

CONFIDENTIAL

FM MUSCAT

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 336

OF 210950Z AUGUST 90.

INFO IMMEDIATE MODUK, RIYADH, ACTOR

INFO PRIORITY OTHER MIDDLE EAST POSTS, ANKARA, TOKYO, WASHINGTON

INFO PRIORITY DELHI, KHARTOUM

SIC :A2G/A2T/A2X/ZAC

VISIT OF VICE-CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF

## SUMMARY

1. MOST OPPORTUNE VISIT TO SALALAH AND THUMRAIT AND LONG MEETINGS WITH THE SULTAN GIVING FULL SCOPE FOR DISCUSSING BILATERAL DEFENCE RELATIONS AND LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THE GULF.

## DETAIL

2. ON 20 AUGUST THE SULTAN RECEIVED VCDS, MYSELF, AM BENNETT AND MAJOR-GENERAL BASKERVYLE-GLEGG AT HIS SALALAH SUMMER PALACE FOR TEA LASTING ABOUT ONE AND A HALF HOURS. THE SULTAN LOOKED TIRED AT THE END OF A LONG WORKING DAY WHEN HE HAD ALREADY RECEIVED IN AUDIENCE THE JAPANESE FOREIGN MINISTER, THE YEMENI MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE US DEFENCE SECRETARY. HE WAS HOWEVER KEEN TO TALK ABOUT THESE VISITS AND THE GULF CRISIS MORE WIDELY. VCDS HAD ALREADY SPENT SIX HOURS THE PREVIOUS EVENING AT DINNER WITH THE SULTAN (WITH ONLY AM BENNETT AND DPM QAIS ZAWAWI PRESENT) AND HAD COVERED MUCH OF THE ACTUAL SITUATION, SO THAT WE CONCENTRATED MORE ON THE SULTAN'S VIEWS IN THE LIGHT OF HIS VISITORS' MESSAGES.

## JAPANESE FOREIGN MINISTER

3. HE SAID THAT THE JAPANESE FOREIGN MINISTER HAD COME TO EXPLAIN AND TO EXPLORE WHAT JAPAN COULD DO TO HELP. NAKAYAMA HAD TALKED EXCLUSIVELY IN TERMS OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. THE SULTAN DID NOT GIVE ANY DETAILS. I MENTIONED MEDIA REPORTS ABOUT THE POSSIBLE DESPATCH OF MINESWEEPERS TO THE GULF BUT THE SULTAN SAID NAKAYAMA HAD NOT MENTIONED THIS.

## YEMENI MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

4. THE SULTAN SAID THAT AL-DALI APPEARED TO WANT TO CONVEY THE IMPRESSION THAT YEMEN WAS TAKING A MORE MODERATE POSITION AND HAD NO INTENTION OF CAUSING TROUBLE IN THE OMANIS' AND SAUDIS REAR. THE SULTAN SAID HE HAD REMARKED THAT THIS WAS A GOOD THING BECAUSE ANYONE CAUSING SUCH TROUBLE (HE ADDED BY WAY OF EXAMPLE SUDAN, AND RUMOURS OF THE IRAQIS STATIONING MISSILES THERE) COULD EXPECT TROUBLE IN RETURN. HE THOUGHT HE HAD REGISTERED A POINT.

#### US DEFENCE SECRETARY

5. CHENEY WAS RUNNING BEHIND TIME AND HAD CUT OUT HIS INTENDED VISITS TO THUMRAINT (UNLIKE VCDS WHO HAD SPENT A VALUABLE MORNING THERE). THE SULTAN SAID HE WAS PERPLEXED ABOUT CHENEY'S MESSAGE. HE HAD OF COURSE BRIEFED ON THE US MILITARY SITUATION AND EXPRESSED GRATITUDE FOR OMANI COOPERATION BUT HAD BEEN CURIOUSLY SILENT ON THE PROSPECTS.

#### PUBLIC RELATIONS

6. I WAS KEEN TO RAISE THE QUESTION OF PRESS VISITORS AND REFERRED TO THE EXTENSIVE COVERAGE IN THE US MEDIA OF THIER FORCES IN SAUDI ARABIA. I SAID WE HAD A SIMILAR NEED TO PROVIDE PUBLIC OPINION IN THE UK AND WIDER WITH INFORMATION ABOUT OUR DEPLOYMENTS IN OMAN. SADDAM HUSSEIN MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO WIN THE PROPAGANDA WAR IN THE ARAB WORLD. THE SULTAN INDICATED HE HAD SEEN MY LETTER TO ALI MAJID AND SPOKE IN TERMS IDENTICAL WITH THOSE IN THE LATTER'S REPLY TO ME ON 19 AUGUST (MY TELNO 324). HE RECOGNISED OUR NEEDS BUT THERE WERE ALSO THE NEEDS OF OMAN WHICH ALWAYS TRIED TO FOLLOW A 'MIDDLE PATH'. HE SAID THAT HE HAD AGREED WITH INFORMATION MINISTER ROWAS YESTERDAY, THAT 'THE DOOR SHOULD BE LEFT OPEN TO THE PRESS BUT VISITS SHOULD BE WELL COORDINATED AMONG THE MINISTRIES'. (COMMENT: WE TOOK THIS TO CONFIRM THE HINT IN ALI MAJID'S LETTER THAT OMAN WOULD ALLOW IN A SMALL NUMBER OF JOURNALISTS. I PROPOSED TO FOLLOW UP IMMEDIATELY WITH ROWAS TO SEE WHAT CAN BE ARRANGED SOON. THE OPPOSITION OF THE SERVICE COMMANDERS STILL PERSISTS (I SPOKE AT LENGTH WITH COSSAF ABOUT THIS EARLIER AND THEY WILL HAVE TO BE TALKED ROUND.)

#### THE GULF CRISIS

7. THE SULTAN SHOWED HIMSELF ALIVE TO THE THREAT OF TERRORISM INSPIRED BY PALESTINIAN GROUPS BASED IN IRAQ AND ELSEWHERE. HE WAS SCORNFUL OF ARAFAT FOR BACKING IRAQ TO THE PALESTINIANS' COST.

8. HE THOUGHT THAT THE KUWIATIS WOULD SEND SOMEONE TO OMAN AS PART OF THIER REGIONAL TOUR TO PUBLICISE THEIR CAUSE.

9. HE DID NOT THINK THE IRAQ/IRAN AGREEMENTS WOULD LEAD TO IRANIAN SUPPORT FOR IRAQ, THOUGH THERE MIGHT BE AN INCREASE IN SMUGGLING INTO IRAQ.

10 HE WAS UNSURE WHERE INDIA STOOD. ALTHOUGH INDIA HAD BACKED THE UN RESOLUTIONS IT SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN QUIET OTHERWISE. WE SPECULATED INCONCLUSIVELY ON WH<sup>TH</sup>ER THERE HAD BEEN ANY QUID PRO QUO FOR THE AGREEMENT WITH IRAQ ON PERMITTING INDIANS TO LEAVE KUWAIT.

1. HE DID NOT INTEND THAT OMAN SHOULD EXPLOIT ANY DIFFICULTIES OF OTHER GULF STATES. HE HAD IMPOSED A BAN ON THE EXPORT OF BASIC COMMODITIES BECAUSE THE HIGHER PRICE COMMANDED BY THEM IN DUBAI WAS LEADING TO LOCAL SHORTAGES AS MERCHANTS RUSHED TO SELL THERE.

#### ANGLO-OMANI COOPERATON

12. VCDS THANKED THE SULTAN FOR THE EXCELLENT COOPERATION FROM THE OMANI FORCES. THE SULTAN REMARKED THAT HE VALUED HIGHLY THE ASSISITANCE WE HAD OFFERED. AS FOR COOPERATION, HE SAID THAT WAS WHAT FRIENDSHIP WAS ABOUT. HE WELCOMED THE POSSIBILITY OF HELP WITH AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS FOR THUMRAIT ON WHICH VCDS IS REPORTING SEPARATELY. HE ALSO UNDERTOOD FULLY THAT WE MIGHT WANT TO DEPLOY THE JAGUARS ELSEWHERE (THUMRAIT IS IN ANY CASE BECOMING OVER-CROWDED WITH AMERICANS) ON WHICH VCDS IS REPORTING EXCLUSIVELY TO CDS.

#### COMMENT

13. GIVEN THAT THE VISIT WAS ARRANGED MONTHS AGO, IT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MORE TIMELY. IT HAS ENABLED VCDS TO STRIKE AN EXCELLENT RAPPORT WITH THE SULTAN, AUGURING WELL FOR OUR FUTURE DEFENCE RELATIONSHIP. VCDS WILL BE REPORTING SEPARATELY ON THE UNDERSTANDING REACHED AT THE PRIVATE DINNER ON THE PRESENTATIONAL PROBLEM RAISED BY THE SULTAN ON THE DEFENCE MOU. IT SHOULD NOT HOWEVER PREVENT THE SIGNATURE GOING AHEAD AS PLANNED IN THE CONTEXT OF SAYYID FAHER'S VISIT TO FARNBOROUGH.

CLARK

YYYY

DISTRIBUTION

33

ADVANCE 33

IRAQ/KUWAIT  
 PS  
 PS/MR WALDEGRAVE  
 PS/PUS  
 MR TOMKYS  
 MR GORE-BOOTH  
 MR FAIRWEATHER  
 MR GOULDEN  
 MR BERMAN (LEGAL ADVISERS)  
 HD/MED  
 HD/NENAD  
 HD/NAD  
 HD/SED  
 HD/UND  
 HD/CONSULAR D  
 HD/NEWS D  
 HD/NPDD  
 HD/SECPOL D

HD/AMD  
 HD/ECD(E)  
 MR PRIDDLE, DEPT OF ENERGY  
 MR W D REEVES CABINET OFFICE  
 MR D J GOWAN CABINET OFFICE  
 MR BARRASS, CABINET OFFICE  
 (BY TUBE H29)  
PS/NUMBER 10 DOWNING ST  
 SIR P CRADOCK,  
 (NO 10 DOWNING ST)  
 CABINET OFFICE DIO  
 (BY TUBE H29)  
 SIR ROBIN BUTLER, CAB OFFICE  
 AUS (C) MODUK  
 HD/SEC (O) (C) MODUK  
 MR LS SMITH BANK ENGLAND  
 EMERGENCY UNIT

NNNN