

PRIORITY

CONFIDENTIAL

*Seen by President Bush  
his underlines what  
we were discussing  
in the car.*

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FM PARIS

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 1584

OF 211508Z DECEMBER 90

INFO PRIORITY MODUK, UKMIS NEW YORK, WASHINGTON, ACTOR, RIYADH

INFO PRIORITY MOSCOW, PEKING, ROME, UKDEL NATO, UKREP BRUSSELS

*Paris*

MY TELNO 1571: IRAQ/KUWAIT

SUMMARY

1. FRANCE DOES NOT WANT TO LAUNCH A COMPETING DIALOGUE WITH IRAQ. BUT POSSIBILITY OF BILATERAL CONTACT AFTER 4 JANUARY NOT RULED OUT, IN THE ABSENCE OF US/IRAQ TALKS.

DETAIL

2. ADMIRAL LANXADE (MITTERRAND'S DEFENCE ADVISER) CONFIRMED TO ME ON 21 DECEMBER, THAT ONE OF THE MAIN PURPOSES OF MITTERRAND'S PRESS CONFERENCE ON 19 DECEMBER (TUR) HAD BEEN TO PREPARE FRENCH PUBLIC OPINION FOR WAR. BUT HE ADDED THAT MITTERRAND REMAINED CONCERNED THAT THERE MIGHT BE NO WESTERN CONTACT WITH SADDAM HUSSEIN BEFORE THE 15 JANUARY DEADLINE. AT A LATER POINT HE REMARKED THAT SADDAM HUSSEIN WOULD WANT GUARANTEES THAT HE WOULD NOT BE ATTACKED IF HE BEGAN, BUT HAD NOT COMPLETED, A WITHDRAWAL FROM KUWAIT BY 15 JANUARY (HE WOULD BE MILITARILY VULNERABLE DURING THE RETREAT). THIS WAS THE SORT OF ISSUE THAT LANXADE EXPECTED TO BE DISCUSSED IN ANY US/IRAQ TALKS.

3. LEVITTE (QUAI ASIA DIRECTOR) TOLD US SEPARATELY ON 20 DECEMBER THAT DUMAS DID NOT FEEL THAT HIS HANDS WERE TIED OVER DIRECT CONTACT WITH IRAQ AFTER 4 JANUARY.

COMMENT

4. I THINK IT IS INCONCEIVABLE THAT MITTERRAND HIMSELF WOULD VISIT BAGHDAD, AS EYSKENS HAS SUGGESTED (ROME TELNO 1135). IT WOULD BE QUITE OUT OF CHARACTER FOR HIM TO PUT HIMSELF IN THE FIRING LINE IN SUCH A WAY. BUT THE FRENCH HAVE NEVER RULED OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF SOME BILATERAL CONTACT (MOST LIKELY BETWEEN DUMAS AND TARIQ AZIZ), IF NO US/IRAQ TALKS TAKE PLACE BY 3 JANUARY. AS OUR TUR POINTED OUT, MITTERRAND REMAINS VERY AWARE OF THE RISK OF LAUNCHING A COMPETING DIALOGUE. BUT THE COMMENTS IN PARA 2 AND 3 (THOUGH NO MORE THAN STRAWS IN THE WIND) SHOW THAT THE IDEA IS ALIVE.

FERGUSSON

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