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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 629 OF 29 DEC

INFO IMMEDIATE RIYADH, ALL MIDDLE EAST POSTS, MODUK, DOT
INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK, PARIS, MOSCOW

INFO SAVING MADRID, UKDEL NATO

NY TELNO 624 (NOT TO ALL): VISIT OF SECRETARY OF STATE

1. SUMMARY.

THE SAUDIS HAVE DECLINED TO RECEIVE THE SECRETARY OF STATE SO LONG AS THE PROBLEM OF RECEIVING THE PLO IS NOT RESOLVED. THERE WILL BE

IMMEDIATE
ADVANCE COPY

Ree Martin:

This is depressing news. The Foreign Secretary will be addressing us the next steps.

HD / (MED) 29/12

HD / NENAD

PS

PS / MR HURD

PS / PUS

SIR J LEAHY

MR EGERTON

No to Downing St.

X-6

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SOME DEPRESSING CONSEQUENCES.

2. FULL REPORT.

I WAS CALLED IN LAST NIGHT BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. HE BEGAN RATHER NERVOUSLY: BRITAIN WAS AN OLD FRIEND OF SAUDI ARABIA AND BRITISH VISITORS WERE ALWAYS WELCOME. BUT THE PRESENT PROPOSAL RAISED A DIFFICULT QUESTION OF TIMING. IF MR PYM WAS COMING TO REPORT THAT THE PROBLEM OF THE PLO DELEGATE HAD BEEN SOLVED, FINE. BUT IF HE WAS SIMPLY GOING TO EXPLAIN THE EXISTING BRITISH ATTITUDE, IT WOULD BE BETTER TO WAIT FOR A MORE OPPORTUNE OCCASION.

3. I SAID WE WERE IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH KING HASSAN AND WERE ACTIVELY DISCUSSING POSSIBLE WAYS AND MEANS. MANSOURI ASKED WHAT THEY WERE. I SAID KING HASSAN HAD BEEN UPSET PREVIOUSLY BY OUR FAILURE TO DEAL WITH HIM ALONE AS LEADER OF THE DELEGATION: BETTER TO LEAVE THE MATTER TO HIM. MR PYM'S VISIT WOULD HAVE PROVIDED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR RESPECTIVE MINISTERS TO DISCUSS THE OPTIONS: IT WAS WHEN THERE WAS DISAGREEMENT THAT MEETINGS WERE NECESSARY.

4. I POINTED OUT EARNESTLY THAT THERE WOULD BE GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT IN LONDON. THE INITIATIVE FOR THIS VISIT HAD COME FROM PRINCE SAUD. THIS WOULD BE THE SECOND TIME IT HAD BEEN PUT OFF BY THE SAUDIS. MANSOURI SAID THE INVITATION STOOD: ONLY THE TIMING WAS AT ISSUE. THE BRITISH PROPOSAL PUT TO THE ARAB SIDE HAD BEEN ALMOST "INCONCEIVABLE" AND IN ITS LANGUAGE VERY "UN-BRITISH". INDEED HE PERSONALLY WOULD CALL IT "DEGRADING". I SAID WE HAD BEEN THROUGH ALL THAT BEFORE: THE SAUDIS SEEMED TO BE NOW IN THEIR TURN IMPOSING A CONDITION ON A VISIT. NOT A CONDITION, SAID MANSOURI, ONLY THE TIMING. I WRINKLED MY NOSE.

5. COMMENT.

MANSOURI WAS EMBARRASSED BUT, ACTING ON INSTRUCTIONS, WAS NOT OPEN TO PERSUASION. THE DECISION HAS CERTAINLY COME FROM THE KING WHO RETURNED TO THE KINGDOM TWO DAYS AGO. DURING HIS PROLONGED STAY IN MOROCCO AND SPAIN HE MUST HAVE BEEN NURSING HIS WRATH TO KEEP IT WARM (RABAT TELNO 501, PARA 3 LAST SENTENCE - NOT TO ALL). BUT SAUDI RELUCTANCE TO GET AHEAD OF THE PACK AND EXPOSE THEMSELVES TO CRITICISM WILL ALSO HAVE PLAYED ITS PART.

6. THE LIKELY CONSEQUENCES ARE DEPRESSING. THE NEWS CAN HARDLY FAIL TO GET OUT (IN LONDON RATHER THAN HERE) AND THE PRESS WILL BLOW IT UP, AS THEY HAVE DONE IN THE PAST. THE COOLNESS WILL THEN SPREAD THROUGH SAUDI GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS, EVEN WITHOUT INSTRUCTIONS FROM ABOVE. MANSOURI SAID HE HOPED THIS DECISION WOULD NOT AFFECT HIS PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH ME. I FIND THIS RATHER OMINOUS.

7. WE MUST TAKE IT THAT THE SAUDI MINISTER OF COMMERCE WILL NOT

7. ^V WE MUST TAKE IT THAT THE SAUDI MINISTER OF COMMERCE WILL NOT WISH TO SWIM AGAINST THE TIDE BY RECEIVING LORD COCKFIELD. I SORROWFULLY RECOMMEND THAT WE DROP THE PROPOSAL FOR THE TIME BEING. THE IDEA OF A MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE KING ABOUT DEFENCE SALES IS CLEARLY INOPPORTUNE NOW. SO IS THE VISIT BY THE HEAD OF DEFENCE SALES WHICH WAS TO HAVE FOLLOWED THE MESSAGE. THOUGH I SHALL ENQUIRE IN A PERSONAL AND INFORMAL WAY ABOUT THE PROPOSED VISITS BY THE DUKE OF KENT TO HERE AND BY PRINCE ABDULLAH AND PRINCE WAIF TO LONDON, THEY MUST NOW BE DOUBTFUL. WE SHALL HAVE TO KEEP OUR HEADS DOWN (AND COOL) FOR A WHILE.
8. EVERYTHING COULD CHANGE OF COURSE IF WE WERE ABLE TO FIND A WAY OUT OF THE PLO DILEMMA SEMICOLON AND THE SOONER THE BETTER. I DO NOT THINK WE CAN AFFORD TO WAIT TILL MARCH (RABAT TELNO 517).
9. THERE IS NO REPEAT NO REASON TO THINK THAT THE VISIT OF SIR GEOFFREY HOWE IN HIS IMF CAPACITY, WILL BE AFFECTED.

FCO PSE PASS SAVING ADDRESSEES.

CRAIG

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