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TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 003 OF 5 JANUARY 1982

INFO ROUTINE WASHINGTON TEL AVIV CAIRO

CAIRO TELNO 1 TO FCO: SINAI MFO

1. AS THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT IS STILL BEING OBSTRUCTIVE OVER THE QUESTION OF AN EARLY REPLY TO MR SHAMIR, YOU MAY LIKE TO HAVE A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF FRENCH MOTIVATION.

2. I NOTE (FROM MOBERLY'S LETTER TO PETRIE OF 24 DECEMBER) THAT THE OVERWHELMING IMPRESSION IN LONDON OF FRENCH MIDDLE EAST POLICY IS ONE OF INCOHERENCE. I THINK IN FACT ITS OVERRIDING CHARACTERISTIC AT PRESENT IS OPPORTUNISM. THE MITTERRAND/MAUROY GOVERNMENT GIVES HIGH PRIORITY TO MAINTAINING AN APPEARANCE OF A VIGOROUS BUT INDEPENDENT FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME CLAIMING TO GET ON WELL WITH ALLIES AND PARTNERS AND TRYING HARD NOT TO BE ON BAD TERMS WITH ANYONE IN THE THIRD WORLD. THE ONLY WAY IN WHICH THESE CONFLICTING AIMS CAN BE RECONCILED IS BY NOT FOLLOWING THROUGH REALLY EFFECTIVELY ANY PARTICULAR POLICY LINE AND FINDING WAYS OF PLEASING EACH DIPLOMATIC INTERLOCUTOR SEPARATELY.

3. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND IT IS NOT ONE OF THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT'S CONCERNS THAT THE SINAI MFO SHOULD BE REALLY EFFECTIVE. THIS IS A PROBLEM FOR THE US GOVERNMENT RATHER THAN FOR FRANCE. THE FRENCH WOULD NOT MIND ALL THAT MUCH IF THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT VETOED EUROPEAN PARTICIPATION IN THE MFO. FRANCE WOULD HAVE SHOWN WILLING AND ISRAEL WOULD HAVE SAVED FRANCE FROM DOING SOMETHING WHICH IS NOT POPULAR WITH THE ARABS. IN ANY CASE FRENCH INTEREST IS CLOSELY FOCUSED ON FRANCE'S OWN INDEPENDENT INITIATIVES, FOR EXAMPLE IN RELATION TO THE LEBANON.

4. THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO CALCULATE THAT FRANCE'S REALTIONS WITH ISRAEL HAVE MOMENTUM OF THEIR OWN WHICH WOULD NOT BE MUCH AFFECTED BY AN ISRAELI VETO OF EUROPEAN PARTICIPATION IN THE MFO. IT IS NOTICEABLE THAT THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE TAKEN UMBRAGE AT REPORTS OF THE LIKELY POSTPONEMENT OF PRESIDENT MITTERRAND'S VISIT TO ISRAEL BECAUSE OF ISRAEL'S ANNEXATION OF THE GOLAN (MY TELNO 1135 OF 1981).

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5. FRANCE SEEMS TO HAVE OBTAINED ALL SHE WANTED FROM EGYPT DURING THE RECENT VISITS THERE OF M. CHEYSSON AND M. HERNU (SALE OF 20 MIRAGE 2000) AND PROBABLY SEES NO POINT IN PLEASEING EGYPT GRATUITOUSLY AT THE EXPENSE OF DISPLEASEING OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES WHICH ARE ALREADY A LITTLE SORE ABOUT FRANCE'S RECENT PERFORMANCE.

6. ALL OF THIS MEANS THAT WHILE THERE MIGHT BE SOMETHING FOR THE MIDDLE EAST IN AN EARLY REPLY TO MR SHAMIR, THERE IS NOTHING IN IT FOR FRANCE IN THE SHORT TERM AND, UNLESS CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE, THERE IS UNLIKELY TO BE HELPFUL FRENCH MOVE.

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