7	Staff Brigadier General	Kadhum Zahir Jabr	Member	[Signature]
8	Staff Brigadier General retired	Fadhel Abbas Jassem	Member	[Signature]
9	Staff Brigadier General retired	Saleh Hussein Jarallah	Member	[Signature]
10	First Lieutenant	[Redacted Name]	Military Security Representative	[Signature]

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File Number 23

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Audio Transcript

Of the Armed Forces General Command meetings  
And  
The Speeches of President Leader (God may protect and watch over him)  
At  
The Armed Forces General Command

Fourth Committee

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Staff Major General Miyassar Ibrahim Hammadi               | Head of the Committee                          |
| 2. Staff Air Vice Marshal Mohammad Salman Hamad               | Member   |
| 3. Staff Major General Retired 'Abdallah Qassem Ahmed         | Member   |
| 4. Staff Major General Hafez Habib 'Abdallah                  | Member   |
| 5. Staff Brigadier General 'Ali Hamdi Mustafa                 | Member   |
| 6. Staff Brigadier General Retired Mustafa Hamdi Ahmed        | Member   |
| 7. Staff Brigadier General Retired Hameed 'Abd-al-Karim Hasan | Member   |
| 8. Naval Staff Brigadier General Retired Nazar Sadeeq Ahmed   | Member   |
| 9. Staff Brigadier General Zubayr Jassem Othman               | Member   |
| 10. Brigadier General (Special Forces) 'Abdallah Hamad Ahmed  | Member   |
| 11. Major (Intelligence) [ <i>Redacted Name 2</i> ]           | (Military Security Directorate Representative) |

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No.	Number of Tape	Date	Pages	
			From	To
1	Tape No. 1	May 23, 1988	1	37

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Tape No. 2

Date: May 23, 1988

Attendees

1. President Leader, Staff Field Marshal Saddam Hussein (may God protect him)
2. Chief of Staff of the Military, Staff General Nazar Abd-al-Karim
3. Armed Forces General Command Secretary General, Staff Lieutenant General Alaa al-Din Kadhum
4. Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations, Staff Lieutenant General Hussein Rashid Mohammed
5. Political Guidance Department Director, Comrade Abd-al-Jabbar Muhsin
6. General Military Intelligence Director, Major General Saber Abd-al-Aziz

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Tape Number 2

Date: May 23, 1988

Armed Forces General Command Meeting  
(Side One of the Tape)

**Political Guidance Department Director, Comrade Abd-al-Jabbar Muhsin:** It is in training now.

**Mr. President:** So, from where?

**Political Guidance Department Director:** I believe for training purposes, Sir.

**Mr. President:** Why? There is no one else?

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations, Staff Lieutenant General Hussein Rashid:** If we make them part of the Republican Guard and they do not have their battle orders, then we will further burden the Republican Guard.

**Military Chief of Staff, Staff General Nazar 'Abd-al-Karim:** Anything that becomes a part of the Republican Guard, they will never return [*to the regular military*].

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** Let us create formations for them.

**Mr. President:** Huh?

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, the Republican Guard at that time...

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**Mr. President:** No, they [*the Republican Guard*] have to give them back [*to the regular military*].

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, the best thing now is -- [*Interrupted*]

**Mr. President:** Because when you place them with the Republican Guard for the first time, they [*the soldiers*] would think they are members of the [*Republican*] Guards.

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** Yes.

**Mr. President:** The Republican Guard has different rules for recruiting members than the Army.

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. President:** The Republican Guard will start investigating these people. This way you will be further burdening it.

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** Exactly, Sir.

**Mr. President:** It may be at the expenses of other formations.

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary General Staff Lieutenant General Alaa al-Din Kadhum:** Yes, Sir.

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**Mr. President:** Because it will take volunteers.

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** For sure. It will be like that, Sir.

**Mr. President:** Instead of sending them to such and such a brigade that it [*the Republican Guard*] formed recently, it sends them to the regiments.

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** Either we give them all to it, completely, at once, or we do not form them there, or we assign them to the artillery.

**Mr. President:** Anyway, in the first phase, let us form them and assign them to the artillery, and choose one specific person to be in charge before us ... you are responsible for it.

**Military Chief of Staff:** One time, Sir, we asked for two 155 mm artillery regiments from the Republican Guard. The controlling headquarters is the one that controls it and the concerned people in the Republican Guard [*illegible*]. But then, on another day, he [*unspecified*] surprised me and said, "We need these to strike the target in front of me. So, I decided not to give it to them." We said, "Okay. Rely on God."

**Mr. President:** (His Excellency and the attendees laugh)

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**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** Sir, he didn't lose anything.

**Military Chief of Staff:** No... I didn't lose [*anything*].

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** They are settled.

**Military Chief of Staff:** They are.

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** Let them form three or four extra regiments.

**Mr. President:** For the Republican Guard?

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. President:** Yes, we will form that for them... How many do you have now, 35 artillery regiments?

**Military Chief of Staff:** Thirty-five regiments... Yes, Sir.

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** Two multiple rocket launcher [*MRL*] regiments and 34 artillery regiments.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Meaning 36 regiments.

**Mr. President:** I swear, I wasn't convinced of the idea that they form ten artillery regiments. This is my conviction... but [*due to*] the persistence of Hussein (meaning Major General Hussein Kamil, then the Minister of Industry and Military Industrialization and supervisor of the Republican Guard's affairs).

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**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. President:** It [*his persistence*] made us create these formations.

**Deputy Chief of Staff of the Military for Operations:** Sir, he used to tell me... when the artillery group reaches six people, we put a cannon with them just like that... so it will never stop. He asked me... How many people do you have? Form artillery out of them. Indeed, this was helpful.

**Mr. President:** Yes.

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** Artillery has become a decisive weapon, Sir.

**Mr. President:** Of course, the Republican Guard has personnel... When we want the Republican Guard formations, we have to add artillery units to it. However, he wanted to make the artillery larger than the troops at an early stage. I told him, "This will cause you an extra administrative burden in terms of securing volunteers and other issues." But it seemed as though he wanted to expand the Republican Guard. The idea is correct.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, didn't you give this operation a name? You told me to call it Ramadan Mubarak [*Blessed Ramadan*], as a good omen for 14 Ramadan or 17 July or any other name?

**Mr. President:** We will call it ... Tawakalna Ala Allah [*in God we trust*].

**Military Chief of Staff:** Up until now, we have been calling it Project 33.

**Mr. President:** Yes.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Now it is Tawakalna Ala Allah.

**Mr. President:** As of today.

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** Yes.

**Mr. President:** The day of (Y) you will give it the name... it is significant in the media to announce that we liberated the entire southern Majnoon.

**General Military Intelligence Director, Staff Major General Saber 'Abd-al-Aziz:** The battle of al-Shalamja also became a major media story.

**Mr. President:** It is not as clear to the Iraqis as Majnoon.

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**General Military Intelligence Director:** It has a name now.

**Mr. President:** Of course, we are going to discuss it, God willing, because there are a lot of things the Iraqis remember... They had martyrs on the Jassem River.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** And in the battle of al-Hassad al-Akbar.

**Mr. President:** They have such and such person... I mean these are names they know.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** They know Jassem River more than al-Shalamja.

**Mr. President:** Yes.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** The talk now is about the Jassem River... We will regain Jassem River. They think that Jassem River is the major attack that will be re-launched.

**Mr. President:** Yes.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** This time, Sir, we are reassured just like the battle of al-Faw. In other words, we don't have a concern.

**Mr. President:** Yes... by God, I am also reassured.

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** God willing, a day worth of work.

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**Mr. President:** Reassured.

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** Sir, while I was riding in the car with our brother the Military Intelligence Director, when I gave him a ride... I told him, "I remember when I was a student in middle school, I saw a raging bull on Ghazi street, which is now called al-Kifah street... it was surrounded by cars... a traffic officer came and shot six rounds at the bull. It did not move. But soon afterward, it jumped over the cars and then the fence, to fall in the park. Butchers gathered around it, I do not know where they came from, and every one of them had a big knife and they started cutting it..." I told him, the only thing left for the Iranians is a similar jump prior to their fall.

**Mr. President:** Yes.

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** And then the knives will start cutting them.

**Mr. President:** Only if they gain something in the north then will they get their balance back.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, they will never gain anything in the North

**Mr. President:** God willing.

**Military Chief of Staff:** These actions they are carrying out... They want to do another Halabja in Qalat Dizah... Sir, in Qalat Dizah they will do something else.

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**Mr. President:** Yes.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, the other direction is from Sheikh Mohammed toward Qara Basra hill... this is located north of Dokan... and maybe all actions...

**Mr. President:** Where is it?

**Military Chief of Staff:** North of Dokan, Sir.

**Mr. President:** Yes.

**Military Chief of Staff:** It is clear to us that this direction... They want to achieve something to allow them (not clear) Darbandikhan, Qalat Dizah, and this sector north of Dokan... This is their situation... but they need transportation roads now. The issue of Sheikh Mohammed... They will need a road along Sheikh Mohammed. Then they will control Qara Basra. After that, they will develop the road a little bit in the direction of Qara Basra so they will be north of Dokan within some time... Therefore, Sir, I think they will advance to Qalat Dizah before Sheikh Mohammed... They will develop the road at Sheikh Mohammed and the other direction they are planning to work in... I think in the direction of Seedi Kan and the direction of Najma - Hawdian. This road that is going up north of Sabeelak, they will go in the direction of the Hareer Mountain and from there to Koysanjaq - Taq Taq, meaning this direction.

**Mr. President:** Yes.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** I am sure that they will not do anything other than that... They have a position in Darbandikhan and a similar position in Dokan, which will create a position for them through Najma.

**Mr. President:** Do not elaborate on these ideas that you have.

**Military Chief of Staff:** No, Sir, just myself and the Deputy of Operations.

**Mr. President:** I mean, do not elaborate on them, because we should not expect... I mean, we have to be cautious on the basis that the enemy understands just as much as we do or more. But, our understanding of ourselves, when we put ourselves in the enemy's place, we don't elaborate on it to a great extent, you will never know... There are serious exchanges between us and the enemy.

It doesn't make sense for the enemy to embark on this adventure without knowing the consequences. Thank God, so far God has humiliated the enemy. So do not elaborate on our ideas... In other words, we limit them [*our ideas*] only to the people directly involved.

**Military Chief of Staff:** In my assessment, when I see this whole attack... 100% this is the direction of the attack... because, Sir, only knowing the direction will give us great assurance.

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**Mr. President:** To thwart his plans.

**Military Chief of Staff:** To thwart his plans there are only a few requirements, God willing. At the time we formed these artillery regiments that we have, Sir... And we said that we needed formations especially in light of the desire of corps commanders, I believe all of them... commando units - commando formations relatively disappointed them [*corps commanders*]... not like the infantry, Sir... afterwards, officers and soldiers avoided serving in the commando units... Therefore, their performance at this time is not like the infantry formations. The infantry formations are better... To get a large number of formations, we need to survey the commando formations and units. We need about 25 infantry formations in addition to 16 commando formations to achieve a balance and continuity to work for us; balance and continuity for work in the south... we have the [*Army*] reserves to work with in the north.

**Mr. President:** The commandos... The thing that made them avoid serving there is the way they have been used.

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** Yes, they weren't used in a correct way. Yes, I swear, Sir.

**Mr. President:** The commandos weren't used as planned... Let's go back to the papers. What is written on them? What did I write?

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** It is clear, Sir. It is here... to work within their divisions.

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**Mr. President:** By God, the situation was there, but we weren't in need of it... to the contrary.

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. President:** The absence of... or I mean inconsistency outside the framework of this strategy is what leads to strategic failure when using the troops.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, even at the location... the commandos are at the location... the commando units.

**Mr. President:** Had we assigned all the commandos to their divisions, their sacrifices would have been less and the impact they leave would have been greater and they wouldn't avoid serving in these units. To the contrary, they also want stability and when they realize that they won't be used when there are no attacks on their divisions then to the contrary, this is more stability for them... and people would have been more interested in the commandos.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, this is a chronic case, it wasn't born today, yesterday, or [*when*] the work happened a while ago... A chronic case, meaning this has been going on since the formation of the commando [*units*]. This means this is the way they have always been used.

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**Mr. President:** It started a year ago [*and continues*] until now... No, more than that.

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** Well, Sir, they were actually used a lot. Every time a battle erupts, we immediately maneuver with commando brigades.

**Mr. President:** With commandos.

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** This is not only now.

**Mr. President:** Lieutenant General Nazar (he means General Nazar al-Khazraji, the Military Chief of Staff) is the one that maneuvers with the commandos the most, because he believes in commandos more than the others. He is the one who used them in excess.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Well, Sir, you remember at the time how we used them, because it is also based on the time of their use.

**Mr. President:** Yes.

**Military Chief of Staff:** How do we use these forces?

**Mr. President:** Yes, there is someone who knows how to use them and there are others who use them as infantry.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** Remember, Sir, we used them widely in our battles.

**Mr. President:** In the north.

**Military Chief of Staff:** They achieved a lot of success in the north, but some pocket stayed, Sir. Even in the battles of Jawarta and Darbandikhan, we pressured them relatively... The last phase when we fought in Darbandikhan, their performance was remarkable, meaning (unclear) their officers...

Remember, Sir, we fought in Jawarta, we fought in Penjawin, and we fought in Darbandikhan, a number of the battles were in Darbandikhan. When we regained Darbandikhan, there was a superb commando unit led by someone named Qadduri, Sir, he died and so did his officers, a bomb killed them. By the time we finished Darbandikhan at that time, we were almost dead... We exhausted them as well because there was no one else besides them...

Sir, what is happening is they participated in every battle, and so they say, "Why stay with the commandos, we can be in an infantry regiment and take a defensive position, and we will participate in a battle once a year."

**Mr. President:** Yes.

**Military Chief of Staff:** So they [*soldiers*] actually started to avoid the commandos.

**Mr. President:** I know all of this. I want to bring your attention to the Republican Guard issue as well. Let's keep [*this*] in mind and not let them get to this situation...

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**Mr. President:** Because sometimes they might say, “Don’t you want us to complain?” But don’t make them complain. So pay attention to this. At the last meeting and I think before al-Faw I asked you to study the idea of creating formations under the command of the General Command.

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. President:** I don't know. What have you decided about it?

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** Sir, nothing happened so far.

**Mr. President:** This idea is still on the table. Study it... when a battle happens, it is possible for a battle to take place in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps sector according to preliminary intelligence information.

What is going to happen now is that we are going to maneuver from the 6<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps sector, and you are going to maneuver in phases according to the information we receive. Isn't this our plan?

**Military Chief of Staff:** Yes, Sir.

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**Mr. President:** What happens is that the arrangement of the defensive position and taking it [*the position*] will be in phases. The enemy is waiting for us to finish all of our maneuvers. He keeps on watching for two weeks, and when he doesn't see any formation he starts to attack in another place... the place where we maneuvered, which gives the enemy the opportunity to attack it. Isn't this what is going on?

But, if we had ten brigades, we would have moved them all at once. Some of them would be mobilized in the defensive position and some as a counter-attack force. The ones in the defensive position would have their full opportunity along with the seven brigades in the position... They had their opportunity for a whole month and they got ready, unlike what is happening now, some troops take 48 hours, some 24 hours and others take 25 days. Isn't this practically what is happening?

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** Yes, Sir.

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**Mr. President:** So, this is to our advantage. The second point is, if we maneuver with these ten brigades, assuming the Armed Forces General Command has 12 brigades at the most, and the enemy attacks another location in one of the corps [*sectors*], the corps will be self-sufficient because nothing was taken from it, and they do not have any gaps. So the enemy will not be able to gain anything out of this corps. The other thing is, we shall maneuver with these at once. When an attack occurs on this corps but not on the other which we were anticipating, it will be easy to maneuver with these ten brigades compared to maneuvering with the ten brigades from the corps. Am I right or not?

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** Right, Sir.

**Mr. President:** Another thing that I want is when we reach a point where we have troops we shouldn't let periodic competition [*occur*] on a regular basis between the Republican Guard forces and the corps in carrying out offensive missions...

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**Mr. President:** Just because if we accept this or not, when this situation lingers it will leave some friction between the army and the Republican Guard... it has to leave friction, especially if the successes continue and failures of the other side continue. It is definitely not in our interest for this to happen... So, we let the competition be between the General Command reserve and the corps, and until the General Command reserve is formed the way I wanted it, think of letting the competition be between the corps themselves. For example, if the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps has two targets similar in value and circumstances, meaning the nature of the terrain and other factors suitable for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps and the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Corps to compete on, we train troops from the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Corps and from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps, and we hold friendly offensive operations between the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps...

**Military Chief of Staff:** In the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Corps and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps.

**Mr. President:** Also, if the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Corps has two similar targets,

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**Mr. President:** The 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps will periodically assist the 1<sup>st</sup> Private Corps. Let's not make the first phase of targeting be very ambitious so as to create this competition. We will not let the corps lead alone, but we will make the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps lead in its own direction and the Private Corps lead in its own direction, and the same goes for the Republican Guard.

Regardless of how small the operations are, by [*doing*] this we will not exhaust the Republican Guard and we save the army from frictions by introducing a new element to the competition other than the standard element, which is only for the Republican Guard.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, we had... Remember, Your Excellency, we had twenty brigades.

**Mr. President:** We should have combined them.

**Military Chief of Staff:** We have them at hand... supposedly to be trained. But, the situation that occurred in the north... Sir, we lost 25 brigades in the north because of these sources, in addition to the offensive operations that we are conducting at the present.

**Mr. President:** Look into... if you want to turn the commando regiments into infantry regiments or infantry brigades, whatever you think.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** Also, we are conducting a study now in light of these recommendations.

**Mr. President:** Yes, conduct this study and we will look into it.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. President:** We might even invite the corps commanders to get their opinions on this.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Yes, Sir... at one point, Sir, in one of the main battles such as the battle of Mawet and others, we had 13 brigades. The entire 1<sup>st</sup> Corps along with the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, which is now within the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps sector with 13 brigades, all battles started with 13 brigades. Now, there are 47 brigades, except for the 24<sup>th</sup> Division that became within the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps sector, and this situation, I mean, is a problem for us. In every corps sector, we kept a number of brigades as reserves from approximately 30 that were reserves and which we trained to carry out operations there.

**Mr. President:** So, had we not carried out this strike in the al-Faw sector that saved the reputation of the army morally in addition to its other values, they would have destroyed our reserve. We could have kept the conventional course, defense troops, and quit the other works. Thank God, we see everything fine. We want this regiment that achieved its objectives to be honored.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. President:** So that not everyone is evaluated the same... The one that achieves his goal and the one that does not... We treat them as a victorious regiment.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Also, it was pulled back after that, Sir.

**Mr. President:** And yet, it achieved victory... Didn't it achieve its goal?

**Military Chief of Staff:** It achieved its goals, advanced forward, and captured some of the hills there.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** Within the first hour, it finished occupying its target.

**Mr. President:** And held on to the target?

**Military Chief of Staff:** It held on to the target until approximately 1300 hours.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** Almost to the end, Sir.

**Military Chief of Staff:** But then we ordered them to withdraw.

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**General Military Intelligence Director:** To the end, Sir, until the full withdrawal took place... From the first half hour, I think the first half hour.

**Military Chief of Staff:** It achieved its goal and advanced forward to hill 363... The frontline tanks were at the bottom of the Sanoba hill, and it was instructed not to rush any more because it might have suffered an impact from the [*direction*] of Sanoba with light ammunition, as the enemy was still present.

**Mr. President:** From now on, I will not ask the commanders to tell me, even the Republican Guard troops. I will deal with them based on rations. I will say, "This is how much your share is of Bravery Medals... Tell me how do you suggest distributing them," because it appears that the commanders are not in a good situation... They only want to take as much as they can to the point where they even ruin the honoring process. So, this battalion will get thirty Bravery Medals plus four super [*luxury*] cars plus fifteen Brazilian cars.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** Sir, they were praising the brigade commander.

**Military Chief of Staff:** One of the four super cars will go to the brigade commander who was a leader, Sir.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** Because the brigade commander, Sir, also led an infantry regiment.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** The brigade also led an infantry regiment.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** The brigade commander led an infantry battalion and there was a reserve commando company with him.

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** He is a battalion commander, Sir.

**Mr. President:** I don't care about that... I want this... It is what has been assigned to you.

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** This is for the regiment only, Sir.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** The direction is this, Sir... If Your Excellency will allow me.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Including the brigade commander.

**Mr. President:** Yes?

**General Military Intelligence Director:** This approach includes the brigade commander... because even the corps commander and the [*Ba'ath*] Branch Secretary...

**Mr. President:** Yes.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** They used to say that in the first meeting we thought that he [*the corps commander*] is the only one who will achieve his goal, while the rest of the brigade commanders didn't achieve anything.

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**Mr. President:** Yes... with the brigade commander... let them tell us... the corps commander and brigade commander... how are they going to distribute these between the distinguished fighters.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Well, Sir, this is fine... but, we have to hold people accountable, Sir... yesterday he was a formation commander...

**Mr. President:** Yes... [*We must*] hold them accountable for sure... we said that... but, I want to make the hearts of cowards bleed [*make them suffer*] in this...

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** Indeed, Sir... so that the others will see how these people achieved their goals and are being honored...

**Mr. President:** We said plus fifteen Brazilian cars?

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** Yes, Sir... thirty Bravery Medals, plus four super cars, plus fifteen Brazilian cars.

**Mr. President:** Get the cars tomorrow and send them there to be given to the brigade commander, and he will be told how you want them distributed.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, let the Branch Secretary and the corps commander be included, as they are in constant contact with them... he [*the corps commander*] will supervise them so as to guarantee proper distribution.

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**Mr. President:** Yes... so the corps commander will distribute them...

**Military Chief of Staff:** Yes, Sir, along with the Branch Secretary and the brigade commander.

**Mr. President:** The Branch Secretary, the corps commander, and the brigade commander. These four are the committee, let them tell us who the distinguished and qualified ones for this are... and don't tell this to anyone... because there is a possibility that we may cancel their nomination if we have other information to work with.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** By the way, Sir, if you allow us to talk about the party.

**Mr. President:** Yes.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** In battles. .. there is an experience... they are led by the secretary of the Basra Branch, Comrade Talib (meaning comrade Talib al-Sadoun). We have not seen this in any other place... and I think the successes achieved in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps are because of him. Sir, he himself supervises, brings the comrades and distributes them to all companies.

**Military Chief of Staff:** He is different from others.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** And Your Excellency knows... Sir...

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**Mr. President:** Then why wasn't it achieved [*until*] now?

**Military Chief of Staff:** They were not optimistic about the two brigade commanders.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** Besides that, Sir, it is the situation that the Military Chief of Staff, the Assistant, and I see in fact.

**Mr. President:** Yes, he is a good man.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** Which means, Sir, the situation doesn't fully exist... we don't see it in the north and [*it*] doesn't exist in any other place.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Well, it did exist; it started in the north.

**Mr. President:** It started when he was...

**General Military Intelligence Director:** In the north, yes, Sir, when he was there... in this case Sir, a [*Ba'ath*] Branch Member shall accompany every company commander, and a [*Ba'ath*] Division Member and five comrades shall accompany each [military] division commander. Sir, this provides a comfortable procedure. After all, we need a situation like this because the presence of a [*Ba'ath*] Party official is a deterrent factor, even to the corps commander.

**Mr. President:** True.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** And to the division commander.

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**Mr. President:** Exactly.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** And the commander of the brigade.

**Mr. President:** For sure... we honor party members in the regiment that succeeded... the branch member, for example.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. President:** We will honor party members... separate from this honoring.

**General Military Intelligence Director:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. President:** Separate from it.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Sir, we experience a lot of issues. When a formation commander fails in his task for no good reason for his failure, meaning he has no confidence in himself or his capabilities to achieve...

**Mr. President:** And nobody asks... ask him why he failed? Come here...

**Military Chief of Staff:** But, this case was not proven against him during his evaluation... even the commanders here, Sir, and sometime the corps commanders, they have no desire to prove this case against him.

**Mr. President:** Even when he is transferred... or when he is removed from his responsibility, they don't document that he was removed from his responsibilities for his failure in such and such a thing... but I requested this recently.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. President:** I requested this and said it shall be established against him from now on. Every time you replace or transfer someone, you must mention the reason... I will not accept you saying we shall transfer or replace him unless you write the reason with his last name also, so there won't be any mistakes.

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** Yes, Sir, it must be mentioned in their suggestions... replacing or transferring brigade commanders. And we request that they explain the reasons.

**Mr. President:** I think these instructions only reached the Military Office.

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** I swear, Sir, to the Military Office and to all.

**Mr. President:** Then document it... from now on, any-one replaced, transferred or who has his promotion delayed, the reason should be in writing... because after a year, two years, three, four, and five years elapse you can forget this. He may become a commander or something I don't know what is going to happen.

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**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** It should be documented with his last name.

**Mr. President:** With his last name... are these thirty Bravery Medals appropriate [*sufficient*]?

**Military Chief of Staff:** Good, Sir.

**Mr. President:** Yes? And four super cars and fifteen Brazilian cars.

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** So, they will have to distinguish these situations, Sir.

**Military Chief of Staff:** It is not much for the military, but it is for the national defense battalions, because the regiments, Sir, entered a series of battles and our soldier in the battle of al-Anfal fought exceptionally, face to face and shot to shot. I swear, Sir, the action that took place in the al-Anfal battlefield is amazing indeed, Sir, and how we kicked them out of there... It is true we have financial and other means, but the fighting was man to man in the battles of al-Anfal. In the first operation of al-Anfal, 12 formations participated and every formation was in a series of battles. I mean some formations were in ten battles... there was a battle every day for a month.

**Mr. President:** This is their share of honoring... when they hand them out to the distinguished ones and say we have seen so and so by our own eyes killing four [*Iranians*], and the fifth from behind the line with a hand grenade.... People like these deserve a Bravery Medal.

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**Military Chief of Staff:** It is supposed to be like this... But Sir, as far as the fighting that took place in al-Anfal, our troops fought well and our soldiers were fighting the insurgents in an excellent manner, even though the insurgents were with the Khomeini Guards... Some of the defeated brigades, I mean, the brigades that sustained losses shall participate at least, Sir, in the battles of al-Anfal... You see the soldier fighting in a very good way... I don't know if it is because he is fighting a saboteur or insurgent and is spiteful of him or is it something in his nature?

**Mr. President:** No... Because he is fighting him (the insurgent) and he doesn't have any artillery support... because artillery frustrates our troops... It is bad.

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** Sir, the issues that have nothing to do with offensive [*operations*]... I will turn them over to Your Excellency because they need to be disseminated, while the comrades documented the ones that are related to offensive [*operations*].

**Mr. President:** Yes... the ones that are related to offensive [*operations*], the comrades already documented them.

**Military Chief of Staff:** And, Sir, we will also go there at night, the night of the 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Mr. President:** Good, God willing.

**Military Chief of Staff:** God willing, we will document all of this for you.

**Mr. President:** Pay attention to your safety, as they may have a number of bombs they can hit you with.

**Military Chief of Staff:** Yes, Sir.

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**Mr. President:** I believe the (Koreans) gave them some things of this nature after the battle of al-Faw.

(End of Side One of the Tape)

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Tape Number 2

Date: May 23, 1988

(Side Two of the Tape)

**Mr. President:** Here we go.

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** Sir, the commander of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Division, Staff Brigadier General Latif Mohammed Sa'id, and Staff Brigadier General Naser Sa'id, commander of the al-Khamseen Forces, have finished their review of the documents three days ago. I informed Mr. Hamed (meaning Mr. Hamed Youssef Hammadi, the President's Secretary) to come and see you, because you ordered it at that time, after they finish reading the military laws and everything else. Today, I contacted Mr. (Hamed)... he said, "They can go now and they will get called later on so we would delay their deployment," Sir.

**Mr. President:** Yes... good... this is the first time after six days that I am feeling better because I had (a virus) that kept me in bed. Otherwise, a cold doesn't keep me in bed, I don't care anyway.

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** I'm glad you are well, Sir. When I called... they said Your Excellency... all of the rest have deployed, Sir.

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**Mr. President:** I had a fever.

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** Sir, do you want to issue us orders to have them join after they finish?

**Mr. President:** The commanders?

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** Yes, Sir... after they leave... so that they will write their names in the daily attendance book and sign...

**Mr. President:** After they get here... and the commander finishes... ask him if he has any comments on military law. If he says no tell him, "Apply it or it will be applied on you."

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** At your order, Sir.

**Mr. President:** You tell him just like that... This is an order from such and such (meaning his honor).

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. President:** Apply whatever you read.

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** I have mentioned that to them verbally, Sir.

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**Mr. President:** Apply this in time of peace and time of war, exactly the same style [*version*] that I read and regarding the same issues that you are aware of. I think a large number of them did not remember the military law until they read it.

**Armed Forces General Command Secretary:** Well, Sir, as you know... it has been awhile since they read it, when they were students at the military college.

**Mr. President:** We have been at war for at least eight years and none of them read... good night.

**Attendees:** Good night, Sir.

(End of Side Two of the Tape)

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<b>Rank</b>	<b>Full Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Signature</b>
Staff Major General	Miyassar Ibrahim Hammadi	Head of Committee	[Signature]
Staff Major General retired	‘Abdallah Qasem Ahmed	Member	[Signature]
Staff Air Vice Marshal	Muhammad Salman Hamad	Member	[Signature]
Staff Major General	Hafez Habib ‘Abdallah	Member	[Signature]
Staff Brigadier General	‘Ali Hamdi Mustafa	Member	[Signature]
Mariner Brigadier General retired	Nazar Sadeeq Ahmed	Member	[Signature]
Staff Brigadier General retired	Mustafa Hammudi Ahmed	Member	[Signature]
Staff Brigadier General	Hamid Abd-al-Karim Hasan	Member	[Signature]
Brigadier General	Zubayr Jassem Othman	Member	[Signature]
Brigadier General	‘Abdallah Hamad Amed	Member	[Signature]
Brigadier General	Muwaffaq Khalil Rumman	Military Security Representative	[Signature]