

IRAN/IRAQ

ADVANCE COPIES

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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 759 OF 16 OCTOBER

AND IMMEDIATE ROME, PRIORITY WASHINGTON MUSCAT, ROUTINE MOSCOW, PARIS, BONN, UKMIS NEW YORK, TEL AVIV, AMMAN, BAGHDAD, KUWAIT, DOHA, BAHRAIN, ABU DHABI AND DUBAI.

Read in full.

YOUR TELNO 391 TO MUSCAT: IRAQ/IRAN.

1. MY AMERICAN COLLEAGUE TELLS ME THAT HE RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS ABOUT A WEEK AGO TO TELL THE SAUDIS AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL THAT THE USA WAS DETERMINED THAT THE STRAITS OF HORMUZ SHOULD BE KEPT OPEN, ASSURED THAT SAUDI ARABIA SHARED THIS AIM, AND WAS THEREFORE PROCEEDING WITH CONSULTATIONS WITH THE BRITISH AND THE FRENCH ABOUT CONTINGENCY PLANNING. AMBASSADOR WEST HAD TO WAIT 4 OR 5 DAYS FOR AN APPOINTMENT WITH PRINCE FAHD. BY THAT TIME USS LEAHY HAD ALREADY ENTERED THE GULF AND THERE WAS PUBLIC NEWS OF FRENCH UNITS IN THE AREA. WEST TOLD FAHD THAT HE PRESUMED THESE MOVES WERE THE RESULT OF THE CONSULTATIONS. FAHD SAID "FINE".

2. WEST SAW PRINCE SULTAN THIS MORNING AND REITERATED THE USA'S RESOLVE TO KEEP THE LANES OPEN IN ANY EVENTUALITY AND THEIR INTENTION TO CONSULT WITH OTHER INTERESTED AND FRIENDLY POWERS AND TO KEEP THE SAUDIS INFORMED. HE GAVE SULTAN EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO OBJECT OR CRITICISE, BUT SULTAN READILY AGREED TO WHAT WAS PROPOSED.

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3. I COMMENTED THAT THIS ATTITUDE WAS IN LINE WITH WHAT PRINCE TURKI HAD TOLD ME BUT AGAINST THE VIEWS EXPRESSED BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS (THUNAYYAN) AND OTHER OFFICIALS IN THE MFA AND THE VIEWS AIRED REGULARLY IN THE LOCAL PRESS. WEST SAID THIS WAS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE GAP BETWEEN PRINCE SAUD AND PRINCE FAHD. SAUD HAD MADE STATEMENTS TO THE PRESS TO THE EFFECT THAT FOREIGN POWERS SHOULD KEEP OUT OF THE GULF AND THAT THE LOCAL STATES COULD LOOK AFTER THEIR OWN COMMUNICATIONS. HE MUST KNOW THAT THIS WAS NONSENSE, BUT AS USUAL HE WAS INCLINED TO TAKE THE STANDARD ARAB NATIONALIST LINE.

4. WEST ADDED THAT SAUD HAD JUST LEFT FOR TEN DAYS HOLIDAY IN PARIS WITH HIS DEPUTY MINISTER FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS, MANSOURI. WHEN I EXPRESSED SURPRISE THAT SAUD SHOULD GO AWAY AT A TIME OF CRISIS, WEST COMMENTED THAT HE HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT SAUD WAS MIFFED BECAUSE THE BIG DECISIONS WERE TAKEN BY OTHERS AND THAT HE MIGHT HAVE HAD "HIS WRIST SLAPPED" OVER HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS. TURKI ON THIS ISSUE WAS, PRIVATELY AT LEAST, WITH FAHD AND SULTAN AND AGAINST HIS BROTHER SAUD.

5. WEST SAID THAT HE WAS PERSONALLY CONVINCED THAT IF WESTERN COUNTRIES HAD TO INTERVENE IN GULF SECURITY, THEY WOULD GET FULL SUPPORT FROM THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT IN PRIVATE, THOUGH HE COULD NOT GUARANTEE WHAT THEIR PUBLIC ATTITUDE WOULD BE.

6. NOW THAT WE HAVE THIS CLARIFICATION OF SAUDI VIEWS AT THE TOP AND GIVEN THAT FAHD AND SULTAN WILL BE PREOCCUPIED WITH THE PILGRIMAGE FROM NOW ON FOR A WEEK, I DO NOT REPEAT NOT PROPOSE TO TRY FOR AN APPOINTMENT WITH EITHER OF THEM UNLESS YOU WISH TO DISTANCE HMG FROM THE AMERICAN APPROACH. I TAKE IT THAT AS OF NOW, THOUGH YOU ARE NOT ENTIRELY SATISFIED WITH AMERICAN PROCEDURE, YOU WOULD NOT WISH TO MAKE WHAT WOULD HAVE TO BE A CONSPICUOUS EFFORT TO EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN US.

CRAIG