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IRAQ/KUWAIT, DISCUSSION WITH CROWN PRINCE

SUMMARY

1. CROWN PRINCE ABDULLAH APPEARS TO SHARE KING FAHD'S RESOLUTE APPROACH TO GETTING IRAQ OUT OF KUWAIT, FOLLOWED BY REMOVAL OF IRAQ'S CBW CAPABILITY. WELCOME FOR UK'S STRONG AND CONSISTENT POSITION AND FOR THE WAY BRITISH TROOPS HAVE MOVED QUICKLY INTO TRAINING HERE. PRINCE ABDULLAH DOUBTS SADDAM WILL WITHDRAW UNDER PRESSURE AND ALBEIT RELUCTANTLY, SEES CONFLICT AS PROBABLE. STRESSES DISTINCTION BETWEEN SADDAM'S REGIME AND IRAQI PEOPLE. GLAD TO RECEIVE UK PARLIAMENTARY PARTY NEXT WEEK.

DETAIL

2. I TOOK GEN DE LA BILLIERE TO CALL ON CROWN PRINCE ABDULLAH IN RIYADH TODAY. CROWN PRINCE SPOKE WARMLY OF OUR CONSISTENT POSITION OVER KUWAIT AND OF THE LEAD THE PRIME MINISTER CONTINUED TO GIVE. HE DUCKED AN INVITATION TO VISIT 7TH ARMoured BRIGADE BUT SHOWED INTEREST IN THE DETAIL OF THE BRITISH MILITARY PRESENCE. HE HAD ADMIRERD THE PERFORMANCE OF 7TH ARMoured BDE. CHALLENGERS IN A FIRING ON THE MOVE DEMONSTRATION SHOWN ON SAUDI TV THIS WEEK. THE BRIGADE HAD A STRONG REPUTATION AND ITS JERBOA WAS AN APT INSIGNIA FOR DESERT WARFARE.

3. ASKED ABOUT THE OUTLOOK PRINCE ABDULLAH DOUBTED SADDAM HUSSEIN WOULD WITHDRAW UNDER PRESSURE. TO DO SO WOULD LOSE HIM WHAT WAS LEFT OF HIS REPUTATION IN IRAQ AND THE PEOPLE WOULD TURN ON HIM. HE WAS LIKELY TO TRY TO STICK IT OUT IN KUWAIT. PRINCE ABDULLAH CITED A PROVERB ABOUT THE NEED TO EQUIP ONESELF FOR FIGHTING A LION IF ONE WAS TO BE SURE OF BEATING A JACKAL. BFCME EXPLAINED THAT THIS JUSTIFIED FURTHER ALLIED REINFORCEMENT AND ABDULLAH TOOK THE POINT. HE SUSPECTED HOWEVER THAT IF SADDAM

WERE TO BECOME CONVINCED THAT HE WOULD BE ATTACKED BY A SUPERIOR FORCE, HE MIGHT THEN UNDERTAKE A LIGHTNING WITHDRAWAL. IN THIS EVENT IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO FOLLOW THROUGH AND ENSURE THAT HIS CAPACITY TO MAKE WAR WITH CHEMICAL AND OTHER WEAPONS WAS REMOVED. I POINTED OUT THAT WE WERE AS ONE ON THIS POINT. PRINCE ABDULLAH COMMENTED THAT OTHER DANGEROUS ARMOURIES OF WEAPONS IN THE REGION, INCLUDING ISRAEL COULD NOT NOW BE TACKLED UNTIL IRAQ'S HAD BEEN DISMANTLED. BUT HE EXPECTED THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO FOLLOW THROUGH.

3. PRINCE ABDULLAH CONCLUDED A CONFLICT THUS LOOKED PROBABLE, AND THE WINDOW OF TIME WAS NOT WITHOUT LIMIT. HE INDICATED HOWEVER THAT HE SAW THIS COURSE AS REGRETTABLE, AND HE HOPED FERVENTLY THAT IN THE INTERVAL REMAINING TO US SOMEONE IN IRAQ WOULD DO AWAY WITH SADDAM. THE REGIME WOULD THEN TOPPLE. HE HAD NO QUARREL WITH THE IRAQI PEOPLE, BUT WITH THEIR LEADER WHO HAD TO BE DONE AWAY WITH.

4. THE CROWN PRINCE WELCOMED THE DEFENCE SECRETARY'S VISIT HERE NEXT WEEK TO DISCUSS OUR JOINT APPROACH TO THE CRISIS. OUR CLOSE FRIENDSHIP WAS SHOWING TRUE FORM. HE RESPONDED POSITIVELY TO MY REQUEST THAT HE RECEIVE LORD PYM'S PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION NEXT WEEK.

## COMMENT

5. THIS WAS A USEFUL OPPORTUNITY TO OBTAIN A READ-OUT OF PRINCE ABDULLAH'S POSITION. HE HAS NOT SHOWN HIMSELF OVER THE PARAPET OF LATE AND IT WAS SUGGESTED THAT HE HAS BEEN LUKEWARM OVER THE PRESENCE OF US TROOPS AND OF THE PROSPECT OF HOSTILITIES. HE HAS IN THE PAST BEEN THE SENIOR PRINCE TO MAINTAIN THE CLOSEST RELATIONS WITH IRAQ AND SADDAM (WITH WHOM HE INTERCEDED AT THE DEFENCE SECRETARY'S REQUEST LAST MARCH OVER BAZOFT). BUT THE GENERAL AND I FOUND PLENTY OF SIGNS OF RESOLVE TO SEE THIS ONE THROUGH AND TO HAVE SADDAM'S THREAT REMOVED, ALBEIT WITH A TINGE OF RELUCTANCE TO CONTEMPLATE A FIGHT. THE CROWN PRINCE CLEARLY APPRECIATED THE PRESENCE AND PERFORMANCE OF BRITISH TROOPS AND GAVE BFCME A PARTICULARLY WARM WELCOME. HE ALSO COMMENDED THE VERY CLOSE COOPERATION BETWEEN OURSELVES AND THE NATIONAL GUARD AND THE WAY THIS WAS BEING TURNED TO ACCOUNT IN THE CRISIS, WITH THE HELP OF OUR MILITARY MISSION. A BRIGADE OF THE GUARD HAD DISTINGUISHED ITSELF BY MOBILISING TO THE FRONT IN FOUR HOURS WHEN THE IRAQI THREAT APPEARED (THIS WAS PARTLY DUE TO PRODDING FROM BRIGADIER COCKING). THE CROWN PRINCE USED VIVID PROVERBIAL IDIOM TO ILLUSTRATE THE NEED TO BE SURE OF DEALING WITH THE JACKAL. HE APPRECIATED THE FCO VIDEOS IN ARABIC OF PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON THE CRISIS AND OF THE PRESENT SITUATION IN KUWAIT WHICH I LEFT WITH HIM.

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