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FM FCO 1471742Z OCT 80

TO IMMEDIATE CANBERRA

TELEGRAM NUMBER 458 OF 14 OCTOBER

AND TO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON BAGHDAD MODUK (AUS D STAFF) MUSCAT  
ABU DHABI DUBAI BAHRAIN DOHA ISLAMABAD KUWAIT JEDDA STOCKHOLM  
NEW DELHI

IRAN/IRAQ EXERCISE BEACON COMPASS

1. THE AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER CALLED ON THE LORD PRIVY SEAL  
TODAY ON INSTRUCTIONS.

2. SIR J PLIMSOLL SAID THAT AUSTRALIAN MINISTERS HAD REVIEWED RAN  
PARTICIPATION IN THE EXERCISE. THEY WERE CONCERNED THAT IN THE LIGHT  
OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THE GULF, THE EXERCISE WOULD BE OPEN TO  
MISINTERPRETATION BY IRAQ AND IRAN AND PLAY INTO COMMUNIST HANDS.  
THEY CONSIDERED THAT THE TIMING AND SCALE WERE WRONG IN RELATION TO  
THE IRAQ/IRAN CONFLICT. THE AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR IN IRAQ HAD  
ALREADY BEEN APPROACHED ABOUT THE INADVISABILITY OF HOLDING THE  
EXERCISE. SIR J PLIMSOLL WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE ORIGINAL PURPOSE OF  
THE EXERCISE (TO SHOW STRENGTH POST AFGHANISTAN) WOULD NO LONGER  
BE FULFILLED. FOR THESE REASONS THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD  
PREFER TO SEE THE EXERCISE CANCELLED AND HOPED THAT THE UK WOULD  
AGREE.

3. THE LPS SAID THAT WE SAW THE EXERCISE IN A DIFFERENT LIGHT.  
ALTHOUGH IT WOULD NOW NOT FULFILL THE ORIGINAL PURPOSE, GIVEN THE

INCREASING CONCERN OF GULF RULERS FOR REASSURANCE IT HAD TWO NEW  
PURPOSES TO WHICH WE ATTACHED IMPORTANCE:

- A. IT WOULD PROVIDE REASSURANCE TO THE RULERS THAT WESTERN POWERS  
WERE ABLE AND WILLING TO OPERATE IN THE NORTHERN INDIAN OCEAN:
- B. SINCE THERE WAS AT LEAST A POSSIBILITY THAT WESTERN POWERS MIGHT  
NEED TO PROVIDE NAVAL PROTECTION FOR MERCHANT SHIPPING IN THE GULF,  
THE EXERCISE PROVIDED GOOD COVER FOR DEPLOYMENT OF NAVAL VESSELS  
IN THE GENERAL VICINITY WITHOUT UNDULY RAISING THE TEMPERATURE:

4. THE LPS ADDED THAT, GIVEN THE UNSATISFACTORY CO-ORDINATION OF  
PLANNING WITH THE AMERICANS, PARTICIPATION IN THE EXERCISE PROVIDED  
US WITH A LEVER TO INDUCE THE AMERICANS TO TAKE HEED OF OUR CONCERNS  
ABOUT THIS. MOREOVER TO PULL OUT OF THE EXERCISE ENTIRELY WOULD LOOK  
WEAK IN THE EYES OF THE GULF RULERS, WOULD PROBABLY ANNOY THE  
AMERICANS (AND INCIDENTALLY WOULD WEAKEN OUR HANDS IN DEALING WITH  
THEM) AND COULD BE DELIBERATELY MISINTERPRETED BY THOSE HOSTILE TO US  
FOR ALL THESE REASONS, AND BECAUSE WE BELIEVED IT IMPORTANT BOTH TO  
DILUTE THE STRONG AMERICAN PRESENCE IN THE AREA AND SHOW A WILLING-  
NESS TO CO-OPERATE WITH THEM, THE UK BELIEVED THE EXERCISE SHOULD  
GO AHEAD. HE HOPED THE AUSTRALIANS WOULD AGREE TO IT DOING SO.

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/5. SIR J PLIMSOLL

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5. SIR J PLIMSOLL UNDERTOOK TO REPORT OUR VIEWS TO CANBERRA BUT DID NOT RULE OUT A DECISION BY THE AUSTRALIAN MINISTERS TO PULL OUT.

6. WE THINK IT IMPORTANT TO RETAIN AUSTRALIAN PARTICIPATION. YOU SHOULD THEREFORE REINFORCE WHAT HAS BEEN SAID HERE AT A SUITABLY SENIOR POLITICAL LEVEL DRAWING ON THE POINTS IN PARAGRAPHS 3-4 ABOVE.

7. GRATEFUL IF BAGHDAD AND OTHER POSTS WOULD REPORT ANY REPRESENTATIONS THEY MAY HAVE RECEIVED ABOUT THE EXERCISE.

CARRINGTON

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ADDITIONAL DISTRIBUTION

IRAQ/IRAN

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