

PP ABU DHABI

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GRS 400

UNCLASSIFIED

FROM JEDDA 151025Z APR 85

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TEL NO 214 OF 15TH APRIL 1985

INFO IMMEDIATE RIYADH

INFO PRIORITY ABU DHABI, DOHA, DUBAI, BAHRAIN, MUSCAT, KUWAIT, WASHINGTON.

FROM H OF C (AMBASSADOR IS IN RIYADH)

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT : SAUDI PRESS COVERAGE

1. THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO RIYADH ON 14 APRIL HAS GIVEN RISE TO THE WARMEST AND MOST EXTENSIVE COVERAGE OF BRITAIN IN THE SAUDI PRESS SINCE CROWN PRINCE ABDULLAH'S VISIT TO THE UK IN FEBRUARY 1984.
2. ALL LOCAL NEWSPAPERS (AS WELL AS SAUDI RADIO AND TV) REPORTED THE VISIT AS THEIR LEAD STORY ON 14 AND 15 APRIL. COVERAGE WAS FULL AND GENERALLY ACCURATE, AND MOST NEWSPAPERS REPORTED PROMINENTLY THE FACT THAT A LARGE NUMBER OF MINISTERS AND SENIOR PRINCES HAD TAKEN PART IN THE VISIT ON THE SAUDI SIDE. ON 15 APRIL THE PRESS LED WITH KING FAHD'S DESCRIPTION OF THE TALKS AS 'USEFUL', AND CARRIED BRIEF STATEMENTS BY THE SAUDI AMBASSADOR IN LONDON AND BY ME TO THE EFFECT THAT THE DISCUSSIONS HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL AND HAD COVERED BOTH REGIONAL AND BILATERAL TOPICS. THE JEDDA ARABIC-LANGUAGE DAILY 'OKAZ' AS WELL AS THE SAUDI INTERNATIONAL DAILY 'SHARQ AL-AWSAT' BOTH CARRIED INTERVIEWS WITH THE AMBASSADOR ON 14 APRIL, GIVING PROMINENCE TO HIS REMARKS ON THE EXCELLENT STATE OF SAUDI-BRITISH RELATIONS.



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PS/LADY YOUNG
PS/MR LUCE
PS/MR RAISON
PS/MR RENTON
PS/PUS
SIR W HARDING
~~DR WILSON~~
MR VEREKER (ODA)
CABINET OFFICE

Proc. C. Nicholl
No 10 D. St.

BRITISH RELATIONS.

3. EDITORIAL COMMENT ON THE VISIT WAS SIMILARLY WARM. FOLLOWING THE LOCAL CUSTOM, MOST NEWSPAPERS SAW IT AS EVIDENCE OF SAUDI ARABIA'S WEIGHT IN REGIONAL AFFAIRS, THOUGH MOST ALSO SPOKE OF THE UK'S IMPORTANCE IN EUROPE AND HER LONG EXPERIENCE OF THE MIDDLE EAST. 'AL MADINA' ON 15 APRIL SPOKE APPROVINGLY OF BRITAIN'S CONDEMNATION OF ISRAELI STATEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. THE ONLY CARPING NOTE WAS STRUCK BY THE HABITUALLY ANTI-WESTERN 'AL NADWA', WHICH REFERRED (WHILE ADMITTING THAT ANGLO-SAUDI RELATIONS ARE GENERALLY GOOD) TO DIFFERENCES OF OPINION AND APPROACH ON NORTH SEA OIL AND ARAB/ISRAEL. BUT MOST NEWSPAPERS SPOKE IN VERY WARM TERMS OF THE UK AND OF THE PRIME MINISTER PERSONALLY. EVEN THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE 'SAUDI GAZETTE', RESPONSIBLE IN THE PAST FOR A NUMBER OF ANTI-BRITISH CAMPAIGNS, CARRIED AN EDITORIAL ON 14 APRIL WARMLY WELCOMING THE PRIME MINISTER TO SAUDI ARABIA, AND PRAISING 'HER TENACITY OF PURPOSE AND STRENGTH OF CHARACTER'.

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