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IDENTICAL LETTERS DATED 1 MARCH 1999 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I.
OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF SAUDI ARABIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL AND TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE
SECURITY COUNCIL

On instructions from my Government, I wish to refer to the letter dated 9 January 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/1999/29), commenting on the letter dated 4 January 1999 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1999/3) concerning the border clash that took place on 12 December 1998 between Iraqi and Saudi patrols.

In view of the fallacies and unfounded claims put forward in the aforementioned Iraqi letter, I wish to make the following clarifications:

- The region in which the Iraqi patrol attacked the Saudi patrol comes under Saudi sovereignty and is inside the borders of Saudi Arabia. It is not an area where commercial exchanges take place and where it would be reasonable to find an Iraqi customs patrol, as the above-mentioned Iraqi letter states. Furthermore, the Government of Saudi Arabia is punctilious in observing and applying Security Council resolutions concerning the prohibition on commercial exchanges with Iraq.
- The information given in the Iraqi letter is far from the truth. The incident took place inside Saudi territory, and it was the members of the Iraqi patrol who were the first to open fire on the Saudi patrol. As a consequence, a Saudi soldier was shot in the head and later died.
- Saudi patrols working in border regions are careful at all times not to go beyond the borders of Saudi Arabia into any neighbouring State. The border of Saudi Arabia with Iraq is clearly marked, in accordance with the border agreement signed by the two countries, and features an earthen bulwark which is difficult to traverse. The members of Iraqi border patrols are therefore very well aware of the position of the border between the two countries. The border violation was perpetrated by the Iraqi rather than the Saudi patrol.

- The claim made in his letter by the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations, to the effect that the Iraqi patrol opened fire in self-defence, is devoid of truth. It was the Iraqi patrol that first opened fire, and there was no exchange of fire between the two sides. Conclusive proof of this is the fact that a member of the Saudi patrol was killed by Iraqi fire, rather than vice versa: none of the members of the Iraqi patrol was harmed.

The encroachment on Saudi territory by the Iraqi patrol constitutes a violation of the security and sovereignty of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and of its international borders. The Government of Saudi Arabia therefore condemns these Iraqi violations of and encroachments on Saudi territory and the fact that the members of the Saudi patrol were fired on, and reiterates that the Government of Iraq bears full responsibility for this act of aggression carried out inside Saudi territory.

The Government of my country requests you to use every means to halt such Iraqi practices, violations and acts of provocation, which are clearly in contravention of the rules of international law and international legitimacy. Iraq bears full responsibility for the consequences of such unjustified acts, because those acts of aggression contravene the provisions of international law.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Abdulrahman S. AL-AHMED
Chargé d'affaires a.i.
