

CONFIDENTIAL

19239 - 2

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FM F C O 141930Z MAY 84

TO IMMEDIATE BAGHDAD

TELEGRAM NUMBER 317 OF 14 MAY

TO IMMEDIATE ALL GULF POSTS, BIS TEHRAN, PRIORITY WASHINGTON,
PARIS, STOCKHOLM, UKMIS NEW YORK, UKDEL NATO, UDEL OECD, UKREP,
BRUSSELS

YOUR TELNO259 (NOT TO ALL)

ATTACKS ON SHIPPING IN THE GULF

1. WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR REPORTS FROM YOU AND GULF POSTS. THE IRAQIS NOW CLAIM TO HAVE HIT TWO OIL TANKERS (BOTH SOUTH OF KHARG ISLAND) ON 13 MAY BUT HAVE SO FAR NOT (NOT) CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE UNSUCCESSFUL ATTACK ON THE KUWAITI VESSEL, UMM CASBAH, WHOSE CARGO OF FUEL OIL IS DESTINED FOR SHELL (UK). OIL AND SHIPPING CIRCLES IN LONDON (WITH WHOM WE ARE IN CLOSE TOUCH) ARE CONCERNED AT THE FREQUENCY AND INDISCRIMINATE NATURE OF THE LATEST ATTACKS. INSURANCE RATES FOR TANKERS CALLING AT KHARG ISLAND WERE TODAY INCREASED FROM 2 PERCENT TO 3 PERCENT.

DETAIL.

2. THE SHIPS ATTACKED ON 13 MAY HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS:

(A) AN IRANIAN-REGISTERED TANKER, THE TABRIZ, WHICH WAS HIT ABOUT 10 MILES NORTH OF THE SAUDI-OWNED TANKER, AL AHOOD, AND IS REPORTED ON FIRE.

(B) A GREEK-REGISTERED TANKER, THE ESPERANZA, WHICH WAS HEADING NORTH IN BALLAST. IT WAS NOT BADLY DAMAGED BUT HAS TURNED BACK TO LAVAN.

WE HAVE JUST RECEIVED REPORTS OF FURTHER ATTACKS TODAY ON:

(C) A KUWAITI-OWNED CRUDE TANKER, THE BAHRA, HEADING NORTH IN BALLAST TO KUWAIT. THIS HAS BEEN HOLED BY AN EXOCET, BUT IT IS NOT IN DANGER. TWO CREW WERE INJURED.

(D) A KUWAITI-OWNED PRODUCTS TANKER, THE RAS AL-ZOUR. WE HAVE NO DETAILS OF WHEREABOUTS OR DAMAGE IF ANY.

3. BP CURRENTLY HAVE TWO VESSELS IN THE GULF AREA. THE FIRST,

CONFIDENTIAL

19239 - 2

THE SHOOSH, IS OPERATED BY BP'S IRANIAN JOINT VENTURE COMPANY. THIS VESSEL LEFT KUWAIT YESTERDAY AND SHOULD NOW BE OUTSIDE THE IMMEDIATE DANGER ZONE. THE OTHER BP VESSEL, BRITISH SUCCESS, LEFT KUWAIT EARLY THIS MORNING AND MAY STILL BE IN THE NORTHERN GULF.

4. COMMENT. THERE IS MUCH SPECULATION HERE ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ATTACK ON THE UMM CASBAH. THE AMERICANS BELIEVE THE IRANIANS TO BE RESPONSIBLE, BUT WE HAVE NO CORROBORATION. FOR THEIR PART, THE IRAQIS HAVE TAKEN A HARD-LINE APPROACH TO THE WHOLE QUESTION OF ATTACKS. ON 10 MAY (IE, AFTER THE ATTACKS ON THE SAUDI-OWNED TANKERS) THE IRAQI MINISTERS OF OIL REPORTEDLY TOLD KUWAITI JOURNALISTS THAT THE IRAQIS COULD NOT (NOT) DISTINGUISH BETWEEN FRIENDLY AND UNFRIENDLY TANKERS. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND FROM THE AMERICANS THAT IRAQI LEADERS RECENTLY TOOK A VERY TOUGH LINE WITH THE JAPANESE, ASSERTING THAT THEY WOULD CONTINUE TO ATTACK TANKERS IN THE GULF AS LONG AS IRAQ IS DENIED USE OF HER GULF PORTS.

5. FOR TEHRAN. WE ARE SOMEWHAT SCEPTICAL ABOUT REPORTS THAT THE IRANIANS ATTACKED THE UMM CASBAH, BUT IF TRUE COULD REFLECT INCREASING IRANIAN CONCERN ABOUT THE CONTINUING IRAQI ATTACKS AND THEIR OWN INABILITY TO LAUNCH THE MUCH EXPECTED GROUND OFFENSIVE IN THE SOUTH. GRATEFUL FOR ANY COMMENTS YOU MAY HAVE.

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2
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