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PS
 PS/SIR I GILMOUR
 PS/MR HURD
 PS/PUS
 SIR E YOUDE
 SIR J GRAHAM
 MR J C MOBERLY
 MR BRAITHEWAITE
 HD/MED
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Sir A Ahmad

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FM MUSCAT 161541Z OCT 80

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 297 OF 16 OCTOBER

INFO IMMEDIATE ROME (FOR SECRETARY OF STATE), WASHINGTON,
 PRIORITY DUBAI, BAHRAIN, DOHA, ABU DHABI, KUWAIT, JEDDA, BAGHDAD,
 AMMAN

INFO SAVING PARIS, BONN, UKMIS NEW YORK, MOSCOW, TEL AVIV

YOUR TELNO 391: IRAQ/IRAN.

1. MOBERLY AND I HAD AN HOUR WITH QAIS ZAWAWI THIS MORNING AND HALF AN HOUR WITH THE SULTAN (WITH ZAWAWI IN ATTENDANCE) THIS AFTERNOON.
2. MOBERLY SPOKE ON BOTH OCCASIONS ABOUT THE GENERAL OBJECTS OF HIS CURRENT TOUR, AND ADDED SPECIFIC EXPLANATIONS OF OUR RESPONSE TO ZAID'S APPROACH AND OF NAVAL CONTINGENCY PLANNING, DRAWING AS APPROPRIATE ON YOUR TELS 391 AND 392.
3. ZAWAWI ASKED WHETHER THERE WAS ANY DIRECT CONNECTION BETWEEN ZAID'S REQUEST AND THE BRITISH NAVAL MOVEMENTS AND WAS TOLD THERE WAS NOT. HE ATTACHED GREAT IMPORTANCE TO SAUDI ATTITUDES AND SAID THAT THE OMANIS PROPOSED TO SUGGEST REACTIVATING THE TAIF GROUP OF THE SIX OF 1979 (I.E. GULF STATES OTHER THAN IRAQ AND IRAN) IN ORDER TO POINT THE MORAL THAT THE DANGER WHICH THE CONTINGENCY PLANNING DISCUSSED THERE HAD BEEN DESIGNED TO COUNTER WAS NOW FACING THE SIX AND THAT FACILITIES FOR THE WESTERN POWERS WERE NECESSARY TO BALANCE SOVIET INFLUENCE IN THE AREA.

IN THE AREA.

4. ZAWAWI WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE AMERICANS HAD SPOKEN TO THE OMANIS ABOUT THE PROPOSED NAVAL CONTINGENCY PLANNING (CURIOSLY, MY U.S. COLLEAGUE HAD NOT MENTIONED THIS APPROACH WHEN HE SAW MOBERLY AT MY HOUSE LAST NIGHT). THE OMANIS THOUGHT THAT THIS REQUIRED BROADER CONSULTATIONS AND THAT IT SHOULD BE MADE CLEAR THAT THE PURPOSE OF ANY INTERNATIONAL NAVAL ACTION WOULD BE LIMITED TO MAINTAINING FREEDOM AND SECURITY OF NAVIGATION.
5. THE OMANIS HAD ALSO DISCUSSED WITH THE AMERICANS IN WASHINGTON THEIR WISH TO IMPROVE OMANI DEFENSIVE CAPABILITIES IN THE STRAITS OF HORMUZ AREA, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING ALTERNATIVE SEA LANES IF THE NORMAL CHANNELS WERE BLOCKED (HIS THOUGHT HERE WAS NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR).
6. MOBERLY REPLIED THAT WE WOULD WELCOME IT IF THE OMANIS COULD PERSUADE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE SIX TO CO-ORDINATE THEIR RESPONSE TO THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THIS WAY. BUT HE HAD DETECTED SIGNS OF NERVOUSNESS FURTHER UP THE GULF AT BEING SEEN TO BE GETTING TOGETHER. IT WOULD CERTAINLY BE NECESSARY TO AVOID PREMATURE PUBLICITY ABOUT CONTINGENCY PLANNING AND THE TIMING OF ANY MEASURES PROPOSED WOULD NEED CAREFUL JUDGMENT, OTHERWISE NEGATIVE REACTIONS IN THE AREA COULD FRUSTRATE EFFECTIVE ACTION.
7. ZAWAWI THOUGHT THAT SOME NERVOUSNESS IN THE REGION WAS NOT ALTOGETHER UNWELCOME. HE REAFFIRMED OMAN'S NEUTRALITY IN THE CURRENT CONFLICT "ALTHOUGH WE HAD SOME DIFFICULTIES IN THE BEGINNING". COMMENTING ON MOBERLY'S UNDERLINING OF YOUR RECOGNITION THAT THE VARIOUS PROBLEMS FACING THE REGION ARE INTERCONNECTED AND THAT PROGRESS ON THE PALESTINE ISSUE IS ESSENTIAL, ZAWAWI SAID THAT THE ARABS SHOULD REALISE THAT U.S. SUPPORT OF ISRAEL WAS NOTHING NEW, THAT IT WAS PROBABLY LESS NOW THAN IT HAD EVER BEEN AND THAT CO-OPERATION WITH THE AMERICANS MADE MORE SENSE THAN THE REVERSE.
8. AT THE AUDIENCE, MOBERLY REPEATED MORE BRIEFLY WHAT HE HAD SAID TO ZAWAWI. QABOOS GAVE HIS SEAL OF APPROVAL, AS IT WERE, TO ZAWAWI'S REPLY, AND EXPRESSED HIS GRATITUDE FOR THE MESSAGE WHICH MOBERLY HAD CONVEYED BUT DID NOT ENTER INTO ANY DETAILED DISCUSSION EXCEPT TO STRESS THAT HE WOULD BE GLAD TO PROVIDE ANY FACILITIES THAT MIGHT BE REQUIRED FROM OMAN.
9. BOTH QABOOS AND ZAWAWI WELCOMED OUR RESPONSE TO ZAID AND NEITHER REACTED BY SUGGESTING SIMILAR ACTION IN OMAN. BOTH ALSO AFFIRMED THEIR READINESS TO MAINTAIN CONTINUING CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH US AS THE SITUATION IN THE AREA EVOLVED.

FCO PASS SAVING TO PARIS, BONN, UKMIS NEW YORK, MOSCOW AND
TEL AVIV

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