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Subject copy:

Iraq, April 80,
Internal Sst

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T.188/80

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PARIS FROM LONDON
SECRET GOVERNMENTAL 0022
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MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT GISCARD.

MY DEAR PRESIDENT,

THANK YOU FOR YOUR MESSAGE OF 25 SEPTEMBER ABOUT YOUR MEETING WITH M. TAREQ AZIZ. I AM GRATEFUL TO YOU FOR HAVING KEPT ME INFORMED. IT IS CLEARLY IMPORTANT THAT WE SHOULD KEEP IN THE CLOSEST POSSIBLE TOUCH AS THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPS.

THE POSITION IS IF ANYTHING MORE WORRYING NOW THAN WHEN YOU SENT YOUR MESSAGE. YOU WILL HAVE LEARNT, THROUGH OUR AMBASSADOR, OF THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT'S PLAN TO LAUNCH AN ATTACK, USING OMANI FACILITIES, AGAINST THE TUMBS AND ABU MUZA AND POSSIBLY AGAINST BANDAR ABBAS. SUCH AN OPERATION, WHICH MAY WELL BE IMMINENT, WOULD BE BOUND TO HAVE THE GRAVEST REPERCUSSIONS FOR US ALL. WE OURSELVES, WHO HAVE A PARTICULAR CONCERN BECAUSE OF THE PRESENCE OF BRITISH SERVICE PERSONNEL IN OMAN, HAVE BEEN URGING CAUTION ON THE OMANIS. I BELIEVE THAT THE AMERICANS ARE DOING LIKEWISE AND THAT THEY ARE MAKING REPRESENTATIONS IN JEDDA AND AMMAN.

IT IS DIFFICULT TO JUDGE WHETHER THE OMANIS WILL DRAW BACK. THEY MAY CONSIDER THEMSELVES COMMITTED TO THE IRAQIS. BUT I GATHER THAT THERE ARE SOME SIGNS THAT THE IRAQI'S THEMSELVES MAY BE HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS. I WONDER, WHETHER YOU HAVE BEEN CONSIDERING MAKING AN APPROACH DIRECT TO BAGHDAD. I NOTE FROM YOUR MESSAGE THAT THE IRAQIS WERE SAYING ON THURSDAY THAT QUOTE AT THAT STAGE UNQUOTE THEY HAD NO INTENTION OF UNDERTAKING MILITARY OPERATIONS AGAINST THE GULF ISLANDS. THIS MIGHT OFFER A BASIS ON WHICH TO GO BACK TO THEM AND URGE RESTRAINT.

IF YOU DECIDE TO DO SO, I SHOULD BE GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD BE GOOD ENOUGH NOT TO REVEAL THAT WE HAD DIRECT KNOWLEDGE OF IRAQI INTENTIONS THROUGH THE OMANIS. THERE HAS, OF COURSE, BEEN A GREAT DEAL OF PRESS SPECULATION ABOUT POSSIBLE MILITARY ACTION AT THE SOUTHERN END OF THE GULF. MOVEOVER THE IRAQIS MUST ASSUME THAT THEIR AIRCRAFT MOVEMENTS WILL HAVE BEEN OBSERVED.

THESE DEVELOPMENTS UNDERLINE, IN MY VIEW, THE NEED FOR CLOSE AND CONTINUING QUADRIPARTITE CONSULTATION ABOUT THE SITUATION WHICH HAS ARISEN. YOU WILL HAVE HEARD FROM M. FRANCOIS PONCET OF THE PROPOSAL THAT A QUADRIPARTITE CONSULTATIVE GROUP SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED IN PARIS. THIS SEEMS TO ME TO BE AN EXCELLENT IDEA. I WOULD HOPE, IF YOU AGREE, THAT THE GROUP COULD MEET URGENTLY. WE ARE READY TO SEND A REPRESENTATIVE TO PARIS IMMEDIATELY A MEETING IS CONVENED. I PLAN TO BE IN TOUCH WITH HELMUT SCHMIDT ABOUT THIS LATER TODAY.

YOURS SINCERELY

MARGARET THATCHER.

BT