

GR 250
RESTRICTED
FM TEHRAN 210930Z APR
TO PRIORITY FCO
TELNO 227 OF 21 APRIL 1983
AND TO GULF POSTS, BAGHDAD.

RESTRICTED DOWNING STREET. (2COPIES).

MY TELNO 215 : IRAN/IRAQ/THE GULF.

1. UNCONFIRMED STORIES ARE CIRCULATING IN TEHRAN THAT THE OIL SLICK COULD PROVE MORE OF A DISASTER IN THE GULF FOR IRAN THAN ANYONE WILL SO FAR ADMIT, IN PARTICULAR THAT IRANIAN NAVAL VESSELS, AND TANKERS HOPING TO TAKE OIL OFF FROM KHARG ISLAND, MAY BE RELUCTANT TO GO INTO HEAVILY OIL-POLLUTED WATERS.

2. IN THE MEANTIME THERE SEEMS LITTLE IMMEDIATE HOPE OF POSITIVE PROGRESS IN COMBATING THE OIL LEAKAGE. EBRAHIMI, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE IRANIAN COMPANY RESPONSIBLE FOR OPERATING THE OFF-SHORE OIL WELLS, SAID ON 21 APRIL THAT ABOUT 10,000 BARRELS OF OIL A DAY WERE LEAKING INTO THE GULF WATERS, AND THIS COULD INCREASE. SO FAR THE DAMAGE INFLICTED ON THE NOWRUZ, ABUZAR AND SORUSH OIL WELLS WAS ESTIMATED TO BE 700 TO 800 MILLION DOLLARS. THIS INCLUDED DAMAGES TO INSTALLATIONS.

3. HE SAID ARAB COUNTRIES HAD EXPRESSED THEIR WILLINGNESS TO PAY COSTS OF DAMAGE FROM THE OIL SLICK. IRAN WOULD DECIDE IN FUTURE WHETHER IT WOULD RECEIVE COMPENSATION FROM THE IRAQI REGIME AS WAR REPARATIONS OR IN ANOTHER FORM.

4. EBRAHIMI SAID THAT IRANIAN ENGINEERS WERE CAPABLE OF SOLVING THE OIL SLICK PROBLEM PROVIDED IRAQ WOULD NOT THREATEN THEIR SECURITY. THIS HAD BEEN ACCEPTED BY ALL OTHER MEMBERS ATTENDING THE MEETINGS IN KUWAIT EXCEPT THE IRAQIS. IRAQI INSISTANCE THAT THEIR OWN REPRESENTATIVES SHOULD ACCOMPANY THE IRANIS MENDING THE LEAKS WAS ABSURD. IRAN OWNED SOME FOUR HUNDRED OIL WELLS IN THE PERSIAN GULF WATERS AND HAD APPROPRIATE EXPERIENCE SEMICOLON IRAQ HAD NONE.

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