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DESKBY 071630Z

FROM KUWAIT 071515Z OCT

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 472 OF 7/10/80,

INFO IMMEDIATE PARIS AND WASHINGTON,

INFO PRIORITY BONN, JEDDA, BAGHDAD, UKMIS NEW YORK, MOSCOW, ABU DHABI
BAHRAIN, MUSCAT, AMMAN, DOHA, TEL AVIV.

IRAQ/IRAN.

WHEN MOBERLY CALLED TODAY ON THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE, SHAIKH SALIM AL SABAH THE LATTER EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN ABOUT IRANIAN THREATS DIRECTED SPECIFICALLY AGAINST KUWAIT. HE SAID THAT KUWAIT HAD TAKEN ALL POSSIBLE STEPS TO DEFEND HERSELF AND ADDED WITH SOME EMPHASIS THAT KUWAIT MUST RELY ON HER OWN EFFORTS IN THIS SITUATION. HE THEN REFERRED TO KUWAIT'S OBLIGATIONS TO IRAQ UNDER THE ARAB LEAGUE CHARTER AND MADE IT CLEAR THAT IN THE LAST RESORT KUWAIT WOULD BE BOUND TO SIDE WITH IRAQ, THOUGH HE RECOGNISED THAT SADDAM HUSSEIN'S AMBITION TO BE THE NEW NASSER COULD POSE AS MUCH OF AN EVENTUAL

AMBITION TO BE THE NEW MASSER COULD POSE AS MUCH OF AN EVENTUAL THREAT TO KUWAIT AS THE PRETENSIONS OF IRAN.

2. WHILE SHAIKH SALIM SAID HE WOULD WARMLY WELCOME FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO EXCHANGE ASSESSMENTS WITH US ABOUT THE EVOLVING SITUATION, HE DID NOT SEE MUCH SCOPE FOR CO-ORDINATION OF POLICY OWING TO KUWAIT'S INABILITY TO TAKE A NEUTRAL POSITION. THOUGH HE DID NOT RULE OUT A TIP AND RUN ATTACK, HE WAS INCLINED TO DISCOUNT THE LIKELIHOOD OF A ~~CARIOUS~~^{SERIOUS} IRANIAN MOVE AGAINST ANY OF THE GULF STATES SINCE THE IRANIANS WOULD KNOW THAT THIS WOULD INVOLVE SAUDI ARABIA AND SAUDI ARABIA'S FRIENDS. HE WAS REASSURED BY A CONCILLIATORY STATEMENT FROM PRESIDENT BANI SADR HEARD ON THE RADIO THIS MORNING. HE URGED THAT WE WORK WITH THE AMERICANS AND IF NECESSARY THE RUSSIANS AT THE U N OR THROUGH THE ISLAMIC OR NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENTS TO ENCOURAGE BANI SADR TOWARDS NEGOTIATIONS. KUWAIT DID NOT WISH TO SEE MORE FIGHTING OR SOVIET OR U S INVOLVEMENT. A DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION HAD TO BE FOUND QUICKLY.

3. SHAIKH SALIM ALSO SPOKE SEVERAL TIMES OF THE SOVIET NEED FOR OIL IN THE LATTER PART OF THE 1980'S AND SPECULATED THAT THIS WOULD PREDISPOSE THE RUSSIANS TO LOOK FOR WAYS OF EXPLOITING THE SOLUTION TO THEIR ADVANTAGE. HE SEEMED VERY NERVOUS BOTH ABOUT THE RISKS OF THE CONFLICT REMAINING UNRESOLVED FOR LONG AND ABOUT POSSIBLE SUPER-POWER INVOLVEMENT. THE NEAREST HE CAME TO RECOGNISING A ROLD FOR THE AMERICANS WAS IN HIS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT THE SQZPORT OF SAUDI ARABIA BY HER "FRIENDS" MIGHT DETER IRANIAN ATTACKS.

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