

CONFIDENTIAL  
FM WASHINGTON  
TO IMMEDIATE FCO  
TELNO 2617  
OF 262121Z OCTOBER 90  
AND TO IMMEDIATE ROME  
INFO PRIORITY UKMIS NEW YORK, RIYADH, BAGHDAD, TEL AVIV  
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(ROME FOR SECRETARY OF STATE'S PARTY)

MY TELNO 2546: IRAQ/KUWAIT:  
SUMMARY

1. NO MAJOR CHANGE IN PUBLIC MOOD SINCE TUR BUT CLEAR INDICATIONS OF AN IMMINENT INCREASE IN CURRENT PLANNED LEVELS OF US GROUND FORCES IN SAUDI ARABIA. DECISION LIKELY TO RAISE PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS WHILE FURTHER DEFERRING ANY DECISION ON USE OF MILITARY OPTION. ADMINISTRATION REMAIN CONCERNED TO KEEP INTERNATIONAL COALITION TOGETHER.

DETAIL

2. INCREASING PUBLIC SPECULATION AS TO THE POSSIBILITY OF ADDITIONAL US TROOP DEPLOYMENTS TO THE GULF HAS BEEN GIVEN A FURTHER BOOST THROUGH A TV INTERVIEW WITH CHENEY ON 25 OCTOBER IN WHICH HE DID NOT REJECT A SUGGESTION THAT 100,000 MORE MIGHT BE NEEDED. THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE SUBSEQUENTLY CONFIRMED NO UPPER LIMIT HAD BEEN SET FOR GROUND FORCES. THERE MAY BE A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF US INTENTIONS SHORTLY, FOLLOWING THE RETURN OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF FROM AN INSPECTION TOUR OF THE AREA.

3. IT HAS BEEN EVIDENT FOR SOME TIME NOW THAT WHILE THE AIR BUILDUP WAS COMPLETE, US PLANS FOR THEIR GROUND FORCES WERE STILL EVOLVING, AND THAT THE AMERICANS ARE UNDER NO ILLUSIONS THAT AIR POWER ALONE COULD BRING VICTORY IF IT CAME IN THE END TO AN OFFENSIVE AGAINST IRAQ. THE TWO LIGHT DIVISIONS CURRENTLY IN THEATRE AT LEAST WILL BE REPLACED WITH HEAVY ARMoured DIVISIONS ON ROULEMENT. THIS WILL INVOLVE SOME DIVERSION FROM GERMANY. THERE MAY WELL BE FURTHER REINFORCEMENTS IN DUE COURSE: OUR CONTACTS HERE HAVE BEEN INCREASINGLY OPEN IN EXPRESSING THEIR UNEASE ABOUT THE AMERICAN ABILITY TO EXERCISE THE MILITARY OPTION WITH THE FORCE LEVELS SO FAR CONTEMPLATED.

FOR EXAMPLE, THE DIRECTOR OF THE DEFENCE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY AT THE PENTAGON TOLD US EARLIER THIS WEEK THAT, DESPITE THE OVERWHELMING ALLIED AIR SUPERIORITY, AIR POWER ALONE COULD NOT BE COUNTED ON TO WIN THE CAMPAIGN. SINCE AUGUST THE IRAQIS HAD CONSIDERABLY STRENGTHENED AND SKILFULLY DEVELOPED THEIR DEFENCES IN KUWAIT. A COSTLY GROUND BATTLE SEEMED INEVITABLE AND DIA, AT LEAST, WONDERED WHETHER SUFFICIENT FORCES WERE IN PLACE.

4. IF THE ADMINISTRATION CONFIRM THAT THERE IS NOW TO BE A SIGNIFICANTLY GREATER US BUILDUP, ABOVE THE 220,000 LEVEL THAT THEY HAVE APPARENTLY ENVISAGED UP TO NOW, THERE ARE TWO IMMEDIATE CONCLUSIONS TO BE DRAWN. FIRST, THAT NO US LED OFFENSIVE IS LIKELY UNTIL THE HIGHER LEVEL CAN BE REACHED, PRESUMABLY TOWARDS THE END OF THE YEAR AT THE EARLIEST, AND SECOND THAT THE ADMINISTRATION'S OPTIONS WILL BE NARROWED BECAUSE OF THE WAY PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS ARE LIKELY TO DEVELOP. BUT I SHOULD NOT WANT TO GO BEYOND THAT FOR THE MOMENT. THE ADMINISTRATION'S DILEMMA IN DECIDING WHAT TO DO IF THERE IS NO REAL SIGN OF A SIGNIFICANT SHIFT IN THE IRAQI POSITION OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS WILL GET NO EASIER WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME.

5. THERE HAVE BEEN NO MAJOR SHIFTS IN PUBLIC MOOD ON THE GULF CRISIS SINCE MY TUR. THERE WERE SMALL ANTI-WAR DEMONSTRATIONS IN NEW YORK, SAN FRANCISCO AND OTHER CITIES OVER THE WEEKEND OF 20-21 OCTOBER. THEY WERE GIVEN SIGNIFICANT COVERAGE IN THE MEDIA AND THE WIDER AMERICAN PUBLIC WILL HAVE BEEN WELL AWARE OF THEM. BUT THEY WERE SMALL IN NUMBER AND RELATIVELY ISOLATED. AT THIS STAGE AT LEAST THEY DO NOT SUGGEST A FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT IN PUBLIC OPINION. SUPPORT FOR THE PRESIDENT'S GULF POLICIES, ALTHOUGH LESS THAN IT WAS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CRISIS, REMAINS PRETTY STEADY, EVEN THOUGH POLLS SUGGEST THAT MOST BELIEVE THE CRISIS WILL END IN WAR. MEANWHILE, CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT HAVE NOW AGREED A GENERAL FORMULA PROVIDING FOR CONTINUED CONSULTATION WITH CONGRESS DURING THE RECESS AND ITS RECALL IN THE EVENT OF HOSTILITIES.

6. OVER THE LAST WEEK, THERE HAVE BEEN SIGNS THAT THE ADMINISTRATION HAVE STARTED TO REACT TO EARLIER CRITICISMS THAT THEY WERE LOSING THEIR WAY ON POLICY TOWARDS THE CRISIS. PLANNING FOR A POSSIBLE TRIP TO THE GULF BY THE PRESIDENT, AND TO EUROPE AND THE GULF BY BAKER, IS NOT YET COMPLETE. IF AND WHEN THEY OCCUR IT WILL NOT JUST BE IN THE INTERESTS OF KEEPING THE INTERNATIONAL COALITION TOGETHER BUT ALSO TO CONVEY A SENSE OF PURPOSE TO THE AMERICAN PUBLIC. THE ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY OF EMPHASIS ON THE LONG HAUL AND RELIANCE ON SANCTIONS (TUR) ALSO SEEMED TO SOME TO HAVE BEEN QUALIFIED BY REMARKS BY WEBSTER (DIRECTOR, CIA) ON 25 OCTOBER TO THE EFFECT THAT SANCTIONS WERE

HAVING LITTLE EFFECT AND THAT THE GULF COULD NOT BE SECURE AS LONG AS SADDAM RETAINED POWER AND MAINTAINED HIS PRESENT ARSENAL. THE PRESS HAVE NOTED THESE REMARKS AS SOME OF THE BLUNTEST BY ANY ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL. THEY ARE ALSO THE FIRST PUBLIC OFFICIAL REFERENCE TO THE NEED TO GET RID OF SADDAM AND HIS WEAPONS. THE PRESIDENT HOWEVER IN FIRMLY REPEATING HIS OBJECTIVES IN VERMONT ON 23 OCTOBER DID NOT GO BEYOND THE AIMS SET OUT BY UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS.

7. PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT IS AT STAKE HAVE PERHAPS BEEN FURTHER AFFECTED BY INCREASING PRESS COMMENT ON THE STRENGTHENING OF IRAQI FORCES AND DISPOSITIONS IN THE AREA AND MUDDIED BY SPECULATION ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF AN EVENTUAL PREEMPTIVE IRAQI WITHDRAWAL. PRINCE SULTAN'S SUGGESTION OF A COMPROMISE DEAL WAS THEREFORE DOUBLY UNWELCOME TO THE ADMINISTRATION (PRIMAKOV'S EARLIER VISIT TO WASHINGTON HAD ALREADY PROVIDED EVIDENCE OF THE GROWING TEMPTATION AMONG SOME TO MAKE COMPROMISES WITH SADDAM.) SULTAN'S STATEMENT CAME DURING PRESIDENT BUSH'S CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN SWING THROUGH VERMONT AND HIS REFERENCES THERE TO SADDAM AS QUOTE HITLER REVISITED UNQUOTE SHOULD PROBABLY BE SEEN AS UNDERLINING THE PRESIDENT'S OWN STEADFASTNESS OF PURPOSE IN THE FACE OF APPARENT SAUDI UNCERTAINTY.

8. AS THE EXTENDED MILITARY BUILD-UP CONTINUES, ADMINISTRATION EFFORTS TO MANAGE THE CRISIS WILL CONTINUE TO BE AFFECTED BY THEIR ATTEMPTS, IN THE UN AND BEYOND IT, TO RE-DIRECT ATTENTION TOWARDS IRAQ AND AWAY FROM ARAB/ISRAEL. THE REQUIRED BALANCING ACT WILL BE DIFFICULT.

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