

SECRET

FM AMMAN
TO PRIORITY MODUK
TELNO U/N
OF 021053Z JANUARY 91
AND TO PRIORITY FCO, TEL AVIV, RIYADH

SIC: U2G/I9M/ZAC

MODUK FOR DI(ROW), FCO FOR NENAD AND EMERGENCY UNIT, POSTS FOR DA, FROM DA.

SUBJ: JORDANIAN PERSPECTIVE ON GULF WAR HOSTILITIES AND JAF INVOLVEMENT

1. WHEN I MET GENERAL HAFIZ MAREI, ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF (INTELLIGENCE) OF JAF ON 1 JAN 91, I RAISED THE MATTER OF SCENARIOS WHICH MIGHT INVOLVE JORDAN IN A GULF WAR.
2. HE STRESSED THAT THE CURRENT WORK ON FIELD DEFENCES IN THE JORDAN VALLEY EASTERN APPROACHES IMPLIED NO OFFENSIVE INTENT, AND WAS AIMED EQUALLY AT MAINTAINING THE MORAL OF THE JORDANIAN PUBLIC AS AT PROVIDING A DETERRENT AGAINST AN IDF GROUND FORCES INCURSION, A SCENARIO WHICH HE AGREED WAS UNLIKELY TO BE ISRAEL'S OVERALL ADVANTAGE IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES. BUT HE MADE THE POINT THAT JAF HAD A DUTY TO TAKE SENSIBLE PRECAUTIONS AGAINST ATTACK FROM ANY SIDE, WHETHER FROM ISRAEL, SYRIA OR IRAQ. (THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME I HAD HEARD A SENIOR JAF STAFF OFFICER ACKNOWLEDGE THE POSSIBILITY OF AN IRAQI THREAT)
3. TURNING TO THE AIR THREAT, HE POINTED OUT THAT JAF HAD NO ABILITY TO INTERCEPT MISSILES. HE AGREED THAT AN ISRAELI RETALIATORY ATTACK ON IRAQ WOULD POSE VERY DIFFICULT PROBLEMS FOR JORDAN, BUT HE WAS CLEAR THAT RJAF WOULD BE ORDERED TO ENGAGE ANY FOREIGN MILITARY AIRCRAFT WHICH INVADED JORDAN'S AIRSPACE, WHEREVER THEY CAME FROM. HE FELT THAT QUOTE TWO OR THREE AIRCRAFT UNQUOTE MIGHT ESCAPE DETECTION, BUT THAT LARGE NUMBERS OF AIRCRAFT WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO TRANSIT JORDAN WITHOUT BEING ATTACKED. HE QUESTIONED WHETHER IT WAS EVEN NECESSARY FOR ISRAEL TO CROSS JORDANIAN AIRSPACE IN RETALIATORY ATTACKS AGAINST IRAQ, WHEN THEY COULD JUST AS EASILY CROSS SAUDI AIRSPACE, OPERATING OUT OF AIR BASES IN SOUTHERN ISRAEL. I SUGGESTED THAT THE SAUDIS

MIGHT FIND THIS VERY DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT DESPITE THEIR DISPUTE WITH IRAQ.

4. ON THE DEGREE OF CONTACT WHICH JORDAN HAD WITH ISRAEL, GEN MAREI SAID THAT THE UN ARMISTICE COMMITTEE PROVIDED A USEFUL FORUM FOR DISCUSSION, AND OTHER CONTACTS WERE ARRANGED FROM TIME TO TIME. HE RE-AFFIRMED THE LINE TAKEN THROUGHOUT THE CRISIS BY JAF CGS, GEN FATHI ABU TALEB, THAT PROVIDED ISRAEL DID NOT BECOME INVOLVED IN HOSTILITIES, JORDAN COULD ALSO STAY OUT OF A GULF WAR.

5. COMMENT: GEN MAR APPEARS TO HAVE A FIRM GRASP OF THE REALITIES OF JAF'S UNENVIABLE POSITION AS THE MEAT IN THE SANDWICH. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE PRO-IRAQI RHETORIC STILL ATTRIBUTED TO SENIOR POLITICAL FIGURES IN JORDANIAN PRESS REPORTS AND THE PRAGMATISM NOW DISPLAYED BY HIM AND OTHER SENIOR JAF STAFF WHOM I HAVE VISITED RECENTLY IS REMARKABLE. HE WAS ALSO MUCH MORE FORTHCOMING THAN IN OUR PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS ON THE CRISIS.

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