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TELEGRAM NUMBER 2512 OF 25 AUGUST
INFO MODUK (DS1 AND DS 11), JEDDA, TEL AVIV,
INFO SAVING CAIRO, BAGHDAD, DAMASCUS, AMMAN, BEIRUT,
TRIPOLI, OTHER GULF POSTS, UKDEL NATO, MOSCOW, BONN, PARIS

Middle East
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AWACS FOR SAUDI ARABIA

1. THE ADMINISTRATION SUBMITTED TO CONGRESS YESTERDAY THEIR PACKAGE OF PROPOSALS TO ENHANCE SAUDI AIR DEFENCE. THIS INCLUDES FIVE AWACS, TWENTY-TWO RADAR GROUND STATIONS, SIX TANKERS, 1,177 SIDE-WINDER MISSILES AND 101 SHIP-SETS OF F15 CONFORMAL FUEL TANKS. THE TOTAL COST OF THE PACKAGE IS DOLLARS 8.5 BILLION. THE PROPOSALS HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN PRESENTED NOW, INSTEAD OF 9 SEPTEMBER WHEN CONGRESS RESUMES, SINCE THE LATTER DATE WOULD COINCIDE WITH BEGIN'S VISIT HERE. AFTER THE USUAL TWENTY DAYS OF INFORMAL NOTICE STARTING ON 9 SEPTEMBER, THE ADMINISTRATION WILL THEN GIVE CONGRESS THE STATUTORY THIRTY DAYS NOTICE TO CONSIDER THE PACKAGE. FAILING A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE TWO HOUSES AGAINST THE PACKAGE BEFORE 30 OCTOBER, IT WOULD THEN BE IMPLEMENTED.

2. THE SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS HAS BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY AN IMPRESSIVE AND COMPREHENSIVE SET OF BRIEFS (COPIES BY BAG - NOT TO ALL) PROVIDING POLITICAL ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL, AND TECHNICAL DETAILS OF THE SYSTEMS IN QUESTION. IN SUMMARY THE ADMINISTRATION'S ARGUMENTS STATE:

- (I) THE PACKAGE WILL CLEARLY HELP THE SAUDIS TO DEFEND THEMSELVES;
- (II) IT WILL HELP RESTORE US CREDIBILITY AS A REALISTIC SECURITY PARTNER IN THE REGION;
- (III) IT WILL HELP TO MEET SOME US MILITARY NEEDS IN THE GULF BY PROVIDING THE FOUNDATION FOR THE EARLY WARNING AIR DEFENCE NETWORK WHICH WOULD BE ESSENTIAL FOR ANY US RESPONSE TO AIR THREATS TO GULF OIL FACILITIES;
- (IV) THE US WILL BE PROVIDING AN EXTENSIVE LOGISTICS BASE AND SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE TO SAUDI ARABIA WHICH WOULD FACILITATE DEPLOYMENT OF US TACTICAL AIRCRAFT TO THE REGION IN TIME OF NEED, IF SO REQUESTED;
- (V) THE PACKAGE PROVIDES A POSITIVE FOUNDATION FOR MORE EXTENSIVE US-SAUDI SECURITY COOPERATION OVER TIME.

3. THE ADMINISTRATION BRIEFING EMPHASISES THAT THE PACKAGE HAS BEEN DESIGNED TO MEET SAUDI DEFENCE REQUIREMENTS WHILE MINIMISING THE IMPACT ON THE ARAB/ISRAELI BALANCE. THEY CLAIM THAT THE EFFECT ON ISRAELI SECURITY, STILL A PARAMOUNT INTEREST OF THE US, WILL BE LIMITED BY THE SUPERIORITY OF THE ISRAELI AIR FORCE, THE TOPOGRAPHY OF THE REGION, THE LIMITATIONS OF THE AWACS AND THE NEED FOR US PERSONNEL TO MAINTAIN KEY ELEMENTS OF THE SYSTEM FOR ITS ENTIRE LIFE.

4 THE AMERICAN-JEWISH COMMITTEE STATED LAST MONTH THAT THE PRINCIPAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY FOR THE JEWISH COMMUNITY THIS YEAR WOULD BE BLOCKING THE AWACS SALE. THIS VIEW WAS SUBSEQUENTLY ECHOED BY OTHER JEWISH ORGANISATIONS. YESTERDAY'S ANNOUNCEMENT PRODUCED A BRIEF STATEMENT FROM THE ISRAELI EMBASSY: QUOTE THE POSITION OF ISRAEL IS WELL KNOWN. ISRAEL CONSIDERS THE SALE OF AWACS PLANES TO SAUDI ARABIA A DANGER TO ITS SECURITY AND TO THE MILITARY BALANCE IN THE AREA UNQUOTE.

5. DURING A BACKGROUND BRIEFING FOR THE PRESS YESTERDAY, US OFFICIALS REPORTEDLY HINTED THAT CONGRESS WOULD BE INFORMED LATER OF SOME AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE US AND SAUDI ARABIA ABOUT THE AREA IN WHICH THE AIRCRAFT WERE AUTHORISED TO OPERATE. EARLIER REPORTS IN THE NEW YORKS TIMES THAT THE SAUDIS HAD REFUSED TO ACCEPT LIMITATIONS ON CERTAIN OPERATIONS WITHIN THEIR OWN AIRSPACE WERE DESCRIBED AS UNINFORMED.

6. DURING THE SAME BRIEFING, US OFFICIALS ARE ALSO REPORTED TO HAVE SAID THAT IF CONGRESS VETOED THE SALE, THE SAUDIS WOULD BE LIKELY TO PURCHASE NIMROD AIRCRAFT FROM THE BRITISH AND POSSIBLY FRENCH FIGHTERS (MIERS' LETTER TO MONROE, MOD, OF 21 AUGUST - NOT TO ALL - REFERS).

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THIS TELEGRAM
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