

DESKBY 202230Z

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED
FM WASHINGTON
TO DESKBY 202230Z FCG
TELNO 3096
OF 202222Z DECEMBER 90
AND TO DESKBY 202230Z CABINET OFFICE
INFO IMMEDIATE CAIRO, BAGHDAD, OTHER GULF POSTS
INFO IMMEDIATE PARIS, ROME, MOSCOW, PEKING, UKMIS NEW YORK
INFO IMMEDIATE UKDEL NATO, MODUK, ACTOR

SIC

PLEASE PASS URGENTLY TO PRIME MINISTER'S PARTY ABOARD THE
AIRCRAFT

IRAQ/KUWAIT; READINESS OF US FORCES

SUMMARY

1. EMBARRASSMENT IN WASHINGTON AT COMMENTS BY THE DEPUTY
COMMANDER OF US FORCES IN THE GULF THAT AMERICAN TROOPS WILL
NOT BE READY FOR OFFENSIVE ACTION BY 15 JANUARY.

DETAIL

2. GEN SCHWARZKOPF'S DEPUTY, LT GEN CALVIN WALLER, SAID IN
AN INTERVIEW WITH REPORTERS ON 19 DECEMBER THAT HIS TROOPS
QUOTE WILL NOT BE READY FOR COMBAT ACTIVITIES UNQUOTE BY 15
JANUARY AND HE COULD NOT IMAGINE THAT PRESIDENT BUSH WOULD
ORDER AN OFFENSIVE THAT SOON. HE SAID THAT MAJOR AMERICAN
REINFORCEMENTS STILL IN TRANSIT FROM EUROPE AND THE US WOULD
NOT BE COMBAT-READY UNTIL QUOTE SOMETIME BETWEEN 15 JANUARY
AND THE MIDDLE OF FEBRUARY UNQUOTE. HE WOULD ADVISE DEFENCE
SECRETARY CHENEY AND GENERAL POWELL THAT QUOTE UNTIL OUR FULL
COMPLEMENT OF FORCES ARE ON THE GROUND... WE SHOULD NOT
INITIATE HOSTILE ACTIVITIES UNQUOTE.

3. WALLER'S COMMENTS HAVE EMBARRASSED THE PENTAGON. THE
CONTEXT AND EMPHASIS RECALL SIMILAR INDISCRETIONS BY GENERAL
DUGAN EARLIER IN THE YEAR (OUR TELNO 2246). THE WHITE HOUSE
HAVE ATTEMPTED TO DOWNPLAY WALLER'S COMMENTS. FITZWATER SAID
ON 20 DECEMBER THAT, WHILE US FORCES MIGHT NOT BE AS READY AS
THEY WOULD LIKE TO BE FOR ALL THE CONTINGENCIES, THEY WOULD
BE READY TO DO WHATEVER THEY WERE CALLED UPON TO DO.

(AJP/CHY)

/...COMMENT

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COMMENT

4. GEN WALLER'S REVELATIONS WILL NOT HAVE COME AS A SURPRISE TO YOU, OR TO THE BETTER INFORMED AMONG THE US PUBLIC. 1 FEBRUARY HAS BEEN QUOTED MORE OFTEN THAN NOT AS THE DATE FOR THE COMPLETION OF COMBAT-READY BUILD UP. BAKER TOLD THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON 26 NOVEMBER THAT IN TERMS OF US MILITARY PREPARATIONS, A COUPLE OF WEEKS SLIPPAGE WAS POSSIBLE EVEN AFTER 15 JANUARY (FCO TELNO 989). CHENEY AND POWELL MADE SIMILAR PUBLIC STATEMENTS LAST WEEK, THOUGH IN MORE GUARDED TERMS, AND CHENEY SAID ON 18 DECEMBER THAT WHILE MOST US FORCES WOULD BE IN POSITION BY 15 JANUARY, TIME WOULD BE NEEDED TO ACCLIMATISE THE TROOPS AND MATCH THEM TO THEIR EQUIPMENT.

5. THE ADMINISTRATION HAVE HOWEVER PLACED INCREASING EMPHASIS ON 15 JANUARY AS A DEADLINE, IN AN EFFORT TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE IRAQIS, LEAVING THE IMPRESSION THAT SADDAM HUSSEIN COULD BE AT DIRECT RISK FROM THE FIRST HOURS OF 16 JANUARY ONWARDS. BY SPEAKING SO BALDLY WALLER HAS DAMAGED THIS APPROACH AND UNDERCUT ADMINISTRATION EFFORTS TO PERSUADE IRAQ TO AGREE TO A BAKER/SADDAM MEETING BEFORE 12 JANUARY.

6. I WOULD NOT OTHERWISE BE INCLINED TO TAKE WHAT HAS HAPPENED TOO SERIOUSLY. US FREEDOM OF MANOEUVRE AFTER 15 JANUARY HAS NOT BEEN MATERIALLY AFFECTED. THE US AIR FORCES, WHICH WOULD BEAR THE BRUNT OF THE INITIAL ACTION, ARE READY. AND OUR CONTACTS IN THE PENTAGON HAVE EMPHASISED THAT US GROUND FORCES WILL BE PREPARED TO ACT ON 16 JANUARY IF ORDERED TO DO SO, THOUGH BETTER PLACED TO ATTACK SOMEWHAT LATER. PROVIDED SADDAM HUSSEIN IS IN NO DOUBT HE WILL BE ATTACKED AT SOME TIME - AND NOTHING WALLER SAID IMPLIED ANYTHING ELSE - HIS POLICY DILEMMA WILL NOT BE EASED BY UNCERTAINTY AS TO EXACTLY WHEN THE FIRING WILL START.

WOOD