

ADVANCE COPY

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FM WASHINGTON

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 3050

OF 150119Z DECEMBER 90

INFO PRIORITY TEL AVIV, RIYADH, MODUK, ACTOR

MY TELNO 2984: IRAQ/KUWAIT: ISRAELI INTENTIONS

1. IN VIEW OF THE CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY STATE DEPARTMENT AND NSC WE HAVE ASKED THEM WHETHER PRIME MINISTER SHAMIR'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON HAD SHED ANY MORE LIGHT ON THE POSSIBILITY OF ISRAEL TAKING PRE-EMPTIVE MILITARY ACTION AGAINST IRAQ.

2. BOTH STATE AND NSC TOLD US SHAMIR HAD INCREASED THE CONFIDENCE IN WASHINGTON THAT ISRAEL WAS NOT LOOKING FOR AN OPPORTUNITY FOR UNILATERAL ACTION. THE PRESIDENT HAD MADE CLEAR THAT IT WOULD NOT BE IN THE INTERESTS OF THE ANTI-IRAQ COALITION, OR OF ISRAEL ITSELF, FOR ISRAEL TO START A WAR. HE STRESSED THAT THIS WOULD DO CONSIDERABLE DAMAGE TO ISRAEL'S POSITION IN THE US. SECRETARY BAKER ASKED SPECIFICALLY ABOUT SUGGESTIONS THAT ISRAEL MIGHT LAUNCH A PRE-EMPTIVE ATTACK ON IRAQI MISSILE SITES. SHAMIR SAID THAT ISRAEL HAD NEVER CONSIDERED A PRE-EMPTIVE ATTACK AND WOULD NOT BE THE FIRST TO OPEN A MILITARY CONFRONTATION.

3. SHAMIR WENT ON TO SAY THAT, AS A CONSEQUENCE OF ISRAELI FORBEARANCE, HIS GOVERNMENT NEEDED REAL TIME INTELLIGENCE OF IRAQI ACTIVITIES FROM THE AMERICANS SO AS TO MAKE THE NECESSARY CIVIL DEFENCE PREPARATIONS. STATE SAID THE ADMINISTRATION HAD BEEN LOOKING HARD AT WHETHER THEY COULD UPGRADE THE QUALITY AND TIMELINESS OF THE INTELLIGENCE THEY PASSED TO THE ISRAELIS. THE PROBLEM WAS THAT ANY REAL TIME SUPPLY OF INTELLIGENCE WOULD REQUIRE A DIRECT SATELLITE DOWN-LINK TO ISRAEL AND THIS WAS QUITE OUT OF THE QUESTION.

4. SHAMIR WAS ASKED DURING A PUBLIC MEETING WHETHER ISRAEL WOULD MAKE PRE-EMPTIVE OR RETALIATORY ATTACKS ON IRAQ. HE SAID QUOTE ISRAEL HAS DECLARED VERY CLEARLY THAT IT DOES NOT THINK AND PLAN ANY PRE-EMPTIVE STRIKE. AND WHAT HAPPENS AFTERWARDS, IF IT WILL BE ATTACKED OR NOT, IT IS CLEAR THAT ISRAEL WILL HAVE TO RESPOND UNQUOTE.

COMMENT

5. CLEARLY THERE CAN BE NO CAST-IRON GUARANTEES IN THIS

SITUATION. NEITHER DID THE PRESIDENT OR BAKER PRESS SHAMIR ON THE ISRAELI RESPONSE IN ALL THE VARIOUS POSSIBLE SCENARIOS. BUT THE ADMINISTRATION APPEAR REASSURED THAT THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT IS NOT LOOKING FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE A GO AT THE IRAQIS. THEY ATTRIBUTE THIS IN PART TO SHAMIR'S ACCEPTANCE THAT THE ADMINISTRATION REMAINS DETERMINED TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM OF SADDAM'S IRAQ (WHETHER BY WAR OR PEACE) AND THAT IN REACHING A SOLUTION ISRAEL'S INTERESTS WOULD BE TAKEN FULLY INTO ACCOUNT.

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