

221723Z

COMMENT:

EMERGENCY UNIT AS REQUESTED 36A(A-B)

SECRET

UK COMMS ONLY

FM RIYADH

TO DESKBY 201200Z FCO

TELNO 1056

OF 200620Z OCTOBER 90

INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, BAHRAIN, DOHA, ABU DHABI, AMMAN

INFO IMMEDIATE HQBFME

SIC AAA/I9M

FCO TELNO 717 AND TELCON PLUMBLY/YOUNG, EMERGENCY UNIT:
EASTERN PROVINCE: CONTINGENCY PLANNING

1. THE FOLLOWING WAS DRAFTED BEFORE RECEIPT OF YOUR TUR (FOR WHICH I AM MOST GRATEFUL). IT HAS BEEN AMENDED TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF THAT TEL. I WOULD STILL BE GRATEFUL FOR AN EARLY SIGHT OF THE NEW ADVICE WE ARE CONSIDERING GIVING BRITISH CITIZENS IN THE EASTERN PROVINCE, ONCE YOU HAVE A FORM OF WORDS, AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT. BUT AT THE RISK OF REITERATING THE OBVIOUS, A NUMBER OF POINTS SEEM TO ME IMPORTANT:

A) WE MUST BE CAREFUL NOT TO CREATE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SENSATIONALIST COMMENT ON THE PART OF THE LARGE BRITISH PRESS CORPS HERE, NOR CAUSE FEAR AMONG OUR COMMUNITY THROUGHOUT THE KINGDOM. IT FOLLOWS THAT WE SHOULD STRESS THAT OUR ADVICE AMOUNTS TO A REITERATION OF THAT GIVEN FOR THE EP SINCE THE OUTSET AND DOES NOT CONSTITUTE A REACTION TO HEIGHTENED DANGER. WE HAVE ALREADY TRIED TO THIN DOWN DEPENDENTS AND NON-ESSENTIALS IN THE EP:

B) THIS IS NOT (NOT) A SITUATION FOR USE OF THE BBC WORLD SERVICE. WE CAN GET MESSAGE OUT THROUGH COMPANIES AND WARDENS, AS SUGGESTED IN PARA 5 OF TUR (GIVEN LOCAL WEEKEND, AND NEED TO FOREWARN SAUDIS, THE TIME TO SET UP MEETINGS - ASSUMING ACTION IS APPROVED - WILL PROBABLY BE AROUND 30/31 OCT):

C) WE MUST GIVE ADVANCE WARNING AND EXPLANATION TO SAUDIS, PROBABLY VIA MFA: ONLY A FEW WEEKS AGO THEY CALLED IN AMBASSADORS AND ASKED THAT WE DROP NEGATIVE ADVICE TO TRAVELLERS AND RESIDENTS ON GROUNDS THAT IMMEDIATE DANGER WAS PAST: THEY WILL RIGHTLY FEAR IMPACT OF A FRESH WARNING TO THIN OUT ON VITAL SERVICES, OIL INDUSTRY AND DEFENCE, AS WELL AS POSSIBILITY THAT ACTION BY US COULD START EXODUS BY SAUDI POPULATION IN EP WHO ARE ALREADY ON TENTERHOOKS:

D) ALTHOUGH THERE ARE DIFFERENCES IN WORDING BETWEEN CONSULAR ADVICE GIVEN BY OURSELVES AND OTHER WESTERN EMBASSIES, GENERAL IMPRESSION IN FOREIGN COMMUNITIES IS THAT WE ARE NOW PRETTY MUCH AT ONE (INCLUDING THE MOST IMPORTANT IN TERMS OF NUMBERS, OURSELVES AND THE AMERICANS) IE WE DISCOURAGE DEPENDENTS AND NON-ESSENTIALS IN EP, BUT ADVISE OTHERS IN KINGDOM TO CARRY ON AS NORMAL. US ADVICE IS A SHADE OPAQUE, AND HAS CAUSED THEM PROBLEMS WITH PUZZLED CITIZENS. TO THE EXTENT THAT WE CAN STANDARDISE WITH AMERICANS AND EC IT INCREASES CREDIBILITY OF ADVICE WITH COMMUNITY AND HELPS PRESENTATIONALLY WITH SAUDIS. IN THIS CONTEXT I WELCOME PROPOSAL FOR FURTHER CLOSE DISCUSSION IN TWELVE, AND ALSO IN PARTICULAR CLOSE CONTACT WITH AMERICANS (WHO HAVE PROMISED TO KEEP US IN PICTURE ON ANY MOVES IN RELATION

TO THEIR OWN CITIZENS):

B

EP NOTWITHSTANDING MINISTRY OF INFORMATION PRESSURES, THERE ARE STILL UPWARDS OF THIRTY UK JOURNALISTS AND TV CREW IN THE EASTERN PROVINCE AND TIME LIES HEAVY ON THEIR HANDS. THEY WILL SUBJECT ANY CHANGE TO INTENSE SCRUTINY, IN PARTICULAR ATTEMPTING TO ANALYSE IMPLICATIONS VIS A VIS ASSESSMENT OF IRAQI THREAT/POSSIBILITY OF ALLIED ATTACK.

2. WITHOUT KNOWING PRECISELY LANGUAGE PROPOSED FOR NEW ADVICE, OUR ABILITY TO ADVISE ON PRESENTATION IS LIMITED. FROM LOCAL POINT OF VIEW I HOPE WE CAN INCLUDE FOLLOWING POINTS:-

A) WE ARE REAFFIRMING EARLIER ADVICE ON DEPENDENTS, SINCE THERE HAS BEEN SOME DRIFT BACK TO EP THOUGH TENSION HAS NOT DIMINISHED. WE HAVE ALREADY SOUGHT TO THIN OUT COMMUNITY IN EP:

B) OUR ADVICE IS IN LINE WITH AMERICANS/OTHERS (EC):

C) ACTION TAKEN IS A SENSIBLE PRECAUTION: IT DOES NOT REFLECT NEW INFORMATION SUGGESTING IMMINENT IRAQI ATTACK, NOR DOES IT IMPLY ALLIES ARE ABOUT TO START HOSTILITIES.

3. IN LINE WITH DISCRETION GIVEN, TWO DS FAMILIES HAVE RETURNED TO EP FOR MORALE (AND EFFICIENCY: ONE OF WIVES IS KEY MEMBER OF LE CONSULAR STAFF) REASONS. I AM VERY RELUCTANT TO GO BACK ON THIS. BUT CREDIBILITY OF ANY THINNING OUT MESSAGE WOULD BE WEAKENED IF LLOYD FAMILY IN PARTICULAR STAYED, SINCE THEY HAVE SMALL CHILDREN.

4. LINE ON RIYADH (YOUR PARA 8) IS ACCEPTED BUT EVEN IF WE CHANGE ADVICE ON DEPENDENTS, WE WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE LARGE COMMUNITY IN EP. I AM GLAD THAT NEW THOUGHT IS BEING GIVEN TO CW, TO EVACUATION OPTIONS IN EVENT THAT WE HAVE A WARNING OF HOSTILITIES, AND TO ADVICE TO BE GIVEN IN EVENT OF OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES WITHOUT WARNING. I DO NOT (NOT) THINK WE HERE ARE REALLY IN A POSITION TO ADVISE FURTHER AS BETWEEN THE ONLY TWO ALTERNATIVES - DRIVING WEST, OR STAYING PUT INDOORS. THIS COULD AMOUNT TO A ONE SHOT AFFAIR, IN WHICH CASE LATTER MIGHT BE BETTER (AND ROADS COULD ANYWAY BE CLOSED OR CLOGGED WITH REFUGEES). BUT WE REALLY NEED EXPERT GUIDANCE, INCLUDING FROM MOD.

MUNRO

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ADVANCE 27

IRAQ/KUWAIT SECRET 1

PS 1

PS/PUS 1

PS/MR WALDEGRAVE 1

PS/S OF S FOR DEFENCE 1

MR FAIRWEATHER 1

MR YOUNG (EMERGENCY UNIT) 1

MR GOULDEN 1

MR GORE-BOOTH 1

MR BROOMFIELD 1

HD/NENAD 1

HD/UND 1

HD/NPDD 1

HD/SECPOL D 1

HD/AMD 1

HD/PUSD 1

DEPUTY HD/PUSD 1

HD/ISD(O) 1

MR BERMAN (LEGAL ADVISERS) 1