

LUNCH WITH KING HUSSEIN

The Prime Minister gave a working lunch today for King Hussein of Jordan, during which they had a general discussion on the situation in the Middle East. On the British side the guests included the Secretary of State for Defence, the Lord Privy Seal and Douglas Hurd, Minister of State, FCO. On the Jordanian side were the Jordanian Ambassador and two of King Hussein's advisers.

The Prime Minister is keen that we should say no more than the above when speaking to the press, (presumably, because sensitive aspects of both the Middle East situation and the possible sale of tanks to Jordan were discussed during the lunch).

King Hussein arrived at Downing Street at 1 p.m. and left just after 2.30 p.m.

CVA

p.s. The F.C.O. defensive press line on the question of sale of tanks to Jordan, if it leaks, is as set out in the F.C.O. telegram attached.

FM F C O 141704Z JUN 79

TO IMMEDIATE AMMAN

TELEGRAM NUMBER 136 OF 14 JANUARY

INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON, TEL AVIV, CAIRO, DAMASCUS, MODUK (MR MEHEW - DS 13), DEFENCE SALES

YOUR TELEGRAM NO 165 (NOT TO ALL): SALE OF TANKS TO JORDAN.

1. MINISTERS WILL INFORM KING HUSSEIN DURING HIS CURRENT VISIT THAT H M G AGREE IN PRINCIPLE TO THE SALE OF 274 SHIR 1 TANKS TO JORDAN SUBJECT TO A SATISFACTORY OUTCOME TO NEGOTIATIONS ON THE DETAILS. THE GOVERNMENT WILL WISH TO BE INFORMED OF THE OUTCOME OF THE NEGOTIATIONS BEFORE THE SALE IS COMPLETED.

2. NO ANNOUNCEMENT OF THIS DECISION IS PLANNED. IF NEWS OF IT LEAKS, NEWS DEPT WILL TAKE THE LINE ON THE RECORD THAT IT IS NOT OUR PRACTICE TO COMMENT ON INDIVIDUAL ARMS SALES. THEY WILL ADD UNATTRIBUTABLY THAT BRITAIN HAS A TRADITIONAL DEFENCE RELATIONSHIP WITH JORDAN AND HAS, IN THE PAST, BEEN JORDAN'S MAIN SUPPLIER OF TANKS. NEGOTIATIONS ARE IN PROGRESS ON THE POSSIBLE RE-EQUIPMENT WITH BRITISH TANKS OF A JORDANIAN ARMoured DIVISION. IF PRESSED THEY WILL SAY THAT SALE OF CHOBHAM ARMOUR WOULD NOT (REPEAT NOT) BE INVOLVED.

3. STRICTLY FOR YOUR OWN INFORMATION MINISTERS' DECISION APPLIES ONLY TO THE 274 SHIR 1 TANKS NEEDED FOR ONE ARMoured DIVISION. NO DECISION HAS BEEN TAKEN ON WHETHER TO ALLOW NEGOTIATIONS ON THE REMAINDER OF THE ORIGINAL JORDANIAN REQUEST FOR 600 TANKS. THIS WILL BE MADE CLEAR TO THE KING. WE RECOGNISE THAT AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE TO SUPPLY TO JORDAN MAY LEAD TO SIMILAR REQUESTS FROM EGYPT, ISRAEL AND SYRIA, BUT WE REGARD JORDAN AS A SPECIAL CASE. WHILE SUPPLY TO JORDAN WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY REPRESENT A SIGNIFICANT STRENGTHENING OF JORDAN'S ARMoured CAPABILITY IT WOULD NOT IN OUR VIEW SERIOUSLY AFFECT THE STRATEGIC BALANCE IN THE AREA.

4. WASHINGTON SHOULD INFORM THE STATE DEPARTMENT IN CONFIDENCE OF OUR INTENTIONS. OTHER RECIPIENTS SHOULD TAKE NO, REPEAT NO, ACTION WITH HOST GOVERNMENTS UNLESS THE NEWS LEAKS AND THEY HAVE TO DEAL WITH QUESTIONS.

CARRINGTON
DEPARTMENTAL DIST.
NENAD. MKWS.D.
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