

FLASH

19

IRAN/IRAQ

ADVANCE COPIES

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unfaxed to
Chequers
27-9-80

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Sir Adam
MR ADAMS

FLASH

SECRET UK COMMS ONLY
FM MUSCAT 271230Z SEPT 80
TO FLASH FCO
TELNO 268 OF 27 SEPT 80
AND TO FLASH MODUK (FOR COSSEC DIA AND DNOT). CINC
FLEET WASHINGTON UKMIS NEW YORK BAGHDAD ABU DHABI DUBAI
IMMEDIATE KUWAIT BAHRAIN DOHA JEDDA

WASHINGTON TELNO 4115 OF 26 SEPT: IRAN/IRAQ.
1. I WAS SUMMONED TO SEE THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS THIS MORNING. QAIS ZAWAWI EXPLAINED THAT A HIGH-LEVEL
IRAQI DELEGATION HAD VISITED THE SULTAN IN SALALAH YESTERDAY
TO REQUEST ASSISTANCE IN THEIR CONFLICT WITH IRAN. WHEN I PRESSED
HIM HE ADMITTED THAT A DECISION HAD BEEN TAKEN IN PRINCIPLE TO OFFER
THE IRAQIS FACILITIES TO MOUNT OPERATIONS AGAINST THE TUMBS AND
ABU MUSA AND ALSO TO "TAKE CARE OF" IRANIAN NAVAL UNITS.
HE WOULD NOT BE DRAWN ON THE TIMESCALE BUT IT IS ALMOST CERTAINLY
IMMINENT (SEE NAVAL ATTACHES TELNO UZH/KAG/LAA OF 27 SEPT
NOT TO ALL. OMAN HAD COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT, SUCH WAS THE
DEGREE OF INSTABILITY IN THE GULF AREA CAUSED BY THE
KHOMEINI REGIME THAT THEY FELT OBLIGED TO GIVE ASSISTANCE
TO THE IRAQIS.

2. I SAID THAT I WAS SPEAKING WITHOUT SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS BUT

2. I SAID THAT I WAS SPEAKING WITHOUT SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS BUT THAT THE BRITISH VIEW WAS THAT THE AREA OF CONFLICT SHOULD BE LIMITED AND A PEACEFUL SOLUTION SOUGHT. I DID NOT THINK THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WOULD BE IN FAVOUR OF THE OPERATION. WE HAD ADMIRERD THE EVEN-HANDEDNESS SHOWN BY THE OMANIS IN THE FIRST DAYS OF THE CONFLICT. I ASKED WHETHER THE OMANIS HAD CONSIDERED THE DANGERS OF RETALIATION FROM IRAN AND ALSO THE DANGERS OF THE IRANIANS HAMPERING FREEDOM OF PASSAGE IN THE STRAITS OF

HORMUZ. ON RETALIATION, ZAWAWI SAID THAT THIS HAD OF COURSE BEEN CONSIDERED. THE OMANIS HAD FAITH IN THEIR AIR DEFENCE SYSTEM, AND "THIS WOULD BE A GOOD TEST". HE SEEMED TO BELIEVE (UNREALISTICALLY IN MY VIEW) THAT IT WOULD BE SOME DAYS BEFORE THE IRANIANS DISCOVERED THE BASE FROM WHICH THE OPERATION WAS LAUNCHED. ON HORMUZ, ZAWAWI THOUGHT THAT THE OPERATION WOULD HELP GUARANTEE FREE PASSAGE. I ASKED WHETHER THE OMANIS EXPECTED THE US FLEET TO COME TO THEIR ASSISTANCE IN THE EVENT OF DIFFICULTIES. HE REPLIED THAT THIS WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE ACCESS AGREEMENT. MY US COLLEAGE, WHO WAS ALSO SUMMONED FOR THE SAME PURPOSE TODAY, CLAIMS HOWEVER THAT ZAWAWI'S ASSUMPTION MAY BE PREMATURE.

3. FINALLY I MADE THE POINT THAT OMAN WOULD HAVE TO LIVE WITH ANY FUTURE IRANIAN REGIME AND THAT THE LATTER, WHATEVER COMPLEXION IT MIGHT TAKE, COULD WELL HARBOUR A GRUDGE AGAINST OMANI PARTICIPATION IN THIS ADVENTURE. SINCE THE ISLANDS WOULD PRESUMABLY EVENTUALLY REVERT TO THE STATES OF THE UAE, WHY SHOULD NOT THEY, RATHER THAN THE OMANIS PROVIDE THE FACILITIES? QAIS MERELY COMMENTED THAT THE SULTAN HAD DECIDED AND THAT THESE WERE RISKS THE OMANIS WOULD HAVE TO TAKE. IN ANY CASE THE UAE COULD NOT PROVIDE ADEQUATE FACILITIES. WHEN I ASKED HIM WHETHER HE THOUGHT KHOMEINI WOULD REALLY BE OUT OF THE PICTURE IN A MATTER OF DAYS HE SAID THAT IT WAS ONLY A QUESTION OF MONTHS AT THE MOST AND THAT HE WAS CONVINCED ANY FUTURE REGIME WOULD SEE THE WISDOM OF THE OMANI ACTION.

4. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER, IN GIVING US AND THE AMERICANS THIS FOREWARNING THE OMANIS GENUINELY WISH TO HEED OUR VIEWS. THERE MAY IN ANY CASE BE LITTLE TIME, AND I WOULD JUDGE THAT IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO CHANGE THE SULTAN'S MIND NOW THAT HE HAS GIVEN SOME SORT OF UNDERTAKING TO THE IRAQIS. NEVERTHELESS I HAVE URGED DELAY ON ZAWAWI AND WOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR URGENT INSTRUCTIONS.

BE DIFFICULT TO CHANGE THE SULTAN'S MIND NOW THAT HE HAS GIVEN SOME SORT OF UNDERTAKING TO THE IRAQIS. NEVERTHELESS I HAVE URGED DELAY ON ZAWAWI AND WOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR URGENT INSTRUCTIONS. ZAWAWI HAS INVITED OUR FURTHER VIEWS AS SOON AS THEY ARE RECEIVED. MY US COLLEAGUE HAS RESPONDED IN SIMILAR VEIN SEMI COLON AND IT MIGHT WELL BE PRODUCTIVE IF WE WERE INSTRUCTED TO MAKE A JOINT DEMARCHE TO THE OMANIS. MOREOVER, IF WASHINGTON TUR IS TO BE BELIEVED, ANY FURTHER CALLS FOR RESTRAINT MIGHT ALSO BE DIRECTED AT KING HUSSAIN, WHO HAS GREAT INFLUENCE WITH QABOOS.

5 ZAWAWI ALSO MENTIONED IN REPLY TO MY QUESTION THAT LOAN SERVICE PERSONNEL WOULD BE EXPECTED TO TAKE PART IN ANY OPERATIONS WITHIN OMANI TERRITORIAL LIMITS WHICH MIGHT ARISE FROM IRAQI ACTIONS. GRATEFUL FOR INSTRUCTIONS ON THIS POINT ALSO.

TUNNELL
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