NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

National Security Policy Group Meeting
July 24, 1987, 10:45 a.m. - 10:55 a.m., Situation Room

SUBJECT: Persian Gulf

PARTICIPANTS:

The President

The Vice President's Office:
Donald Gregg
Craig Fuller

State: White House:
Michael H. Armacost   Howard Baker
Edward P. Djerejian   Marlin Fitzwater
                                                Will Ball
OSD: Kenneth Duberstein
Caspar W. Weinberger
Edward Gnehm   NSC:
                                                Frank C. Carlucci
Treasury   Colin L. Powell
James Baker   Robert B. Oakley
                                                William A. Cockell
Justice
Edwin Meese
Charles Cooper

CIA
William Webster
Richard Kerr

JCS:
Admiral William J. Crowe
Vice Admiral Jonathan T. Howe

Minutes

The President opened the meeting observing that, in the wake of
the mine damage to Bridgeton, we need to pursue a calm and steady
course. (U)

Secretary Weinberger commented that it was important to keep in
mind that the escort operation had been flawless until Bridgeton
hit the mine. As a matter of fact, he continued, we are not even
sure that it was a mine; it could have been an internal
explosion. We won't know until the ship gets into port and the

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tanks can be inspected. The most likely hypothesis is that it
was a moored mine planted within a few hours of the detonation,
staged from Farsi Island. The escorts have completed their
mission now, and turned the two tankers over to the Kuwaitis. We
don't yet know what repairs will be required to Bridgeton. The
ship was scheduled to depart next Thursday; it may have to delay
departure. The explosion occurred just past midnight last night.
There were no casualties. Bridgeton stopped briefly, then got
underway again, at a slower speed; the convoy arrived at the
turnover point about four hours late. (S)

Admiral Crowe said he wanted to echo the comment that we should
remain calm. We will be consulting with the Kuwaitis about the
scheduling of the return transit. We also want to mute public
scheduling of the ships. We need to find a way to keep the
information out of the public domain. Tracking the intelligence
on small boats activity last night it appears that some craft
from Farsi may have been laying mines. (S)

Mr. Carlucci noted that the President had asked where the Saudi
minesweepers are now. Admiral Crowe replied that they are in
Kuwait. Secretary Weinberger observed that the Saudis prefer to
sweep the channel after it has been cleared. What we would like
them to do is to sweep ahead of the convoys. Mining is very easy
to deal with if we sweep the area a few hours before the convoy
passes, or sweep in front of the convoy. We would also like
helicopter support so we can look for mines. In that regard we
are looking at some uninhabited islands that Saudi Arabia owns as
possible sites for staging helos. It's worth noting, he
continued, that the Iranian Exclusion Zone takes over half the
navigable waters of the Gulf, limiting the area for tanker
passage. We have chosen not to enter the Exclusion Zone. The
President asked what would happen if, from time to time, we
crossed the boundary. Admiral Crowe replied that we can, and
probably should cross it. The President added that it was clear
we should do anything necessary to keep the ships' schedules
secret. (S)

Admiral Crowe observed that we need to find a way to keep the
Iranians out of the part of the Gulf where our tankers will be
transiting. We cannot allow them to plant mines there, in
international waters. That is a violation of international law
-- an act of war; and we must keep them out, even if we have to
shoot them. He went on to say that our number one priority at
this point is to get the Saudis to use their minesweepers. Mr.
Carlucci said he was prepared to send a message; we could send a
message from the President to Fahd. Secretary Armacost asked
that Defense provide State with a list of things we need. (S)

Mr. Carlucci concluded the discussion by emphasizing the
importance of avoiding any talk of retaliation at this point. We
need to await an assessment of damage, costs, etc. (S)