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FM RIYADH

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELNO 321

OF 150600Z DECEMBER 85

INFO PRIORITY GULF POSTS, WASHINGTON, BAGHDAD, TEHRAN, PARIS

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MS

MY TELNO 317 : VISIT BY IRANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

1. I SPOKE TO THE DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER ON 14 DECEMBER ABOUT THE VELAYATI VISIT, HAVING ALSO HAD AN OPPORTUNITY ON 12 DECEMBER TO SPEAK TO THE IRANIAN CHARGE D'AFFAIRES.

2. MANSOURI SAID THAT THE VISIT HAD PRODUCED NOTHING, AND THAT THE SAUDIS CONSIDERED IT TO HAVE BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL. IT HAD REVEALED MORE OR LESS SIMILAR ATTITUDES ON AFGHANISTAN AND PALESTINE (ALTHOUGH THE IRANIANS WERE CONSIDERABLY MORE EXTREME ON THE LATTER THAN THE SAUDIS, SINCE THEY REJECTED THE FEZ RESOLUTION ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT IMPLICITLY RECOGNISED ISRAEL). BUT ON THE IRAN/IRAQ WAR THERE HAD BEEN NO MEETING OF MINDS. THE IRANIANS HAD MADE IT CLEAR THAT THEY WOULD CONTINUE TO FIGHT UNTIL SADDAM HUSSAIN HAD BEEN TOPPLED, AND WERE CRITICAL OF THE SAUDIS FOR THEIR ASSISTANCE TO IRAQ.

3. MANSOURI SAID THAT IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE IRANIANS INTERPRETED THE GCC SUMMIT DECLARATION AS A SOFTENING OF POSITION AND AS EVIDENCE THAT THE GCC NOW PUT IRAN AND IRAQ ON AN EQUAL FOOTING, AS NEUTRALS. THIS WAS CLEARLY AN ATTEMPT TO NEUTRALISE SAUDI ARABIA, BUT THE IRANIANS WOULD NOT SUCCEED. THE SAUDIS HAD TOLD THEM THAT, EVEN IF THEY HAD BEEN NEUTRAL BETWEEN THE TWO BELLIGERENTS, IRAQ WAS CALLING FOR PEACE, UNLIKE IRAN.

4. HAVING BEEN TOLD BY THE IRANIAN CHARGE THAT, INsofar AS PART OF THE PURPOSE OF VELAYATI'S MISSION HAD BEEN TO DEVELOP RELATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA AND GCC COUNTRIES, IT HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL, I ASKED MANSOURI WHETHER THERE WAS ANY PROSPECT OF EXCHANGING AMBASSADORS WITH TEHRAN. (THE IRANIAN CHARGE EXPLAINED HEJAILAN'S ATTENDANCE (PARA 4 OF MY TUR) ON THE GROUNDS THAT HE HAD EARLIER BEEN INVOLVED IN NEGOTIATIONS OVER BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA.) MANSOURI SAID THAT THE EXCHANGE OF AMBASSADORS HAD NOT EVEN BEEN DISCUSSED. INDEED, ONCE VELAYATI'S ATTITUDE HAD BECOME CLEAR, THE SAUDIS HAD AVOIDED TALKING ABOUT BILATERAL RELATIONS ALTOGETHER, AND HAD CONFINED THEMSELVES TO LISTENING WITHOUT COMMENT. (I HAD NOT, AT THE TIME, SEEN ABU DHABI TELNO 230, PARA 4).

5. MANSOURI SAID THAT THE IRANIANS HAD TALKED A LOT ABOUT THE NEED TO REMOVE FOREIGN FLEETS FROM THE AREA. THE SAUDIS HAD POINTED OUT THAT THE CONTINUATION OF THE WAR WAS THE RAISON D'ETRE OF THEIR PRESENCE.

CONFIDENTIAL

16

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6. COMMENTING ON THE VISIT GENERALLY, MANSOURI SAID THAT THE IRANIANS HAD BEEN UNHAPPY WITH THE OUTCOME, AND HAD OBJECTED IN PARTICULAR TO PRINCE SAUD'S STATEMENT (PARA 3 OF MY TUR). HE THOUGHT THAT A COUNTER-STATEMENT WAS LIKELY TO COME FROM TEHRAN, WHICH HE EXPECTED TO BE "CONDESCENDING" IN TONE, AND BUILDING ON THE IRANIAN ASSUMPTION THAT THE GCC WAS NOW NEUTRAL.

7. HAVING HEARD FROM MY US COLLEAGUE THAT THE VELAYATI VISIT WAS LIKELY TO HAVE AFFECTED ADVERSELY THE OIC PEACE MISSION, I ASKED MANSOURI ABOUT THE PROSPECTS. HE SAID THAT THE NEXT OIC MEETING WOULD BE IN MOROCCO, AND GIVEN IRAN'S BAD RELATIONS MOROCCO THEY WERE UNLIKELY TO ATTEND, AT LEAST AT FOREIGN MINISTER LEVEL.

8. I HAVE HEARD THAT THE SAUDIS WERE UNENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT RECEIVING VELAYATI AT THIS TIME, BUT THAT THE IRANIANS PRESSED FOR ~~AN EARLY VISIT~~ ^{FOR AN EARLY VISIT} FROM MANSOURI'S DESCRIPTION, THE SAUDIS WERE JUSTIFIED IN TRYING TO POSTPONE IT.

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- 2 -
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