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UKDEL NATO FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S PARTY

SIC

MY TELNO 2964: IRAQ/KUWAIT: CHAPTER 2

SUMMARY

1. ADMINISTRATION STILL PREPARED FOR WAR IF NEED BE. BUT NEXT MOVES UP TO IRAQ. IF THE IRAQIS SHOW NO SIGN OF LEAVING KUWAIT BY 15 JANUARY, ADMINISTRATION AT PRESENT DETERMINED TO USE FORCE. BUT IRAQ MAY TRY TO MAKE THAT DECISION MORE DIFFICULT BY DRAWING THE AMERICANS INTO TALKS OR PARTIALLY WITHDRAWING. US IDEAS ON CONTAINING IRAQ POST-CRISIS FOLLOWING A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE IMMEDIATE ISSUES. WE SHOULD DISCUSS OUR OWN APPROACH WITH THEM.

DETAIL

2. WITH CONTINUED UNCERTAINTY OVER TARIQ AZIZ'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON AND BAKER'S TO BAGHDAD, YOU MIGHT FIND USEFUL AN ACCOUNT OF CURRENT US THINKING. THE FOLLOWING IS BACKGROUND FOR MY OWN VISIT TO LONDON. WE WILL PROVIDE ANY NECESSARY UPDATING JUST BEFORE THE PRIME MINISTER'S TALKS WITH THE PRESIDENT ON 21 DECEMBER.

3. THE PUBLIC MOOD HAS BEEN THROUGH A NUMBER OF SWINGS SINCE 2 AUGUST, AND WILL NO DOUBT GO THROUGH MORE BETWEEN NOW AND 15

JANUARY. THE PRESIDENT'S OFFER OF TALKS WITH BAGHDAD (WHICH WAS GREETED HERE WITH A SIGH OF RELIEF), SADDAM HUSSEIN'S DECISION TO LET THE HOSTAGES GO, AND THE EVACUATION OF THE US EMBASSY IN KUWAIT, TOGETHER LENT CREDENCE LAST WEEK TO A WIDESPREAD PUBLIC ASSUMPTION THAT A TIDE TOWARDS NEGOTIATION HAD SET IN. THE EDGE HAS NOW GONE OFF THAT, BECAUSE OF THE QUESTION MARKS OVER DATES. THE LATEST POLLS, FOR WHAT THEY ARE WORTH, SHOW US PUBLIC OPINION AS SPLIT DOWN THE MIDDLE ON THE USE OF FORCE IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. THE DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY IN CONGRESS CONTINUE TO ARGUE IN FAVOUR OF LONG-TERM PRESSURE THROUGH SANCTIONS.

4. THE ADMINISTRATION REMAIN COMMITTED TO THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN RESOLUTIONS. SENIOR US REPRESENTATIVES STRESS THE PRESIDENT'S CONTINUING DETERMINATION TO USE MILITARY FORCE IF NEED BE, AND THE PRESIDENT STRONGLY UNDERLINED THE POINT IN SPEAKING TO ALLIED AMBASSADORS ON 17 DECEMBER (MY TELNO 3067). IN THAT EVENT, I DOUBT IF CONGRESS WOULD STAND IN THE ADMINISTRATION'S WAY. DETAILED MILITARY PLANNING, AND THE MILITARY BUILDUP, CONTINUE. THE PRESIDENT'S MILITARY ADVISERS SEEM MORE CONFIDENT THAN THEY WERE SOME WEEKS AGO OF BEING ABLE TO DELIVER. UNLESS SADDAM IS OUT OF KUWAIT BY 15 JANUARY, OR CLEARLY MOVING OUT BY THEN, I WOULD EXPECT THE PRESIDENT BEFORE TO LONG THEREAFTER TO AUTHORISE THE USE OF FORCE TO GET HIM OUT.

5. SO THE KEY TO WHAT HAPPENS NEXT LIES WITH SADDAM HUSSEIN. IF HE WITHDRAWS COMPLETELY, THE AMERICANS WILL NOT ATTACK. IF HE SIMPLY REFUSES TO TALK, OR OBVIOUSLY EXPLOITS THE PROPOSED MEETINGS TO STRING THE AMERICANS ALONG, THE PRESIDENT COULD ARGUE THAT, IN GOING THE EXTRA MILE, HE HAD ALSO SHOWN THERE TO BE NO REALISTIC ALTERNATIVE TO FORCE. HE WOULD STILL FACE QUESTIONS HERE OVER THE POSSIBLE EFFECTIVENESS OF LONG TERM SANCTIONS. CONGRESS IS UNLIKELY TO BE CONVINCINGLY ON BOARD. SO THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD HAVE EXTRA REASON TO HOPE FOR A QUICK VICTORY WHICH WOULD TURN CONGRESSIONAL OPINION AROUND. BUT THE PRESENT DETERMINATION OF THE PRESIDENT IS SUCH THAT I BELIEVE THAT HE WILL ACT IF THERE IS STILL DEADLOCK BY MID-JANUARY.

6. THE IRAQIS CAN, HOWEVER, ALTER THE CONTEXT WITHIN WHICH THE PRESIDENT WILL HAVE TO MAKE HIS DECISION, THEREBY MAKING THE USE OF FORCE MORE DIFFICULT. IF THEY EITHER TAKE UP THE US OFFER OF A MEETING OR MAKE A PRE-EMPTIVE PARTIAL WITHDRAWAL, WE SHOULD

ALREADY BE IN CHAPTER 2 (YOUR CONVERSATION OF 10 DECEMBER WITH DUMAS, PARIS TELNO 1536) OR AT ANY RATE LEAVING RAPIDLY TOWARDS IT.

7. IF MEETINGS ARE EVENTUALLY ARRANGED, SADDAM HUSSEIN'S OBJECTIVE WILL BE TO PLAY FOR TIME, OR TO NEGOTIATE. THE IRAQIS WILL BE THE BETTER PLACED TO BROADEN THE AGENDA, THE LONGER ANY TALKS MAY CONTINUE. THE AMERICANS ARE WELL AWARE OF THESE DANGERS: THEY HAVE NO INTENTION OF BARGAINING. BUT THERE MUST BE A RISK THAT MEETINGS WILL, DESPITE CURRENT US INTENTIONS, MARK THE START OF A PROCESS OF POLITICAL NEGOTIATION. (AT A MINIMUM, THE TIMING OF ANY IRAQI WITHDRAWAL WILL HAVE TO BE ADDRESSED, AND PERHAPS THE ISSUES OF HOW BEST EVENTUALLY TO SETTLE MATTERS OUTSTANDING BETWEEN KUWAIT AND IRAQ, AND, BY IMPLICATION AT LEAST, THE EVENTUAL SHAPE OF A REGIONAL MILITARY BALANCE.) UNLESS, THEREFORE, THE IRAQIS PROVE SO OBDURATE AT THE FIRST TWO ENCOUNTERS AS TO MAKE IT OBVIOUS THAT THERE IS NO CHOICE BUT TO USE FORCE, THERE MUST BE THE POSSIBILITY THAT MEETINGS NOW COULD LEAD TO A PERIOD OF NEGOTIATION, WITH THE MAIN WEAPON ON THE ALLIED SIDE BEING THE CONTINUED EXERCISE OF FULL SANCTIONS, RATHER THAN THE THREAT OF FORCE.

8. EVEN WITHOUT ANY MEETINGS, THE IRAQIS WOULD STILL HAVE THE OPTION OF PREEMPTIVE PARTIAL WITHDRAWAL. THE US RESPONSE WOULD DEPEND LARGELY ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF SUCH A WITHDRAWAL. THE OBVIOUS US ANSWER WOULD BE THE RAPID MOVEMENT OF ALLIED FORCES TOWARDS THE NEW DE FACTO FRONTIER (PERHAPS WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF A UN FLAG IN DUE COURSE), RESTORATION OF THE AL SABAH AND THE MAINTENANCE OF THE FULL RANGE OF SANCTIONS UNTIL WITHDRAWAL WAS COMPLETE. SOME IN THE ADMINISTRATION SAY THAT A PARTIAL IRAQI WITHDRAWAL NEED NOT PREVENT AN ALLIED ATTACK. BUT CLEARLY IT WOULD BE HARDER TO JUSTIFY TO OPINION HERE.

9. WHATEVER HAPPENS, IMPLEMENTING THE SECURITY COUNCIL'S DEMANDS IS ONLY PART OF THE STORY. RIGHT FROM 2 AUGUST, THE PRESIDENT HAS HAD A FOURTH OBJECTIVE, TO SAFEGUARD THE PEACE AND STABILITY OF THE REGION. THE ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN CONSIDERING HOW BEST TO CONTAIN IRAQ MILITARILY ONCE THE GULF CRISIS IS OVER. IF IRAQ IS DEFEATED IN WAR, THE TASK WILL BE SIMPLER, THOUGH THE OVERALL MIDDLE EAST SITUATION COULD PROVE VOLATILE, AND THE AMERICAN POSITION COMPLICATED. IF THE GULF CRISIS IS RESOLVED SHORT OF

WAR, ESSENTIAL BUILDING BLOCKS IN CONTAINING IRAQ WOULD BE A CONTINUED US PRESENCE IN THE AREA, WITH GROUND TROOPS BEING DRAWN DOWN SO FAR AS POSSIBLE IN FAVOUR OF AIR AND NAVAL FORCES: A NETWORK OF ALLIANCES BETWEEN THE GULF STATES, BUT PERHAPS ALSO INCLUDING EGYPT AND MAYBE SYRIA OR TURKEY: AND AN ARMS CONTROL SYSTEM. THE MOST READILY IDENTIFIABLE ELEMENT OF THE LATTER WOULD BE CONTINUED CONTROLS ON THE EXPORT OF SENSITIVE ITEMS TO IRAQ. THE IDEAL ROUTE TO THAT OBJECTIVE WOULD BE THROUGH THE MODIFICATION OF THE EXISTING UN SANCTIONS, RATHER THAN THE IMPOSITION OF A NEW SET. THERE IS STILL HOWEVER MUCH DETAILED PLANNING TO BE DONE TO ESTABLISH WHICH ITEMS SHOULD BE CONTROLLED AND HOW. THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD WELCOME OUR IDEAS.

10. THE ADMINISTRATION HAVE NEVER EXPLICITLY SAID THAT THE DESTRUCTION OF IRAQI NBC CAPABILITY IS ONE OF THEIR OBJECTIVES. BUT THE LIMITATION AND FRUSTRATION OF THAT CAPABILITY ARE CLEARLY IMPORTANT FOR THE FUTURE STABILITY OF THE MIDDLE EAST. THE SUBJECT OF A NUCLEAR FREE MIDDLE EAST WAS BROACHED DURING THE 10-11 DECEMBER TALKS WITH SHEVARDNAZE AND WITH SHAMIR, BUT WITHOUT ANY DEFINITIVE RESULT. IT MAY IN PRACTICE BE EASIER TO PROCEED THROUGH CONTINUED EXPORT CONTROLS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CSBMS THAN TO GO STRAIGHT FOR AN OUTRIGHT REGIONAL BAN, NOT LEAST BECAUSE OF THE WAY THAT THIS QUESTION LINKS UP WITH THE WIDER ARAB/ISRAEL PROBLEM.

11. FINALLY, ARAB-ISRAEL. THE AMERICANS OF COURSE ACCEPT THE IMPORTANCE OF PROGRESS. BUT THE ADMINISTRATION ALSO WANT TO AVOID ANYTHING WHICH APPEARS TO REWARD SADDAM HUSSEIN FOR HIS AGGRESSION, OR WHICH MIGHT ENABLE HIM TO CLAIM THE ROLE OF A HERO IN THE ARAB/ISRAEL STRUGGLE. THEY ARE VERY CONSCIOUS TOO OF WHAT THEY SEE AS THE PRESENT POLITICAL REALITIES IN ISRAEL: A PEACE MOVEMENT WHICH HAS BEEN OBLITERATED BY RECENT EVENTS, AND A GOVERNMENT WHICH WOULD HAVE VERY LITTLE DOMESTIC ROOM FOR MANOEUVRE, EVEN IF IT WANTED TO BE FLEXIBLE. AT PRESENT, THEY SEE A GREATER NEED TO REASSURE AND KEEP THE ISRAELIS ON SIDE THAN FOR MORE PRESSURE ON THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT. HENCE THEIR PRESENT SCEPTICISM AS TO THE UTILITY OF TALKING NOW ABOUT AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OR EVEN A ROLE FOR THE PERMANENT FIVE. ON THE OTHER HAND, THEY BELIEVE THAT, PROVIDED THAT SADDAM HUSSEIN CAN BE DEALT WITH, THERE OUGHT IN THE FUTURE TO BE MORE ROOM FOR MANOEUVRE BETWEEN THE ARAB STATES AND ISRAEL, WITH THE

ESTABLISHMENT OF CSBMS AS THE FIRST STEP TOWARD EXPLOITING IT.

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