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FM WASHINGTON
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELNO 2232
OF 140001Z SEPTEMBER 90
INFO PRIORITY ROME, BAGHDAD, RIYADH, ACTOR

MY TELNO 2218: IRAQ/KUWAIT: IRANIAN STATEMENT

SUMMARY

1. ADMINISTRATION SUGGEST THAT KHAMENEI'S REMARKS MAY BE BASED ON A MISUNDERSTANDING OF US IDEAS FOR REGIONAL SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS. THEY ARE SEEKING CLARIFICATION.

DETAIL

2. STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN WAS ASKED AGAIN TODAY (13 SEPTEMBER) ABOUT KHAMENEI'S STATEMENT. HE SAID THAT THE IRANIAN POSITION APPEARED TO BE BASED ON QUOTE A MISUNDERSTANDING OF WHAT WE MEAN BY REGIONAL SECURITY STRUCTURES AND ARRANGEMENTS UNQUOTE. REFERRING BACK TO SECRETARY BAKER'S TESTIMONY ON THE HILL LAST WEEK (MY TELNO 2145), HE SAID THAT THE US WISHED TO FIND MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE ARRANGEMENTS WHICH WOULD GUARANTEE PEACE AND PROSPERITY BUT ALSO FIT REGIONAL REALITIES. HE SAID THEY HAD NO PARTICULAR MODEL IN MIND, NOR WOULD SUCH ARRANGEMENTS DIMINISH US COMMITMENT TO UN ACTION OR THE ROLE OF THE UN. HE RECALLED THAT US TROOPS WERE IN SAUDI ARABIA AT SAUDI INVITATION QUOTE AND WE WILL LEAVE SAUDI ARABIA WHEN THAT MISSION IS ACCOMPLISHED OR WHENEVER WE MIGHT BE ASKED TO LEAVE BY THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, SPOKESMAN DENIED THAT THIS WAS A RETREAT FROM THE PRESIDENT'S REFERENCE TO A LASTING US PRESENCE IN THE GULF TO DETER FUTURE AGGRESSION.

3. WE HAVE SPOKEN FURTHER TO STATE (NEA AND COUNTER-TERRORISM). THEY REMAIN OF THE VIEW THAT KHAMENEI'S STATEMENT DOES NOT AMOUNT TO A DIRECT IRANIAN THREAT TO US FORCES IN THE GULF. THEY SEE IT MORE AS A SIGNAL THAT THE IRANIAN LEADERSHIP, OR AT LEAST SOME WITHIN IT, ARE CONCERNED AT US INTENTIONS IN THE GULF OVER THE LONGER TERM. THEY ARE SEEKING CLARIFICATION FROM THE IRANIANS, VIA THE SWISS, IN A LOW KEY MANNER.

4. WHILE THEY DO NOT EXPECT IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS FROM THE IRANIANS, STATE ARE NEVERTHELESS CONCERNED THAT KHAMENEI'S WORDS COULD BE TAKEN BY PRO-IRANIAN GROUPS IN THE REGION AS THE GREEN LIGHT TO CARRY OUT TERRORIST ATTACKS AGAINST US FORCES.

5. WE ARE DUE TO TALK TO PLANNING STAFF IN STATE TOMORROW ABOUT THEIR WORK ON POSSIBLE REGIONAL SECURITY STRUCTURES. WE WILL

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