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SIC 19M
MY TELNO 2767: IRAQ/KUWAIT

SUMMARY

1. BAKER CLAIMS BROAD DOMESTIC SUPPORT FOR ADMINISTRATION'S GULF POLICY, BUT NOTES NEED TO SEND A CONSISTENT AND UNIFORM SIGNAL. CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS RULE OUT SPECIAL SESSION AT PRESENT, GIVEN PRESIDENT'S ASSURANCE THAT NO DECISION HAS BEEN TAKEN TO USE FORCE.

DETAIL

2. PRESIDENT BUSH MET CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS TODAY (14 NOVEMBER) TO DISCUSS ADMINISTRATION POLICY ON THE GULF. AT A SUBSEQUENT PRESS CONFERENCE, SECRETARY BAKER SAID THAT THERE WAS STILL SUBSTANTIAL AND BROAD SUPPORT, BOTH AMONG THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND THE CONGRESS FOR THE PRESIDENT'S POLICY TOWARDS THE GULF. HE ACKNOWLEDGED VARYING VIEWS ON TACTICS, BUT SAID THERE WAS AGREEMENT THAT THERE MUST BE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS AND NO ACCEPTANCE OF PARTIAL SOLUTIONS. HE NOTED THAT THERE WAS QUOTE GENERAL AGREEMENT UNQUOTE BETWEEN CONGRESS AND THE ADMINISTRATION THAT NOW WAS NOT THE TIME FOR A SPECIAL SESSION OF CONGRESS TO DEBATE GULF POLICY. ASKED WHETHER THE DEBATE WHICH HAD OPENED UP IN THE LAST FEW DAYS UNDERMINED THE PRESIDENT'S POSITION, BAKER SAID THAT THERE SHOULD BE A DEMOCRATIC DEBATE IN THE COUNTRY ON SUCH FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES. QUOTE BUT WE SHOULD DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO TRY AND SEND A CONSISTENT AND UNIFORM SIGNAL UNQUOTE HE ADDED THAT THE CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS HAD AGREED AT THEIR MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO AVOID SENDING MIXED SIGNALS.

3. ON THE DEPLOYMENT OF ADDITIONAL FORCES, BAKER SAID THAT, SINCE THE OPTION OF FORCE COULD NOT BE RULED OUT, IT WAS IMPORTANT TO LAY AN APPROPRIATE POLITICAL AND MILITARY FOUNDATION FOR THAT OPTION. QUOTE THAT DOES NOT MEAN THAT THIS IS A COURSE OR AN OPTION THAT HAS BEEN CHOSEN UNQUOTE. WHEN ASKED

ABOUT SENATOR MITCHELL'S VIEW THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS COMPELLED BY THE CONSTITUTION TO SEEK CONGRESSIONAL AUTHORIZATION BEFORE LAUNCHING A MILITARY OFFENSIVE, BAKER ARGUED THAT THE PROTECTION OF AMERICAN CITIZENS COULD CALL FOR A VERY PROMPT AND SUBSTANTIAL RESPONSE (WHICH WOULD NOT PERMIT TIME TO CONSULT CONGRESS). PRESSED FURTHER, HE SAID THAT THERE REMAINED A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION BETWEEN THE EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE BRANCHES OVER THE WARPOWERS ACT, WHICH THE ADMINISTRATION CONSIDERED UNCONSTITUTIONAL.

4. ASKED WHETHER SANCTIONS WERE WORKING, BAKER SAID THAT THEY WERE, BUT QUOTE THAT DOES NOT MEAN THAT (SADDAM HUSSEIN) IS READY TO WITHDRAW UNCONDITIONALLY FROM KUWAIT, WHICH IS WHAT THE SANCTIONS WERE TO ACHIEVE UNQUOTE. HE ADDED THAT IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO SAY WITH CERTAINTY WHETHER THEY WOULD ACHIEVE THE GOALS OF THE UN RESOLUTIONS. BAKER DID NOT COMMENT ON A FURTHER SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION TO AUTHORISE THE USE OF FORCE, EXCEPT TO SAY THAT THE POSITION WOULD BE CLEARER IN A WEEK TO TEN DAYS, AND THAT HE HOPED TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO TALK TO THE FOREIGN MINISTERS OF ZAIRE, COTE D'IVOIRE AND ETHIOPIA, WHO WERE CURRENTLY SERVING ON THE SECURITY COUNCIL.

5. SENIOR DEMOCRATIC CONGRESSMEN EMERGING FROM THEIR MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT WELCOMED THE LONG, WIDE RANGING DISCUSSION. THEY NOTED IN PARTICULAR THE PRESIDENT'S ASSURANCE THAT THE DECISION TO DEPLOY ADDITIONAL FORCES TO THE GULF DID NOT AMOUNT TO A DECISION TO USE FORCE. THEY CONFIRMED THAT THEY SAW NO NEED FOR A SPECIAL SESSION OF CONGRESS AT PRESENT, BUT IMPLIED, MORE OR LESS EXPLICITLY, THAT THEY WOULD BE LOOKING FOR MORE THAN JUST CONSULTATION IF THERE WAS A CHANGE IN POLICY.

COMMENT

6. THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS AND BAKER'S SUBSEQUENT PRESS CONFERENCE CAN BE SEEN AS FIRST STEPS IN THE ADMINISTRATION'S EFFORTS TO REGAIN THE PUBLIC RELATIONS INITIATIVE (OUR TUR). IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THEY WILL HAVE THE DESIRED EFFECT.

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