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IRAQ/KUWAIT: OMANI VIEWS OF SITUATION

SUMMARY

1. OMANI EQUIVALENT OF NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER FORECASTS IRAQI WITHDRAWAL AT ELEVENTH HOUR BUT EXPRESSES DOUBT ABOUT CONSEQUENCES.

DETAIL

2. WHEN I CALLED ON GENERAL ALI MAJID, MINISTER OF PALACE OFFICE AFFAIRS ON 31 DECEMBER, I TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK HIM HOW HE SAW THE KUWAIT CRISIS DEVELOPING.

3. HE SAID THAT HE BELIEVED THAT THE IRAQIS WOULD STAY IN KUWAIT UNTIL THE LAST MOMENT AND WOULD THEN WITHDRAW. HE WONDERED HOWEVER WHERE THIS LEFT THE MULTINATIONAL FORCE. HE ALSO WONDERED WHETHER SADDAM HUSSEIN WOULD SURVIVE. WHATEVER HAPPENED, HE FELT SURE THAT THE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE REGION AND FOR THE WEST WOULD BE FELT OVER A LONG PERIOD.

4. I SUGGESTED THAT THERE WAS A GRAVE DANGER OF FURTHER MISCALCULATION BY SADDAM HUSSEIN. IT MIGHT BE DIFFICULT TO DECIDE WHEN THE LAST MOMENT HAD ARRIVED. IT COULD BE THAT THE MULTINATIONAL FORCE COULD HAVE ALREADY STARTED TO MOVE AND IT MIGHT BE TOO LATE THEN TO STOP IT. HE AGREED. I QUESTIONED HOWEVER WHETHER WITHDRAWAL NECESSARILY MEANT THE END OF SADDAM HUSSEIN IN VIEW OF HIS GRIP ON THE COUNTRY AND ABILITY TO MANIPULATE THE PEOPLE. HE REMAINED OF THE VIEW THAT SADDAM HUSSEIN COULD NOT SURVIVE.

5. HE WONDERED ALOUD WHAT THE JORDANIANS AND YEMENIS WERE UP TO. HE SAID THINGS HAD GONE VERY QUIET IN BOTH COUNTRIES AND SPECULATED THAT THIS COULD PRESSAGE SOME KIND OF MILITARY ACTION BY THEM IN THE REAR IF IT CAME TO HOSTILITIES.

6. I SAID THAT IT WAS TO THE GOOD IF BOTH THESE COUNTRIES HAD QUIETENED DOWN AS IT WOULD FACILITATE BETTER RELATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA. I DOUBTED WHETHER EITHER COUNTRY WAS PREPARED TO JOIN WITH

IRAQ AGAINST THE MULTINATIONAL FORCE.

7. MENTIONING YEMEN GAVE ME A CUE TO ASK WHETHER THERE WERE ANY NEW DEVELOPMENTS OVER THE FRONTIER DISPUTE. HE SAID THERE WAS NOTHING NEW. OMAN'S POSITION WAS CLEAR AND UNCHANGEABLE.

8. I ASKED HOW HE SAW THE OMANI CONTINGENT'S ROLE IN ANY HOSTILITIES. HE SAID UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT IT WAS THERE TO FIGHT. HE CLEARLY MEANT IN AN OFFENSIVE AS WELL AS A DEFENSIVE CAPACITY.

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