

State Dept. Urged Military Sale to Iraq

'89 Memo Cited Goal of Protecting Saddam's Aircraft From Missiles

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Senior State Department officials urged the sale to Iraq in 1989 of military equipment expressly designed to protect Iraqi President Saddam Hussein by safeguarding his personal aircraft from missile attack.

Details of the planned sale, which was not publicly disclosed at the time, are described in an internal State Department memorandum declassified yesterday along with 54 other department documents on U.S.-Iraqi relations. The documents

were requested by a congressional committee investigating U.S. policy toward Iraq before the Persian Gulf War.

The July 1989 memo, co-written by former assistant secretary of state John Kelly and acting assistant secretary Arnold Schlossberg Jr., said the proposed sale of an infrared countermeasures system for Saddam's Boeing 747 and three presidential helicopters was consistent with the administration's earlier approval of "communications security devices for the presidential pal-

ace devices was also not disclosed at the time, according to officials.

The officials noted that while U.S. policy generally forbade export of military equipment to Iraq, the sale of anti-missile equipment fell under an exception to munitions export regulations for "protection of the head-of-state." A U.S. official said yesterday the sale was never completed, but the memorandum described it as "consonant with our wider goal of working towards a broader relationship with Iraq."

That controversial policy aim is cited in many of the internal doc-

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uments as justification for the Bush administration's efforts to cultivate relations with Iraq prior to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. Those efforts included easing controls on U.S. exports to Iraq, providing an additional \$1 billion in credits for Iraq to purchase U.S. agricultural commodities and opposing punitive sanctions demanded by some members of Congress for Iraq's violations of human rights and use of chemical weapons against its Kurdish population.

Congressional Democrats such as Rep. Sam Gejdenson (Conn.), chairman of a House Foreign Affairs subcommittee, have criticized the administration's previous policy. Gejdenson had demanded release of yesterday's batch of documents on grounds they contained no national security information and had been withheld only because they "across the board embarrass the administration."

The documents were provided by a U.S. official to The Washington Post at the same time they were given to Gejdenson "to prevent the Democrats" from "characterizing these documents in a way we think has been unfair," the official said. "A neutral reader will see they are not evidence of a coverup or certainly illegal acts but of an administration

struggling to formulate a policy when the options as a whole were not good ones."

The new documents make clear that National Security Decision Directive 26 (NSDD 26), a statement of overall U.S. policy on Iraq signed by Bush in October 1989 and partially declassified last week, had far-reaching implications.

In the directive, Bush called on U.S. officials to "propose economic and political incentives for Iraq to moderate its behavior" and to "pursue and seek to facilitate opportunities for U.S. firms to participate in the reconstruction of the Iraqi economy, particularly in the energy area, where they do not conflict with our nonproliferation and other significant objectives."

Assistant secretary Kelly, who in 1989 and 1990 had charge of Near East and South Asian affairs at the State Department, cited the "explicit presidential authority" provided by NSDD 26 in arguing in a subsequent

memo that the administration should rein in the power of a special inter-agency committee that was responsible for reviewing exports to Iraq of items that might be used in weapons of mass destruction. Kelly wrote in the memo, the date of which was not provided yesterday, that in his view "our licensing procedures have been a drag on trade with Iraq."

Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence S. Eagleburger cited NSDD 26 in a November 1989 letter to the Treasury Department, in which he argued for approval of an additional \$1 billion in commodity credits for Iraq, even though the program was entangled in allegations of wrongdoing by the Atlanta branch of the

Banco Nazionale de Lavoro, Iraq's principal foreign financier.

While some State Department documents released yesterday described U.S. efforts to constrain Iraq's development of ballistic missiles and chemical and nuclear weapons, others contained sharp self-criticism. Assistant Secretary of State Richard A. Clarke said in one memorandum that "no one was paying attention to the need to block . . . proliferation" by Iraq during a decade of military buildup. Another memorandum stated that no action resulted from a December 1989 request by Clarke for proposed "export control changes that would enhance our efforts against Iraq" nuclear and chemical arms programs.