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FM AMMAN 211730Z OCT 81

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 399 OF 21 OCT

INFO MODUK (DI4B), BAGHDAD, MOSCOW AND WASHINGTON

MY TELNO 394: JORDANIAN PURCHASE OF AIR DEFENCE EQUIPMENT FROM THE SOVIET UNION

1. I AND MY DA SAW THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF THIS MORNING IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE FOR FRANCE, THE UNITED STATES AND HIS OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE UK AND, IN VIEW OF CONFLICTING REPORTS WE HAVE BEEN RECEIVING ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT THE JORDANIANS HAD IN FACT CONCLUDED AN AGREEMENT WITH THE SOVIET UNION FOR THE PURCHASE OF AIR DEFENCE EQUIPMENT, I ASKED HIM IF HE COULD TELL US THE LATEST STATE OF PLAY. THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF BEGAN BY CONFIRMING THAT THE DEAL HAD ALREADY BEEN SIGNED. HE SAID THAT ONLY SAM 8S AND ZSU 23/4 GUNS (AND NOT SAM 6S, AS HAD BEEN MENTIONED IN OTHER REPORTS) WERE BEING PURCHASED AND DELIVERY WOULD TAKE PLACE DURING 1982.
2. JORDAN HAD BEEN INFLUENCED BY A NUMBER OF FACTORS IN TAKING THIS DECISION:
 - A. JORDAN'S URGENT NEED FOR A MOBILE AIR DEFENCE SYSTEM HAD BEEN CONCLUSIVELY SHOWN IN THE CONFRONTATION WITH SYRIA LAST NOVEMBER. THE FIXED POSITION HAWK BATTERIES WHICH JORDAN AT PRESENT POSSESSED WERE NO SUBSTITUTE FOR A MOBILE SYSTEM AND WERE VERY VULNERABLE WITHOUT LOW LEVEL PROTECTION: INDEED A SENIOR VISITING US OFFICER HAD RECENTLY REMARKED THAT THE ISRAELIS COULD TAKE THE HAWK EMPLACEMENTS OUT IN 20 MINUTES.
 - B. NO OTHER SYSTEM OF MOBILE LOW-LEVEL AIR DEFENCE WAS AVAILABLE TO JORDAN AT THIS TIME AND THE AMERICANS HAD, AS WE KNEW, JUST CANCELLED THEIR OWN ROLAND PROGRAMME.
 - C. JORDAN WOULD BE THE FIRST ARAB COUNTRY TO OBTAIN SAM 8S AND INDEED THE FIRST COUNTRY OUTSIDE THE SOVIET BLOC TO DO SO. IT WAS AN OPPORTUNITY WHICH THE JORDANIANS FELT THEY COULD NOT AFFORD TO FORGO.
3. I ASKED GENERAL SHAKER ABOUT A POSSIBLE SOVIET TECHNICAL PRESENCE IN JORDAN. HE ADMITTED THAT PERHAPS 20-25 SOVIET TECHNICIANS WOULD BE REQUIRED TO SERVICE THE NEW WEAPONRY ON ARRIVAL, BUT CLAIMED THAT NO PERMANENT SOVIET IN-COUNTRY PRESENCE WOULD BE REQUIRED (ALTHOUGH HE SPOKE WITH LITTLE CONVICTION). HE SUBSEQUENTLY MODIFIED THIS BY SAYING THAT, IF A HANDFUL OF SOVIET TECHNICIANS WERE PRESENT IN JORDAN, THE JORDANIANS WOULD TAKE THE UTMOST CARE TO "SEAL THEM OFF" AND ENSURE THAT THEY DID NOT HAVE ACCESS TO OTHER EQUIPMENT IN THE JORDANIAN ARMED FORCES.

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4. I ASKED GENERAL SHAKER IF THERE WAS ANY TRUTH IN RECENT PRESS REPORTS THAT IRAQ HAD CONCLUDED A MAJOR NEW DEAL WITH THE SOVIET UNION FOR AIR DEFENCE EQUIPMENT. HE SAID THAT, AS FAR AS HE KNEW, THIS WAS NOT SO AND THAT UNFORTUNATELY THIS MEANT THAT THE JORDANIANS WOULD NOT BE ABLE, AS MIGHT OTHERWISE HAVE BEEN DESIRABLE, TO DO THEIR TRAINING ON SAM BS IN IRAQ. IRAQ HAD, HOWEVER, CONCLUDED A VERY LARGE DEAL FOR THE PURCHASE OF ROLAND MISSILES FROM THE FRENCH AND INTENDED PASSING SOME OF THESE TO JORDAN SEMICLN BUT THEY WOULD NOT BE A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE SAM BS, WHICH JORDAN WAS ACQUIRING FROM THE RUSSIANS (PRESUMABLY BECAUSE DELIVERY WOULD BE LONG DELAYED)

5. GENERAL SHAKER EMPHASISED THAT HE WAS SPEAKING TO ME AS A TRUSTED FRIEND AND THAT THE JORDANIANS HAD NOT YET INFORMED THE AMERICANS OF THEIR DECISION. THEY WANTED TO DO THIS IN THEIR OWN WAY (I UNDERSTAND FROM THE US AMBASSADOR THAT KING HUSSEIN WILL BE SPENDING A DAY OR TWO TALKING TO MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND GIVING PRESS INTERVIEWS IN WASHINGTON AFTER THE FORMAL PART OF HIS VISIT IS OVER AND THE JORDANIANS WILL PRESUMABLY NEED TO THINK VERY CAREFULLY ABOUT HOW TO HANDLE THE RELEASE OF INFORMATION ON THE MISSILE DEAL IN THIS CONTEXT AS WELL AS IN THEIR OFFICIAL TALKS). MY US COLLEAGUE WAS STILL HOPING TODAY (HE LEAVES FOR THE US ON 22 OCTOBER) THAT THE KING WOULD DELAY SIGNING THE DEAL UNTIL AFTER HIS VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES.

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SIR A ALLAND
SIR J GRAHAM
MR MOBERLY
MR GILLMORE

THIS TELEGRAM
WAS NOT
ADVANCED

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