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Authority E.O. 12958

By 8 NARA Date 6-05-02

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Department of State

TELEGRAM

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
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LONDON 12113

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BRITISH VIEWS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PBOR, MOPS, XF, UK

SUBJECT: EUROPEAN ATTITUDES IN MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

1. WE TOOK OPPORTUNITIES TO DISCUSS MIDDLE EAST SITUATION SEPARATELY WITH MEMBER OF CABINET (LEADER OF HOUSE OF COMMONS JAMES PRIOR) WHO HAS LONG SERVED AS AN INFORMAL AND PERSONAL CHANNEL TO PRIME MINISTER HEATH AND WITH FCO PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY ANTHONY ROYLE. WE CONVEYED TO THEM THE SUBSTANCE OF STATE 203685 AND 204887. WE EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF AMBASSADOR RUMSFELD'S STATEMENT IN NAC OCTOBER 16 (STATE 205850) AND OF NATO GOVERNMENTS RESPONSES THERETO.

2. ADDITIONALLY, IN TALK WITH PRIOR, WE NOTED THAT MOST WESTERN EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS SEEMED TO BE DOING THEIR UTMOST TO STAY ON THE SIDELINES IN THE CURRENT CONFLICT. NOT ONLY WERE THEY CAREFULLY AVOIDING ANY DIRECT ASSISTANCE TO ISRAEL, BUT THEY HAD ALSO QUICKLY MOVED TO PRECLUDE ANY INDIRECT CONNECTION WITH THE US RESUPPLY OPERATION TO ISRAEL, E.G., THE BRITISH REQUEST FOR ASSURANCES THAT US BASES IN THE UK WERE NOT BEING USED.

3. PRIOR SAID THAT MIDDLE EAST WAR POSED VERY DIFFICULT AND SERIOUS PROBLEMS FOR BRITAIN. THERE WERE EXTENSIVE BRITISH ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL INTERESTS IN ARAB STATES AND ARAB OIL WAS OF FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE TO UK AND WESTERN EUROPE. UK HAD WORKED HARD IN LAST TWO OR THREE YEARS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH ARABS AND THOUGHT US AGREED THIS WAS CONSTRUCTIVE COURSE, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF US RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL.

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4. WE POINTED OUT THAT ATTITUDES OF MOST EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS WERE SIMILAR TO UK AND THAT IN CURRENT SITUATION THOSE ATTITUDES COMBINED TO HAVE EFFECT OF ISOLATING US. WE STRESSED THAT NATO RELATIONSHIP COULD NOT BE PUT ASIDE IN ISSUE OF SUCH IMPORTANCE FOR ALL MEMBER STATES WHEN SOVIET UNION HAD EMBARKED ON HIGHLY ADVENTUROUS MOVE OF MASSIVE AID TO ARAB STATES. WE RECALLED THAT WHEN CONSERVATIVE PARTY CAME TO POWER IN 1970, PRIME MINISTER HEATH AND SIR ALEC DOUGLAS-HOME HAD EXPRESSED TO US THEIR DEEP CONCERN ABOUT DANGER OF SOVIET INFLUENCE AND ACTIVITIES IN MIDDLE EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA, BUT THAT WE HAD NOT HEARD MUCH OF THIS CONCERN DURING PAST YEAR.

5. PRIOR SAID HEATH AND SIR ALEC WERE STILL CONCERNED ABOUT SOVIET THREAT AND THEN REVERTED TO IMPACT OF MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT ON BRITISH DOMESTIC SCENE. ACKNOWLEDGING THAT LARGE MAJORITY OF BRITISH PUBLIC WERE SYMPATHETIC TO ISRAEL, HE SAID THIS MADE IT EVEN MORE DIFFICULT FOR GOVERNMENT TO FOLLOW POLICY TO

PROTECT BRITISH INTERESTS. EMPHASIZING HIS POINT, HE SAID HE HAD SPENT THE MORNING WORKING ON CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR GASOLINE RATIONING.

6. IN SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION WITH ANTHONY ROYLE, HE EXPRESSED SURPRISE THAT US CONCERN ABOUT EUROPEAN ATTITUDES HAD NOT COME THROUGH IN MESSAGES HE HAD READ FROM LORD CROMER. ROYLE SAID FOREIGN OFFICE THOUGHT IT WAS HIGHLY IMPORTANT THAT UK SHOULD CONDUCT ITSELF SO THAT AT LEAST ONE IMPORTANT EUROPEAN MEMBER OF SECURITY COUNCIL WOULD BE IN A BROKER'S POSITION WHEN THE TIME CAME TO INTRODUCE DEFINITIVE RESOLUTION AND PURSUE IT WITH BOTH SIDES. HE THOUGHT THAT OF ALL SC MEMBERS, UK IS ONE WITH BEST POSSIBILITY OF HAVING INFLUENCE AND CREDENCE WITH BOTH SIDES EVEN THOUGH UK RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL IS SOMEWHAT STRAINED. ROYLE SAID FCO HAD THOUGHT THAT USG AGREED WITH THEIR CONCEPT OF BRITISH ROLE, BUT SAID HE HAD REGISTERED POINTS WE MADE AND WOULD MAKE THEM KNOWN AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE.

7. COMMENT: IT SEEMS TO US THAT BRITISH ARE DECEIVING THEMSELVES ABOUT BEING IN A BROKER'S POSITION.

8. DEPT REPEAT AS DESIRED.

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