

CONFIDENTIAL
FM WASHINGTON
TO DESKBY 200730Z FCO
TELNO 2547
OF 192357Z OCTOBER 90
INFO IMMEDIATE MOSCOW
INFO ROUTINE ROME, PARIS, RIYADH, BAGHDAD, CAIRO, ACTOR

ADVANCE COPY

CORRECTED VERSION

MY TELNO. 2520: PRIMAKOV VISIT
SUMMARY

1. PRIMAKOV GOT A STRONGLY NEGATIVE RESPONSE FROM THE PRESIDENT ON 19 OCTOBER TO SUGGESTIONS FOR A FACE-SAVING WAY OUT FOR SADDAM HUSSEIN.

DETAIL

2. HAASS (NSC) HAS TOLD US THAT PRIMAKOV SPENT AN HOUR AND A HALF WITH THE PRESIDENT ON 19 OCTOBER, HAVING EARLIER SEEN BOTH SCOWCROFT AND BAKER. HIS PRESENTATION WAS OPAQUE BUT ESSENTIALLY PESSIMISTIC IN THAT HE BELIEVED TIME WAS WORKING AGAINST THE COALITION ARRAYED AGAINST SADDAM HUSSEIN. PRIMAKOV MADE IT PLAIN HE WAS EXTREMELY OPPOSED TO GOING TO WAR WITH IRAQ.

3. PRIMAKOV SAID THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT FULLY SUPPORTED THE COMPLETE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE RELEVANT SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS ON KUWAIT. SADDAM HUSSEIN SHOULD NOT BE REWARDED IN ANY WAY. DESPITE THIS, AND PRIMAKOV'S EXPLICIT ENDORSEMENT OF SANCTIONS AND THE MILITARY BUILD UP AS ESSENTIAL PRESSURES ON THE IRAQIS, HE NONETHELESS ALSO ARGUED THAT SOME WAY OF SAVING SADDAM HUSSEIN'S FACE HAD TO BE FOUND. WHEN THE PRESIDENT TOLD HIM HE DID NOT UNDERSTAND QUITE WHAT PRIMAKOV WAS TRYING TO GET AT THE LATTER MADE IT PLAINER THAT HE THOUGHT SOME WAY OUT COULD BE FOUND BY MAKING IT CLEAR TO SADDAM HUSSEIN IN PRIVATE AND IN ADVANCE THAT, IN RETURN FOR UNCONDITIONAL WITHDRAWAL, HE COULD BE SURE HE WOULD GET AT LEAST SOMETHING IN EXCHANGE AT A LATER STAGE. PRIMAKOV DID NOT IMPLY THAT ANY SUCH INDUCEMENTS WOULD BE IN THE SPECIFIC KUWAIT CONTEXT, WHERE SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS HAD TO BE FULFILLED. SOMETHING MIGHT HOWEVER BE DONE WITH REGARD TO PALESTINE. THE IRAQIS MIGHT FOR EXAMPLE BE GIVEN FIRMLY TO UNDERSTAND THAT FOLLOWING THEIR UNCONDITIONAL WITHDRAWAL THERE WOULD BE A US/SOVIET STATEMENT ON AN ACTIVE EFFORT TO RESOLVE THE ARAB/ISRAEL PROBLEM, PERHAPS THROUGH AN INTERNATIONAL

CONFERENCE.

4. PRIMAKOV ALSO URGED THAT THE AMERICANS SHOULD IN ANY CASE RESTART THEIR DIALOGUE WITH THE PLO AS A MEANS OF PUTTING PRESSURE ON SADDAM HUSSEIN. HE EVIDENTLY FEARED THE IRAQIS WERE WINNING THE ARGUMENT IN THE ARAB WORLD, HENCE THE URGENCY OF ACTION TO WEAN THE PLO AWAY FROM BAGHDAD. PRIMAKOV SAID THAT THE OTHER PERMANENT MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN THE PROPOSED US/SOVIET STATEMENT. IRAQ WOULD HAVE TO UNDERTAKE TO ALLOW THE HOSTAGES TO LEAVE. SOMETHING MIGHT BE DONE, TOO, OVER THE WITHDRAWAL OF OTHER TROOPS IN THE GULF REGION. PRIMAKOV SUGGESTED THAT THE ARAB LEAGUE SHOULD FOSTER THE KUWAIT/IRAQ RELATIONSHIP AFTER THE IRAQI WITHDRAWAL. BUT THE ESSENTIAL POINT WAS THAT SADDAM HUSSEIN SHOULD KNOW IN ADVANCE THAT HIS WITHDRAWAL FROM KUWAIT WOULD PROVIDE AN IMPETUS TOWARDS THE RESOLUTION OF OTHER PROBLEMS IN THE AREA.

5. PRIMAKOV HAD IMPLIED THAT HE MIGHT GO BACK TO IRAQ. THE PRESIDENT SAID HE WOULD HAVE NO DIFFICULTY WITH THAT BUT THAT THE MESSAGE HE SHOULD CONVEY TO SADDAM HUSSEIN WAS THAT THERE WAS NO FLEXIBILITY IN THE US POSITION.

6. WOOD ASKED HAASS WHETHER THE AMERICANS BELIEVED PRIMAKOV WAS ACTING AT GORBACHEV'S REQUEST AND WITH HIS AUTHORITY. HAASS SAID THAT PRIMAKOV HAD IMPLIED GORBACHEV HAD ASKED HIM TO SHARE HIS OBSERVATIONS ON HIS RECENT TRIP TO BAGHDAD WITH THE AMERICANS BUT THAT PRIMAKOV HAD NOT MADE IT CLEAR HOW FAR HE WAS SPEAKING PERSONALLY OR THE DEGREE TO WHICH WHAT HE SAID REPRESENTED THE OFFICIAL SOVIET POSITION. WHAT PRIMAKOV HAD SAID HOWEVER WAS SO MUCH AT VARIANCE WITH EVERYTHING ELSE THE AMERICANS HAD HEARD FROM MOSCOW THAT THEY CONCLUDED HE WAS DOING LITTLE MORE THAN ADVANCE PERSONAL IDEAS. WOOD TOLD HAASS IN ANSWER TO HIS QUESTION HE HAD NO DOUBT PRIMAKOV WOULD RECEIVE A SIMILARLY DUSTY ANSWER FROM US.

7. WOOD SUBSEQUENTLY SPOKE TO ROSS (STATE), WHO HAD EARLIER SUGGESTED WE MIGHT LIKE TO CONSIDER TAKING REINFORCING ACTION WITH GORBACHEV ONCE WE HAD SPOKEN TO PRIMAKOV. HE ASKED WHETHER THE AMERICANS WERE CONSIDERING ACTION WITH GORBACHEV THEMSELVES. ACCORDING TO ROSS, THEY ARE. ROSS WANTED TO ADD THAT, IN THE LIGHT OF HIS OWN TALKS WITH PRIMAKOV, HE HAD NO DOUBT OF PRIMAKOV'S GOOD WILL. HE HAD MADE IT CLEAR THE RUSSIANS WANTED TO BE WITH THE AMERICANS WHATEVER THEY DECIDED AND THAT THERE WAS INDEED NO TURNING BACK FOR THE SOVIET UNION.

HIS INTENTION HAD BEEN TO PUT FORWARD IDEAS WHICH MIGHT, IN PRIMAKOV'S VIEW, AVOID THE MILITARY CONFRONTATION HE SO MUCH DREADED. THE FACT WAS HOWEVER THAT OFFERING ANY REWARD, HOWEVER

QUALIFIED AND HOWEVER DISTANCED FROM AN IRAQI WITHDRAWAL FROM KUWAIT, WOULD ONLY ADD TO SADDAM HUSSEIN'S STATURE AND MAKE TH OTHER STATES OF THE REGION THEREFORE VULNERABLE. THE RESULT WOULD BE IN THE END TO LEAD ANYWAY TO A MILITARY CONFRONTATION, VERY PROBABLY ON A WIDER SCALE THAN ANYTHING WHICH MIGHT POSSIBLY OCCUR AS A RESULT OF THE PRESENT CRISIS.

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