

CONFIDENTIAL
FM WASHINGTON
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELNO 2231

ADVANCE COPY

OF 132240Z SEPTEMBER 90
INFO IMMEDIATE MODUK
INFO ROUTINE BIS NEW YORK, UKMIS NEW YORK, CG NEW YORK
INFO ROUTINE OTTAWA, BONN, PARIS, MOSCOW, UKDEL NATO
INFO ROUTINE UKREP BRUSSELS, TOKYO, MEXICO CITY
INFO ROUTINE RIYADH, CAIRO, TEL AVIV, AMMAN, HM TREASURY
INFO ROUTINE ACTOR
INFO SAVING ATLANTA, BOSTON, CHICAGO, CLEVELAND, DALLAS
INFO SAVING HOUSTON, MIAMI, LOS ANGELES, SAN FRANCISCO
INFO SAVING SEATTLE

OUR TELNO 1993: IRAQ/KUWAIT: THE US DOMESTIC DIMENSION

SUMMARY

1. US PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR PRESENT POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST HAS SOLIDIFIED AND IS NOW BASED ON A SOBER APPRECIATION OF THE REASONS FOR THE DEPLOYMENT AND THE LIKELIHOOD OF A LONG HAUL. CONGRESS AND THE MEDIA ALMOST UNIVERSALLY SUPPORTIVE.
2. CRITICISM OF JAPAN, GERMANY, AND SOMETIMES THE EUROPEANS IN GENERAL, CONCENTRATED ON CONGRESS AND NOT SO FAR REFLECTIVE OF WIDESPREAD PUBLIC ANGER. BUT THAT COULD CHANGE. ONLY EUROPEAN GROUND FORCES IN SAUDI ARABIA LIKELY TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON CALLS FOR MORE BURDEN-SHARING.
3. PUBLIC OPINION STEADY FOR THE TIME BEING.

DETAIL

4. IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS, AND ESPECIALLY SINCE THE LABOR DAY HOLIDAY AND THE RETURN OF CONGRESS, US PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE PRESIDENT'S HANDLING OF THE GULF CRISIS HAS SOLIDIFIED. ABOUT 80 PER CENT OF AMERICAN VOTERS NOW APPROVE OF THE US DEPLOYMENT IN THE GULF: AND THERE ARE SIGNS THAT BLACKS AND WOMEN - TWO GROUPS EARLIER IDENTIFIED AS SCEPTICAL ABOUT THE COMMITMENT - ARE INCREASINGLY SUPPORTIVE, BY A SMALLISH MAJORITY IN EACH CASE.

5. THE EARLIER MOOD OF ANXIOUS RALLYING AROUND THE FLAG HAS GIVEN WAY TO A SOBER APPRECIATION OF THE PRACTICAL REASONS FOR THE DEPLOYMENT: THE PROTECTION OF OIL SUPPLIES (CITED BY 50 PER CENT OF THOSE ASKED IN ONE RECENT POLL WHY THEY THOUGHT US TROOPS WERE IN SAUDI ARABIA): THE RESTORATION OF KUWAITI SOVEREIGNTY (39 PER CENT): THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY RESTORATION OF THE EMIRS: AND THE REMOVAL OF SADDAM HUSSEIN (9 PER CENT). THERE IS A WIDESPREAD SENSE THAT, UNLIKE WITH OTHER RECENT OVERSEAS MILITARY ADVENTURES, THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INTERESTS OF AMERICA AND THE WEST ARE DIRECTLY ENGAGED ON THIS OCCASION: AND THAT, AS THE REMAINING SUPERPOWER, THE UNITED STATES HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO SAFEGUARD THEM.

6. THE OTHER MAJOR FACTOR IN THE STEADYING OF OPINION HERE IS THAT AMERICANS NOW BELIEVE THAT - BARRING UNPREDICTABLE FOLLY ON SADDAM HUSSEIN'S PART - THEY ARE IN FOR THE LONG HAUL. FEARS OF IMMINENT WAR, AND HISTORICAL PARALLELS WITH, FOR EXAMPLE, AUGUST 1914, HAVE PROVED TO BE UNFOUNDED: NEARLY 40 PER CENT OF VOTERS POLLED LAST WEEK THOUGHT THAT THE PRESENT MILITARY STAND-OFF MIGHT LAST 12 OR MORE MONTHS. AND THE PUNDITS HAVE BEEN CORRESPONDINGLY QUICK TO REPLACE EARLIER WARNINGS ABOUT THE TRADITIONAL IMPATIENCE OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WITH EVIDENCE OF THEIR PATIENCE - IN ENDURING 14 YEARS OF GROWING CASUALTIES IN VIETNAM, AND IN SUSTAINING LARGE FORCES IN EUROPE AND KOREA FOR DECADES.

7. THE ADMINISTRATION'S TASK IN GENERATING AND MAINTAINING SUPPORT FOR CURRENT POLICY HAS BEEN HELPED BY AN UNUSUALLY UNCRITICAL PRESS, WHICH SEEMS LARGELY TO HAVE SUSPENDED ITS LONGSTANDING DISBELIEF ABOUT BUSH'S PRESIDENTIAL QUALITIES, AND BY A CONGRESS LEFT SCRAMBLING TO PROCLAIM ITS SUPPORT IN THE WHITE HOUSE'S WAKE. THERE HAVE BEEN CRITICISMS, OF COURSE, BUT THEY HAVE BEEN MINOR, AND FOCUSED MAINLY ON THE UNCERTAINTIES OF THE FUTURE RATHER THAN THE PRESENT CONDUCT OF POLICY. THE WAR POWERS RESOLUTION HAS HARDLY BEEN MENTIONED ON CAPITOL HILL, ALTHOUGH JUST RECENTLY THERE HAS BEEN TALK - WITH WHITE HOUSE CONNIVANCE - OF A JOINT RESOLUTION ENDORSING THE DEPLOYMENT.

8. THE ONE SERIOUSLY DISCORDANT NOTE IN THIS OTHERWISE HARMONIOUS PICTURE HAS BEEN THE RELISH WITH WHICH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS OF BOTH PARTIES, AND PARTICULARLY THOSE FACING CLOSE

RACES ON 6 NOVEMBER, HAVE CRITICISED THE JAPANESE AND GERMANS, AND SOMETIMES THE EUROPEANS IN GENERAL, FOR NOT DOING ENOUGH TO SUPPORT THE UNITED STATES IN THE GULF. BURDEN-SHARING IS MENTIONED, WITH VARYING DEGREES OF ANGER, BY ALMOST EVERYONE ON CAPITOL HILL AS THEIR MAIN CURRENT CONCERN ABOUT THE CRISIS. BUT, SO FAR AT LEAST, THE STRONG FEELINGS ON THIS ISSUE SEEM TO BE CONCENTRATED, AND PERHAPS MANUFACTURED, ON CAPITOL HILL, AND THERE IS NO REAL EVIDENCE OF WIDESPREAD PUBLIC ANGER TOWARDS JAPAN, GERMANY OR THE EUROPEANS IN GENERAL. THAT COULD, HOWEVER, CHANGE AS THE ELECTIONS APPROACH, AND MEMBERS OF CONGRESS RETURN NEXT MONTH TO THEIR DISTRICTS.

9. THE BEST ALLY OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP IN RESISTING SOME OF THE WILDER GESTURES - FOR EXAMPLE, TO FORCE JAPAN TO MEET THE FULL COST OF US FORCES DEPLOYED THERE - IS THE IMMINENT END OF THE SESSION: BUT THEY WILL BE HELPED BY WHATEVER MORE THE JAPANESE AND GERMANS ARE ABLE TO PROVIDE, IN TERMS OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND, MORE IMPORTANT, PRACTICAL HELP ON THE GROUND.

10. BRITAIN HAS SO FAR BEEN LARGELY EXEMPT FROM ALL BUT GENERALISED CRITICISM OF THIS KIND, AND HMG'S AND THE PRIME MINISTER'S SUPPORT HAS OFTEN BE SINGLED OUT FOR SPECIAL PRAISE. NEVERTHELESS, ONLY THE DEPLOYMENT OF EUROPEAN GROUND FORCES ALONGSIDE US TROOPS IN SAUDI ARABIA IS LIKELY TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON A GROWING MOOD IN CONGRESS THAT ALL THE ALLIES SHOULD BE DOING MORE.

11. ONE MINOR DIVERSION HAS BEEN THE SPLIT IN CONSERVATIVE RANKS BETWEEN THE HAWKS (WHO FAVOUR AN EARLY STRIKE AGAINST IRAQ) AND THE ISOLATIONISTS (WHO DO NOT BELIEVE HIGHER OIL PRICES AND SAVING THE KUWAITI EMIRATE JUSTIFY INTERVENTION). BUT, DESPITE THE EFFORTS OF THE PRESS, THE DEBATE REMAINS CONFINED TO A HANDFUL OF LEADING RIGHT-WING COMMENTATORS, AND CONSERVATIVE OPPOSITION TO THE DEPLOYMENT HAS FOUND NO REAL ECHO IN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY, ON THE LEFT OR IN THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE (CERTAIN POCKETS OF ISOLATIONISM APART).

12. FOR THE ADMINISTRATION THEREFORE, THE MESSAGE FROM THE AMERICAN PUBLIC IS SO FAR, SO GOOD. MOST COMMENTATORS HERE BELIEVE THAT - WILD CARDS SUCH AS IRAQI ACTION AGAINST HOSTAGES APART - THE COMBINATION OF THE PRESIDENT'S POLITICAL CAUTION, THE LOGISTICAL REALITIES IN ARABIA AND THE TIME

NEEDED FOR SANCTIONS TO WORK MEANS THAT THE PRESENT COURSE - AND LEVEL OF PUBLIC SUPPORT - ARE LIKELY TO BE MAINTAINED AT LEAST UNTIL THE MID-TERM ELECTIONS ON 6 NOVEMBER, AND PROBABLY UNTIL THE TURN OF THE YEAR. BEYOND THAT, HOWEVER, AND BEYOND THE PRESENT POLICY OF ECONOMIC PRESSURE AND PRUDENT MILITARY PRECAUTIONS, PREDICTION MUST BE UNCERTAIN. EVEN IF MANY AMERICANS SUSPECT THAT WAR COULD EVENTUALLY BECOME UNAVOIDABLE, FEW ARE YET RECONCILED TO WHAT THEY NOW HOPE IS A RELATIVELY FAR-OFF PROSPECT. US PUBLIC OPINION WILL DOUBTLESS EVOLVE UNDER THE PRESSURE OF EVENTS. BUT IF, FOR WHATEVER REASON THE PRESIDENT DECIDED IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS THAT HE HAD NO REAL OPTION BUT TO TAKE THE MILITARY OFFENSIVE AGAINST IRAQ, THE US PUBLIC WOULD WANT TO RALLY ROUND HIM. BUT THE EXTENT TO WHICH THEY WOULD FEEL ABLE TO DO SO WOULD DEPEND CRUCIALLY ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES, AND THE NEW FACTORS WHICH HAD COME INTO PLAY.

ACLAND

YYYY

DISTRIBUTION *39 38*ADVANCE *39 38*

IRAQ/KUWAIT
PS
PS/MR WALDEGRAVE
PS/S OF S FOR DEFENCE
PS/CHANCELLOR
PS/PUS
MR TOMKYS
~~MR GORE-BOOTH~~
MR FAIRWEATHER
MR GOULDEN
MR JAY
MR SLATER
MR BERMAN (LEGAL ADVISERS)
HD/MED
HD/NENAD
HD/NAD
HD/SED
HD/UND

HD/AMD
HD/ECD(E)
MR PRIDDLE, DEPT OF ENERGY
MR APLEYARD CABINET OFFICE
(BY TUBE H29)
MR W D REEVES CABINET OFFICE
(BY TUBE H29)
MR D J GOWAN CABINET OFFICE
(BY TUBE H29)
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/CONSULAR D
HD/NEWS D
HD/NPDD
HD/SECPOL D

HD/SEC (O) (C) MODUK
MR LS SMITH BANK ENGLAND
~~EMERGENCY UNIT~~
RESIDENT CLERK

NNNN