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JERUSALEM FOR SECRETARY OF STATE'S PARTY

IRAQ/KUWAIT: VISIT OF PRIMAKOV TO ROME, 16 OCTOBER

SUMMARY

1. SOVIETS REPORTEDLY LINK IRAQI WITHDRAWAL FROM KUWAIT TO A UN INITIATIVE ON THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. ITALO-SOVIET AGREEMENT ON THE NEED FOR 'SPECIAL PRESSURES' ON SADDAM TO SECURE THE RELEASE OF FOREIGN HOSTAGES.

DETAIL

2. GORBACHEV'S SPECIAL ENVOY, PRIMAKOV, VISITED ROME ON 16 OCTOBER ON HIS WAY TO PARIS AND WASHINGTON. HE HAD AN HOUR OF RESTRICTED TALKS WITH ANDREOTTI AND DINNER WITH DE MICHELIS. NEITHER ANDREOTTI'S OFFICE NOR THE RELEVANT MFA DESK OFFICER (CHERUBINI) WERE ABLE TO BRIEF US ON THE VISIT, CLAIMING THAT DETAILS HAD NOT YET FILTERED DOWN TO THEM. THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT IS THEREFORE BASED ON PRESS ACCOUNTS AND A BRIEFING FROM THE US EMBASSY (WHO DECLINED TO GIVE THEIR SOURCE).

3. THE AMERICANS SAY THAT PRIMAKOV HAD THREE MESSAGES FOR THE ITALIANS:

- (I) THE SOVIET DISTASTE FOR MILITARY ACTION IN THE GULF
- (II) THE SOVIET UNION'S FIRM RESOLVE TO STAND BEHIND THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS
- (III) SOVIET SUPPORT FOR A UN INITIATIVE ON THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES 'INDEPENDENT OF BUT PRIOR TO' IRAQI WITHDRAWAL FROM KUWAIT.

4. ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS, PRIMAKOV TOLD ANDREOTTI THAT THE

SOVIET UNION CONTINUED TO BE OPTIMISTIC THAT A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE GULF CRISIS WAS POSSIBLE. HE SAID HIS IMPRESSION FROM HIS OWN DISCUSSIONS WITH SADDAM WAS THAT IRAQ WAS READY TO NEGOTIATE, BUT ONLY IF ITS ENEMIES REFRAINED FROM ULTIMATUMS AND THREATS OF MILITARY ACTION. THERE WAS REPORTEDLY NO MENTION OF SOVIET PRESS REPORTS THAT IRAQ WAS READY TO AGREE TO A PARTIAL WITHDRAWAL FROM KUWAIT.

5. THERE WAS ALSO A LENGTHY DISCUSSION OF THE HOSTAGE PROBLEM, WITH ANDREOTTI AND DE MICHELIS REPORTEDLY AGREEING THAT 'SPECIAL PRESSURES' SHOULD BE PUT ON SADDAM TO RELEASE FOREIGNERS. ANDREOTTI REVEALED THAT THE ITALIAN DELEGATION TO THE IPU CONFERENCE IN URUGUAY HAD ALREADY LOBBIED IRAQI PARLIAMENTARIANS ON THIS POINT. HE ALSO TOLD PRIMAKOV THAT LIBYAN FOREIGN MINISTER AL-BISHARI, ON A RECENT VISIT TO ROME FOR A WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN MINISTERIAL MEETING (MY TELNO 854), HAD ASSURED THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT THAT QADHAFI HAD INTERVENED WITH SADDAM ON BEHALF OF FOREIGN HOSTAGES.

6. IN A BRIEF AND UNILLUMINATING PRESS CONFERENCE ON 16 OCTOBER, PRIMAKOV TOLD JOURNALISTS THAT HE WAS VISITING ROME NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF ITALY'S ROLE AS EC PRESIDENCY, BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF THE 'PERSONAL POSITION' OF ANDREOTTI ON THE GULF CRISIS. (COMMENT: THIS WAS PRESUMABLY A REFERENCE TO ANDREOTTI'S WELL-KNOWN PREDILECTION FOR A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT.)

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