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CONFIDENTIAL UK COMMS ONLY

FM BAGHDAD 021115Z OCT 82

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 635 OF 2 OCTOBER, 1982

INFO PRIORITY UKMIS NEW YORK AMMAN DAMASCUA JEDDA CAIRO

KUWAIT WASHINGTON MOSCOW TEHRAN MODUK (FOR D14)

INFO SAVING UKDEL NATO

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IRAQ

OUR TELNO 631 (NOW BEING REPEATED TO TEHRAN) AND UKMIS NEW YORK
TELNO 1564 TO FCO (NOT TO ALL): IRAQ/IRAN

1. IN THE EVENT THE IRAQIS DID NOT HAVE MUCH LONGER TO WAIT. THE FOREIGN MINISTER, HAMMADI, SUMMONED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PERMANENT MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL LATE LAST NIGHT TO CONFIRM, AS ALREADY REPORTED ON THE BBC WORLD SERVICE, THAT THE IRANIANS HAD ATTACKED IRAQI FORCES IN THE AREA OF MANDALI AT 0100 ON 1 OCTOBER AND THAT FIGHTING WAS STILL CONTINUING. HE SAID THAT IT WAS IRAQ'S INTENTION TO CALL FOR AN EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND ASKED FOR SUPPORT. IN ANSWER TO MY QUESTION HAMMADI SAID THAT THE IRAQIS BELIEVE THAT THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS LATEST IRANIAN ATTACK WOULD BE TO SEIZE AND HOLD IRAQI TERRITORY. THEY ALSO EXPECT THAT THE ATTACK IN THE CENTRAL SECTOR WILL BE COORDINATED WITH A RENEWED OFFENSIVE IN THE SOUTH, TOWARDS BASRA OR AMARA.

2. BAGHDAD IS OUTWARDLY CALM BUT AN UNDERCURRENT OF NERVOUSNESS IS DETECTABLE, EVEN IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE. MANDALI IS ONLY SOME 112 KMS FROM BAGHDAD AND THIS THE NEAREST THE FIGHTING HAS COME TO THE CAPITAL IN OVER TWO YEARS OF WAR. INITIAL BAGHDAD RADIO CLAIMS THAT THE IRANIAN ATTACK HAD BEEN DEFEATED WERE CONTRADICTED BY SUBSEQUENT BROADCASTS WHICH CONFIRMED THAT FIGHTING WAS STILL IN PROGRESS. AT 11.00 AM LOCAL THIS MORNING, 2 OCTOBER, BAGHDAD RADIO ADMITTED THAT THE IRANIANS HAD NOW ENTERED IRAQI TERRITORY. IF CORRECT THIS MEANS THAT THEY WILL HAVE SUCCEEDED IN DEFEATING SOME IRAQI FORCES REMAINING IN IRANIAN ENCLAVES.

3. IRANIAN FORCES FACING THE IRAQIS IN CENTRAL SECTOR ARE UNDERSTOOD TO CONSIST OF FOUR DIVISIONS PLUS TWO INDEPENDENT BRIGADES AND A BRIGADE OF PARATROOPS SUPPORTED BY TWO LIGHT DIVISIONS OF REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS. THE IRANIAN DIVISIONS CONCERNED ARE THOUGHT TO BE 81 AND 16 ARMoured DIVISIONS, 21 INFANTRY DIVISION AND 28 MECHANISED DIVISION.

4. WE DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION TO ATTEMPT AN ASSESSMENT OF THE MILITARY SITUATION. THIS LATEST ATTACK COULD BE A FEINT. BUT THE AXIS OF THE ATTACK APPEARS INITIALLY TO HAVE TAKEN THE IRAQIS AND SOME OBSERVERS BY SURPRISE SINCE ANY IRANIAN THRUST IN THE IRANIAN SECTOR WAS EXPECTED TO BE ALONG THE AXIS KHANAQIN-BAQUBA. IN ANTICIPATION OF THIS THE IRAQIS HAVE PREPARED FOUR STRONG DEFENSIVE LINES ACROSS THAT AXIS. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE IRANIANS HAVE CHOSEN TO APPROACH BAQUBA THROUGH MANDALI IN ORDER TO BYPASS THOSE DEFENCES. AN ADDITIONAL ADVANTAGE OF THAT ROUTE IS THAT IT OFFERS BETTER GOING FOR ARMOUR.

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5. THERE HAS BEEN NO IRANIAN AIR ACTIVITY OVER BAGHDAD SO FAR AND THE BRITISH COMMUNITY REMAINS CALM. THERE ARE ONLY EIGHT BRITISH SUBJECTS AT BAQUBA, ALL OF WHOM ARE THOUGHT TO BE EMPLOYEES OF TAYLOR WOODROW. WE HAVE ADVISED THE COMPANY'S BAGHDAD OFFICE THAT THEY SHOULD, IF POSSIBLE, BE WITHDRAWN TO BAGHDAD ON SOME DEFENSIBLE PRETEXT UNTIL THE MILITARY SITUATION CLEARS. BAGHDAD ITSELF DOES NOT (NOT) APPEAR TO BE THREATENED. I INTEND TO HOLD A MEETING OF COMMUNITY WARDENS AT 5.00 PM LOCAL TOMORROW, 3 OCTOBER. A COMMON FACTOR OF ALL PREVIOUS IRANIAN OFFENCES EG THE CROSSING OF THE KARUN RIVER, IS THAT THEY APPEAR TO HAVE CONTINUED FOR NO MORE THAN THREE OR AT THE MOST FOUR DAYS BEFORE LOGISTIC AND OTHER PRESSURES NECESSITATE REGROUPING AND CONSOLIDATION. THE PATTERN MAY REPEAT ITSELF IN THIS INSTANCE.

FCO PASS SAVING UKDEL NATO

RAMSAY

(REPEATED AS REQUESTED)

**THIS TELEGRAM
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ADVANCED**

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