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FM AMMAN 161115Z FEB 82

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELNO 78 OF 16 FEB

AND TO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON

INFO MODUK (DI4B AND AUSS MOD SALES), BAGHDAD, DAMASCUS, TEL AVIV
SAVING INFO BAHRAIN BEIRUT CAIRO DOHA JEDDA MUSCAT MOSCOW
UKMIS NEWYORK

VISIT OF US DEFENCE SECRETARY TO JORDAN

1. MR WEINBERGER VISITED JORDAN FROM 10-13 FEBRUARY. HE HAD DINNER WITH KING HUSSEIN ON THE EVENING OF HIS ARRIVAL AND, FOLLOWING FORMAL TALKS AT THE ARMY HEADQUARTERS ATTENDED BY THE KING, THE PRIME MINISTER, THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF AND OTHERS, SPENT MUCH OF THE NEXT DAY TOURING WITH THE KING BY HELICOPTER. HE ALSO HAD A SEPARATE MEETING WITH CROWN PRINCE HASSAN. THE US AMBASSADOR, WHO WAS PRESENT AT ALL THE DISCUSSIONS EXCEPT FOR A HALF-HOUR TETE-A-TETE BETWEEN THE KING AND WEINBERGER BEFORE DINNER ON THE NIGHT OF HIS ARRIVAL, HAS GIVEN ME THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT OF THE MAIN THEMES OF WEINBERGER'S TALKS HERE.

2. ON DEFENCE SALES TO JORDAN, WEINBERGER TOLD THE JORDANIANS THAT IF THEY DECIDED TO GO FOR AN ADVANCED US AIRCRAFT SUCH AS F16S OR 18S, OR FOR F5GS, THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD, SUBJECT TO THE PRESIDENT'S AGREEMENT, BE WILLING TO PUT THE CASE TO CONGRESS.

ACCORDING TO AMBASSADOR VIETS, THE JORDANIANS MADE IT CLEAR THAT THEY HAD REACHED NO FIRM DECISIONS YET ON FUTURE AIRCRAFT REQUIREMENTS AND WOULD REQUIRE MUCH ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON POSSIBLE US AIRCRAFT TYPES. VIETS THOUGHT THE JORDANIANS WOULD TRY TO REACH SOME CONCLUSION BEFORE APRIL, WHEN THE NEXT MEETING OF THE JOINT US/JORDANIAN JOINT MILITARY COMMISSION IS DUE TO TAKE PLACE. VIETS ADDED THAT WHEREAS F4GS MIGHT BE AVAILABLE QUITE QUICKLY, THE DELAY IN SUPPLYING F16S OR 18S WOULD BE LENGTHY (AND, ALTHOUGH VIETS DID NOT SAY SO, MUCH WOULD PRESUMABLY DEPEND ON WHAT CREDIT TERMS THE AMERICANS COULD OFFER). VIETS ALSO SAID (AND ASKED ME TO ENSURE THAT HIS CONFIDENCE WAS FULLY RESPECTED) THAT THE KING HAD TOLD HIM SEPARATELY THAT, IF THE AMERICANS CAME UP WITH A SUITABLE AIRCRAFT TO MEET JORDAN'S NEEDS, HE WOULD TRY TO GET RID OF HIS FRENCH F1S PROBABLY TO IRAQ AS THEY WERE CAUSING THE JORDANIANS A GREAT DEAL OF TROUBLE.

3. NO SPECIFIC PACKAGE OF AIR DEFENCE EQUIPMENT WAS APPARENTLY DISCUSSED, BUT IT WAS LEFT THAT THE JORDANIANS WOULD PUT TOGETHER A LIST OF THEIR REQUIREMENTS WHICH WERE LIKELY TO BE MAINLY FOR MOBILE HAWK. MY DEFENCE ATTACHE HAS HEARD SEPARATELY FROM US ASSISTANT MILITARY ATTACHE THAT THE AMERICANS ALSO RAISED THE POSSIBILITY OF SUPPLYING JORDAN WITH IMPROVED CHAPPARAL, EQUIPPED WITH NIGHT-VISION BLIND-FIRE CAPABILITY, TO MEET THE LOW-LEVEL REQUIREMENT. IT WAS RECOGNISED BY BOTH SIDES THAT, EVEN IF A SUITABLE PACKAGE COULD BE AGREED TOMORROW, IT WOULD PROBABLY BE 3 YEARS BEFORE DELIVERY COULD BE MADE WHEREAS THE SOVIET-SUPPLIED ZSU 23/4 GUNS WOULD BE DELIVERED BY MAY AND SAM 8S TOWARDS THE END OF 1982. US AMA SAID THAT THE KING MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE

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WANTED IMPROVED HAWK AND CHAPPARAL IN ADDITION TO SAM 8S (WE UNDERSTAND THE SOVIET OFFER IS FOR 20 SAM 8S AND 16ZSU 23/4S; THE PRICE BEING CHARGED FOR THE SAM 8S IS ONLY US DOLLARS 10 MILLION EACH). VIETS (PLEASE PROTECT) PUT AN INTERESTING GLOSS ON THIS SEMICLN HE CLAIMED TO HAVE REMINDED THE KING IN WEINBERGER'S PRESENCE OF AN EARLIER UNDERTAKING THAT IF THE US COULD SUPPLY JORDAN WITH AIR DEFENCE EQUIPMENT TO MEET HER REQUIREMENTS, HE MIGHT IN DUE COURSE PASS THE SOVIET EQUIPMENT TO ONE OF HIS ARAB NEIGHBOURS= HOWEVER, WHEN I QUESTIONED VIETS ON THE TIMESCALE HE ENVISAGED, HE READILY ADMITTED THAT IF THIS HAPPENED AT ALL IT WOULD NOT BE FOR SOME YEARS. FROM ALL THAT VIETS AND WA SAID, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE AMERICANS NOW REALISE THAT THEY CANNOT HOPE TO DISPLACE THE SOVIET EQUIPMENT FOR SOME TIME TO COME, IF EVER SEMICLN WEINBERGER'S MILITARY ADVISERS SEEM TO HAVE RECOGNISED THAT TECHNICALLY THE SAM 8 IS PROBABLY THE BEST MOBILE LOW-LEVEL AIR DEFENCE SYSTEM CURRENTLY AVAILABLE.

4. THERE WAS MUCH DISCUSSION OF THE SECURITY SITUATION IN THE GULF AREA, ALTHOUGH THE JORDANIANS SAID VERY LITTLE ABOUT THE IRAQ/IRAN WAR OTHER THAN TO REITERATE THAT THE DESPATCH OF VOLUNTEERS WAS INTENDED AS A SYMBOLIC GESTURE. LHEY HAD BEEN KEENLY INTERESTED IN WEINBERGER'S TALKS WITH THE SAUDIS AND HAD TOLD WEINBERGER OF THEIR MANY DIFFICULTIES IN DEALING WITH THE SAUDIS. KING HUSSEIN HAD SPOKEN AT LENGTH ABOUT THE VULNERABILITY OF WHAT HE HAD TERMED THE "CARDBOARD REGIMES" IN THE GULF, PARTICULARLY IN FACE OF IRANIAN SUBVERSION. HE HAD SPOKEN OF THE FORTHCOMING MILITARY EXERCISES WITH BAHRAIN, AND HAD SAID HE HOPED TO DO SOMETHING SIMILAR WITH OTHER GULF STATES IN DUE COURSE. HE INDICATED THAT HE WAS STILL PLANNING TO VISIT ONE OR TWO GULF STATES QUITE SOON, INCLUDING QATAR AND KUWAIT.

5. THE SYRIAN INTERNAL SITUATION HAD BEEN DISCUSSED AT LENGTH, PARTICULARLY WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IF THE PRESENT SYRIAN REGIME WERE TO LOSE INTERNAL CONTROL. VIETS GAINED A CLEAR IMPRESSION FROM THESE EXCHANGES THAT THE JORDANIAN PRIME MINISTER IN PARTICULAR FAVOURED SOME FORM OF JORDANIAN INTERVENTION IN SUPPORT OF THE

OPPONENTS OF THE REGIME (BADRAN TAKES A VERY HARD LINE ON SYRIA, PARTICULARLY FOLLOWING THE SYRIAN REGIME'S ATTEMPT TO HAVE HIM ASSASSINATED), BUT THAT HIS VIEWS WERE NOT SHARED BY OTHERS.

6. ACCORDING TO VIETS, THERE WERE ONLY BRIEF REFERENCES BY THE JORDANIANS TO THEIR CONCERN ABOUT A POSSIBLE ISRAELI OPERATION AGAINST SOUTHERN LEBANON. THE JORDANIANS HAD, HOWEVER, REITERATED THEIR DETERMINATION TO PREVENT INFILTRATION BY PALESTINIAN TERRORISTS THROUGH JORDAN INTO ISRAEL (SEE ALSO MY TELNO 77). VIETS REMARKED THAT THE JORDANIANS HAD ALSO SAID SURPRISINGLY LITTLE ABOUT EGYPT, PERHAPS BECAUSE THE KING DID NOT HAVE ANY RECENT DEVELOPMENTS TO REPORT (SEE MY TELNO 72).

7. SUMMING UP, VIETS FELT THAT WEINBERGER HAD MADE A CONSIDERABLE IMPRESSION ON THE JORDANIANS. THERE HAD NOT BEEN A BAD MOMENT THROUGHOUT THE DISCUSSIONS AND WEINBERGER HAD MADE VERY CLEAR TO

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THE JORDANIANS HIS DETERMINATION TO MAINTAIN A BALANCE IN US POLICY BETWEEN ISRAEL ON THE ONE HAND AND HER LINKS WITH MODERATE ARAB STATES ON THE OTHER. VIETS THOUGHT THE VISIT HAD HAD A MUCH-NEEDED TONIC EFFECT ON THE JORDANIANS, WHO WERE STILL SMARTING FROM MRS KIRKPATRICK'S PERFORMANCE AT THE UNITED NATIONS AND OTHER RECENT EVENTS.

8. SHORTLY BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE FROM AMMAN AIRPORT, WEINBERGER GAVA A PRESS CONFERENCE (FULL TEXT BY BAG TO FCO AND WASHINGTON ONLY). ASKED WHETHER HE AGREED WITH THE ISRAELIS THAT THE SALE OF MOBILE AIR DEFENCE MISSILES OR F16S TO JORDAN WOULD CONSTITUTE A THREAT TO ISRAEL, WEINBERGER SAID HE BELIEVED "MATTERS LIKE THESE" WOULD SERVE TO STRENGTHEN A GOOD FRIEND (IE JORDAN) BUT ADDED THAT THE JORDANIANS HAD NOT REQUESTED FURTHER US WEAPONS AND HENCE THAT ANY DISCUSSION OF SUCH SALES WOULD BE MERE CONJECTURE. THE JORDANIAN PRESS COMMENT ON HIS VISIT HAS FOCUSED ON ISRAELI PROTESTS ABOUT POSSIBLE US ARMS SALES TO JORDAN, AND IN PARTICULAR ON SPECULATION ABOUT WHETHER THE AMERICANS WILL GIVE IN TO THIS ISRAELI PRESSURE.

9. COMMENTS BY KING HUSSEIN ON WEINBERGER'S VISIT ARE BEING SENT ON OTHER CHANNELS.

10. WASHINGTON ONLY. I AM SENDING THIS TELEGRAM TO YOU IMMEDIATE IN CASE IT PROVIDES USEFUL BACKGROUND FOR THE PUS'S TALKS WITH THE AMERICANS TODAY.

FCO PASS SAVING ADDRESSEES.

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