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TO IMMEDIATE F C O
TELEGRAM NUMBER 4202 OF 4 OCTOBER
INFO IMMEDIATE PARIS PRIORITY BONN JEDDA UKMIS NEW YORK KUWAIT
BAGHDAD ABU DHABI MOSCOW BAHRAIN MUSCAT AMMAN DOHA TEL AVIV

IRAQ/IRAN: US INTENTIONS

1. YOU KNOW FROM LAST WEEKEND HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO PERCEIVE ANY PATTERN OF US POLICY ON THE IRAQ/IRAN CRISIS; BUT CERTAIN STRANDS SEEM TO BE EMERGING THAT I SHALL TRY TO DESCRIBE THOUGH, BEING AS THEY ARE WITHOUT DESIGN OR INTENT, TOO MUCH SHAPE SHOULD NOT BE ATTACHED TO THEM.

(A) SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR, THE US GOVERNMENT HAVE HAD DIFFICULTIES IN GIVING SUBSTANCE TO THE PRESIDENT'S SECURITY COMMITMENT TO DEFEND THE GULF FROM EXTERNAL ATTACK, PARTLY BECAUSE OF THE RELUCTANCE OF SOME OF THE COUNTRIES TO BECOME VISIBLY INVOLVED, PARTICULARLY AT A TIME WHEN THE US ARE UNPOPULAR WITH MOST OF THE ARAB WORLD OVER PALESTINE AND LOATHED IN REVOLUTIONARY IRAN. BUT THE IRAQ/IRAN CONFLICT AND THE NEW THREAT TO THE GULF HAVE SUDDENLY CHANGED THE SCENE. THANKS TO THE FEAR OF AN ATTACK FROM IRAN THAT MIGHT FLOW FROM IRAQI ACTION, THE USA ARE NOW WANTED, AND THERE IS LESS INHIBITION ON THE PART OF THE GULF STATES IN EXPRESSING THEIR WISHES. THE USA HAS BEEN VOUCHSAFED THE LEVERAGE THAT FOR SO LONG HAS ELUDED THEM. THE PRESIDENT'S SECURITY COMMITMENT RELATED TO AN EXTERNAL THREAT; NO MATTER IF IT IS AN INTERNAL THREAT THAT OFFERS AMERICA AN ENTRY INTO THE AREA NOT JUST WITH LOCAL ACQUIESCENCE BUT BY LOCAL INVITATION.

BY CONTRAST, THE SOVIET UNION, UNTIL RECENTLY THE TERTIUS GAUDENS OF ANY TROUBLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST, NOW LOOK UNCOMFORTABLE. THEY CANNOT WANT THE WAR EITHER TO CONTINUE OR TO SPREAD: IT IS AWKWARD FOR THEM IF THEIR ARMS-CLIENT, IRAQ, IS IN DIFFICULTY; NOR CAN IT HELP THEM IN IRAN THAT IRAQ IS ATTACKING THE IRANIANS WITH SOVIET ARMS; IT DOES NOT SUIT THEM AT ALL THAT THE AMERICANS SHOULD BE INVITED IN TO PLAY A HAND IN THE GULF (HENCE THE CHANGE IN THE SOVIET TUNE SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE FIGHTING).

(B) FOR THE USA, THE CONTINUED INTEGRITY AND INDEPENDENCE OF SAUDI ARABIA IS PARAMOUNT. THE USA CANNOT MISS THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET THE SAUDIS WISH FOR HELP: NOR MUST THEY DO ANYTHING TO LET THE SAUDIS DOUBT THE RELIABILITY OF AN AMERICAN LINK. IN PRACTICE, IMMEDIATE AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT CAN TAKE TWO FORMS:

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(I) NAVAL COOPERATION

DISCUSSIONS ARE TAKING PLACE WITH THE SAUDIS ABOUT THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARDS WESTERN NAVAL ACTIVITY IN THE STRAITS OF HORMUZ AND THE GULF. THESE ALSO EMBRACE THE QUESTION OF THE ATTITUDE OF OTHER GULF STATES. THE USA WILL ALSO WISH TO INVOLVE WESTERN COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY FRANCE AND THE UK, AND THEY MAY WISH THEM TO JOIN IN EXPLORATORY APPROACHES TO THE GULF STATES.

(II) AWACS/HAWKS

AN AMERICAN TECHNICAL TEAM IS NOW IN SAUDI ARABIA DISCUSSING HOW BEST TO LINK UP THE AWACS WITH SAUDI AIR DEFENCES, NOTABLY THEIR HAWK MISSILES. INTEREST IN AWACS INFORMATION IS EXPECTED FROM THE OTHER GULF STATES. THIS INTEREST MAY REACH THE AMERICANS THROUGH THE SAUDIS, WHO HAVE REACTED POSITIVELY TO THE IDEA OF SHARING THE AWACS INFORMATION. MEANWHILE, THERE IS AN AMERICAN MILITARY SURVEY TEAM IN BAHRAIN WHO WILL EXPLORE WITH THE BAHRAINIS THE IDEA OF ESTABLISHING AN AIR DEFENCE SYSTEM LINKED WITH THE AWACS. OTHER GULF STATES MAY ALSO BE INTERESTED IN EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITY OF IMPROVING THEIR AIR DEFENCES.

(C) WHAT IS ALSO AT ISSUE IS THE LONGER TERM READINESS OF THE USA TO BECOME INVOLVED, NOT JUST IN INTELLIGENCE GATHERING AND WARNING, BUT IN OPERATIONS IN DEFENCE OF SAUDI ARABIA OR THE GULF STATES IN THE EVENT OF AN ATTACK (EG FROM IRAN). THIS IS A DELICATE MATTER AND THE PUBLIC EXPRESSION BY THE AMERICANS OF ANY SUCH READINESS WOULD REQUIRE VERY CAREFUL HANDLING ON THEIR PART. THE PRESENT POSITION IS HELD BY MEANS OF THE CURRENT TALKS ON NAVAL AND AWACS COOPERATION. IT MAY BE THAT THE SAUDIS DO NOT WANT ANYTHING GOING FURTHER AT THE MOMENT. THERE ARE OF COURSE CONGRESSIONAL ASPECTS (WAR POWERS ACT) BUT MY OWN GUESS IS THAT THE AMERICANS WOULD BE READY TO BECOME INVOLVED IN DEFENCE OF SAUDI ARABIA PROVIDED THERE WAS A CLEAR INVITATION: INDEED I THINK THAT THIS IS JUST THE OPENING THEY MAY BE LOOKING FOR.

(D) THE US GOVERNMENT DO NOT SEE ANY IMMEDIATE POSSIBILITY OF GETTING CLOSE TO IRAQ. THEY ARE TEMPTED BY THE IDEA THAT IF THINGS GO BADLY FOR IRAQ IN THE WAR AND IF THE SOVIETS ARE NOT THOUGHT TO HAVE GIVEN BAGHDAD THE FULL SUPPORT THEY EXPECTED, THE LATTER MAY BECOME DISILLUSIONED WITH THE SOVIET ALLIANCE. THE AMERICANS BELIEVE THAT THE FRENCH HAVE WRITTEN OFF IRAN AND HAVE DECIDED TO PUT THEIR SHIRT ON IRAQ.

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(E) THE AMERICANS DO NOT, REPEAT NOT, FAVOUR THE DISMEMBERMENT OR DISINTEGRATION OF IRAN: THE SOVIETS WOULD BE TEMPTED TO MOVE IN: THE OCCUPATION OF AFGHANISTAN WOULD BE EASED: THE IRAQIS WOULD BE TEMPTED TO CLING ON TO THE OIL OF KHUZESTAN AND EXPLOIT THIS FOR THEIR USE: A DANGEROUS VACUUM WOULD BE CREATED: ANY INCREASE IN IRAQI POWER OR INFLUENCE WOULD BE CONTRARY TO US INTERESTS. IT IS NOT REALISTIC, THE AMERICANS REALISE, TO HOPE THAT THE IRANIANS WILL, IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE, SEE THEIR INTEREST AS LYING IN CLOSER RELATIONS WITH THE USA: NEVERTHELESS, THE AMERICANS FIND IT DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT THE IRANIANS WILL NOT PERCEIVE THE DANGERS OF COMPLETE ISOLATION, NOT TO MENTION THEIR DEPENDENCE UPON AMERICAN EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY. THEY HAVE SENT MESSAGES TO IRAN EXPLAINING THE AWACS EXERCISE: THEY WANT TO GET IT ACROSS TO THE IRANIANS THAT THEY ARE NOT IN LEAGUE WITH THE IRAQIS AND THAT US POLICY IS TO MAINTAIN THE INTEGRITY OF IRAN.

(F) LOOKING A LITTLE FURTHER AHEAD, THE US/ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP MAY BE AFFECTED BY THE EXISTENCE OF US DEFENCE FACILITIES IN EGYPT AND OMAN AND PERHAPS IN SAUDI ARABIA. THE ISRAELI AUTHORITIES MAY ALREADY BE WORRIED BY THIS AS THEY ARE THE US CANCELLATION OF STRATEGIC TALKS AND NAVAL MANOEUVRES.

2. AS I HAVE SUGGESTED, IT WOULD BE PREMATURE TO THINK THAT THE AMERICANS HAVE FORMULATED CLEAR-CUT POLICIES IN RESPONSE TO RECENT EVENTS. NEVERTHELESS, THE SCENE HAS SHIFTED AND THERE DOES SEEM TO BE SCOPE FOR US MOVEMENT BEYOND THE CONFINES OF RECENT YEARS: AND A THOROUGH DISCUSSION OF THE ISSUES AT STAKE, OF THE MEANS OF CONSULTATION ABOUT POLICIES, AND INDEED OF WHAT THOSE POLICIES SHOULD BE, SHOULD BE AMONG THE FIRST PRIORITIES FOR ALL OF US AFTER THE NOVEMBER ELECTION.

3. PARIS, PLEASE SHOW BULLARD.

HENDERSON

IRAQ/IRAN STANDARD

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NENAD	TRED
NAD	ERD
UND	ECON D
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WED	CABINET OFFICE
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ADDITIONAL DISTN.

IRAQ/IRAN