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TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELNO AIRBORNE 010
OF 030526Z SEPTEMBER 90
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FROM PRIVATE SECRETARY

SECRETARY OF STATE'S MEETING WITH THE SULTAN OF OMAN

SUMMARY

1. SULTAN IN BUOYANT MOOD BUT WITH NO CLEAR VIEW OF HOW THE CRISIS WILL END. BUT THINKS SADDAM HUSSEIN IS GETTING NERVOUS. SOME SUSPICIONS OF SAUDI MOTIVES.

DETAIL

2. THE SECRETARY OF STATE SPENT AN HOUR WITH THE SULTAN OF OMAN BEFORE DINNER ON 2 SEPTEMBER. ALMOST ALL OF THE E DISCUSSION WAS ON IRAQ BUT IRAN WAS ALSO COVERED (SEE MIFT - NOT TO ALL).

3. THE SULTAN AGREED WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE THAT WE WERE NOW ENTERING A DIFFICULT PHASE. AT FIRST EVERYONE HAD RALLIED ROUND, WITH EVERYONE - OR ALMOST EVERYONE - AGAINST THE IRAQIS. BUT NOW PEOPLE WERE BEGINNING TO WONDER WHETHER IRAQ WOULD CHANGE ITS MIND AND EVER WITHDRAW FROM KUWAIT. THE SULTAN HIMSELF DOUBTED IT VERY MUCH UNLESS THERE WAS PRESSURE FROM WITHIN IRAQ ITSELF. SADDAM HUSSEIN WAS NOT IN A MOOD TO GO BACK ON THE GAINS HE HAD MADE IN KUWAIT. THE SULTAN SAW LITTLE HOPE OF A PLITICAL SOLUTION FOLLOWING THE ABORTIVE MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY GENERAL AND TARIQ AZIZ.

4. THE SECRETARY OF STATE SAID THAT WE SHOULD HAVE NO TRUCK WITH INITIATIVES, BE THEY FROM KING HUSSEIN, JESSE JACKSON OR MR WEDGEWOOD-BENN. WE HAD TO KEEP UP THE PRESSURE. OIL WAS NOT DIFFICULT. TRADE BY AIR WAS. WE WOULD HAVE TO PERSUADE THE OVERFLIGHT COUNTRIES TO INTERDICT THE TAFFIC. FOOD WOULD ALSO BE A DIFFICULT PROBLEM. THE SULTAN COMMENTED THAT IRAQ HAD PLANS TO CULTIVATE THE ENTIRE COUNTRY. HMA REMARKED THAT THIS WOULD NOT WORK BECAUSE MUCH OF THE LAND HAD BEEN SPOILED BY SALINATION. THE SULTAN THOUGHT IT WAS RIGHT NOT TO TRY TO ESTIMATE HOW LONG

SANCTIONS WOULD TAKE TO WORK. WE DID NOT KNOW WHAT IRAQ'S RESOURCES WERE. SANCTIONS WOULD WORK IN TIME IF, AND IT WAS A BIG IF, THEY COULD BE SUSTAINED. BUT PEOPLE TENDED TO GET TIRED. THEIR ECONOMIES WERE AFFECTED AND THEY STARTED TO COMPLAIN. SO YOU COULD NOT GUARANTEE THE SUCCESS OF SANCTIONS OVER THE LONG HAUL. . THE SECRETARY OF STATE SAID WE WERE READY TO HELP TURKEY, EGYPT AND JORDAN. THE SULTAN SAID THAT, IN HE CASE OF JORDAN, THIS MUST DEPEND ON THEIR CEASING TO SUPPORT IRAQ. THE SECRETARY OF STATE WONDERED HOW A DANGEROUS MAN LIKE SADDAM HUSSEIN WOULD REACT IF CORNERED. HMA SAID HE COULD ENVISAGE A SITUATION WHERE SADDAM HUSSEIN WITHDREW AND PRESENTED IT TO HIS PEOPLE AS AN INEVITABLE RESPONSE TO UNEQUAL PRESSURES. THE SULTAN WAS DOUBTFUL. IN THE CASE OF THE IRAN/IRAQ WAR, SADDAM HUSSEIN HAD NEVER ADMITTED TO STARTING IT AND COULD CLAIM 1) THAT HE HAD HELD BACK AN IRANIAN INVASION, AND 2) THAT HE HAD CURBED IRAN'S EXPANSIONISM. HE COULD THEREFORE CLAIM A SUCCESS. HIS SETTLEMENT WITH IRAN COULD BE JUSTIFIED ON THE GROUNDS THAT, FACED WITH THE HOSTILITY OF THE INFIDEL WORLD, IT WAS RIGHT TO MAKE PEACE WITH HIS MOSLEM BROTHERS. BUT KUWAIT WAS DIFFERENT. HE CLAIMED IT WAS HISTORICALLY PART OF IRAQ WHICH HAD NOW BEEN RESTORED TO THE MOTHERLAND. NOW THAT HE HAD GOT IT BACK, HE WAS SAYING HE WOULD NEVER WITHDRAW. IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN TO HIS PEOPLE IF HE DID SO. HMA POINTED OUT THAT HE HAD ABANDONED HIS CLAIM TO THE SHATT-AL-ARAB BUT THE SULTAN REPLIED THAT SADDAM HUSSEIN COULD CREDIBLY CLAIM THAT HE NO LONGER NEEDED THE SHATT-AL-ARAB BECAUSE KUWAIT HAD GIVEN HIM ALL THE ACCESS HE NEEDED. THE SULTAN'S OWN VIEW WAS THAT, IF HE WITHDREW FROM KUWAIT, SADDAM HUSSEIN COULD FACE INTERNAL OPPOSITION FROM HIS OWN PEOPLE. THAT INDEED MIGHT BE THE SOLUTION. BUT HE WAS A VERY RUTHLESS MAN. YUSUF ALAWI SAID THAT, IF THERE WAS A KURDISH UPRISING, SADDAM HUSSEIN MIGHT WITHDRAW ON THE BASIS THAT HE HAD TO FACE A THREAT AT HOME.

5. THE SULTAN SPOKE OF THE NEED FOR COUNTER-PROPAGANDA BUT SADDAM HUSSEIN WAS NOT HAVING IT ALL HIS OWN WAY. HE TALKED ABOUT THE HOLY PLACES BUT HE WAS NO DEFENDER OF ISLAIC VALUES EVEN IF SOME, LIKE THE PALESTINIANS, WOULD NOT FACE UP TO THE TRUTH. EQUALLY, HIS LONG AND CRUDE ATTACK ON MUBARAK HAD MADE A VERY BAD IMPRESSION ON THE ARAB WORLD. WHAT WAS MUCH MORE EFFECTIVE WAS HIS APPEAL TO STUDENTS IN IRAQ ABOUT HOW STUDENTS IN KUWAIT LOOKED DOWN ON THE MASSES WHO SUFFERED AS A RESULT. THAT WAS POTENT STUFF.

6. THE SECRETARY OF STATE SAID THAT SADDAM HUSSEIN WAS RELYING

ON TENSIONS WITHIN THE AREA AND THE IMPATIENCE OF THE UNITED STATES. BUT BUSH HAD PROVED A CALM AND FIRM LEADER. THE SULTAN SAID HE SAW SOME DANGER OF PROBLEMS, EG IN SAUDI ARABIA, IF THE CRISIS DRAGGED ON AND ON. BUT IF THERE WAS A WELL FORMULATED COUNTER-PROPAGANDA ATTACK IN THESE COUNTRIES, THEY WOULD GET THROUGH. IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR WESTERN HELP NOT TO BE PRESENTED AS BEING SELF-INTERESTED BUT DESIGNED TO STOP IRAQ'S DICTATORSHIP. HE WAS CRITICAL OF HYPE IN THE WESTERN MEDIA.

7. THE SECRETARY OF STATE SAID THAT SOME OF THE PAPERS TENDED TO STOKE UP THE WAR OPTION BUT WE COULD LOSE THE OVERWHELMING SUPPORT WE NOW ENJOY IF WE HAD TO GO TO WAR. THE KEY WAS THAT SADDAM HUSSEIN SHOULD NOT EMERGE VICTORIOUS. IF AFTER A PERIOD ECONOMIC MEASURES WERE NOT PRODUCING RESULTS, THEN WE MIGHT HAVE TO THINK OF OTHER MEASURES. BUT FOR THE TIME BEING WE SHOULD PUT THE EMPHASIS ON THE PEACEFUL WAY. HE COULD UNDERSTAND THE IMPATIENCE OF EG THE BAHRAINIS BUT WE MUST BE PATIENT AND STRONG. THE SULTAN AGREED. IT WAS IMPORTANT NOT TO CLOSE ANY DOOR AND TO KEEP OUR OPIONS OPEN. HE ENDORSED THE POLICY OF GETTING WORLD OPINION BEHIND US. IT WAS IMPORTANT NOT TO SHOW THAT WE WERE AGGRESSIVE. SADDAM HUSSEIN MUST BE THE FOCUS AS THE AGGRESSOR RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SITUATION. IT WOULD NOT BE WISE TO TAKE FURTHER MEASURES AT TE WRONG TIME AN BADLY EXECUTED. HE HOPED THE KUWAITI EXILES WOULD NOT LOSE HEART AND AGREED WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S POINT THAT WE MUST ENCOURAGE THEIR VOICE TO BE HEARD.

8. THE SULTAN SAID HE HAD READ A DISTURBING ARTICLE IN MEI (AN ECONOMIST PUBLICATION?) SAYING THAT KUWAIT WOULD BE ACCEPTED AS FEDERATED WITH IRAQ AND THAT THE UAE, QATAR AND BAHRAIN WOULD FEDERATE WITH SAUDI ARABIA AS A BALANCE. HE FOUND THIS SORT OF THING DISTURBING. PEOPLE TENDED TO BELIEVE IT. THERE WAS THEN SOME DISCUSSION OF WHETHER OR NOT PRINCE SULTAN HAD SAID THAT SAUDI ARABIAN SOIL WOULD NOT BE USED FOR AN ATTACK ON IRAQ. THE SULTAN SAID THAT AN ARAB WHO SHOULD KNOW HAD SAID TO HIM THAT IN THE END THE IRAQIS AND THE SAUDIS WOULD BE HOLDING THE SAME BATON, THE IMPLICATION BEING, AS PER THE MEI ARTICLE, THAT THEY WOULD BECOME THE BIG POWERS OF THE REGION AND THE SMALLER ONES SUPPRESSED. THE SECRETARY OF STATE SAID HE FOUND THIS HARD TO BELIEVE OF PRESENT-DAY SAUDI ARABIA. THE SULTAN AGREED. THE SAUDIS LIKED TO HAVE INFLUENCE BUT IT WAS HARD TO BELIEVE THAT THEY WOULD PLAY THE SAME GAME AS IRAQ. BUT MAYBE PRINCE SULTAN'S REMARKS COULD BE EXPLAINED BY THE SAUDIS THINKING THAT IF IRAQ WAS GOING TO BE IN KUWAIT TO STAY, THEY SHOULD NOT SUPPORT A

COUNTER-ATTACK ON HIM. MR GORE-BOOTH SAID THAT IT LOOKED AS IF PRINCE SULTAN HAD SAID THAT SAUDI SOIL SHOULD NOT BE USED FOR AGGRESSION. THIS DID NOT RULE OUT A COUNTER-ATTACK. THE SULTAN SAID THIS MIGHT BE RIGHT BUT THE SAUDI MIND WOULD START TO WONDER. IF IT ALL DRAGGED ON, WOULD PUBLIC OPINION SIMPLY TOLERATE THE OCCUPATION? HE ACCEPTED THAT PEREZ DE CUELLAR'S FAILURE WOULD HELP RALLY PEOPLE BUT WE HAD TO BE ABLE TO SUSTAIN THEIR SUPPORT FOR A LONG TIME. THE SULTAN THEN SAID THAT THERE SEEMED TO BE SOME NEW THINKING BETWEEN PAKISTAN, IRAN AND TURKEY ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE REGION BUT HE DID NOT ELABORATE.

9. THE SULTAN SAID THAT HE WATCHED SADDAM HUSSEIN CLOSELY ON TELEVISION. HIS FACE HAD CHANGED SINCE THE CRISIS STARTED. HE BLINKED A LOT, WHICH WAS A SIGN THAT HE HAD LOST SELF-CONFIDENCE. HIS ORDERS NOW SEEMED TO BE INCONSISTENT.

10. THE SULTAN SAID THAT HE HAD HAD A LONG TALK WITH THE JORDANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER BUT DID NOT GO INTO DETAIL. OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS, HE HAD ALSO HAD SEVERAL CONVERSATIONS WITH ARAFAT. HE DID NOT LIKE HIS POLITICAL IDEAS BUT WAS BEGINNING TO LIKE HIM AS A PERSON. HE WAS A KNOWLEDGEABLE MAN WHO RANGED WIDELY.

HE DID NOT WANT TO LOSE POWER AND ONE DAY HE MIGHT JUST GO FOR A SOLUTION. THE SECRETARY OF STATE SAID HE WAS RELIEVED TO HEAR THAT THE SULTAN HAD NOT BEEN TAKEN IN BY ARAFAT'S POLITICS.

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