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FM BAGHDAD 270935Z SEP 80
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 439 OF 27/9/80
AND IMMEDIATE UKMIS NEW YORK
INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, MOSCOW AND UK DEL NATO BRUSSELS
PRIORITY AMMAN, ABU DHABI, DUBAI, KUWAIT, SAUDI ARABIA, MUSCAT, PARIS,
BONN, JEDDA, DAMASCUS AND ANKARA.

JIC TEL 845 OF 22 SEPTEMBER, PARA 9: IRAQ/IRAN.

1. WE OWE YOU AN ASSESSMENT OF IRAQ'S AIMS IN THE PRESENT FIGHTING. I WOULD HAVE TELEGRAPHED EARLIER BUT FOR OUR PREOCCUPATION WITH GETTING MOST BRITISH COMMUNITY WIVES AND CHILDREN OUT OF THIS COUNTRY.

2. I AGREE WITH ABU DHABI (MR ROBERTS' TEL 297 TO YOU) THAT IRAQI AMBITIONS GO FURTHER THAN INDICATED IN THE LAST SENTENCE OF JICTEL UNDER REFERENCE. THIS BELIEF IS PERHAPS SUPPORTED BY THE RELEASE OF IRAQ'S "THREE CONDITIONS" FOR NEGOTIATION (MY TEL NO 432 AS AMENDED BY PARA 2 OF AMMAN TEL NO 354, BOTH OF 25 SEPTEMBER).

3. AN IMPORTANT NEW CONSIDERATION IS THAT THE PACE OF IRAQI SUCCESSES IN THE DISPUTED LAND AREAS IS NOW SLOWING DOWN, IN SPITE OF KING HUSSEIN'S BELIEF THAT 48 HOURS (FROM 25 SEPTEMBER) WOULD SUFFICE FOR ALL IRAQI MILITARY OBJECTIVES TO BE ACHIEVED (PARA 3 OF AMMAN TUR). AGAINST THAT BACKGROUND, SADDAM'S MILITARY PLAN MAY LOOK SOMETHING LIKE THE FOLLOWING, BUT IS NO DOUBT CONSTANTLY BEING REASSESSED IN THE LIGHT OF DEVELOPMENTS ON THE GROUND AND THE AVAILABILITY OF SPARES:-

FIRST PRIORITY:

----- OCCUPATION OF ABADAN AND KORRAMSHAHR AND ADVANCE AS FAR AS POSSIBLE TOWARDS REGIONAL CAPITAL, AHWAZ. SADDAM MAY NOW BE LEARNING THAT KHUZISTANI ARAB WELCOME FOR LIBERATING IRAQI TROOPS IS LESS WARM THAN HE EXPECTED. IRANIAN ARMED FORCES RESISTANCE IS CERTAINLY A SURPRISE.

SECOND PRIORITY:

----- ADVANCE UP THE KERMANSHAH ROAD (WELL BEYOND QASR-I-SHIRIN) TO BUILD UP NEGOTIATING POSITION ON THE TWO CLAIMED STRIPS OF TERRITORY RESPECTIVELY NORTH AND SOUTH OF MANDALI (ZAIN AL-WAUS AND SAIF SAAD). IT SEEMS THAT THE IRAQIS ARE DETERMINED TO HAVE SUBSTANTIAL RECTIFICATIONS IN THEIR FAVOUR HERE AT THE END OF THE DAY.

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THIRD PRIORITY:

----- IF SAQR OF RAS AL-KHAIMAH HAS INDEED MADE A DEAL WITH SADDAM, AND IF A MEASURE OF UAE SUPPORT OR AT LEAST ACQUIESCENCE EG. IN REFUELLING IRAQI MIGS AFTER A STRIKE MISSION CAN BE OBTAINED (BOTH BIG IFS), I CAN FORESEE SOME LIMITED MOVE AGAINST THE TUNBS AND/OR "OCCUPIED" ABU MUSA (CF WASHINGTON TEL TO YOU 4115). THIS MIGHT TAKE THE FORM OF AN AIRBORNE ROCKET ATTACK ON IRANIAN INSTALLATIONS ON EG. THE TUNBS, AND WOULD BE A ONE/OFF OPERATION TO GET THE WEST (OR WHOEVER) TO PUT PRESSURE ON IRAN TO NEGOTIATE. IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT THE IRAQIS COULD MOUNT AN EFFECTIVE LAND/SEA ATTACK AGAINST ANY OF THE ISLANDS, SINCE BOTH THEIR AMPHIBIAN FORCES AND AIR SUPPORT ARE PROBABLY INADEQUATE AND COULD NOT COUNT ON SYSTEMATIC GULF ARAB LOGISTIC SUPPORT (PARA1 (D) OF DUBAI TEL TO ABU DHABI NO 29 IS RELEVANT HERE).

4. THE ABOVE IS ALL SPECULATIVE. BUT ONE SHOULD AT ALL TIMES REMEMBER THE IMMENSE STUBBORNNESS AND SELF-IMPORTANCE OF SADDAM HUSSEIN, WITH HIS INNATE TENDENCY TO "UP THE ANTE" IF HIS WISHES OR PRESTIGE ARE THREATENED. AS THIS FEATURE IS MORE OR LESS MATCHED BY WHAT I UNDERSTAND TO BE THE IRANIAN ATTITUDE, THE MOOD TO NEGOTIATE MAY TAKE A FEW DAYS YET TO DEVELOP, AND WILL BE INFLUENCED LARGELY BY THE RESUPPLY POSITION ON BOTH SIDES.

5. NO DOUBT YOU HAVE MANY OTHER SOURCES AT YOUR DISPOSAL WHICH THROW LIGHT ON IRAQI AMBITIONS. HERE WE SEE THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY, BUT ARE IN NO DOUBT THAT SADDAM'S PRETENSIONS AS A LEADER OF ARABISM, THOUGH NOT YET HIS FUTURE AS LEADER OF IRAQ, ARE VISIBLY AT STAKE. FURTHERMORE HE MAY BE REALISING A BIT LATE THAT THE DIFFICULTY OF FINDING AN IRANIAN LEADER PREPARED OR EMPOWERED TO NEGOTIATE (AS NABIL NAJM TOLD ME ON 23 SEPTMBER) IS A SEVERE ONE. A SKILLED MEDIATOR IS SURELY GOING TO BE REQUIRED.

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