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MY TELNO 967 : IRAQ/KUWAIT

MITTERRAND PRESS CONFERENCE

SUMMARY

1. TOUGHER FRENCH ATTITUDE TOWARDS IRAQ. MITTERRAND DESCRIBES POSSIBLE MEASURES WHICH THE FRENCH NAVY COULD TAKE TO ENFORCE THE EMBARGO. FRENCH PARLIAMENT TO BE RECALLED ON 27 AUGUST. A FRENCH RECONNAISSANCE UNIT TO BE SENT TO UAE AND ADVISERS TO SAUDI ARABIA.
2. AT A PRESS CONFERENCE THIS EVENING AFTER A RESTRICTED MINISTERIAL MEETING, MITTERRAND CONFIRMED THAT FRANCE WAS TOUGHENING ITS ATTITUDE TOWARDS IRAQ. HE SAID THAT AN EMBARGO NEEDED TO BE PROPERLY ENFORCED, OTHERWISE IT WOULD BE A SHAM. MEASURES WHICH THE FRENCH NAVY COULD EMPLOY, DEPENDING ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES, WERE OBSERVATION, SURVEILLANCE AND INSPECTION OF SUSPECT VESSELS QUOTE TO GO BEYOND THIS, ORDERS FROM MILITARY HIGH COMMAND WERE NECESSARY. IF IT WAS A QUESTION OF FIRING ON A SHIP, THE ORDERS WOULD HAVE TO COME FROM THE PRESIDENT, AS ARMED FORCES CHIEF. NO PART OF THIS PROCEDURE WAS RULED OUT. BUT SO FAR THE QUESTION HAD NOT ARISEN. WE ARE SIMPLY ADOPTING DISPOSITIONS SO THAT WE CAN CARRY OUT INSTRUCTIONS UNQUOTE. MITTERRAND ADDED THAT AS A RESULT OF HUSSEIN'S ACTIONS, THERE WAS A QUOTE LOGIQUE DE GUERRE UNQUOTE, IE A DOWNWARD CYCLE TOWARDS WAR. IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO ESCAPE FROM THIS DOWNWARD CYCLE WITHOUT ABANDONING THE FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVE OF DEFENDING THE RULE OF LAW, BUT DIALOGUE WITH IRAQ HAD NOT BEEN FORMALLY BROKEN OFF AND QUOTE SO FAR DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS HAVE NOT BEEN SEVERED UNQUOTE.
3. OTHER MAJOR POINTS FROM THE PRESS CONFERENCE WERE AS FOLLOWS:
 - PARLIAMENT TO BE RECALLED IN EXTRAORDINARY SESSION ON 27 AUGUST BECAUSE OF THE GULF CRISIS

- FIRST USE BY MITTERRAND OF WORD QUOTE HOSTAGES UNQUOTE TO DESCRIBE FRENCH CITIZENS DETAINED BY THE IRAQI AUTHORITIES.

- CATEGORICAL DENIAL THAT FRANCE ENGAGED IN SEPARATE NEGOTIATIONS TO FREE ITS CITIZENS.

(THIS FOLLOWS, INCIDENTALLY, NEWS OF AN IRAQI STATEMENT TODAY THAT AS A RESULT OF FRENCH SUPPORT FOR THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE UN EMBARGO, FRANCE WOULD NOT LONGER BE CONSIDERED A FRIEND : ENFORCEMENT ACTION BY THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT WOULD MEAN THAT FRENCH CITIZENS HENCEFORTH BE TREATED LIKE AMERICANS)

- ANNOUNCEMENT THAT A FRENCH RECONNAISSANCE UNIT WOULD BE DEPLOYED IN THE UAE, AND PERHAPS ELSEWHERE IN THE REGION. FRENCH TECHNICIANS TO BE SENT TO SAUDI ARABIA WHERE KUWAITI MIRAGE F1 PLANES RESCUED FROM KUWAIT DURING THE IRAQI INVASION ARE NOW BASED.

LLEWELLYN SMITH

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34

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31

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