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FM RIYADH

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 703

OF 200845Z AUGUST 90

INFO PRIORITY MODUK, WASHINGTON, KUWAIT, BAGHDAD, CAIRO, ACTOR
INFO PRIORITY SANA'A, PARIS, CABINET OFFICE, MOSCOW, PEKING
INFO PRIORITY GULF POSTS, AMMAN, TEL AVIV, CANBERRA, ESC LONDON
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SIC AAA/I9M

IRAQ/KUWAIT: US DEFENCE SECRETARY'S PRESS CONFERENCE IN DHAHRAN

1. AT A PRESS CONFERENCE DURING HIS VISIT TO US TROOPS IN DHAHRAN, CHENEY EMPHASISED THAT US FORCES WERE IN SAUDI ARABIA AT THE REQUEST OF KING FAHD. THEY WOULD STAY FOR AS LONG AS THE SITUATION REQUIRED, AND LEAVE AS SOON AS THEIR TASK WAS COMPLETED, OR WHEN ASKED TO DO SO BY KING FAHD. HE ADDED THAT US FORCES WERE WORKING ALONGSIDE THE FORCES OF SAUDI ARABIA AND OTHER FOREIGN UNITS DEPLOYED IN THE GULF. THEY HAD A THREE FOLD MISSION: TO DETER FURTHER IRAQI AGGRESSION ('WE ARE MAKING IT CLEAR TO THE IRAQIS THAT IF THEY LAUNCH ANY ASSAULT ON SAUDI ARABIA THEY WILL BE MEETING AMERICAN AND SAUDI FORCES'): TO PROTECT SAUDI TERRITORY, IN COOPERATION WITH THE SAUDI ARMED FORCES: AND TO UNDERTAKE TRAINING PROGRAMMES AND MILITARY MANOEUVRES WITH THE SAUDI ARMED FORCES AND OTHERS IN THE REGION SO AS TO RAISE THE LATTER'S MILITARY CAPABILITIES.

COMMENT

2. THE INITIAL FEELING OF RELIEF AMONG SAUDIS AT THE DEPLOYMENT OF AMERICAN FORCES HAS BEGUN TO SUBSIDE, AND THE INEVITABLE QUESTIONS ARE BEING ASKED ABOUT US INTENTIONS. A REMARK TO THE PRESS BY CHENEY BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE FOR THE GULF TO THE EFFECT THAT US TROOPS WERE LIKELY TO BE IN SAUDI FOR A LONG TIME RAISED EYEBROWS AMONG OUR SAUDI CONTACTS. QUESTIONS ARE BEGINNING TO BE ASKED AS TO WHETHER THE AMERICANS REALLY INTEND TO LEAVE, AND ALSO WHO IS PAYING FOR THE DEPLOYMENT. THERE ARE ALSO SOME SIGNS OF CONCERN THAT THE SAUDI ARMED FORCES ARE BEING PUSHED TO ONE SIDE. THIS REACTION MAY SEEM UNGRATEFUL, BUT IT IS RELATED TO THE UNDERLYING

SENSITIVITIES ABOUT FOREIGN INTERVENTION (NEXT TWO WORDS UNDERLINED) PER SE. ACCORDING TO THE US EMBASSY, CHENEY'S REMARKS IN DHAHRAN WERE INTENDED TO PUT THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON THE QUESTION OF A CONTINUING US PRESENCE HERE. WE SHOULD MAINTAIN A SIMILAR LINE, AND WILL DO SO WITH GROWING NUMBER OF UK JOURNALITIST BEING LET IN.

3. ASSUMING WE (AND THE AMERICANS?) ARE MEEING MOST OF THE COSTS OF OUR RESPECTIVE DEPLOYMENTS, IT SEEMS TO ME THAT WE SHOULD NOW MAKE A VIRTUE OF NECESSITY, AND TRY ALSO TO NAIL THE NEGATIVE CRITICISM RELATING TO COSTS. THE SAUDIS ARE UNLIKELY TO WISH TO BROACH THE SUBJECT OF COST IN THEIR OWN MEDIA. BUT MIGHT IT BE POSSIBLE TO STIMULATE A WORLD SERVICE/ARABIC SERVICE ITEM OR INTERVIEW TO PUT RECORD STRAIGHT ON WHERE COSTS OF OUR CURRENT DEPLOYMENT FALL? IT WOULD BE HELPFUL P.R. HERE.

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