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FM JEDDA 270930Z MAY  
TO PRIORITY FCO  
TELNO 407 OF 27 MAY 80

*Prime Minister*

*To see all*

*M.A.D.*

*28/5*

ANGLO / SAUDI RELATIONS

1. WE DISTRIBUTED YOUR SPEECH, WITH EXTRACTS TRANSLATED INTO ARABIC, TO ALL NEWSPAPERS AND SAUDI PRESS AGENCY ON FRIDAY 23 MAY.
2. BOTH ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY NEWSPAPERS QUOTING AGENCIES, REPORTED THE SPEECH ON 24 MAY. ARAB NEWS, DETECTING "AN ALMOST PLAINTIVE NOTE IN CARRINGTON'S APPEAL TO THE KINGDOM'S ROYAL FAMILY TO FORGIVE AND FORGET", SAYS THAT THE REFERENCE TO THE HOPE THAT HIGH LEVEL CONTACTS WILL SOON BE RESUMED, HAS BEEN "TAKEN BY AIDES TO MEAN THE FOREIGN SECRETARY IS READY TO MAKE A PERSONAL VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA SOON IF INVITED". I PRESUME THIS REFLECTS BRIEFING IN LONDON: WE HAVE NOT, OF COURSE, DISCUSSED YOUR TELNO 292 OUTSIDE THE EMBASSY.
3. THE ONLY ARABIC LANGUAGE PAPER TO REPORT ON THE SPEECH, AL MEDINA, HAD AN UNSYMPATHETIC FRONT PAGE REPORT FROM A CORRESPONDENT IN LONDON WHO ATTENDED THE MEA MEETING. HE CLAIMED THAT YOU DID NOT MAKE AN APOLOGY BUT ONLY EXPRESSED ANEW YOUR REGRET OVER THE FILM, AND THAT YOU HAD BEEN IMPELLED TO TRY TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA BY THE DECLINING ECONOMIC SITUATION IN BRITAIN. HE CLAIMED THAT YOU WERE UPSET BY THE CORRESPONDENT'S OWN QUESTION ON BRITAIN'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY AND "GAVE AN OBSCURE ANSWER CONTAINING NOTHING NEW".
4. ARTICLES REPORTING THE SPEECH IN NEWSPAPERS PUBLISHED ABROAD (INCLUDING THE ARABIC NEWSPAPER AL SHAK AL AWSAT, PUBLISHED IN LONDON) WERE NOT CENSORED: IT WAS FROM THIS SOURCE THAT MY MFA CONTACT, KABBANI, FIRST HEARD OF YOUR SPEECH.

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5. WE UNDERSTAND FROM A SAUDI JOURNALIST THAT THERE IS A MINISTRY OF INFORMATION BAN ON THE PUBLICATION OF ITEMS CONCERNING THE FILM. IF THIS IS TRUE, THEN IT IS THE ARTICLES REFERRED TO IN PARAS 2 AND 3 ABOVE THAT REQUIRE EXPLANATION, NOT THE ABSENCE OF REPORTING OR COMMENT IN THE OTHER LOCAL PAPERS. THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT MACHINE GRINDS SLOWLY, UNTIL THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION REACTS TO THE SPEECH, THERE WILL PROBABLY BE LITTLE REFERENCE TO IT IN THE PRESS HERE. AND BY THE TIME THE MINISTRY DOES ACT, THE NEWS WILL BE TOO OLD TO MERIT PRINTING.

6. SAUDI PRESS REPORTED ON 25 MAY PRINCE FAHD'S INTERVIEW WITH KUWAITI NEWSPAPER AL RAI AL AAM. ON THE FILM, FAHD SAID THAT QUOTE WE CANNOT ADVISE THE BRITISH GOVERNEMENT ON WHAT IT SHOULD DOBUT WE BELIEVE THAT ENLIGHTENING AND PROTECTING PEOPLE FROM THE FORCES OF FORGERY AND DECEPTION IS PART OF THE DUTIES OF GOVERNMENTS EVERYWHERE, HOWEVER THEIR SYSTEMS DIFFER UNQUOTE.

GRAY

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2

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