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VISIT OF TARIQ AZIZ TO AMMAN: 13 OCTOBER

SUMMARY

1. KING HUSSEIN BRIEFS ME ON LATEST VISIT OF TARIQ AZIZ. NO SIGN OF ANY SIGNIFICANT IRAQI SHIFT.

DETAIL

2. THE KING SUMMONED ME AGAIN TODAY (14 OCTOBER). TOGETHER WITH THE US AMBASSADOR. HE SUBSEQUENTLY INVITED US TO LUNCH AT WHICH CROWN PRINCE HASSAN WAS ALSO PRESENT. THE KING'S MAIN PURPOSE WAS TO BRIEF US ON HIS DISCUSSION WITH TARIQ AZIZ. WE ALSO HAD SOME DISCUSSION OF SANCTIONS WHICH I AM REPORTING SEPARATELY.

3. TARIQ AZIZ BROUGHT NO WRITTEN MESSAGE BUT HAD BEEN BRIEFED ORALLY BY SADDAM. HIS PURPOSE WAS TO BRING THE KING UP-TO-DATE ON RECENT IRAQI EXCHANGES WITH EG THE RUSSIANS, AND TO PASS ON LATEST IRAQI VIEWS OF THE CRISIS.

4. SADDAM WAS INSISTENT THAT HE HAD NEVER THREATENED SAUDI ARABIA, NOR WOULD HE DO SO IN THE FUTURE. IRAQ'S INVASION SHOULD BE VIEWED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND HER PRESENT ATTITUDE AGAINST THE EVENTS WHICH HAD TAKEN PLACE SINCE THE INVASION, PARTICULARLY THE DEPLOYMENT OF FOREIGN FORCES. IRAQ WAS ACTIVELY WORKING TO RESOLVE THE HUMANITARIAN ISSUES ARISING FROM THE CRISIS AND REMAINED STRONGLY INTERESTED IN A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE WHOLE PROBLEM. (THE KING INDICATED THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME DISCUSSION OF MR HEATH'S VISIT AND THAT THE RESULTS WERE LIKELY TO BE POSITIVE.)

5. ACCORDING TO TARIQ AZIZ, THERE HAD BEEN SOME VERY STRAIGHT TALKING ON BOTH SIDES DURING THE VISIT OF PRIMAKOV. THE IRAQIS

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HAD FELT REASSURED THAT THE RUSSIANS WANTED A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT AND DID NOT WISH TO SEE THE DISMEMBERMENT OF IRAQ.

6. SADDAM HAD EMPHASISED THAT THERE SHOULD BE SOME FORM OF COMMITMENT THAT THE ARAB/ISRAEL PROBLEM SHOULD BE TACKLED AND RESOLVED. IN THIS CONTEXT, HE VIEWED MITTERRAND'S UN SPEECH VERY POSITIVELY. THE US AND THE UK HAD SHOT DOWN HIS PROPOSAL OF 12 AUGUST WITHOUT EVEN CONSIDERING IT. THE KING COMMENTED THAT TARIQ AZIZ HAD REFERRED TO THIS AS A MAXIMALIST IRAQI POSITION. WHY, ASKED TARIQ, HAD THERE BEEN NO COUNTER-PROPOSAL? WHY NO GIVE AND TAKE? IT WAS NOT UNREASONABLE THAT THE PROBLEMS OF THE REGION SHOULD BE LOOKED AT AS A WHOLE. SADDAM HAD MADE CLEAR TO PRIMKOV THAT ANY PROPOSALS ON THE THEME OF REGIONAL SECURITY WOULD BE LOOKED AT VERY SERIOUSLY BY IRAQ.

7. TARIQ HAD ARGUED THAT IRAQ HAD NOT INVADED KUWAIT FOR ITS OIL BUT BECAUSE IRAQ FELT THAT IT HAD NO OTHER OPTION IN THE CONTEXT OF ITS NEED FOR GREATER ACCESS TO THE SEA. THE BRITISH HAD HELPED TO RESOLVE MANY SIMILAR PROBLEMS EG THE GULF ISLANDS, THE BURAIMI DISPUTE. THE IRAQIS FOUND IT SURPRISING THAT THEY ADAMANTLY REFUSED TO ENTER INTO ANY DIALOGUE ON THIS ISSUE.

8. THE KING SAID THAT HE HAD ASKED TARIQ WHETHER SADDAM HAD ANY SPECIFIC POSITION OVER WITHDRAWAL FROM KUWAIT. HE HAD REPLIED THAT THE IRAQIS WERE READY TO DISCUSS ALL ISSUES BUT THEY WERE NOT PREPARED TO STATE ANY POSITION UNTIL SUCH TIME AS THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY SHOWED READINESS TO DISCUSS THE SITUATION. IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, THE LATTER WANTED TO FORCE A WAR, IRAQ WAS PREPARED FOR THAT EVEN THOUGH THE COST WOULD BE VERY HIGH.

9. WE ASKED WHETHER TARIQ AZIZ'S PRESENTATION OFFERED ANYTHING MORE THAN HAD BEEN CONTAINED IN THE LETTER WHICH SADDAM HAD SENT THE KING FOLLOWING THE CONSULTATIONS IN RABAT. THE KING SAID THAT HE FELT HE DETECTED MORE INTEREST IN NEGOTIATION. ON THE NATURE OF THE IRAQ LINKAGE WITH THE ARAB/ISRAEL DISPUTE, THE KING SAID THAT SADDAM WAS NOT SEEKING SIMULTANEOUS ACTION ON THE TWO ISSUES. WHAT HE APPEARED TO WANT WAS SOME GUARANTEE THAT IF THE KUWAIT ISSUE WERE RESOLVED, OTHER REGIONAL ISSUES, PARTICULARLY THE ARAB/ISRAEL DISPUTE, SHOULD BE TACKLED.

10. I REMARKED THAT IN TERMS OF OUR OBJECTIVES UNDER SCR 660, SADDAM HUSSAIN'S MESSAGE DID NOT APPEAR TO OFFER ANYTHING. THE KING SAID THAT THE IRAQIS HAD TWO MAIN CONCERNS: THE FIRST

WAS TO SECURE SOME LINKAGE TO THE ARAB/ISRAEL DISPUTE: THE SECOND WAS TO SECURE SOME GUARANTEE THAT IRAQ WOULD NOT BE ATTACKED IF IT WITHDREW FROM KUWAIT. ON THE LATTER POINT, HARRISON SAID THAT, IN HIS PERSONAL VIEW, THIS SHOULD NOT BE AN INSUPERABLE PROBLEM. THE LINKAGE TO ARAB/ISRAEL WAS, HOWEVER, UNACCEPTABLE. THE CROWN PRINCE REFERRED TO MRS THATCHER'S STATED VIEW THAT SADDAM SHOULD GET NOTHING OUT OF HIS INVASION. DID THIS MEAN THAT ANY ASSURANCES ABOUT ATTACKS ON IRAQ ITSELF IF IRAQ WITHDREW FROM KUWAIT WERE ALSO RULED OUT? I SAID THAT MY OWN UNDERSTANDING OF THIS REMARK WAS THAT IT RELATED SOLELY TO SADDAM'S INVASION OF KUWAIT.

COMMENT

11. FROM THE KING'S ACCOUNT OF THIS EXCHANGE, IT IS DIFFICULT TO DETECT ANY SIGNIFICANT SHIFT IN SADDAM'S POSITION. IT MAY BE TRUE, AS THE CROWN PRINCE AT ONE POINT ARGUED, THAT THE ARRIVAL OF TARIQ AZIZ WITH THE MESSAGE IS IN ITSELF AN INDICATION OF AN INTEREST BY SADDAM IN WITHDRAWAL. BUT EQUALLY, IT COULD BE PART OF AN IRAQI STRATEGY TO PROLONG THE PRESENT PHASE IN THE HOPE THAT THE INTERNATIONAL CONSENSUS WILL BEGIN TO CRUMBLE. IN ANY EVENT, THE KING GAVE NO INDICATION THAT HE HAD ANY FURTHER INITIATIVE IN MIND. HE SPOKE SEPARATELY TO THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR. NO DOUBT THE IRAQIS ARE HOPING THAT THEY MIGHT TEMPT THE FRENCH INTO TAKING SOME INITIATIVE, THOUGH THE KING HIMSELF SEEMS WELL AWARE THAT THE FRENCH POSITION DOES NOT DIFFER IN SUBSTANCE FROM OURS.

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