

CONFIDENTIAL
UK COMMS ONLY
FM RIYADH
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELNO 1382

✓
ADVANCE COPY

OF 241043Z DECEMBER 90
INFO PRIORITY MODUK, JHQ HIGH WYCOMBE, CAIRO, WASHINGTON
INFO PRIORITY, GULF POSTS, BAGHDAD, TEHRAN, UKMIS GENEVA
INFO PRIORITY PARIS, UKMIS NEW YORK

SIC AAA/I9M

DISCUSSION WITH CROWN PRINCE

1. DURING THE CROWN PRINCE'S LUNCH ON 23 DECEMBER FOR THE PRINCE OF WALES, I HAD SOME TALK ABOUT THE KUWAIT CRISIS WITH PRINCE ABDULLA. THE MAIN POINTS OF INTEREST TO EMERGE WERE:

A) AN UNABATED HOSTILITY TOWARDS SADDAM HUSSEIN - A THUG AND A CRIMINAL - COUPLED WITH SIGNS OF GREATER DOUBT WHETHER HE WOULD WITHDRAW PEACEFULLY THAN I FOUND WHEN I SAW THE CROWN PRINCE LAST MONTH. SIGNIFICANTLY PRINCE ABDULLA (WHO HAS INCIDENTALLY HAD MORE DIFFICULTY THAN THE KING OR SULTAN IN CONTEMPLATING THE PROSPECT OF WAR WITH IRAQ) ASSERTED, WHEN I RAISED THE PROSPECT OF SADDAM TRYING TO SPIN OUT WITHDRAWAL TO TEST THE ALLIANCE'S RESOLVE, THAT WE COULD AFFORD NO MORE THAN A FEW DAYS GRACE PERIOD TO EVALUATE THE POSITION. TO WAIT LONGER MEANT LOSING MOMENTUM. ABDULLA WAS CERTAIN THAT SAUDI ARABIA AND HER TWO MAIN ARAB PARTNERS, EGYPT AND SYRIA WOULD NOT FALTER B) ABDULLA WAS CONVINCED IRAQ'S NEXT RULER (HE HOPED AS A RESULT OF SADDAM'S EARLY OVERTHROW) WOULD COME FROM WITHIN THE ARMY. THE BAATH PARTY HAD SPAWNED SADDAM BUT IT WAS NOW A SHELL. THE POWER BASE LAY IN THE ARMY. GIVEN IRAQ'S PROPENSITY FOR GOVERNMENT BY STRONGMEN, SAUDI ARABIA WOULD HAVE TO KEEP HER GUARD HIGHER HENCEFORWARD. HE STRESSED AGAIN THE NEED TO CUT IRAQ'S MILITARY CAPACITY DOWN TO A SIZE MORE IN BALANCE WITH HER NEIGHBOURS, WHILE SAUDI ARABIA'S MILITARY STRENGTH WOULD HAVE TO BE INCREASED.

C) THE GCC HAD TO BE TURNED INTO THE CORE OF ARABIA'S SECURITY. ABDULLA DISCOUNTED SUGGESTIONS OF RECENT OMANI EQUIVOCATION OVER FACING UP TO IRAQ. HE WAS CONFIDENT THE DOHA SUMMIT WOULD COME OUT WITH A CLEAR MESSAGE TO BAGHDAD ON UNCONDITIONAL WITHDRAWAL.

D) AN EXPRESSION OF APPRECIATION FOR OUR ROLE IN ADVISING THE NATIONAL GUARD ON MOBILISATION SINCE THE START OF THE CRISIS. HE WAS GRATEFUL TO THE DEFENCE SECRETARY FOR HAVING AGREED TO EXTEND BRIG COCKING'S APPOINTMENT DURING THIS CRITICAL TIME.

2. I SOUNDED OUT PRINCE ABDULLA ON THE ISSUE OF THE HANDLING OF THE LARGE NUMBERS OF IRAQI POWS LIKELY TO EMERGE FROM A CONFLICT, AND MENTIONED THE CONCERN OF THE ICRC TO HAVE A HAND IN THEIR TREATMENT. THIS BROUGHT THE OLD BEDOUIN OUT IN ABDULLA WHO CLAIMED THAT MOST PRISONERS WOULD BE ROUNDED UP IN KUWAIT, AND SHOULD BE HELD THERE. THOSE WHO SURRENDERED PEACEFULLY MERITED FAIR TREATMENT, BUT THOSE CAPTURED RESISTING MERITED NO MORE THAN TO BE DISARMED, HELD WITH FOOD AND WATER FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS AND THEN TIPPED BACK INTO IRAQ. THE TASK OF TRYING TO JUSTIFY THE GENEVA CONVENTION TO A SCEPTICAL ABDULLA, AND IN ARABIC, DEFEATED ME. (FORTUNATELY OUR CONTACTS IN THE MFA, WITH WHOM WE HAD RAISED THIS ISSUE ON INSTRUCTIONS, APPEAR TO BE TAKING A MORE CONTEMPORARY VIEW OF THIS POTENTIALLY LARGE PROBLEM.)

3. IN A SEPARATE CONVERSATION DURING THE CROWN PRINCE'S LUNCH PRINCE SULTAN (WHO HAD PUT OFF A LUNCH IN HONOUR OF THE FRENCH DEFENCE MINISTER) TOLD ME HE NOW SAW NO REAL SIGNS FROM BAGHDAD THAT SADDAM WOULD COMPLY WITH SCR 678'S DEADLINE. SADDAM LOOKED LIKELY TO TRY TO SPIN THINGS OUT. SULTAN WELCOMED THE PRINCE OF WALES' VISIT FOR THE SIGNAL OF COMMON PURPOSE IT WOULD SEND TO BAGHDAD. BOTH HE AND ABDULLA EXPRESSED PLEASURE AT THE PRIME MINISTER'S FORTHCOMING VISIT AS AN EARLY CHANCE TO GET ACQUAINTED.

MUNRO

YYYY

DISTRIBUTION

40

ADVANCE 40

IRAQ/KUWAIT	HD/SED
PS	HD/UND
PS/MR HOGG	MR PRIDDLE, DEPT OF ENERGY
PS/MR LENNOX-BOYD	MR APPEYARD CABINET OFFICE
PS/S OF S FOR DEFENCE	(BY TUBE H29)
PS/PUS	MR W D REEVES CABINET OFFICE
MR FAIRWEATHER	(BY TUBE H29)
MR BROOMFIELD	MR D J GOWAN CABINET OFFICE
MR SLATER	(BY TUBE H29)
MR GORE-BOOTH	MR BARRASS, CABINET OFFICE
MR GOULDEN	(BY TUBE H29)
MR JAY	PS/NUMBER 10 DOWNING ST
MR BERMAN (LEGAL ADVISERS)	SIR P CRADOCK, 10 DOWNING ST
HD/MED	CABINET OFFICE DIO
HD/AMD	(BY TUBE H29)
HD/CONSULAR D	SIR ROBIN BUTLER, CAB OFFICE
HD/ECD(E)	AUS (C) MODUK
HD/NAD	HD/SEC (O) (C) MODUK
HD/NEWS D	MR LS SMITH BANK ENGLAND
HD/NENAD	MR WICKS HMT
HD/NPDD	EMERGENCY UNIT
HD/SECPOL D	RESIDENT CLERK
10000	