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FROM WASHINGTON 151745Z OCT 80
TO IMMEDIATE F C O
TELEGRAM NUMBER 4276 OF 15 OCTOBER
INFO IMMEDIATE ROME (FOR WALDEN), BONN AND PARIS.

Read is full
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YOUR TELNOS 389 AND 391 TO BONN.

IRAQ/IRAN: ALLIED CONSULTATION

1. I DECIDED TO SEE MUSKIE IN ORDER TO HAND OVER THE MESSAGE AND TO BRING HOME TO HIM PERSONALLY YOUR CONCERN ABOUT THE LACK OF POLITICAL CONSULTATION ON A MATTER THAT COULD HAVE FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES FOR ALL OF US. HE WAS CAMPAIGNING YESTERDAY BUT SAW ME THIS MORNING ACCOMPANIED BY WARREN CHRISTOPHER AND GEORGE VEST.
2. I SAID THAT I THOUGHT THERE WAS A SERIOUS DANGER OF MISUNDERSTANDING AND DISAGREEMENT DEVELOPING BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES OF THE ATLANTIC UNLESS SOME OF THE UNDERLYING POLITICAL ISSUES COULD BE DISCUSSED. THE UNITED STATES HAD ASKED US TO TAKE PART IN AN INTERNATIONAL NAVAL FORCE AND HAD SUGGESTED A CONCEPT BY WHICH THIS FORCE WOULD OPERATE. THERE HAD BEEN NAVAL TALKS ABOUT THIS IN LONDON AND IT WAS NOW SUGGESTED THAT THESE SHOULD BE TRANSFERRED TO THE COMMANDERS IN THE GULF. BUT EXTREMELY IMPORTANT POLITICAL QUESTIONS WERE INVOLVED: TO WHAT EXTENT WAS IT MILITARILY FEASIBLE, AS PROPOSED BY THE USA, TO LEAVE THE INITIAL REACTION TO SOME INCIDENT TO THE GULF STATES THEMSELVES? WHAT WERE THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT FOR THE SUGGESTED INTERNATIONAL NAVAL FORCE? HOW LONG WAS THIS NAVAL FORCE INTENDED TO REMAIN IN EXISTENCE? THESE WERE ALL HIGHLY POLITICAL ISSUES, WHICH COULD NOT BE DEALT WITH BY NAVAL OFFICERS OPERATING IN THE AREA. THEY HAD TO BE CONSIDERED AT A POLITICAL LEVEL, AND AT A VERY SENIOR ONE.
3. THEN THERE WAS THE QUESTION OF US INTENTIONS AS A WHOLE IN THE GULF, THE ATTITUDES OF THE COUNTRIES CONCERNED AND OUR OWN INVOLVEMENT IN THE REGION. A GREAT DEAL WAS APPEARING IN THE UNITED STATES PRESS AT THE MOMENT ABOUT THE NEW COMMITMENTS OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE GULF. ASSUMPTIONS WERE BEING MADE ABOUT THE ATTITUDES OF THE COUNTRIES CONCERNED. I WISHED TO TELL MR MUSKIE FRANKLY THAT I KNEW THERE WAS A FEELING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ATLANTIC THAT THE AMERICANS MIGHT BE FORCING THE PACE A BIT. AT ANY RATE, IT WOULD BE HELPFUL FOR US TO HAVE EVIDENCE OF THE READINESS OF THE SAUDI ARABIAN GOVERNMENT TO WELCOME ADDITIONAL US INVOLVEMENT. WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO KNOW MORE OF THE PRESENT US INTERPRETATION OF THE ATTITUDES OF THE OTHER GULF STATES TO INCREASED UNITED STATES MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN THE REGION.

4. FOR ALL THESE REASONS, WE WANTED URGENT POLITICAL TALKS AND HOPED THAT WARREN CHRISTOPHER COULD GO TO LONDON IN THE NEAR FUTURE. YOU WERE MAKING SIMILAR PROPOSALS TO THE FRENCH AND FRG FOREIGN MINISTERS.

5. MUSKIE SAID THAT HE WAS VERY SYMPATHETIC TO THESE QUESTIONS AND TO OUR PROPOSALS. INDEED HE DREW "COMFORT" FROM THEM. HE EXPLAINED THE ORIGINS OF THE PROPOSAL FOR AN INTERNATIONAL NAVAL FORCE. THE IDEA HAD BEEN ADVANCED TO MEET A SUDDEN EMERGENCY. (COMMENT: INDEED, WE UNDERSTAND THAT IT WAS ADVANCED BY THE WHITE HOUSE WITHOUT MUSKIE'S BEING CONSULTED). THE SITUATION WAS NOT AT THE MOMENT DANGEROUS AND IT WAS THEREFORE ENTIRELY APPROPRIATE THAT WE SHOULD TALK TOGETHER ABOUT THE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS.

6. THE TRUTH WAS, HE ADMITTED - SOMEWHAT DISARMINGLY THOUGH PERHAPS ALSO SOMEWHAT FRIGHTENINGLY - THAT HE HIMSELF AND CHRISTOPHER AND THE OTHERS CONCERNED HAD NOT SO FAR HAD TIME TO DISCUSS IT AMONG THEMSELVES. HE REPEATED HIS GREAT SYMPATHY WITH OUR QUESTIONS.

7. HE ALSO ADMITTED THAT THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE DEBATE IN WASHINGTON ON WHAT TO DO: WHETHER TO USE THE PRESENT EMERGENCY AS A MEANS OF ESTABLISHING SOME MORE PERMANENT US PRESENCE IN THE AREA. HE THOUGHT THAT THERE WERE ELEMENTS WHO, TO USE MY PHRASE, WERE EAGER TO "FORCE THE PACE". HE TOLD ME THAT IT WAS CERTAINLY NOT INTENDED THAT THE NAVAL FORCE SHOULD BE PERMANENT. NOR WAS THE DESPATCH OF AWACS TO SAUDI ARABIA PERMANENT. THERE HAD BEEN A CHANGE IN THE SAUDI ATTITUDE BUT IT WOULD BE PREMATURE TO SAY THAT ANY LONG-TERM PREDICTIONS OR ARRANGMENTS COULD NOW BE MADE. HE HIMSELF WOULD ALSO LIKE MORE EVIDENCE OF THE REAL INTENTIONS OF THE SAUDIS AND OF THE OTHER GULF STATES. CHRISTOPHER INTERJECTED THAT HE THOUGHT THE US VIEW ON THE HESITATIONS OF THE OTHER GULF STATES TO COMMIT THEMSELVES MORE OPENLY TO THE AMERICANS WAS ENTIRELY IN LINE WITH OURS. INDEED, THE OPINIONS WE HAD EXPRESSED ON THIS SUBJECT HAD HAD CONSIDERABLE EFFECT ON AMERICAN THINKING.

8. MUSKIE SAID THAT HE THOUGHT LONDON WOULD BE A GOOD PLACE FOR A POLITICAL MEETING. HE KNEW THAT CHRISTOPHER LIKED GOING THERE. IT WOULD BE WRONG TO HAVE TOO MANY MEETINGS IN PARIS. IT WAS OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE TO TRY TO ESTABLISH RULES OF ENGAGEMENT AND TO DISCUSS THE POLITICAL QUESTIONS THAT YOUR MESSAGE REFERRED TO.

9. I SAID THAT IT THOUGHT THAT IT WOULD ALSO BE USEFUL TO TALK ABOUT WHAT WE THOUGHT THE SOVIET INTENTIONS AND REACTIONS WERE LIKELY TO BE. MUSKIE AGREED. HE SAID THAT GROMYKO HAD PUT TO HIM HIS EXTREME CONCERN ABOUT THE IDEA OF A MULTINATIONAL FLEET IN THE GULF.

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10. I SAID THAT THERE WAS YET ANOTHER PROMINENT ARTICLE IN THE US PRESS TODAY, ONE BY KAREN HOUSE ON THE FRONT PAGE OF THE WALL STREET JOURNAL (REPORTED SEPARATELY) ABOUT THE POSSIBILITIES FOR A NEW US STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP WITH SAUDI ARABIA. IT WAS OBVIOUSLY WRONG THAT THE PRESS SHOULD BE PUBLISHING AUTHORITATIVE ARTICLES ON THESE POLITICAL ISSUES WHEN NO DISCUSSIONS WERE TAKING PLACE ON THEM BETWEEN THE ALLIES.

11. MUSKIE ASKED ME WHETHER I THOUGHT THAT THE FRENCH WOULD COME TO THE PROPOSED FOUR POWER POLITICAL TALKS. I SAID THAT I DID NOT KNOW BUT IT STRUCK ME THAT THERE MIGHT BE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE FRENCH RELUCTANCE TO HAVE ANYTHING MORE THAN BILATERAL TALKS ON STRICTLY NAVAL MATTERS (WHICH RAISED ALL SORTS OF SENSITIVE ISSUES FOR THEM) AND THEIR ATTITUDE TO POTENTIAL QUADRIPARTITE POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS WHICH IN GENERAL THEY HAD ALWAYS FAVOURED.

12. CHRISTOPHER SAID THAT HE THOUGHT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WERE COMPLETELY RIGHT TO RAISE THESE QUESTIONS AND HE HIMSELF WAS EAGER TO COME OVER FOR TALKS WHENEVER POSSIBLE.

13. IT WAS LEFT THAT I WOULD GET IN TOUCH WITH HIM AGAIN AS SOON AS WE HAD HEARD FROM THE OTHER TWO COUNTRIES AND HAD HIT UPON A DATE.

HENDERSON

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