

IRAN/IRAQ

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FM WASHINGTON 152210Z JUL 82
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 2443 OF 15 JULY

Prime Minister
I have asked the FIC.O. to circulate
a paper to OD saying what they and the
Raf are doing about the Iran/ Iraq situation.

A.F.C. 16/7

MY TELNO 2433 AND TELECON RENWICK/MIERS: IRAN/IRAQ

1. I TOLD EAGLEBURGER THIS MORNING OF OUR INTENTION TO CONSULT URGENTLY WITH THE GULF STATES ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE THREAT FROM IRAN, OF THE MOVEMENT OF A FRIGATE AND FLEET AUXILIARY TOWARDS THE GULF OF OMAN, AND OF THE POSSIBILITY OF A VISIT TO BAHRAIN BY ANOTHER FRIGATE AT THE END OF THE MONTH (DEPENDING ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES AT THAT TIME)

2. EAGLEBURGER WELCOMED THESE STEPS. THE AMERICANS AT PRESENT HAVE A CARRIER BATTLE GROUP IN THE ARABIAN SEA OFF OMAN AND FOUR SMALL NAVAL SHIPS IN THE GULF. THEY DO NOT AT PRESENT PLAN TO DEPLOY ANY FURTHER VESSELS TO THE GULF. EAGLEBURGER SAID THAT WE SHOULD KEEP CLOSELY IN TOUCH AND PROPOSED TALKS BETWEEN OUR TWO NAVIES. HE HAD SUGGESTED SIMILAR TALKS WITH THE FRENCH WHO WERE CONSIDERING REINFORCING THEIR OWN TWO SHIPS NOW IN THE AREA. EAGLEBURGER CONFIRMED THAT THE AMERICANS DID NOT INTEND TO DEPLOY THE RDF TO THE REGION.

3. VELIOTES SAID THAT THE EVIDENCE SO FAR AVAILABLE SUGGESTED THAT IRANIAN CLAIMS YESTERDAY HAD BEEN EXAGGERATED, THOUGH HE DISCO

3. VELIOTES SAID THAT THE EVIDENCE SO FAR AVAILABLE SUGGESTED THAT IRANIAN CLAIMS YESTERDAY HAD BEEN EXAGGERATED, THOUGH HE DISCOUNTED IRAQI CLAIMS TO HAVE THROWN BACK THE INVADERS. IN CONTRAST TO PREVIOUS IRANIAN OPERATIONS THEY WERE CLAIMING TO HAVE CAPTURED ONLY A VERY SMALL NUMBER OF PRISONERS. THE IRANIAN AIRFORCE HAD BEEN ACTIVE AROUND BASRA AND THE IRAQIS HAD ATTACKED KHARG ISLAND, BUT NEITHER AIRFORCE WAS A SERIOUS FACTOR IN THIS WAR. VELIOTES THOUGHT THAT MUCH WOULD DEPEND ON IRAQI WILLINGNESS TO FIGHT AND ON THE ATTITUDE OF THE IRAQI SHIA. HE THOUGHT THAT KHOMEINI MIGHT HAVE MADE A STRATEGIC ERROR IN CALLING FOR THE REMOVAL OF THE BA'ATH PARTY FROM POWER- THIS WOULD ENCOURAGE THE ARMED FORCES TO RALLY ROUND SADDAM HUSSAIN, AND THE SUNNI'S TO BURY THEIR RIVALRIES.

4. THE AMERICANS BELIEVE THAT THE IRANIANS WILL NOT ATTEMPT TO INVADE KUWAIT, BUT WILL TRY TO CUT THE SUPPLY ROUTE FROM KUWAIT TO IRAQ. THEY BELIEVE THAT THE KUWAITIS ARE WORRIED ABOUT POSSIBLE SUBVERSION BY THE SHIA MINORITY AND PALESTINIANS IN KUWAIT, AND THAT THEY WILL BE VERY RELUCTANT TO DO ANYTHING TO UPSET THE IRANIANS. THE AMERICANS DO NOT EXPECT ANY REQUEST FROM THE KUWAITIS FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE BUT THAT THE KUWAITIS WILL AS NECESSARY, SEEK TO DEAL WITH IRAN.

5. VELIOTES SAID THAT THE SAUDIS WERE CONCERNED AT KHOMEINI'S CLAIM TO ISLAMIC LEADERSHIP WHICH CHALLENGED THE BASIS OF LEGITIMACY OF THE SAUDI ROYAL FAMILY AND, SECONDLY, AT THE POSSIBILITY OF SUBVERSION VIA THE GULF STATES AND THE SHIA COMMUNITY IN EASTERN SAUDI ARABIA. THE AMERICANS DID NOT EXPECT SAUDI REQUESTS FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE, BUT THE SAUDIS WERE KEEPING THE OPTION OF JOINT EXERCISES OPEN AND WOULD NO DOUBT SWALLOW THEIR PRINCIPLES TO ACCEPT THE DEPLOYMENT OF AMERICAN FORCES IF THEY JUDGED THAT NECESSARY. VELIOTES REMINDED ME THAT THE SAUDIS HAD CONSISTENTLY OPPOSED JORDANIAN MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN THE ARAB GULF STATES; THIS WAS A PITY AS THE JORDANIANS HAD THE BEST TRAINED FORCES IN A POSITION TO HELP.

6. VELIOTES ASKED WHETHER WE HAD HEARD ANYTHING ABOUT OMAN PLAYING A LARGER ROLE WITHIN THE GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL TO PROMOTE THE FORMATION OF A QUICK REACTION FORCE. GRATEFUL FOR ANY INFORMATION ON THIS.

7. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION EAGLEBURGER SAID THAT THE AMERICANS HAD NO INDICATION OF ANY SOVIET MOVES OF ANY SORT RELATED

7. ~~IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION EAGLEBURGER SAID THAT THE AMERICANS HAD NO INDICATION OF ANY SOVIET MOVES OF ANY SORT RELATED TO THE IRANIAN INVASION OF IRAQ.~~ VELIOTES THOUGHT THAT THE RUSSIANS WOULD BENEFIT FROM INSTABILITY IN THE GULF. GREATER PROBLEMS FOR THE GULF STATES COULD LEAD THEM TO LOOK FOR REASSURANCE TO THE SOVIET UNION AS THE NEARER SUPER-POWER.

8. IN A SEPARATE CONVERSATION RAPHEL (DEPTUY DIRECTOR FOR P/M AFFAIRS IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT) SAID THAT THE AMERICANS ENVISAGED THE CONTACTS ABOUT NAVAL MOVEMENTS AS BEING NEITHER AS FORMAL OR AS COMPLEX AS IN 1980: AND NOT AS A SUBSITUTE FOR BUT AS COMPLEMENTARY TO THESE EXCHANGES THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS. THEY DO NOT SEE WHAT IS PROPOSED AS A JOINT PLANNING GROUP, BUT AS ENABLING THEM TO EXPLAIN US INTENTIONS AND TO KEEP IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH US. SUCH CONTACTS COULD BE CONDUCTED EITHER THOUGH THE US NAVAL COMMANDER IN EUROPE IN LONDON: OR THROUGH THE NAVAL ATTACHE, ADMIRAL SYMONS, HERE. THE AMERICANS WOULD ALSO BE. IN TOUCH WITH THE AUSTRALIANS AND NEW ZEALANDERS.

9. RAPHEL ADDED THAT THE SAUDIS HAD RESPONDED POSITIVELY TO THE SUGGESTION THAT A US TEAM SHOULD VISIT SAUDI ARABIA, WITHOUT PUBLICITY, TO DISCUSS CONTINGENCIES.

THE SAUDIS HAD GIVEN NO RESPONSE AS YET ON THE QUESTION OF A JOINT EXERCISE WITH US F15S AND, RAPHEL MADE CLEAR, NO ACTION WOULD BE TAKEN UNLESS THERE WAS A POSITIVE SAUDI RESPONSE

HENDERSON

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