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GULF CRISIS: AUDIENCE WITH KING HUSSEIN

SUMMARY

1. KING HUSSEIN SUMMONS ME AND US AMBASSADOR. AFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO SANCTIONS. TARIQ AZIZ TO VISIT AMMAN LATER TODAY.

DETAIL

2. I WAS SUMMONED BY THE KING TODAY (13 OCTOBER). UNUSUALLY, HE HAD ALSO SUMMONED MY US COLLEAGUE AND WE WERE INVITED TO SEE HIM TOGETHER. THE MAIN POINTS ARISING FROM A DISCUSSION LASTING WELL OVER AN HOUR WERE:

I) SANCTIONS. THIS SEEMED TO BE THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE AUDIENCE. THE KING SAID THAT HE WISHED TO ASSURE US THAT JORDAN WAS DETERMINED TO ENFORCE SANCTIONS EFFECTIVELY. THERE WERE SOME DIFFICULTIES, FOR EXAMPLE THE FACT THAT EXTENSIVE JORDANIAN TERRITORY LAY BEYOND THE JORDANIAN CUSTOMS POST AT RUWEISHED. THIS MEANT THAT SOME SUPPLIES FOR THOSE LIVING BEYOND THE POST, FOR EXAMPLE AT THE GAS FIELD AT RISHA, WERE BEING ALLOWED THROUGH. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION, HE SAID THAT IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE TO BRING ANY FUTURE ENQUIRIES ON SPECIFIC SANCTIONS ISSUES TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE WHERE THEY WOULD BE DEALT WITH AS SWIFTLY AS POSSIBLE.

II) HE TOLD US THAT TARIQ AZIZ WOULD BE VISITING AMMAN LATER TODAY. HE DID NOT KNOW THE PURPOSE. HARRISON SUGGESTED THAT IF AZIZ WERE BRINGING SOME FRESH PROPOSAL, THE KING MIGHT WISH TO ASK HARRISON TO CONSULT HIS GOVERNMENT BEFORE GIVING ANY FORMAL RESPONSE. THIS MIGHT AVOID DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY WHICH WASHINGTON

WOULD NOT REGARD AS HELPFUL. THE KING MADE NO COMMITMENT BUT UNDERTOOK TO INFORM US BOTH ABOUT THE RESULTS OF AZIZ'S VISIT. HE ALSO REFERRED TO IRAQI INTEREST IN MITTERRAND'S UN STATEMENT. I MENTIONED THAT THE FRENCH HAD ASSURED US THAT THEIR POSITION DID NOT DIFFER ESSENTIALLY FROM OURS.

III) THE KING TALKED AT SOME LENGTH ABOUT HOW UNCONDITIONAL WITHDRAWAL WAS TO BE ACHIEVED. HE COULD NOT SEE ANY PROSPECT OF THIS UNLESS SADDAM HAD SOME ASSURANCES EG OVER ACCESS TO THE SEA. HE FLOATED THE IDEA OF AN ARAB PEACEKEEPING FORCE IN THE 'DISPUTED AREAS' ONCE IRAQ HAD WITHDRAWN. BOTH HARRISON AND I SAID THAT IF THE PURPOSE OF THIS WAS TO FUDGE SOVEREIGNTY IN THE DISPUTED AREAS, WE DID NOT SEE IT AS A STARTER. IN ANY CASE, WE SAW NO SIGN OF IRAQI INTEREST IN WITHDRAWAL.

IV) THE KING EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH THE OUTCOME OF THE VOTE IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL. HE MADE CLEAR THAT HE WAS NOT SEEKING TO ESTABLISH LINKAGE BETWEEN THE PALESTINIAN AND GULF ISSUES. HOWEVER, HE HOPED THAT THE FORMER WOULD BE TACKLED WITH THE SAME VIGOUR WHICH THE SECURITY COUNCIL HAD SHOWN OVER THE GULF ONCE THAT CRISIS WAS SOLVED.

V) I ENQUIRED ABOUT RELATIONS WITH OTHER ARAB STATES. THIS PROVOKED A LENGTHY STATEMENT ON THE INIQUITIES OF HOSNI MUBARAK THOUGH THE KING MENTIONED (AS BIN SHAKER HAD EARLIER TOLD ME) THAT OSAMA AL BAZ MIGHT BE VISITING JORDAN SHORTLY. AS TO THE OTHER ARAB STATES, HE DID NOT FEEL THAT HE HAD MUCH IN COMMON WITH THEM ANY MORE. HAVING MOVED HIMSELF IN THE DIRECTION OF DEMOCRACY, HE DID NOT THINK THAT IT WAS UP TO HIM TO APOLOGISE TO THEM (HE SHOWED LITTLE INTEREST WHEN HARRISON FLOATED THE POSSIBILITY OF PERSUADING THE SAUDIS TO RE-OPEN TAPLINE ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT JORDAN WOULD PAY ITS OUTSTANDING DEBT OF DOLLARS 40 MILLION LATER). DESPITE THE APPALLING DIFFICULTIES HE FACED, HE FELT AT ONE WITH HIS PEOPLE, WHICH WAS A GREAT COMFORT. HIS OVERRIDING AIM WAS TO AVOID A WAR WHICH WOULD DESTROY EVERYTHING THAT HE HAD SOUGHT TO ACHIEVE. IF THERE WERE ANY AMBITION BEYOND THAT, IT WOULD BE TO SEE THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM SETTLED. THAT MIGHT BE THE ONE GOOD THING TO EMERGE FROM THE GULF CRISIS.

COMMENT

3. THE KING SEEMED READY TO TALK AT EVEN GREATER LENGTH. WITH HIS INCREASING ISOLATION IN THE ARAB WORLD AND THE LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES TO TRAVEL, HE SEEMS TO FEEL THE NEED FOR SUCH EXCHANGES. HE TOLD ME RECENTLY THAT ONE LESSON HE HAD LEARNT FROM THE CRISIS WAS THE NEED TO SET ASIDE TIME TO THINK. HIS MOOD SEEMED RELAXED AND RATHER MORE BUOYANT THAN IN RECENT WEEKS.

4. I WILL TRY TO GET AN EARLY ACCOUNT OF TARIQ AZIZ'S VISIT. I SHALL ALSO PURSUE OUR OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS ON SANCTIONS BREACHES WITH THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

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