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FM ROME

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 1154

OF 281415Z DECEMBER 90

INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, BONN, PARIS, BAGHDAD

INFO PRIORITY OTHER EC POSTS

ROME TELNO 1144: FUTURE OF EMBASSIES IN BAGHDAD

SUMMARY

1. ITALIAN MFA GIVE MORE DETAILS OF THEIR PLANS. THEY INCLINE TOWARDS OUR OPTION (II), BECAUSE ONLY A FEW ITALIANS NOW REQUIRE CONSULAR PROTECTION IN IRAQ.

DETAIL

2. WE SPOKE AGAIN TO PLAJA (HEAD OF MFA CRISIS UNIT). HE SAID THAT ITALY NOW PLANNED TO WITHDRAW ALL BUT SEVEN OF ITS EMBASSY STAFF BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR. THOSE TO REMAIN WOULD BE THE AMBASSADOR, HIS DEPUTY (BETTARINI), A CYPHER CLERK, A COMMUNICATOR AND THREE ARAB-BORN (BUT ITALIAN NATIONAL) LOCAL STAFF.

3. PLAJA ADDED THAT THERE WERE HARDLY ANY ITALIAN CITIZENS LEFT IN IRAQ. INDEED, THE ONLY GROUP OF CONCERN TO THE ITALIAN EMBASSY WERE THE TEN OR SO PEACE ACTIVISTS WHO FLITTED BETWEEN BAGHDAD AND THE IRAQ-KUWAIT BORDER. THEY HAD BEEN ADVISED ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION TO LEAVE IRAQ. PLAJA THEREFORE EXPECTED THAT ONCE HOSTILITIES BEGAN, ITALY WOULD SEEK TO WITHDRAW ITS REMAINING DIPLOMATIC STAFF FROM BAGHDAD AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

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