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FM AMMAN 281712Z OCT 80

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 430 OF 28 OCT 80

INFO ROUTINE BAGHDAD BONN DAMASCUS JEDDA MOSCOW PARIS ROME TEL
AVIV UKMIS NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON

MY TELNO 428 (NOT TO ALL): IRAN/IRAQ.

1. I WAS SUMMONED BY KING HUSSEIN THIS AFTERNOON IMMEDIATELY ON HIS RETURN FROM IRAQ. HE CLAIMED HE HAD FOUND IRAQI MORALE HIGH AND PRESIDENT SADDAM CONFIDENT IN THE STRENGTH OF HIS POSITION AND IN THE BELIEF THAT AN OPPORTUNITY NOW EXISTED TO ACHIEVE A LASTING SETTLEMENT OF THE PROBLEM OF THE GULF.
2. THE KING SAID HE HAD BEEN SHOWN LARGE QUANTITIES OF CAPTURED IRANIAN EQUIPMENT, MUCH OF IT BRAND NEW, INCLUDING CHIEFTAIN AND M60 TANKS, SCORPIONS AND 155MM ARTILLERY. THE IRAQIS WERE, HOWEVER, BEGINNING TO RUN SHORT OF AMMUNITION AND SPARE PARTS. SINCE THE START OF THE CONFLICT THE RUSSIANS HAD COMPLETELY SHUT OFF MILITARY SUPPLIES TO IRAQ AND HAD FORBIDDEN SOVIET VESSELS WHICH HAD BEEN ON THEIR WAY TO IRAQ WHEN THE WAR BEGAN TO LAND THEIR CARGOES IN ARAB PORTS, IN SPITE OF OFFERS TO RECEIVE THEM FROM SAUDI ARABIA AND OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES. 170 TANKS AND IMPORTANT CONSIGNMENTS OF AMMUNITION AND SPARES WERE THUS BEING PREVENTED FROM REACHING IRAQ. THE IRAQIS HAD HAD VERY HEATED EXCHANGES WITH THE RUSSIANS ON THIS SUBJECT: ACCORDING TO THE KING, THE IRAQIS WERE NOW COMPLETELY DISILLUSIONED WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND WERE LOOKING FOR NEW AND CLOSER RELATIONSHIPS WITH WESTERN EUROPE.
3. THE KING SAID HE HAD OF COURSE DISCUSSED THE VARIOUS CURRENT PEACE INITIATIVES WITH THE IRAQI PRESIDENT. SADDAM REMAINED VERY SCEPTICAL OF THE NON-ALIGNED MEDIATION ATTEMPT AND, ALTHOUGH HE HAD GONE ALONG WITH THE ISLAMIC INITIATIVE DID NOT SEEM TO THINK THAT IT WAS LIKELY TO ACHIEVE POSITIVE RESULTS. HE HAD HOWEVER BEEN MUCH ENCOURAGED BY HIS DISCUSSION WITH PRESIDENT GISCARD'S EMISSARY (KING HUSSEIN UNDERSTOOD HE WAS AT PRESENT IN BAGHDAD AND REPRESENTED A EUROPEAN MEDIATION ATTEMPT: I TOLD THE KING THAT I DID NOT KNOW ON WHAT BASIS HE HAD BEEN SENT). THE FRENCH ENVOY HAD APPARENTLY SUGGESTED TO THE IRAQIS THAT A CEASE-FIRE SHOULD BE FOLLOWED BY NEGOTIATIONS AND THAT WITHDRAWAL WOULD TAKE PLACE WHEN THE NEGOTIATIONS HAD BEEN SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED. THIS WAS VERY MUCH IN ACCORDANCE WITH PRESIDENT SADDAM'S OWN INCLINATION AND SADDAM HOPED THAT THE EUROPEANS WOULD NOW PURSUE THE ATTEMPT TO ACHIEVE A SETTLEMENT ON THESE LINES (PRESUMABLY IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL, ALTHOUGH THE KING DID NOT SAY SO).

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4. THE KING THEN WENT ON TO GIVE A (PRETTY DISCOURAGING) ACCOUNT OF SADDAM'S CURRENT THINKING ON THE MAIN ISSUES. SADDAM HAD REITERATED THAT HE WAS NOT SEEKING TERRITORIAL GAINS OR THE DISMEMBERMENT OF IRAN. NONETHELESS HE HAD REFERRED TO ARABISTAN AS AN ARAB ISSUE AND TO THE POSSIBILITY OF SOME NEW STATUS FOR THE CITY OF KHORAMSHAHR, SUCH AS THE REVIVAL OF THE OLD ARAB SHEIKHDOM. HE HAD SUGGESTED THAT THE WEST MIGHT ONE DAY WELCOME THIS, ESPECIALLY IF THE REST OF IRAN WERE TO FALL UNDER COMMUNIST RULE. SADDAM HAD ALSO REFERRED TO THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF THE 3 ISLANDS AND TO THE THREAT THEY COULD PRESENT TO WESTERN SECURITY IF THEY WERE TO FALL INTO THE WRONG HANDS, AND STILL SEEMED TO BE THINKING OF THEIR RETURN TO ARAB RULE. ON THE SHATT, SADDAM HAD SAID HE THOUGHT IT ESSENTIAL TO REVERT TO THE POSITION WHICH EXISTED BEFORE THE 1975 TREATY (THE CONDITIONS WHICH IRAQ HAD THEN ACCEPTED HAVING PROVED IMPOSSIBLE) AND THAT IRAQ SHOULD HAVE FULL SOVREIGNTY OVER THE SHATT: THE IRANIANS HAD IN ANY CASE BUILT A CANAL WHICH LESSENED THEIR DEPENDENCE ON THE SHATT, WHEREAS IT WAS IRAQ'S ONLY OUTLET TO THE SEA. THE KING MADE NO REFERENCE TO SADDAM'S VIEWS ON DELINEATION OF THE NORTH WESTERN FRONTIER BETWEEN IRAQ AND IRAN.

5. THE KING SAID HE WOULD NOT BE DISCUSSING HIS VISIT WITH ANY OTHER WEST EUROPEAN REPRESENTATIVES IN AMMAN FOR THE TIME BEING (THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IS IN ANY CASE IN PARIS) AND ASKED ME NOT TO REVEAL WHAT HE HAD SAID TO MY EUROPEAN COLLEAGUES HERE. HOWEVER HE HOPED YOU MIGHT DRAW ON WHAT HE HAD SAID IN DISCUSSING WITH OTHER EUROPEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS WHAT SHOULD NOW BE DONE TO TERMINATE THE CONFLICT. I DID NOT THINK IT PROFITABLE AT THIS STAGE TO START A DISCUSSION WITH THE KING ON WHY PRESIDENT SADDAM'S IDEAS WERE UNLIKELY IN THEIR PRESENT FORM TO PROVIDE A FRUITFUL BASIS FOR NEGOTIATION WITH THE IRANIANS: PRESUMABLY THEY IN ANY CASE REPRESENT A MAXIMAL IRAQI OPENING POSITION.

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6. KING HUSSEIN ALSO MENTIONED KEEN IRAQI INTEREST IN THE CHIEFTAIN TANK AND OTHER BRITISH DEFENCE EQUIPMENT AND IN THE POSSIBILITY OF JOINT VENTURES WITH JORDAN AND THE UK FOR THE ASSEMBLY OF LAND ROVERS AND ROLLS ROYCE DIESEL ENGINES (BOTH OF WHICH HAVE PREVIOUSLY BEEN DISCUSSED WITH THE JORDANIANS). HE SAID THAT JORDAN AND IRAQ WOULD BE FORMING A JOINT COMMITTEE TO EXAMINE THE POSSIBILITIES MORE FULLY. I ASSUME ALL THIS WAS INTENDED TO INCREASE OUR INTEREST IN IRAQ'S NEW ENTHUSIASM FOR CLOSER LINKS WITH BRITAIN AND WESTERN EUROPE.

7 SEE MY TELEGRAM NUMBER 429 (NOT TO ALL) ON BRITISH SUBJECTS IMPRISONED IN IRAQ.

URWICK

IRAQ/IRAN STANDARD

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