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FM AMMAN 200645Z MAY 82

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 206 OF 19 MAY 1982

INFO YODUK (DI4B) PRIORITY WASHINGTON, ROUTINE ABU DHABI,  
BAHRAIN, BAGHDAD, CAIRO, DAMASCUS, DUBAI, JEDDA, KUWAIT, MUSCAT,  
TEL AVIV, UKMIS NEWYORK

IRAN/IRAQ

1. MY TWO IFTS (COPIED TO BAGHDAD AND WASHINGTON ONLY) CONTAIN THE TEXTS OF A PERSONAL MESSAGE TO THE PRIME MINISTER FROM KING HUSSEIN AND OF A LETTER THE KING HAS SENT TO PRESIDENT REAGAN (ORIGINALS FOLLOW BY BAG). THE MESSAGES REFLECT THE KING'S GROWING CONCERN OVER THE GULF WAR AND HIS FEELING THAT THE TIME HAS COME TO SET IN HAND CONTINGENCY PLANNING BETWEEN ARAB STATES IN CASE IRANIAN FORCES CARRY THE WAR ONTO IRAQI SOIL.
2. WHEN SEEING KING HUSSEIN AT HIS HOME THIS AFTERNOON, I HAD ASKED HIM HOW HE VIEWED DEVELOPMENTS IN THE GULF WAR SINCE OUR LAST MEETING ON 9 MAY (MY TELNO 193). THE KING BEGAN BY REPEATING WHAT THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF HAD SAID EARLIER IN THE DAY: THAT THE IRAQIS HAD DECIDED TO HOLD KHORRAMSHAHR WHATEVER THE COST AND IN SPITE OF JORDANIAN ADVICE THAT THE CITY WOULD PROVE DIFFICULT TO DEFEND (MY TELNO 205). THE KING SAID HE FEARED THAT, IF THE IRANIANS WON THE BATTLE FOR KHORRAMSHAHR, THEIR TROOPS WOULD ENTER IRAQ AND THAT THEY WOULD NOT STOP THE WAR UNTIL THEY HAD BROUGHT ABOUT PRESIDENT SADDAM HUSSEIN'S DOWNFALL.
3. I THEN ASKED THE KING WHAT HE COULD TELL ME ABOUT HIS RECENT MEETINGS WITH OTHER ARAB LEADERS. AT THAT POINT HE LEFT THE ROOM FOR A WHILE AND RETURNED BEARING A HAND-WRITTEN LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER (WHICH, ALTHOUGH DATED 18 MAY, I AM CERTAIN HE WROTE ON THE SPOT) AND A COPY OF A MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT REAGAN WHICH HE HAD JUST GIVEN TO THE US AMBASSADOR.
4. AFTER ASKING ME TO READ THE MESSAGES, THE KING REFERRED TO CONSULTATIONS HE HAD HAD WITH OTHER ARAB STATES IN THE PAST WEEK. HE HAD SENT HIS PRIME MINISTER TO IRAQ ON 12 MAY AND HAD RECEIVED IRAQI FIRST DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER IN AMMAN ON 17 MAY (HE MENTIONED THAT THE IRAQIS, IN ADDITION TO GIVING THE JORDANIAN PRIME MINISTER THE LATEST MILITARY PICTURE, HAD EXPRESSED INCREASING CONCERN OVER THE THREAT FROM THE KURDS, PARTICULARLY IN MOSUL). HE HAD HAD EXTENSIVE TALKS WITH SULTAN QABOOS OF OMAN DURING HIS VISIT TO JORDAN FROM 11-14 MAY AND WITH PRINCE TURKI OF SAUDI ARABIA ON 13-14 MAY. HE WAS ALSO KEEPING IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH THE EGYPTIANS AND HAD SENT A MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT MUBARAK ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE GULF WAR ON 17 MAY.
5. THE KING, WHO REPEATEDLY EXCUSED HIMSELF FOR TROUBLING THE PRIME MINISTER WITH HIS PROBLEMS AT A TIME WHEN SHE HAD SO MANY PREOCCUPATIONS OF HER OWN, SAID HE NOW FELT IT ESSENTIAL TO PREPARE CONTINGENCY PLANS IMMEDIATELY TO ENABLE JORDAN AND OTHER ARAB STATES TO GO TO THE HELP OF IRAQ SHOULD THIS PROVE NECESSARY.

HE HAD BEEN PARTICULARLY DISTURBED TO HEAR FROM SULTAN QABOOS OF THE APPARENTLY NEGATIVE ATTITUDE THE AMERICANS HAD TAKEN IN DISCUSSION WITH THE EGYPTIANS ABOUT HELP FOR IRAQ, IN WHICH HE UNDERSTOOD THAT THEY HAD URGED THE EGYPTIANS NOT TO BECOME INVOLVED IN ARAB AFFAIRS. HENCE HE HAD FELT IT NECESSARY TO SEND A MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT REAGAN.

6. THE KING SAID THAT, ALTHOUGH HE STILL AWAITED A REPLY FROM PRESIDENT MUBARAK, HE HAD UNDERSTOOD FROM SULTAN QABOOS THAT THE EGYPTIANS MIGHT BE PREPARED TO CONTEMPLATE DIRECT MILITARY INTERVENTION IF NECESSARY SINCE THEY HAD OF COURSE ALREADY SENT MUCH DEFENCE EQUIPMENT TO IRAQ AND HAD ALSO, HE BELIEVED, OFFERED TO SEND EGYPTIAN OFFICERS. IT WENT WITHOUT SAYING THAT, IF THE EGYPTIANS WERE TO AGREE TO SEND TROOPS TO ASSIST IRAQ, THEY MUST BE FULLY READMITTED INTO ARAB RANKS. THEIR FORCES WOULD HAVE TO PASS THROUGH SAUDI ARABIA OR JORDAN, OR PERHAPS BOTH SINCE JORDAN WOULD NATURALLY GIVE EVERY ASSISTANCE. INDEED IF EGYPT WERE WILLING TO SEND TWO DIVISIONS, THE KING ENVISAGED THAT ONE EGYPTIAN DIVISION MIGHT STAY IN JORDAN RELEASING ONE JORDANIAN DIVISION TO GO TO IRAQ. IRANIAN ENTRY INTO IRAQ WOULD IN ANY CASE BRING INTO FORCE THE ARAB JOINT DEFENCE TREATY AND WOULD, THE KING THOUGHT, MAKE THE POSITION OF SYRIA AND OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES HELPING IRAN IMPOSSIBLE TO JUSTIFY.

7. I ASKED THE KING WHETHER HE FELT HE COULD AFFORD TO SPARE TROOPS TO HELP IRAQ, GIVEN THE POTENTIAL THREAT TO JORDAN FROM BOTH ISRAEL AND SYRIA. THE KING REPLIED THAT THIS WAS WHY HE HAD ASKED PRESIDENT REAGAN TO "KEEP ISRAEL OFF OUR BACKS," ESPECIALLY IF JORDANIAN INTERVENTION IN IRAQ WERE TO LEAD TO A DIRECT THREAT TO JORDAN FROM SYRIA. HE JUST HOPED THAT THE AMERICANS WOULD REALISE WHAT WAS AT STAKE.

8. THE KING SAID HE HAD SPOKEN VERY CLEARLY TO PRINCE TURKI DURING HIS RECENT VISIT OF THE DANGERS AHEAD AND OF THE NEED FOR THE ARABS TO POOL THEIR RESOURCES IN ORDER TO MEET THE THREAT FROM IRAN BEFORE IT WAS TOO LATE: ALL POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE MUST BE EXTENDED TO EGYPT IN ORDER TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR HER TO COME TO THE HELP OF IRAQ, IF AN IRAQI COLLAPSE WAS TO BE AVOIDED. HE SAID HE HAD NOT YET RECEIVED ANY RESPONSE FROM THE SAUDIS.

COMMENT

9. THE KING'S MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT REAGAN IS, EVEN BY THE STANDARDS OF THESE COMMUNICATIONS, EXCEPTIONALLY LONG-WINDED. THE ARGUMENT IS ON FAMILIAR JORDANIAN LINES AND, ACCORDING TO THE US AMBASSADOR WITH WHOM I HAVE SINCE COMPARED NOTES, IS UNLIKELY TO CARRY MUCH CONVICTION WITH THE AMERICANS. AMBASSADOR VIETS TOLD ME HE HAD PUT FORCIBLY TO THE KING THE US VIEW THAT ANY TILT BY THE AMERICANS TOWARDS IRAQ WOULD PUSH IRAN INTO THE ARMS OF THE SOVIET UNION.

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10. ACCORDING TO VIETS, THE KING IS EXAGGERATING EGYPTIAN WILLINGNESS TO INTERVENE SEMICLN THE US EMBASSY IN CAIRO APPARENTLY BELIEVE THAT, AT THE VERY MOST, PRESIDENT MUBARAK WILL COMMIT ONLY TOKEN FORCES. VIETS TRIED HARD TO PIN DOWN THE KING ON WHETHER HE WOULD SEND REGULAR FORCES TO IRAQ: THE KING HAD REPLIED THAT, IF EGYPT SENT TROOPS, JORDANIAN FORCES WOULD BE AT THEIR SIDE. VIETS SUGGESTED TO THE KING THAT RENEWED EFFORTS SHOULD BE MADE TO TRY TO BRING THE WAR TO AN END BY DIPLOMATIC MEANS, BUT THE KING HAD ARGUED UNCONVINCINGLY THAT THERE WAS SUFFICIENT TIME TO BRING THE SECURITY COUNCIL INTO PLAY.

11. THE KING MENTIONED TO VIETS THAT HE HAD RECEIVED A MESSAGE FROM THE BAHRAINI CROWN PRINCE SAYING THAT SENTENCE WOULD BE PASSED ON THE COUP PLOTTERS ON 20 MAY AND OF BAHRAINI CONCERN THAT THERE WOULD BE A RENEWED IRANIAN ATTEMPT TO SUBVERT THE REGIME: THE KING HAD PROMISED TO SEND UP TO A BRIGADE TO HELP BAHRAIN IF THIS WERE NECESSARY.

12. WHATEVER ONE MAKES OF ALL THIS, THERE WAS NO MISTAKING THE ALARMIST VIEW THE KING NOW TAKES OF THE COURSE OF THE WAR AND HIS FEAR THAT, IF IRAQ COLLAPSES, OTHER REGIMES IN THE GULF WILL ALSO FALL. THE FULL CONSEQUENCES OF THE RISKS HE HAS RUN BY IDENTIFYINGL JORDAN SO CLOSELY WITH IRAQ ARE BEGINNING TO SINK IN, AND HE SEEMS TO BE SEARCHING DESPERATELY FOR SOME WAY OF AVERTING THE DOWNFALL OF PRESIDENT SADDAM.

13. THE KING CLEARLY WANTS TO KEEP US CLOSELY INFORMED OF HIS THINKING, BUT HE GAVE NO INDICATION THAT HE WAS EXPECTING ANY HELP FROM US AT THIS STAGE.

URWICK

STANDARD

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| MED   | ES & SD        |
| NENAD | TRED           |
| NAD   | RID            |
| UND   | ERD            |
| EESD  | ESID           |
| ECD   | CONS DEPT      |
| WED   | CONS EM UNIT   |
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ADDITIONAL DISTRIBUTION

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[NOT ADVANCED]

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