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JORDAN HOPES U.N. CHIEF EASES TENSION

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SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES

AMMAN, JORDAN, AUG. 27 -- JORDANIAN OFFICIALS AND OTHERS EXPRESSED HOPE TODAY THAT SECRETARY GENERAL JAVIER PEREZ DE CUELLAR OF THE UNITED NATIONS COULD CREATE A BREATHING SPACE IN THE PERSIAN GULF CRISIS WHERE DIPLOMACY MIGHT, AT LEAST FOR NOW, TAKE CENTER STAGE.

TAJER MASRI, A FORMER JORDANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER AND NOW HEAD OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE IN PARLIAMENT, SAID THE CRISIS HAD REACHED A TURNING POINT.

"FOR 10 DAYS YOU HAD THE BUILDING OF THE WAR MACHINE," HE SAID THIS MORNING. "FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS IT WAS WAR AND TALK. NOW WE'RE REALLY MOVING INTO THE DIPLOMATIC THING."

A WESTERN DIPLOMAT SAID, "YOU GET THE IMPRESSION THAT THE CRISIS IS NOT ESCALATING AT THIS MOMENT."

'A LITTLE BIT OF HOPE'

AN IRAQI DIPLOMAT, SPEAKING IN A TELEPHONE INTERVIEW FROM LONDON, SAID THE MEETING SCHEDULED FOR THURSDAY IN AMMAN BETWEEN MR. PEREZ DE CUELLAR AND FOREIGN MINISTER TARIQ AZIZ OF IRAQ SUGGESTED "A LITTLE BIT OF HOPE" THAT WAR MIGHT BE AVOIDED.

"THERE IS A SMALL LIGHT IN THE MATTER," THE IRAQI DIPLOMAT SAID. "LET'S HOPE THE LIGHT WILL BECOME BIGGER."

MR. PEREZ DE CUELLAR IS RESPECTED IN IRAQ FOR HAVING PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN REACHING A CEASE-FIRE IN THE WAR WITH IRAN IN 1988. IRAQ AND JORDAN ARE TAKING HIS VISIT HERE AS A SERIOUS EFFORT AND NOT JUST AS AN INSTANCE IN WHICH A SENIOR DIPLOMAT GOES THROUGH WHAT MIGHT BE REGARDED AS EXPECTED MOTIONS.

... AND JORDAN ARE ALSO HOPING THAT THE SECRETARY