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ACTION EUR-00

INFO	LOG-00	COPY-01	ADS-00	INR-10	SS-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00
	H-01	IO-17	NEA-06	NSCE-00	NSAE-00	SSO-00	HA-09
	L-03	PM-10	PA-01	OMB-01	INRE-00	ACDA-12	USIE-00
	SP-02	SNP-01	PRS-01	DS-01	DSE-00	SCT-04	/080 W

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: ROBERT O HOMME  
DATE/CASE ID: 22 DEC 2009 200903792

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ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY  
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK PRIORITY  
HQ3AFRAF MILDENHALL UK PRIORITY  
USEUCOM VAHINGEN GE PRIORITY  
USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 07999

BRUSSELS ALSO FOR USEC

E.O.12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: PREL, PTER, UK, LY, US

SUBJECT: THATCHER DEFENDS UK SUPPORT FOR U.S. STRIKE

ON APRIL 14, IT WAS UNDERSTOOD THAT U.S. ACTION COULD BE IMMINENT; HOWEVER, HMG WAS NOT OBLIGATED TO CONSULT WITH ITS EC PARTNERS ABOUT THE USE OF ITS OWN BASES.

. -- THATCHER DID NOT GIVE WASHINGTON CARTE BLANCHE: SHE HAD RESERVED ON A MORE GENERAL MILITARY RESPONSE TO TERRORIST ACTIVITIES.

. -- UK CITIZENS HAD LONG SINCE BEEN ADVISED THAT THEY REMAIN IN LIBYA ON THEIR OWN RESPONSIBILITY.

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THE PRIME MINISTER UNDERTOOK TO FIND OUT WHAT FURTHER EVIDENCE MIGHT BE PASSED TO THE COMMONS, BUT INSISTED SHE COULD NOT COMPROMISE INTELLIGENCE SOURCES.

5. THE CONSERVATIVES LARGELY SUPPORTED THATCHER, ALTHOUGH WITH SOME CAUTIONARY NOTES HARKING BACK TO HISTORICAL EVENTS SUCH AS SUEZ. OPPOSITION LEADERS ECHOED THE SAME THEMES THEY HAD USED WITH THE MEDIA EARLIER IN THE DAY: U.S. ACTIONS WERE NOT CONSISTENT WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW, THE ALLIANCE WOULD SUFFER, THE U.S. AND UK WOULD LOSE INFLUENCE WITH THE MODERATE ARABS, THE ACTION WOULD PROVOKE RATHER THAN PREVENT TERRORISM, PARLIAMENT SHOULD HAVE BEEN INFORMED, THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM RATHER THAN QADHAFI IS THE UNDERLYING CAUSE OF TERRORISM, THE U.S. HAD NO RIGHT TO USE BASES IN THE UK FOR SUCH ACTION. THE PRIME MINISTER WAS AT NO POINT CAUGHT UNPREPARED AND WAS MORE

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COMMENT:

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6. MRS. THATCHER HAS CLEARLY SEIZED THE HIGH GROUND IN THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF THE U.S. ACTION. HER DEFENSE WAS STRONG, CONFIDENT, AND WELL PREPARED. WHILE SHE HAD TO FINESSE SOME OF THE ISSUES -- CONSULTATIONS WITH EC PARTNERS, THE NAGGING ISSUE OF APPROPRIATE USE OF U.S. BASES, THE ULTIMATE EFFECTIVENESS OF A MILITARY RESPONSE TO TERRORISM -- SHE WON ROUND ONE HANDS DOWN. THE DEBATE WILL CONTINUE TOMORROW, PROBABLY ALONG THE SAME LINES.

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7. WE EXPECT THAT THATCHER'S GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO BE ABLE TO HOLD ITS OWN, ALBEIT WITH MORE DIFFICULTY AS THE ISSUES BECOME BLURRED. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, HOWEVER, SHE WILL PAY A PRICE AT HOME AND IN EUROPE:

. -- MANY BRITONS INSTINCTIVELY FEEL THE P.M. SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE CAUTIOUS, PARTICULARLY ON AGREEING TO THE USE OF UK BASES. THEY DO NOT WANT TO SEE THE UK TAKE THE RISKS INHERENT IN JOINING THE U.S. ON THE FRONT LINES OF THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM. MANY BELIEVE THAT DIPLOMACY, NOT MILITARY ACTION, IS THE MOST APPROPRIATE TOOL.

. -- OTHER EUROPEANS WILL DOUBTLESS ACCUSE THATCHER OF DUPLICITY, AND SHOW THEIR ANNOYANCE IN OTHER ASPECTS OF THE EC RELATIONSHIP.

HOW HIGH THE PRICE IS FOR MRS. THATCHER OF COURSE DEPENDS ON WHAT HAPPENS NEXT. IF THE U.S. ACTION CAN BE SHOWN TO HAVE BEEN EFFECTIVE, SHE WILL FIND IT MUCH EASIER TO RIDE OUT ANY TIDE OF CRITICISM.

END COMMENT.

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