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TO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON

TELEGRAM NUMBER 2180 OF 21 DECEMBER 1984

INFO JEDDA, MODUK (FOR PS/S OF S AND PS/HDS)

YOUR TELNO 3550 OF 29 NOVEMBER AND FCO TELNO 286 TO ABU DHABI:

SAUDI ARABIA: TORNADO

FOR AMBASSADOR FROM FERGUSSON (DUSS)

1. CONTACTS WITH THE SAUDIS CONTINUE TO BE ENTIRELY FRIENDLY, THOUGH MADDENINGLY INCONCLUSIVE ON TORNADO. THE KING SENT A SOMEWHAT INCONSEQUENTIAL REPLY TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE. WE HAVE ALSO HAD PRINCE BANDAR BIN SULTAN HERE THIS WEEK ON A FLYING VISIT ON HIS WAY BACK TO THE STATES. HE SAW THE PRIME MINISTER ON 17 DECEMBER (RECORD SENT TO YOU BY TELELETTER) AND HAD A COUPLE OF SESSIONS WITH THE DEFENCE SECRETARY, WITH WHOM HE GOT ON VERY WELL.
2. BANDAR, WHO HAS BECOME A HELPFUL AND INFORMATIVE CONTACT, DID NOT HAVE MUCH TO SAY ON TORNADO DURING HIS VISIT. BUT HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE SAUDIS REMAIN HEAVILY PREOCCUPIED WITH THE NEED TO MAKE PROGRESS ON THE ARAB/ISRAEL DISPUTE AND THE KEY ROLE, AS THEY SEE IT, OF THE UNITED STATES IS IN THIS PROCESS. AS YOU WILL SEE FROM THE RECORD, THE PRIME MINISTER TOLD BANDAR THAT SHE WOULD BE URGING PRESIDENT REAGAN TO TAKE ANOTHER INITIATIVE ON THE MIDDLE EAST.
3. WE, PATRICK WRIGHT AND DEFENCE SALES BELIEVE THAT IT WILL BE VERY IMPORTANT TO KEEP UP THE PRESSURE ON THE SAUDIS AT ALL LEVELS IF THE TORNADO DEAL IS TO BE PULLED OUT OF THE FIRE. TO BE EFFECTIVE, WE NEED NOT SO MUCH TO GIVE THE SAUDIS ANOTHER SALES PITCH ON TORNADO - WE HAVE SAID ALL WE CAN FOR THE PRESENT ON THAT SCORE - AS TO CONVINCING THEM THAT WE SHARE THEIR WIDER CONCERNS AND ARE BEING GENERALLY HELPFUL. MR HESELTINE IS LIKELY TO WRITE TO PRINCE SULTAN ABOUT TORNADO IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. THAT IS IMPORTANT, BUT OUR ASSESSMENT IS STILL THAT THE KING IS THE ONE WE HAVE TO WIN OVER. WE SHALL BE RECOMMENDING THAT THE PRIME MINISTER SEND KING FAHD ANOTHER MESSAGE AFTER HER TALKS WITH PRESIDENT REAGAN. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE MESSAGE WILL DEPEND ON THE OUTCOME OF THE TALKS, BUT THERE SHOULD BE PLENTY OF SCOPE FOR GETTING ACROSS TO THE SAUDIS THE MESSAGE THAT TO THE EXTENT OF OUR ABILITY WE ARE PLAYING A HELPFUL ROLE VIS-A-VIS THE AMERICANS.

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DIST:

CHANCERY LIMITED

ACTION OFFICER:

MR GREEN

HK

ADVANCE COPIES TO:

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MR GREEN

MR GOULTY

X1 4. MEANWHILE, MR HESELTINE HAS SUGGESTED THAT, AFTER THE PRIME MINISTER'S PARTY ARE SAFELY ON THE PLANE FOR HOME, YOU SHOULD GIVE BANDAR A CALL TO LET HIM KNOW IN GENERAL TERMS HOW THE MIDDLE EAST DISCUSSION WENT. I HOPE YOU WILL BE ABLE TO FIND THE TIME FOR THIS: WOULD YOU KINDLY CHECK THAT THE PRIME MINISTER SEES NO OBJECTION? ANYTHING WE CAN DO TO MAINTAIN BANDAR'S GOODWILL WILL BE OF USE TO US, AND IF HE IS ABLE, ON THE BASIS OF YOUR BRIEFING, TO REPORT FAVOURABLY TO RIYADH ON THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT, THAT SHOULD PREPARE THE WAY FOR THE MORE DETAILED PRIME MINISTERIAL MESSAGE WE SHALL BE RECOMMENDING THAT PATRICK WRIGHT DELIVER. AS YOU WILL SEE FROM THE RECORD, THE PRIME MINISTER HERSELF OFFERED TO BRIEF BANDAR EARLY IN THE NEW YEAR IF HE HAPPENED TO BE BACK IN LONDON THEN. YOU MIGHT ADD (AGAIN SUBJECT TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S CONCURRENCE) THAT THE OFFER STILL STANDS.

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

24 December, 1984.

Dear Richard,

Saudi Arabia: Tornado

FCO telegram No. 2180 to Washington proposed that HM Ambassador Washington should brief Prince Bandar on the Prime Minister's discussions with President Reagan on the Middle East. I had a word with Sir Oliver Wright before leaving Washington, and he agreed to do this.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Colin Budd (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

Yours sincerely

Charles Powell

Richard Mottram, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

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