

ADVANCE COPY

CONFIDENTIAL
FM WASHINGTON
TO DESKBY 090830Z FCO
TELNO 2742
OF 090601Z NOVEMBER 90
INFO IMMEDIATE RIYADH, CAIRO, BAGHDAD, PARIS, ROME, MOSCOW
INFO IMMEDIATE PEKING, UKMIS NEW YORK, UKDEL NATO, ESC LONDON
INFO IMMEDIATE ACTOR, MODUK

SIC I9M
MY TELNO. 2689 AND MIPT: IRAQ/KUWAIT
SUMMARY

1. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF MAJOR US REINFORCEMENTS FOR THE GULF WILL AROUSE EXPECTATIONS. BUT NO DECISION YET ON THE EVENTUAL USE OF FORCE. ADMINISTRATION'S NEED TO NURTURE DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT PLAYS INTO THE DECISION ON WHETHER OR NOT TO SEEK FURTHER SECURITY COUNCIL COVER. BAKER WILL WANT TO EXPLORE THE OPTIONS IN LONDON.

DETAIL

2. BAKER'S VISIT TO LONDON COMES TOWARDS THE END OF A ROUND OF CONSULTATIONS WITH THE MAJOR ARAB ALLIES AND THE FOUR OTHER PERMANENT MEMBERS OF THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL, DESIGNED TO ROUND OUT THE CURRENT AMERICAN PROCESS OF STOCKTAKING ON THEIR GULF POLICIES, AND LEADING UP TO A PRESIDENTIAL VISIT TO EGYPT AND SAUDI ARABIA (FOR THANKSGIVING WITH US TROOPS ON 22 NOVEMBER). HIS TALKS IN LONDON WILL ACQUIRE ADDED IMPORTANCE FOLLOWING THE ADMINISTRATION'S DECISION, WHICH HAS JUST BEEN ANNOUNCED, TO REINFORCE US FORCES IN THE GULF BY SOME 150,000 TROOPS. ALTHOUGH NO FIRM DECISIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN ON THE EVENTUAL USE OF FORCE, THE TIDE SEEMS TO BE MOVING IN THAT DIRECTION. A SUBSTANTIAL PROPORTION OF THE NEW FORCES, TOGETHER WITH THEIR ARMAMENTS, WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO COME FROM GERMANY. THE MECHANICS OF ROTATION COULD BE EXPLOITED TO PRODUCE AN UNUSUALLY HIGH NUMBER OF TROOPS EARLY NEXT YEAR. THE AMERICANS WILL NO DOUBT HOPE THAT OTHERS OF THEIR ALLIES WILL FOLLOW THEIR LEAD.

3. THERE WILL STILL HOWEVER BE TIME FOR HESITATION BETWEEN NOW AND EARLY TO MID-JANUARY, WHEN THE LATEST BUILD UP OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN COMPLETED. IF THE AMERICANS ARE EVENTUALLY TO USE FORCE, THEY WILL NEED:

(A) TO RETAIN DOMESTIC SUPPORT OVER THE TIME BETWEEN THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THIS FURTHER INCREASE AND ITS COMPLETION. THIS WILL APPLY TO THE CONGRESS, WHICH WILL NOT WISH TO BE

BLIND-SIDED, AS MUCH AS TO THE PUBLIC IN GENERAL. PRESIDENT BUSH'S STATEMENTS ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL LAST WEEK (MY TEL UNDER REFERENCE) WERE TOUGH BUT AMBIVALENT. BUSH HAS BEEN UNDER MEDIA CRITICISM FOR APPARENT UNCERTAINTY OVER BOTH TACTICS AND OBJECTIVES IN THE GULF. WHILE RECOGNISING THE DIFFICULTY WHICH THE PRESIDENT FACES IN TRYING SIMULTANEOUSLY TO ADDRESS MULTIPLE CONSTITUENCIES, INFLUENTIAL COMMENTATORS HAVE NOTED THAT QUOTE INCOHERENCE IS THE THEME OF OUR MIDDLE EAST POLICY UNQUOTE AND CALLED FOR THE WHITE HOUSE TO PROVIDE AN ARTICULATE AND REASONED EXPLANATION OF US OBJECTIVES. THE ADMINISTRATION FACE AN IMPORTANT TASK IN PUTTING A PERSUASIVE CASE TO THE PUBLIC IF THEY ARE TO RETAIN MAJORITY DOMESTIC SUPPORT AND THE INITIATIVE WITH CONGRESS BETWEEN NOW AND THE END OF THE YEAR. THE FACT THAT THEY HAVE NOW ANNOUNCED A FURTHER INCREASE IN TROOP LEVELS SHOULD HELP TO GIVE A LEAD. THE POLLS SHOW THAT THE PUBLIC IS STILL WILLING TO TRUST THE ADMINISTRATION, EVEN THOUGH A LARGE MAJORITY BELIEVE THAT THE UNITED STATES IS HEADED FOR WAR. BUT THE CONCERNS EXPRESSED TO YOU BY SENATOR BENTSEN ABOUT THE FRAYING OF PUBLIC SUPPORT (YOUR TELNO. 1925, NOT TO ALL) SHOULD NONETHELESS NOT BE DISMISSED, AND TODAY'S PRESIDENTIAL PRESS CONFERENCE WAS NOT ALTOGETHER REASSURING IN THIS REGARD.

(B) THE ADMINISTRATION WILL OF COURSE ALSO NEED TO RETAIN INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT IN THESE NEW CIRCUMSTANCES. VERY LITTLE AUTHORITATIVE HAS BEEN SAID HERE ABOUT BAKER'S TRIP, AND HE HIMSELF IS OF COURSE BEST PLACED TO GIVE YOU AN ACCOUNT OF HIS FINDINGS. BUT THE GENERAL IMPRESSION, CONFIRMED BY WHAT WE HAVE HEARD AND LEARNED SO FAR, IS THAT WHILE THE AMERICANS BY NO MEANS HAVE A TOTALLY FREE HAND, THEY HAVE GAINED ROOM FOR MANOEUVRE, INCLUDING FOR THE EVENTUAL USE OF THE MILITARY OPTION.

(C) BOTH THESE FACTORS PLAY INTO THE DECISION THE AMERICANS MUST SOON TAKE ON WHETHER AND HOW TO GO BACK TO THE UNITED NATIONS TO SEEK FURTHER COVER FOR THE USE OF FORCE.

4. BAKER HAS UP TO NOW ARGUED THAT EXPLICIT UN COVER WOULD SIGNIFICANTLY HELP THE ADMINISTRATION DOMESTICALLY. WHILE SUCH COVER IS PROBABLY NOT ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL, I BELIEVE HIS ASSESSMENT TO BE CORRECT. GIVEN THAT THIS FURTHER INCREASE IN US FORCES IN THE GULF WILL ENTAIL THE WIDER CALL UP OF RESERVISTS, SOME FOR POTENTIAL COMBAT DUTIES, THE PRESIDENT'S DOMESTIC POSITION, INCLUDING PARTICULARLY WITH THE CONGRESS, WOULD BE EASED IF HE WERE ABLE TO POINT TO EXPLICIT INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE POSSIBLE USE OF FORCE IN THE END. A US OFFENSIVE LAUNCHED QUOTE IN COLD BLOOD UNQUOTE, WITHOUT FURTHER INTERNATIONAL ENDORSEMENT, COULD WELL EXCITE CONSIDERABLE DOMESTIC CRITICISM. BUSH WILL NEED

TO SHOW THAT HE INTENDS OVER THE NEXT COUPLE OF MONTHS TO EXHAUST THE LIMITS OF DIPLOMACY. IT IS OF COURSE OPEN TO SADDAM HUSSEIN TO FEED ON THIS BY IMPLYING OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS THAT HE IS PREPARED SERIOUSLY TO CONSIDER A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. SOME OPINION FORMERS HERE BELIEVE THAT A FACE-SAVING DEVICE FOR BAGHDAD IS NECESSARY AND THAT INSISTENCE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS AND NOTHING ELSE IS TOO HARD-NOSED.

5. BAKER WILL BE ABLE TO TELL YOU HOW IMPORTANT HE BELIEVES A UN RESOLUTION MAY BE IN KEEPING THE INTERNATIONAL COALITION TOGETHER. THE IMPRESSION LEFT BY ACCOUNTS OF HIS TALKS SO FAR IS THAT HE ATTACHES CONSIDERABLE WEIGHT TO GETTING FURTHER COVER. IF THAT IS CORRECT, HE WILL BE REFLECTING AN ADMINISTRATION PREFERENCE OF LONG STANDING. BUT A GREAT DEAL WILL OF COURSE DEPEND ON BAKER'S JUDGEMENT OF WHETHER OR NOT IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO GET A PROPER RESOLUTION THROUGH THE SECURITY COUNCIL OVER THE NEXT THREE WEEKS.

6. ONCE BAKER RETURNS, THE PRESIDENT WILL BE VIRTUALLY COMPELLED SOON TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT TO GO TO THE UNITED NATIONS AGAIN IN TIME FOR ACTION IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL BEFORE THE AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL TERM RUNS OUT AT THE END OF NOVEMBER. BOTH MILITARY REINFORCEMENT AND A RECOURSE TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL FOR FURTHER ACTION UNDER ARTICLE 42 OR 53 WILL HEIGHTEN US AND INTERNATIONAL EXPECTATIONS OF MILITARY ACTION EARLY NEXT YEAR. THE PRESIDENT WILL HAVE TO NURTURE HIS SUPPORT IN THE MEANTIME: HE CANNOT RISK FINDING HIMSELF BY JANUARY IN THE DANGEROUS POSITION OF HAVING ESTABLISHED A MOMENTUM TOWARDS THE USE OF FORCE WHILE ALLOWING DOUBTS AS TO ITS WISDOM AND EFFICACY TO GROW. ON PRESENT FORM SADDAM HUSSEIN IS UNLIKELY TO HELP HIM AT THE RIGHT TIME BY OFFERING A CLEAR, FRESH CASUS BELLI. SUCH A PROVOCATION WOULD OF COURSE RAPIDLY CLEAR THE US PUBLIC MIND OF HESITATION.

7. YOUR DISCUSSIONS WITH BAKER ON 9 NOVEMBER WILL BE IMPORTANT IN HELPING HIM TO MAKE UP HIS MIND HOW BEST TO ADVISE THE PRESIDENT. YOU WILL NO DOUBT ALSO WISH TO EXPLORE WITH HIM HOW WILLING OTHERS, INCLUDING THE TURKS AND SYRIANS, MAY BE TO HELP IN REDUCING US/UK EXPOSURE BY ADDING FURTHER TO THE COALITION OF FORCES. THE PRESIDENT HAS NOT THIS WEEK RETURNED TO THE QUESTION OF HOSTAGES OR THE RESUPPLY OF EMBASSIES IN KUWAIT, BUT THESE TWO ISSUES, AS WELL, WILL BE VERY MUCH ON BAKER'S MIND (MY TELNO. 2705).

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37

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