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FM BAGHDAD 080640Z JUN 81

TO FLASH FCO [SIC]

TELEGRAM NUMBER 263/OF 8 JUNE, 1981

INFO FLASH TELAVIV IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON UKMIS NEW YORK PARIS
ROME BONN UKDEL NATO AMMAN DAMASCUS TEHRAN

YOUR TELS NOS 96 AND 97 TO TEL AVIV (NOT TO TEHRAN): ATTACK ON
IRAQI NUCLEAR PLANT.

1. ROCALVE, THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR GAVE ME THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT THIS MORNING, 8 JUNE, STRESSING THE EXTREME CONFIDENTIALITY OF HIS REMARKS.

2. A SMALL FRENCH TEAM OF ENGINEERS WAS ENDING WORK ON THE REACTOR BUILDING AT 1830 HOURS LOCAL TIME ON 7 JUNE. TWO OR THREE AIRCRAFT CAME "OUT OF THE SETTING SUN" AND BOMBED THE PLANT, WHICH IS HEAVILY PROTECTED BY MISSILES, ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS AND ZIGGURAT-SHAPED EARTH WORKS, FROM HIGH ALTITUDE. THERE WAS NO (NO) WARNING OF ANY KIND. MUCH DAMAGE, SO FAR UNSPECIFIED, WAS CAUSED, AND ONE FRENCHMAN IS REPORTED MISSING. A NUMBER OF IRAQI LABOURERS AND GUARDS WAS TAKEN TO HOSPITAL. WHEN THE FRENCH DIRECTOR OF THE PROJECT REPORTED TO ROCALVE AT 2200 HOURS LOCAL LAST NIGHT HE WAS COVERED IN MUD FROM THE EARTH WORKS FROM HEAD TO FOOT, AND MUCH SHAKEN.

3. THE CAMP NEXT TO THE PLANT WHERE THE FRENCH ENGINEERS AND THEIR FAMILIES ARE LIVING WAS NOT (NOT) DAMAGED. ROCALVE SAID THAT THE FAMILIES HAD RETURNED THERE AFTER THE FIRST RAID ON THE PLANT LAST YEAR, AGAINST HIS ADVICE. ALL THE FRENCH WORK FORCE WOULD NOW PROBABLY OPT TO LEAVE.

4. CONTAMINATION CHECKS BY GEIGER COUNTER WERE CARRIED OUT IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE RAID BY FRENCH AND IRAQI STAFF, ON ALL THE DOORS AND OUTSIDE ELEVATIONS OF THE UNDERGROUND CELLAR WHERE ALL RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL HAS BEEN STORED SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR. THE CHECKS PROVED NEGATIVE, I.E. NO (NO) CONTAMINATION WAS REVEALED.

5. I ASKED ROCALVE WHAT HE THOUGHT IRAQI REACTIONS TO THE RAID WOULD BE. HE SAID THEY WOULD FIRST OF ALL REFUSE TO SAY ANYTHING ABOUT THE RAID, AND ALSO REFUSE TO LET HIM SAY ANYTHING E.G. ABOUT ABSENCE OF CONTAMINATION, WHICH WOULD BE MOST AWKWARD.

THEREAFTER, THEY WOULD BLAME THE ISRAELIS, AS THEY HAD DONE AFTER THE FIRST RAID LAST YEAR. HE HIMSELF COULD NOT HELP SEEING AN ELEMENT OF ISRAELI INVOLVEMENT IN THIS SECOND RAID. THE NUCLEAR PLANT WAS THE MOST HEAVILY DEFENDED SITE IN ALL IRAQ, YET ALL ITS

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DEFENCES, AS WELL AS THE BAGHDAD EARLY WARNING SYSTEM, HAD PROVED USELESS. IN HIS BOOK, THIS POINTED AT THE LEAST TO ISRAELI PLANNING, OR PERHAPS EVEN ISRAELI PILOTS.

6. HIS PROBLEM, ROCALVE CONTINUED, WAS TWO-FOLD: TO GET THE IRAQIS TO LET HIM SAY THE MINIMUM TO THE PRESS WHEN QUESTIONS BEGAN SEMICOLON AND TO PERSUADE THE IAEA AT VIENNA TO SEND INSPECTORS OUT POST-HASTE TO GIVE THE PLANT A CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH. THE AGENCY HAD BEEN EXTREMELY SLOW TO DO THIS AFTER THE FIRST RAID.

7. HE HAD CHECKED WITH THE ITALIAN AMBASSADOR THAT THERE WERE NO (NO) ITALIAN CASUALTIES OR MISSING AS A RESULT OF THE RAID.

8. THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS HAD A RINGSIDE VIEW OF THE BELATED ACK-ACK AND MISSILE REACTIONS TO THE RAID AT ABOUT 2130 HOURS, WHEN WE WERE GATHERED FOR THE ITALIAN NATIONAL DAY RECEPTION ON THE BUND OPPOSITE DAWRA REFINERY, BEHIND WHICH LIES CTESIPHON AND THE NUCLEAR PLANT. THE RAIDERS HAD GONE, BUT THE FIREWORKS WERE SPECTACULAR.

9. EXTRA CONTINGENTS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD HAVE BEEN CALLED UP. BAGHDAD AIRPORT WAS CLOSED FOR ALL FLIGHTS LAST NIGHT. THE MILITARY AND INTELLIGENCE NETWORKS ARE ON TOP ALERT.

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