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IRAQ/IRAN.

SUMMARY.

1. THE IRAQIS CLAIM THAT A MAJOR NEW IRANIAN OFFENSIVE HAS STARTED. THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT CALLS ON SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBERS TO CONDEMN IRANIAN AGGRESSIONS.

DETAILS

2. I WAS SUMMONED THIS MORNING TO THE MFA TO SEE SAHHAF, WHO WAS IN A SOMBRE MOOD. HE SAID THAT HE WAS SPEAKING ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM HIS GOVERNMENT AND THAT A SIMILAR APPROACH WOULD BE MADE TO OTHER PERMANENT MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND INDEED ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL. ACCORDING TO SAHHAF THE IRANIS HAD ISSUED A STATEMENT ANNOUNCING A NEW ATTACK, WHICH HAD BEGUN AT MIDNIGHT LAST NIGHT. THE IRAQIS WOULD RESIST THIS NEW AGGRESSION WITH ALL THE MEANS AT THEIR DISPOSAL TO STRIKE AT THE LARGE CONCENTRATIONS OF IRANIAN TROOPS WHCXCEVER THEY WERE TO BE FOUND. SAHHAF DREW MY ATTENTION TO THE STATEMENT OF THE IRAQI SPOKESMAN REPORTED IN TODAY'S LOCAL PRESS (NIPT).

3. SAHHAF SAID HIS GOVERNMENT BELIEVED THAT THE TIME HAD COME WHEN ALL MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL SHOULD MAKE THEIR POSITION CLEAR IN CONDEMNATION OF THE CONTINUING IRANIAN AGGRESSION. HE WAS INSTRUCTED TO ASK ME TO CONVEY A REQUEST TO THIS EFFECT TO THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT. HE ADDED THAT PUBLIC STATEMENTS OF

HE WAS INSTRUCTED TO ASK ME TO CONVEY A REQUEST TO THIS EFFECT TO THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT. HE ADDED THAT PUBLIC STATEMENTS OF THIS KIND WOULD PROVIDE A VALUABLE DEMONSTRATION OF INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY IN RESISTING IRAN'S EXPANSIONIST DESIGNS.

4. SAHHAF COULD NOT TELL ME PRECISELY WHERE THE NEW IRANIAN PUSH WAS TAKING PLACE (THOUGH WE HAVE SINCE HEARD FROM THE FRENCH EMBASSY THAT THERE MAY BE TWO PRONGS IN THE IRAQI 4TH CORPS SECTOR, ONE NEAR BUSTAN, AND THE OTHER ABOUT ONE HUNDRED KILOMETRES TO THE NORTH OPPOSITE THE IRAQI TOWN OF ALI AL GHARDI). NOR COULD HE GIVE ME ANY NEWS

OF THE SITUATION AT THE FRONT.

HE WAS UNCERTAIN WHETHER THIS LATEST ATTACK ANNOUNCED BY THE IRANIANS WAS THE LONG-HERALDED IRANIAN MAIN THRUST OR WHETHER IT WAS A FURTHER DIVERSIONARY ATTACK.

5. I CONFIRMED TO SAHHAF THAT I WOULD REPORT HIS REPRESENTATIONS IMMEDIATELY AND ADDED THAT I KNEW THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WOULD BE CONCERNED ABOUT ANY ESCALATION OF THE WAR. SAHHAF COMMENTED THAT THE IRANIANS WERE SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS.

COMMENT.

6. DURING THE LAST FEW DAYS THE IRAQIS HAVE BEEN CONSISTENTLY TALKING UP THE SIZE AND PROBABLE SEVERITY OF THE EXPECTED IRANIAN MAIN ATTACK. THERE APPEARS TO BE A GENUINELY HEIGHTENED LEVEL OF CONCERN ON THIS OCCASION THOUGH THE RHETORIC MAY ALSO BE DESIGNED TO GIVE ADDED CREDIBILITY TO IRAQI VICTORY CLAIMS IN THE EVENT THAT THE IRANIAN ATTACKS PETER OUT AS ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS.

MODERLY

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