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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

28 February 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR: George J. Demko
Director
Office of the Geographer
Department of State

FROM: [Redacted]
Chief, Geography Division, OGI

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SUBJECT: Saudi Arabia/Iraq: Neutral Zone Partitioned [Redacted]

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1. Attached is a memorandum concerning the partitioning of the Neutral Zone between Saudi Arabia and Iraq. The memorandum includes a map and figures. [Redacted]

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2. The research and analysis for the study were done by [Redacted] the Near East Branch, Geography Division, Office of Global Issues. [Redacted]

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3. If you have any questions concerning this memorandum please call me [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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Attachment:

Saudi Arabia/Iraq: Neutral Zone Partitioned [Redacted]
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SUBJECT: Saudi Arabia/Iraq: Neutral Zone Partitioned

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OGI/GD/NE/ (Feb 1986)

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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

28 February 1986

Saudi Arabia/Iraq: Neutral Zone Partitioned

Summary

[redacted] the Neutral Zone between Saudi Arabia and Iraq (map) has been partitioned since at least July 30, 1982. This division of the Zone was apparently negotiated by Saudi Arabia and Iraq in December 1981, but has not been recognized in U.S. Government mapping policy because the two parties have not released detailed maps or coordinates of the new demarcation and the Iraqi Government has not officially confirmed the partition agreement. Small-scale Saudi maps have shown the divided Neutral Zone since 1981. [redacted]

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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] Geography Division, Office of Global Issues. Information available as of 28 February 1986 was used in its preparation. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Near East Branch, Geography Division, OGI [redacted]

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Saudi Arabia/Iraq: Neutral Zone Partitioned

Background

The first attempt to fix the boundary between Saudi Arabia -- then the Kingdom of Najd -- and Iraq was the Treaty of Muhammarah (now Khorramshahr). This was signed on May 5, 1922, between King Abd al-Aziz and the British High Commissioner for Iraq, Sir Percy Cox, at a time when Abd al-Aziz was expanding his new kingdom to the north and east. The treaty of Muhammarah was negotiated in an attempt to prevent fighting between Saudi and Iraqi tribes and to arrive at a territorial agreement. Because Abd al-Aziz did not like any attempt "to curb, by an imaginery [sic] line in the open desert, the movement of tribes who are accustomed to roam widely in search of pasturage and water," the treaty only assigned tribes and their respective lands and wells to each country, and failed to define a specific linear boundary. [redacted]

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An appendage to the treaty, the Protocol of Uqayr (December 2, 1922), delimited the boundary and included a common or neutral zone that persisted until recently. Abd al-Aziz agreed to sign the protocol only on the condition that neither side place troops or fortifications at sources of water, and that Najdi (Saudi) tribes would be free to cross the boundary to watering places on the Iraqi side. The agreement stated that the area between the two countries' frontiers was to "remain neutral and common to the two Governments of Iraq and Najd who will enjoy equal rights in it for all purposes." The protocol defined the Neutral Zone in terms of place names, and its borders were drawn on an accompanying map (1:1,000,000). According to the Consulate General in Dhahran, the map was lost, and the border was never surveyed. [redacted]

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In 1938, hasty preparations were made by both governments to have the boundary surveyed in the wake of oil discoveries in the region. Saudi Arabia had already granted a concession to an American oil company, and Baghdad wanted to grant a concession in southern Iraq that included the boundary area. What became of these preparations is not clear from subsequent reporting. [redacted]

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Between 1938 and the mid to late 1950's, Aramco personnel made at least four surveys along portions of the border. None were intended to demarcate the boundary. The first of these surveys was conducted by Richard A. Hattrup from 1938 to 1940. At the request of the Saudi Government, and accompanied by Saudi as well as Iraqi representatives, he established a series of triangulation points within five kilometers to either side of the approximate line of the boundary. One of the surveys has been described by a past Consul General in Dhahran as having been a gravity reconnaissance survey. The other two were probably mineralogical surveys. [redacted]

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The Neutral Zone was diamond-shaped, with an east-west axis about 110 miles long and a north-south axis about 48 miles long. Determining the exact location of the four points delimiting the Neutral Zone's borders is

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complicated by the existence of different places with the same name. The Saudi Government's most recent delineation of the Zone in 1981 still defined only the north and east vertices by geographical coordinates. The other two points can be approximated from imagery showing wells which we believe are the ones mentioned in the agreement of December 26, 1981 (appendices, figures 1 and 2). The southern point is defined as lying "44 meters south of the last southern well." Based on the most southern well visible on imagery, this point is approximately 28 degrees 45' 53" N, 45 degrees 30' 36" E. [redacted]

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The western point of the Neutral Zone (and, hence, of the new boundary line) is associated with the village of Nisab, and was defined by the border agreement of December 26, 1981, as:

A point at a distance of 400 meters is to be fixed in the west of Bir Nkhilan. This point ensures that the two wells of Bir Abu Zwair and Bir Al-Ud be maintained on the Iraqi territories and the two wells of Bir Al-Arsh (Maragha) and Bir Al-Urs (Msherfa) be maintained on the Saudi territories. The two wells of Bir Nkhilan and Bir Al-Wahid are to remain on the Neutral Zone. If this proves impossible after the technical survey, the Neutral Zone should come closer to Bir Nkhilan to guarantee the achievement of this position.

Although more than six wells are [redacted] in the vicinity of Nisab, there is what appears to be a border marker situated 400 meters due west of one of the wells. The location of this object is approximately 29 degrees 11' 48" N, 44 degrees 43' 18" E. [redacted]

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The Neutral Zone is situated in a nearly featureless and sparsely populated desert. The terrain slopes from a general elevation of 1066 feet (325 meters) in the west to just under 820 feet (250 meters) in the east. [redacted] the area may contain petroleum deposits, but [redacted] their recovery may not yet be economical. [redacted]

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Negotiations on Dividing the Neutral Zone

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Efforts to divide the Neutral Zone equitably between the two countries were initiated by Saudi Arabia on June 7, 1958. A draft of the Saudi proposal suggested that the Neutral Zone be divided by a straight line connecting the Zone's east and west vertices. Nothing became of the talks, apparently, for in 1975 the two countries were again engaged in negotiations to define their common boundary. A boundary agreement "in principle" was reported by Western press sources to have been signed on April 18, and yet another one was reported by the Saudi press to have been signed on July 2. Riyadh Radio said the Neutral Zone was to be divided in the same manner as proposed in 1958. A Saudi delegation went to Baghdad on November 19, 1975, as part of the final stages of the boundary negotiations.

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In February of 1976, the Western press again reported that Saudi Arabia and Iraq had "concluded a final agreement for the demarcation of their border in the Neutral Zone area." Later that month, the two countries contracted with the Pacific Kogyo Company, Ltd., of Japan to survey the boundary, post stone border markers at intervals of five kilometers, and make a map of the border area. The partitioning of the Neutral Zone was to have been included in the project. [redacted]

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Despite these reports, final agreement was presumably not achieved until after 1981. According to a diplomatic note to the U.S. Embassy from the Saudi Foreign Ministry (dated July 19, 1983), Saudi Arabia "concluded an international border agreement with the government of the Republic of Iraq on December 26, 1981." According to a press report, the agreement was signed in Baghdad by the Interior Ministers of the two countries, Prince Nayef Ibn Abdul-Aziz and Mr. Saadoun Shaker. In its diplomatic note to the United States, the ministry stated the accord specified the agreed points of the entire Saudi-Iraq border, including those points which defined the Neutral Zone. The final part of the diplomatic note stated:

After the approval by the Saudi and Iraqi governments of what has been reached by the two sides a joint technical team is to be formed to place the border markers in the points indicated above.

It had (sic) been decided to hold a meeting in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia between the Saudi and Iraqi sides to consider the division of the Neutral Zone between the two countries and the possibility of making the border line as straight as possible. following the text of the official agreement, the Foreign Ministry commented:

The division of the Neutral Zone between the two states was actually made and the agreement was approved by the interior ministers and the governments of the two countries.

Based on this appended comment, we conclude that yet another agreement concerning partition of the Neutral Zone was made sometime between December 26, 1981, and July 19, 1983. [redacted]

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Current Boundary Description

The precise alignment of the new boundary partitioning the Neutral Zone is unknown, [redacted] All negotiations proposed dividing the zone equally by as straight a line as possible. Several maps published in Saudi Arabia as well as in the United Kingdom (the earliest in 1981) depict the Neutral Zone as having been divided. Some draw the partition as a straight line connecting what were formerly the east and west points of the Neutral Zone. Others show the boundary running due west from the territorial juncture of Kuwait, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia until it reaches the half-way point, from which it then runs west by north to the village of Nisab. One map, published in 1984 under the auspices of the Deputy Ministry for Mineral Resources in

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Jiddah, depicts the boundary as running west-southwest for about eight miles before heading directly for Nisab. This latter alignment reflects what is shown on imagery. [redacted]

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What is known is the location of the eastern point, the approximate location of the western point, and the location of the intervening border posts. These points describe an approximately straight line with a slight turn near the eastern end (map). According to the Saudi Government, the junction of the territories of Kuwait, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia is at 29 degrees 06' 4.5" North, 46 degrees 33' 18.9" East. As mentioned earlier, the western point is at approximately 29 degrees 11' 48" N, 44 degrees 43' 18" E. [redacted]

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[redacted] provides an approximate dating of Saudi and Iraqi construction along the partition line. [redacted] twelve border posts along a line connecting the eastern and western ends of the former Neutral Zone. Their positions and structural differences indicate that six of the posts belong to each country (figure 3 and 4).

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[redacted] at least some of the border posts were already in place in January 1982. [redacted]

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[redacted] in January 1982 the Saudis were digging a trench along the border, about 100 meters within Saudi territory. The [redacted] a trench and parallel berm extending from the third Saudi border post (counting from the westernmost post on the map) to the fifth Saudi post. [redacted] the trench and berm extended to the easternmost Iraqi post (map). The berm had not been extended on the western end, leaving greater uncertainty about the precise alignment of the border in that area. The distance from the center of the trench to the center of the berm is about 12 meters. At intervals, particularly near border posts, there are gaps in the trench and berm, presumably to allow the passage of foot traffic (figure 4). [redacted]

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The finished construction of border posts along the partition line by January 1982 suggests that the approximate line was decided even before the agreement of December 26, 1981. The final agreement concerning the division of the Neutral Zone referred to by Saudi Arabia's July 1983 diplomatic note may only have been concerned with final arrangements for surveying the precise boundary. [redacted]

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Chronology

- May 5, 1922 Treaty of Muhammarah (Khorramshahr) signed in Khorramshahr, Iraq, between Abd al-Aziz, King of Najd (Saudi Arabia), and Sir Percy Cox, British High Commissioner for Iraq.
- December 2, 1922 Protocol of Uqayr (appended to Treaty of Muhammarah) signed in Al 'Uqayr, Saudi Arabia, by King Abd al-Aziz and Sir Percy Cox.
- April 6, 1936 Treaty of Arab Brotherhood signed by Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Confirms arrangements set forth in Protocol of Uqayr.
- 1938 - 1939 Joint triangulation survey of frontier made by Richard A. Hattrup for Saudi Arabia and Abas Mahadi for Iraq.
- 1944 Steineke and Berg of Aramco survey portion of presumed border.
- 1951 - 1952 Helley of Aramco conducts a gravity reconnaissance survey along part of presumed border.
- 195? Bert Beverley and E.L. Elberg of Aramco survey portion of presumed border.
- June 10, 1958 Talks on final border agreement initiated in Riyadh. Saudi Arabia represented by Yusif Yasin, Iraq represented by Minister of State Burhanadin Bash-a'Yan.
- April 13, 1975 Saudi delegation headed by General Abdallah ibn al-Rahman Al al-Shaykh, Commander of the Frontier Forces and Coast Guard, arrives in Baghdad to discuss border settlement.
- April 18, 1975 Agreement in principle to settle the border question signed in Baghdad.
- July 2, 1975 Border agreement signed in Riyadh by General al-Shaykh and the Director General of the Iraqi Ministry of Interior Ali Ahmed Al Naqib. Provides for equal division of Neutral Zone.
- November 19, 1975 Saudi delegation headed by General al-Shaykh arrives in Baghdad. Purpose is to obtain Iraqi agreement on set of international specifications similar to those used by Saudi Arabia with Jordan, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates.

- [REDACTED]
- February 20, 1976 Press announces "Saudi Arabia and Iraq this week concluded a final agreement on the demarcation of their border in the Neutral Zone area." Saudi Arabia represented by Sulayman al-Rubaysh, Director of Surveying at the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, and Iraq represented by 'Ala'din al-Saqqal, Director of General Surveying at the Ministry of Agrarian Reform.
- Late February 1976 Japanese company contracts with both governments to survey, demarcate, and map the boundary, including the partitioning of the Neutral Zone.
- December 26, 1981 Border agreement reportedly signed in Baghdad by Saudi Minister of the Interior Prince Nayif bin Abd al-Aziz. and Iraqi Minister of the Interior Saadoun Shaker. Prince Nayif announces that agreement would partition the Neutral Zone.
- January 11, 1982 Agreement of December 26, 1981 reported not signed by either side.
- January 28, 1982 Iraqi National Assembly approves border treaty signed December 26, 1981 in Baghdad.
- July 19, 1983 Text of December 26, 1981 border agreement provided to U.S. Government in diplomatic note from Saudi Foreign Ministry. Note also mentions that division of the Neutral Zone was made after the December 1981 agreement.

International Agreements Concerning the Neutral Zone

Treaty of Muhammarah

The text of the treaty pertaining to the boundary is as follows:

Article 1.

(a) The tribes known as the Muntafiq, Dhafir and Amarat will belong to Iraq. Both Governments, that is to say the Government of Iraq and the Government of Najd, guarantee mutually that they will prevent aggression by their tribes on the tribes of the other, and will punish their tribes for any such aggression, and should the circumstances not permit of such punishment, the two Governments will discuss the question of taking combined action according to the good relations prevailing between them.

(b) The Najd delegate having refused to accept the boundaries asked for by the Iraq Government, the following principle was laid down: --

According to Article 1 (a) the Muntafiq, Dhafir and Amarat tribes belong to Iraq; similarly the Shammar Najd belong to Najd. The wells and lands used from old times by the Iraq tribes shall belong to Iraq and the wells and lands used from old times by the Shammar Najd shall belong to Najd. In order to determine the location of these lands and wells and to fix a boundary line in accordance with this principle a committee shall be formed consisting of two persons with local knowledge from each Government, and presided over by a British official selected by the High Commissioner; the committee will meet in Baghdad to fix the final boundaries, and both parties will accept these boundaries without any objection.

The Protocol of Ugayr (appended to the Treaty of Muhammarah)

The text of the protocol pertaining to the boundary is as follows:

Article 1.

(a) The frontier from the East begins at the junction of the Wadi al Aujah (W. el Audja) with Al Batin and from this point the Najd frontier passes in a straight line to the well called Al Wuqubah (El Ukabba) leaving Al Dulaimiyah (Dulaimiya) and Al Wuqubah (El Ukabba) north of the line and from Al Wuqubah (El Ukabba) it continues N.W. to Bir Ansab (Bir Unsab).

(b) Starting from the point mentioned above, i.e., from the point of the junction of the Wadi al Aujah (W. el Audja) with Al Batin (El Batin) the Iraq boundary continues in a straight line N.W. to Al Amghar (El Amghar) leaving this place to the south of the line and from thence proceeds S.W. in a straight line until it joins the Najd frontier at Bir Ansab (Bir Unsab).

(c) The area delimited by the points enumerated above which includes all these points will remain neutral and common to the two Governments of Iraq and Najd who will enjoy equal rights in it for all purposes.

(d) From Bir Ansab (Bir Unsab) the boundary between the two states proceeds N.W. to Birkat al Jumaimah (Birkat el Djumeima) and from thence northwards to Bir al Uqbah (Bir el Akaba) and Qasr Uthaimin (Kasr Athmin) from there westwards in a straight line passing through the centre of Jal al Batn (Djal el Batn) to Bir Lifiyah (Bir Lifa) and then to Bir al Manaiyah (Bir el Maniya) and from there to Jadidat Arar (Djadaidat el Arar) from there to Mukur and from Mukur to the Jabal Anazan (Anaza) situated in the neighbourhood of the intersection of latitude 32 degrees north with longitude 39 degrees east where the Iraq-Najd boundary terminates.

Article 2.

Whereas many of the wells fall within the Iraq boundaries and the Najd side is deprived of them, the Iraq Government pledges itself not to interfere with those Najd tribes living in the vicinity of the border should it be necessary for them to resort to the neighbouring Iraq wells for water, provided that these wells are nearer to them than those within the Najd boundaries.

Article 3.

The two Governments mutually agree not to use the watering places and wells situated in the vicinity of the border for any military purpose, such as building forts on them, and not to concentrate troops in their vicinity.

Agreement of December 26, 1981

Portions of the diplomatic note from Saudi Arabia to the United States pertaining to the boundary are as follows (unofficial embassy translation):

The [Foreign] Ministry has the honor to inform the Embassy that the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia concluded an international border agreement with the Government of the Republic of Iraq on December 26, 1981. The agreement included

the following points reached by the Saudi and Iraqi sides concerning the borders of the two countries:

(1) Contact point of Wadi al-Uja with al-Baten

The borders from the east between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Iraq begins from the contact point of Wadi al-Uja with al-Baten of the geographical position North 29 degrees 06' 4.5" East 46 degrees 33' 18.9" approximately, which represents the intersection of the two lines which represent the deepest point in the meeting point of the aforementioned two valleys (Wadi al-Uja and al-Baten).

(2) Bir al-Wakaba

- (Arabic word "bir" means well, plural "abar" wells) The border point at "Abar al-Wakaba" will be fixed at a distance of 44 meters (fourty four meters) south of the last southern well (al-Ghadeer) as indicated on the joint survey map provided that all "Abar al-Wakaba" be included within the Neutral Zone.

(3) Bir Ansab

A point at a distance of 400 meters is to be fixed in the west of Bir Nkhilan. This point ensures that the two wells of Bir Abu Zwair and Bir al-Ud be maintained on the Iraqi territories and the two wells of Bir al-Arsh (Maragha) and Bir al-Urs (Msherfa) be maintained on the Saudi territories. The two wells of Bir Nkhilan and Bir al-Wahid are to remain on the Neutral Zone. If this proves impossible after the technical survey, the Neutral Zone should come closer to Bir Nkhilan to guarantee the achievement of this position.

(4) al-Amghar

The border point (on the north of the trigonometrical point located on Jabal al-Amghar al-Janoubi (Mt. al-Amghar) at a distance of 1100 meters, i.e. the additional point drawn on the joint map and approved by the heads of the two delegations, shall be fixed roughly according to the following geographical coordinates: North 29 degrees 27' 23.35" East 45 degrees 29' 58.14"

[Note: Points (5) through (12) define the rest of Saudi Arabia's boundary with Iraq and Jordan.]

(13) After the approval by the Saudi and Iraqi Governments of what has been reached by the two sides a joint technical team is to be formed to place the border markers in the points indicated above.

(14) It had (sic) been decided to hold a meeting in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia between the Saudi and Iraqi sides to consider the division of the Neutral Zone between the two countries and the possibility of making the border line as straight as possible.

[Redacted]

--

(The division of the Neutral Zone between the two states was actually made and the agreement was approved by the interior ministers and the governments of the two countries.)

Please take note of the above position.

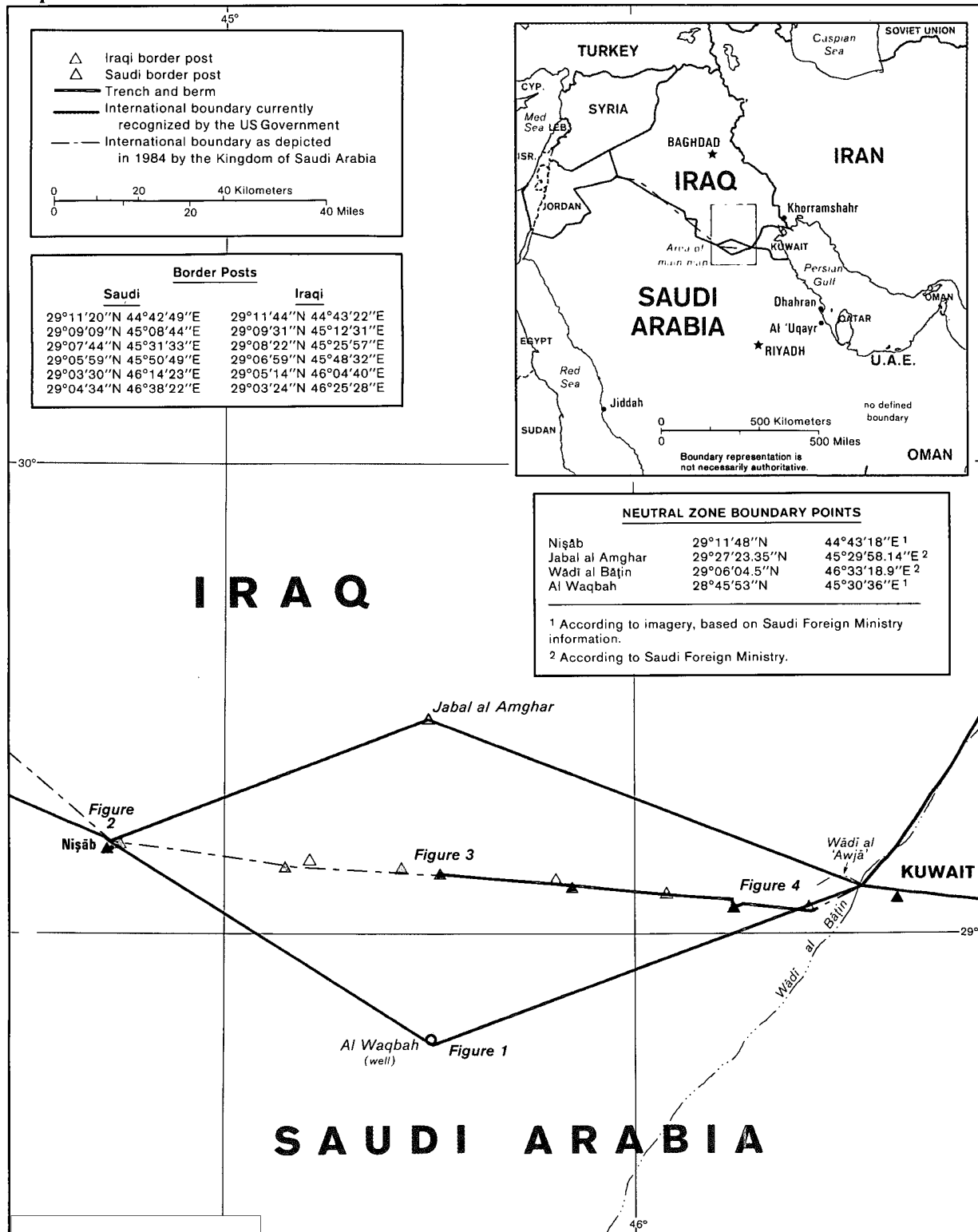
The Ministry of Foreign Affairs avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Embassy the assurances of its highest consideration.

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Iraq-Saudi Arabia Neutral Zone



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