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FM RIYADH
TO DESKBY 150930Z FCO
TELNO 1039
OF 150830Z OCTOBER 90
AND TO DESKBY 150930Z MODUK
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SIC AAA/A2P/19M

IRAQ/KUWAIT: DISCUSSION WITH SAUDI DEFENCE MINISTER

SUMMARY

1. SIGNATURE OF STATUS OF FORCES MOU. PRINCE SULTAN WELCOMES CBFME. ENLIGHTENING DISCUSSION OF HOW HE SEES NEXT STEPS, WITH STRONG PREFERENCE FOR MILITARY ENGAGEMENT BEFORE MID DECEMBER. AGREEMENT THAT PRESSURE SHOULD NOT BE LET UP ON IRAQ UNTIL IT PRESENTS NO MILITARY THREAT OR CHEMICAL ARSENAL. SUGGESTION OF CONTACT WITH PRIME MINISTER OR MR KING.

DETAIL

2. I TOOK GEN DE LA BILLIERE TO CALL ON PRINCE SULTAN IN JEDDA ON 14 OCTOBER. AVM WILSON WAS PRESENT AS WAS DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER MANSOURI. THE MEETING PROVIDED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SULTAN AND MYSELF TO SIGN THE MOU ON STATUS OF BRITISH FORCES IN KINGDOM (SIGNED TEXT BEING FORWARDED TO FCO BY BAG).

3. SULTAN MADE CBFME VERY WELCOME, AND APPEARED WELL BRIEFED ON HIS PREVIOUS ARABIAN EXPERIENCE. SULTAN LOOKED FORWARD TO 7TH ARMoured BRIGADE'S ARRIVAL BY EARLY NOVEMBER AND NOTED CBFME'S POINT THAT A PUMA CASEVAC UNIT WOULD ALSO COME TO JUBAIL. SULTAN ASKED ABOUT REPORTS OF IRAQI FORCES IN SUDAN AND YEMEN, AND WAS PLEASED TO HEAR THAT CDI WAS IN RIYADH THAT DAY TO BRIEF THE SAUDI MILITARY INTELLIGENCE PEOPLE. THE YEMENIS WOULD NOT TRY ANY MILITARY ACTION. CBFME THANKED SULTAN FOR HAVING AGREED OUR COMMAND AND CONTROL ARRANGEMENTS. SULTAN NOTED APPROVINGLY OUR

OPERATIONAL ASSOCIATION WITH US ARMoured UNITS.

4. WE SOUGHT TO DRAW SULTAN OUT ON HOW HE SAW SADDAM'S NEXT MOVES, INCLUDING THE POSSIBILITY OF SUDDEN WITHDRAWAL. THIS STIMULATED AN ANIMATED DISCUSSION IN WHICH SULTAN GAVE US A FULLER ACCOUNT OF THE KIND OF SCENARIO THAT HE (AND WE CAN BE SURE THE KING AND OTHER SENIOR AL SAUD) NOW HAVE IN MIND, THAN WE HAVE SECURED HITHERTO. SULTAN THOUGHT IT POSSIBLE THAT SADDAM WOULD TRY A SUDDEN WITHDRAWAL, OR EVEN GO FOR A QUICK ATTACK. HE DID NOTHING BY STAGES. HE HAD JUST HEARD (ON CNN) THAT TARIQ AZIZ HAD PROPOSED IN AMMAN A SIMULTANEOUS WITHDRAWAL. WE AGREED THIS DID NOT WASH. SULTAN ACCUSED KING HUSSEIN OF HAVING MISLED GCC AMBASSADORS LAST WEEK BY NOT DISCLOSING THAT SADDAM HAD REPLIED TO THE LATEST REQUEST FROM KING HASSAN, CHADLI BENDJEDID, AND KING HUSSEIN FOR A UNILATERAL WITHDRAWAL BY A FLAT NEGATIVE. KING HUSSEIN CONTINUED TO COVER UP FOR SADDAM, WHO IN HIS TURN HAD MADE PLAY WITH MITTERAND'S APPROACH.

5. SULTAN WENT ON TO MAKE IT CLEAR WE COULD NOT AFFORD TO HANG ABOUT FOR MUCH LONGER. OUR ARMOUR WOULD SOON BE IN POSITION. THEN THERE WERE THE US MID-TERM ELECTIONS IN EARLY NOVEMBER. THEREAFTER HE SUGGESTED AN INTERVAL OF NO MORE THAN A MONTH TO GIVE SANCTIONS AND OTHER PRESSURES MORE TIME TO TAKE EFFECT. BUT HE FORSAW THE NEED TO GO ON TO THE OFFENSIVE BEFORE MID DECEMBER. MILITARY ACTION HAD TO BE ENGAGED BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR HOLIDAYS (CHRISTMAS AND ALL THAT) BECAME A DISTRACTION. MOREOVER WESTERN TROOPS MORALE WOULD SUFFER IF THEY HAD TO GO ON SITTING IN THE DESERT INTO JANUARY - ALL RIGHT FOR SAUDIS BUT NOT FOR EUROPEANS. GENERAL PRINCE KHALID WAS VISITING GULF STATES THIS WEEK FOR MILITARY DISCUSSIONS. WE HAD TO KEEP THESE FACTORS IN MIND, AND NOT LET TIME SLIP BY. IRAQ WAS STEADILY COLONISING KUWAIT WITH IRAQIS AND PALESTINIANS - IRANIANS MIGHT BE NEXT.

6. I PROBED SULTAN ON HOW HE SAW THE RESPONSE TO AN ATTEMPT BY SADDAM TO TURN THE TABLES BY SUDDEN WITHDRAWAL: THE PRESSURE ON HIM WOULD HAVE TO BE KEPT UP BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY SO LONG AS HE CONTINUED TO PRESENT A THREAT. SULTAN STRONGLY ENDORSED THIS, STATING THAT WE MUST NOT ONLY SEE WITHDRAWAL AND RESTORATION OF LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT, BUT GO BEYOND THIS TO ENSURE SADDAM'S ARSENAL, AND IN PARTICULAR HIS CHEMICAL ARMOURY, WAS DISMANTLED. THERE WAS NO QUESTION OF HIS BEING LET OFF. SADDAM WAS ONE MAN AGAINST THE WORLD, AND WE MUST GO ON TRYING TO GET THIS ACROSS TO HIM. HE ASKED HOW PRIMAKOV HAD GOT ON IN BAGHDAD, AND I DREW ON SOVIET ACCOUNTS TO US OF THIS FRUITLESS

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ERRAND. SULTAN SPELT OUT THAT ISRAEL COULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO DIVEST HERSELF OF HER CHEMICAL WEAPONRY UNLESS SHE WAS SURE THE ARABS WERE NOT IN A POSITION TO USE THEM. SO ONCE WITHDRAWAL WAS ACHIEVED THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY HAD TO ENSURE, THROUGH THE UN, THAT IRAQ NO LONGER HAD THIS CAPACITY. ONLY THEN COULD PROGRESS BE MADE OVER PALESTINE.

7. SULTAN WENT ON TO SPEAK WITH WARM APPRECIATION OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENTS ON IRAQ. SHE WAS CLEAR AND CONSISTENT. HE HAD READ HER BOURNEMOUTH SPEECH WITH INTEREST. OUR RELATIONSHIP WAS VERY CLOSE OVER THIS CRISIS. SULTAN SAID POINTEDLY THAT HE WOULD BE GLAD TO SEE THE PRIME MINISTER OR MR KING IN SAUDI ARABIA OR LONDON BEFORE LONG.

8. SEE MIFT FOR COMMENT ON THIS USEFUL DISCUSSION.

MUNRO

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