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FM PARIS 061652Z NOV 80

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 914 OF 6 NOVEMBER 1980

INFO ROUTINE BAGHDAD, UKMIS NEW YORK, WASHINGTON AND AMMAN

INFO SAVING BONN AND MOSCOW

IRAQ/IRAN: FRENCH ASSESSMENT

1. WHEN MINISTER SAW SERVANT (SOUS-DIRECTEUR IN CHARGE OF THE MIDDLE EAST AT THE QUAI) ON 5 NOVEMBER, HE ASKED HIM FOR A FRENCH ASSESSMENT OF IRAQI INTENTIONS. SERVANT SAID THAT THE FRENCH THOUGHT THE IRAQIS WERE LOOKING FOR A WAY OUT OF THE WAR. HE HAD BEEN STRUCK BY A REFERENCE IN A SPEECH BY SADDAM HUSSEIN BEFORE THE IRAQI NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO THE EFFECT THAT IRAQ WAS PREPARED TO WITHDRAW ITS TROOPS IN RETURN FOR RECOGNITION OF THEIR RIGHTS. THIS HAD NEVER BEEN EXPRESSED SO CLEARLY BEFORE IN A PUBLIC SPEECH IN IRAQ (BAGHDAD TEL NO 605 REFERS).
2. JAMES ASKED WHETHER TAREQ AZIZ WOULD ASK FOR MORE FRENCH MILITARY EQUIPMENT. SERVANT SAID THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO INTERRUPTION IN THE SUPPLIES OF FRENCH MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO IRAQ. THE BULK OF IT WAS RADAR AND SPARE PARTS AT PRESENT. THERE WERE NO AIRCRAFT BEING SUPPLIED THOUGH THE MIRAGE F1 WERE ON ORDER. ONE OF IRAQ'S PROBLEMS WAS THAT THE SOVIET UNION WAS LIMITING ITS SUPPLIES OF ARMS AND SPARE PARTS.
3. JAMES ASKED WHETHER THE PRO-IRAQI STANCE OF FRANCE WAS CAUSING PROBLEMS IN THEIR RELATIONS WITH IRAN. SERVANT SAID THAT UP TILL NOW THE IRANIANS HAD NOT EXPRESSED ANY SPECIAL CONCERN AT FRANCE'S CLOSE CONNECTIONS WITH IRAQ. THE NEW FRENCH AMBASSADOR HAD ARRIVED AND WAS AT WORK. BUT THE LONGER THE WAR CONTINUED THE MORE HOSTILE THE IRANIAN ATTITUDE TO FRANCE WOULD BECOME.
4. THE FRENCH WERE USING THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE IRAQIS TO SHOW AS MUCH MODERATION AS POSSIBLE. THE DIFFICULTY WAS, HOWEVER, THAT THE IRANIANS SHOWED NO SIGNS OF BEING PREPARED TO MAKE ANY CONCESSIONS. THE FRENCH SAW NO SPECIAL INITIATIVE FOR THEMSELVES EXCEPT BY WORKING ON THE IRAQIS AND THROUGH THE NON-ALIGNED AND ISLAMIC GROUPS, ESSENTIALLY IN THE UNITED NATIONS.

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5. FOR THE TIME BEING THE FRENCH WERE FINDING THEIR OIL ELSEWHERE AND THEY HAD NO PARTICULAR PROBLEM. SERVANT'S EXPECTATION WAS THAT THE WAR WOULD DRAG ON FOR SOME TIME YET. THE FRENCH ASSESSMENT WAS THAT THE IRAQIS HAD NO PROBLEMS WITH MORALE IN THE ARMY AND THAT THE BA'ATH PARTY STRUCTURES WERE HOLDING UP WELL TO THE STRAINS. AS REGARDS SOVIET POLICY, THE FRENCH BELIEVE THE RUSSIANS' PRIME OBJECTIVE WAS TO AVOID TAKING SIDES. IN THE LONGER TERM THE RUSSIANS WANTED TO RE-ESTABLISH THEIR INFLUENCE IN IRAQ AND TO BEGIN TO ACQUIRE INFLUENCE IN IRAN. THE FRENCH THOUGHT IT IMPORTANT IN THEIR OWN INTERESTS AND GENERALLY IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WEST TO WORK AGAINST THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF SOVIET INFLUENCE IN IRAQ.

FCO PLEASE PASS SAVING TO BONN AND MOSCOW

HIBBERT.

(REPEATED AS REQUESTED)

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