

MIDDLE EAST: ADVANCE COPIES

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Saudi Arabia
IMMEDIATE

PS
PS/SIR I GILMOUR
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MR J C MOBERLY

NO 10 DOWNING STREET
~~CABINET OFFICE~~ ~~SIR GILMOUR~~
CABINET OFFICE DIO

HD/NEHAD
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GR 453

CONFIDENTIAL

FM JEDDA 061100Z FEB

TO IMMEDIATE FCO TELNO 117 OF 6 FEB

INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON, KUWAIT DOHA ABU DHABI DUBAI
BAHRAIN MUSCAT AND CAIRO

SAUDI INTERNAL

1. ON THE NIGHT OF 1/2 FEBRUARY THERE WAS ANOTHER VIOLENT INCIDENT IN QATIF.

2. THE INCIDENT PROBABLY BEGAN AFTER A RELIGIOUS CEREMONY, PROBABLY FRIDAY NOON PRAYERS, BUT CONTINUED WELL INTO THE NIGHT. AT LEAST TWO POLICEMEN WERE KILLED, BOTH OF THEM GUARDS ON BANKS (THE SAUDI BRITISH AND THE LOCALLY-OWNED RIYADH BANKS). THERE WAS OTHER DAMAGE TO PROPERTY, NOTABLY VEHICLES. THERE WERE SOME CAUALTIES AND THE POLICE MADE MANY ARRESTS. DETAILS, PARTICULARLY ON CASUALTIES AND ARRESTS, ARE HARD TO COME BY AND IMPOSSIBLE TO VERIFY. TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS WITH QATIF WERE CUT FOR MOST OF FRIDAY AND SATURDAY. THE ATMOSPHERE OUTSIDE QATIF (IE IN SUNNI AREAS LIKE DAMMAM) IS NORMAL, WITHOUT THE TENSION THAT FOLLOWED THE INCIDENTS IN DECEMBER.

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ATMOSPHERE OUTSIDE QATIF (IE IN SUNNI AREAS LIKE DAMMAM) IS NORMAL, WITHOUT THE TENSION THAT FOLLOWED THE INCIDENTS IN DECEMBER.

2. THE US CONSUL-GENERAL IN DHAHRAN BELIEVES THAT QATIF HAS BEEN UNSETTLED SINCE DECEMBER INCIDENTS; THE LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE (SOME ESTIMATES SUGGEST 170) STILL DETAINED FROM DECEMBER HAS CAUSED RESENTMENT SEMI COLON AND IRANIAN RADIO PROPAGANDA IS HAVING SOME EFFEL, W5-?)6 IN STIRRING UP ANTI-AMERICAN FEELING. LINDSTROM ALSO HAS COPIES OF INFLAMMATORY ANTI-AMERICAN LEAFLETS BEING DISTRIBUTED IN THE AREA. HE IS INCLINED TO THINK THAT ALTHOUGH THE SITUATION DOES NOT REPRESENT A SIGNIFICANT THREAT TO STABILITY, IT SHOULD BE TREATED MORE SERIOUSLY BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES THAN IT IS.

3. IT WAS TO BE FEARED THAT MECCA IN NOVEMBER AND QATIF IN DECEMBER MIGHT START A FASHION FOR VIOLENT OUTBURSTS AGAINST THE REGIME. IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO SAY THAT THESE FEARS HAVE NOW BEEN CONFIRMED; BUT THE SITUATION, PARTICULARLY IN THE SHIA AREAS IN THE EAST, CLEARLY NEEDS CLOSE MONITORING. WE WOULD NOT ACCEPT UNCRITICALLY LINDSTROM'S ASSESSMENTS OF SAUDI OFFICIAL ACTIVITY (OR LACK OF IT). THERE ARE SIGNS THAT THEY ARE USING STICK AND CARROT; PRINCE NAIF TOLD THE INDIAN AMBASSADOR RECENTLY THAT "HUNDREDS" OF PEOPLE SYMPATHETIC TO THE IDEAS OF THE MECCA INSURGENTS HAD BEEN ARRESTED SINCE NOVEMBER, ACROSS THE COUNTRY SEMI COLON AND THE GOVERNMENT THIS WEEK ANNOUNCED SR95M OF CONTRACTS TO IMPROVE THE MUNICIPAL SERVICES IN SIHAT (A LARGELY SHIA TOWN NEAR QATIF, AND THE STARTING POINT OF THE DECEMBER DISTURBANCES). THE MOST DIFFICULT FACTOR FOR THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT TO CONTROL, HOWEVER, IS THE EXTERNAL DIMENSION, THE ANTI-AMERICAN FLAVOUR OF THE LATEST INCIDENT, AND THE IRANIAN ASPECT, TEND TO REINFORCE PRINCE FAHD'S CLAIM (MY TELNO 110) THAT EVENTS IN THE AREA CANNOT BE ISOLATED FROM ONE ANOTHER -- AND SPECIFICALLY NOT FROM RESENTMENT WD US INVOLVEMENT IN THE CAMP DAVID PROCESS.

CRAIG

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