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TELNO 2130

OF 041226Z NOVEMBER 90

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MY TELNO 2102 : HOSTAGE POLICY

SUMMARY

1. SADDAM SAYS CERTAIN EUROPEAN WORKERS WILL BE ALLOWED TO LEAVE IRAQ. SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY STATES THAT ALL HOSTAGES WILL BE RELEASED IF CERTAIN COUNTRIES DECLARE THAT THEY ARE AGAINST WAR. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AGREES THAT BULGARIANS BE ALLOWED TO LEAVE IRAQ ON TERMINATION OF THEIR CONTRACTS.

DETAIL

2. THERE WERE TWO INDICATIONS ON 3 NOVEMBER THAT THE IRAQIS MIGHT BE CONSIDERING CHANGES IN THEIR POLICY TOWARDS FOREIGNERS IN IRAQ AND KUWAIT. FIRST, AT A RECEPTION FOR THOSE ATTENDING THE NINTH ANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE GENERAL FEDERATION OF IRAQI WORKERS, A DELEGATION FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ARAB WORKERS APPEALED TO THE PRESIDENT TO ALLOW A NUMBER OF EUROPEAN WORKERS CURRENTLY IN IRAQ THE RIGHT TO LEAVE. SADDAM AGREED, EXPLAINING THAT HE HAD TAKEN THIS DECISION IN APPRECIATION OF THE 'MILITANT ROLE OF ARAB WORKERS' TOWARDS PAN-ARAB QUESTIONS AND THE QUESTION OF 'NATIONAL AND HUMANITARIAN LIBERATION'.

3. SECOND, THE SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, SA'DI MEHDI SALEH, ADDRESSING THE OPENING OF THE ASSEMBLY'S AUTUMN SESSION, SAID THAT THE REASON WHY FOREIGNERS WERE PREVENTED FROM TRAVELLING WAS TO PUT OBSTACLES IN THE WAY OF THE AGGRESSIVE INTENTIONS OF THEUS ADMINISTRATION AND ITS ALLIES AND TO ALLOW PUBLIC OPINION TO DECIDE ON A PEACEFUL APPROACH TO THE CRISIS. SALEH WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE SAME GOALS COULD NOW BE ACHIEVED BY ALLOWING FOREIGNERS THE FREEDOM TO LEAVE IRAQ, PROVIDED THAT A NUMBER OF STATES DECLARED THEMSELVES AGAINST WAR AND THE

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THREAT OF MILITARY ACTION AS A MEAN TO SOLVE OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS IN THE REGION, AT THE FOREFRONT OF WHICH WAS THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION. SALEH SAID THAT FOREIGNERS WOULD BE ALLOWED TO TRAVEL IF ALL FIVE PERMANENT MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVELY, OR ANY TWO OUT OF FRANCE, PRC, SOVIET UNION, GERMANY AND JAPAN, AGREED TO DECLARE THEY WERE AGAINST THE USE OF MILITARY FORCE AGAINST IRAQ AND WERE COMMITTED TO PEACEFUL AND JUST METHODS OF SOLVING ALL THE PROBLEMS OF THE REGION.

4. THE LOCAL PRESS ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT AT ITS SESSION ON 3 NOVEMBER THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AGREED TO ALLOW ALL BULGARIAN NATIONALS TO LEAVE IRAQ ON TERMINATION OF THEIR CONTRACTS (MY TELNO 2003 - NOT TO ALL).

COMMENT

5. WE HAVE RECEIVED NO GUIDANCE ON WHICH WORKERS FROM WHICH EUROPEAN COUNTRIES SADDAM INTENDS TO ALLOW TO LEAVE, AND CAN ONLY WAIT FOR HIS INSTRUCTIONS TO BE INTERPRETED. IT MAY BE THAT THERE ARE CERTAIN COUNTRIES (EG EAST EUROPEAN) ALL OF WHOSE WORKERS ARE NOW GOING TO BE ALLOWED TO DEPART. OR IT COULD RATHER BE THAT IT IS CERTAIN CATEGORIES OF WORKER THAT ARE GOING TO BE ALLOWED TO DEPART (CF THOSE WORKING ON THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE WHO WE HOPE WILL SHORTLY BE ALLOWED TO LEAVE AT THE END OF THEIR CONTRACTS).

6. THE STATEMENTS OF SADDAM AND SALEH ARE FURTHER INDICATIONS THAT THE IRAQIS ARE HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT THEIR HOSTAGE POLICY AND ARE LOOKING FOR WAYS OF LIMITING ITS SCOPE WITHOUT LOSING FACE. UNFORTUNATELY, HOWEVER, WE MUST TAKE IT AS CERTAIN, IN THE LIGHT OF THE CALL PAID BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TWELVE ON THE FOREIGN MINISTER ON 1 NOVEMBER (TUR), THAT THE AUTHORITIES WILL CONTINUE TO DETAIN A SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF AT LEAST AMERICAN AND BRITISH HOSTAGES TO MAKE IT NECESSARY FOR WESTERN MILITARY PLANNERS TO ASSUME THAT THERE ARE FOREIGNERS AT ALL OF IRAQ'S MAJOR MILITARY AND INDUSTRIAL INSTALLATIONS.

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