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FROM AMMAN 201650Z JUL 82

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELNO 320 OF 20 JULY 1982

AND TO INFO PRIORITYMODUK (D14) BAGHDAD, CAIRO, DAMASCUS, JEDDA,  
TEL AVIV

BIS TEHRAN, UKMIS NEW YORK, WASHINGTON AND CG JERUSALEM.

JORDAN MIDDLE EAST

1. IN A SPEECH TO THE NATIONAL CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL ON 19 JULY, THE JORDANIAN PRIME MINISTER ANNOUNCED THE FORMATION OF A COMMITTEE TO BEGIN WORK ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A JORDANIAN "POPULAR ARMY" WHICH WOULD GIVE TRAINING TO ALL CITIZENS CAPABLE OF CARRYING ARMS. BADRAN ADDED THAT THE JAF HAD ALSO BEGUN CALLING UP A NUMBER OF RESERVISTS TO ATTEND A TRAINING COURSE "TO RAISE THE STANDARD OF THEIR PERFORMANCE". BADRAN CLAIMED THAT THE AIM OF THESE MEASURES WAS TO ENABLE JORDAN TO CONFRONT AGGRESSION FROM ANY EXTERNAL SOURCE SEMICOLON JORDAN WOULD NOT BE AN EASY TARGET FOR ANY OF THOSE WHO HARBOURED DESIGNS AGAINST HER.
2. BADRAN SAID THAT JORDAN WOULD CONTINUE TO EXTEND A HELPING HAND TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE TO WORK TOGETHER FOR THE DEFENCE OF JORDAN AND FOR PALESTINIAN NATIONAL RIGHTS. HE REPEATED THE INFORMATION MINISTER'S DESCRIPTION OF MR BEGIN'S OFFER TO JORDAN OF A CONFEDERATION (MY TELNO 315) AS "RIDICULOUS." HE ATTACKED AT LENGTH SHARON'S SUGGESTION THAT JORDAN SHOULD BE THE PALESTINIANS' HOMELAND. HE INSISTED THAT JORDAN WOULD REMAIN JORDAN AND THAT THE PALESTINIANS WOULD NOT SO EASILY FORGET THEIR OWN HOMELAND. BADRAN ALSO CRITICISED ISRAEL'S ATTEMPT TO SIDE-STEP THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION BY RESTRICTING CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS ON LEBANON TO THE MODALITIES OF A PALESTINIAN WITHDRAWAL. HE REGRETTED THAT SOME ARABS HAD BEEN IMPLICATED IN THIS CONSPIRACY AND WERE PREPARED TO BARGAIN OVER THE NUMBER AND KIND OF PALESTINIANS THEY WOULD ACCEPT IN THEIR COUNTRY IN RETURN FOR SUMS OF MONEY (A CLEAR REFERENCE TO SYRIA). BADRAN ALSO TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO CRITICISE THE UNITED STATES FOR ACCEPTING ISRAEL'S RULES FOR THESE NEGOTIATIONS AND CALLED ON THE AMERICANS TO TURN THEIR ATTENTION TO THE CENTRAL PALESTINIANS QUESTION.

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3. NEITHER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A POPULAR MILITIA NOR THE CALL-UP OF RESERVISTS FOR FURTHER TRAINING ARE NEW IDEAS: BOTH HAVE BEEN MOOTED SINCE LATE 1980 WHEN THE SYRIANS WERE THREATENING TO INVADE. THE CONSENSUS AT THE MEETING OF EC HEADS OF MISSION THIS MORNING WAS THAT NOT TOO MUCH SHOULD BE MADE OF THE PRIME MINISTERS ANNOUNCEMENT. THE IDEA OF A PEOPLE'S ARMY IS STILL ONLY AT THE COMMITTEE STAGE, ALTHOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN EARLIER REPORTS OF SOME ARMS BEING GIVEN TO BEDOUIN TRIBES, RETIRED ARMY OFFICERS AND FARMERS IN THE JORDAN VALLEY. THE CALL- UP OF RESERVISTS HAD ALREADY BEEN PLANNED TO START AROUND NOW SEMICLN THE JAF HAVE FOR SOMETIME BEEN PREPARING A GENERAL SCHEME TO CALL UP FORMER NATIONAL SERVICEMEN ON A ROTA BASIS IN ORDER TO GIVE THEM REFRESHER COURSES. THERE IS CLEARLY SOME REAL ADVANTAGE TO JORDAN IN TROUBLED TIMES IN ENHANCING HER MILITARY PREPAREDNESS. BUT THE TIMING AND FORM OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT SEEMS EQUALLY INTENDED AS A PIECE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS DESIGNED TO REASSURE THE POPULACE THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS TAKING SERIOUSLY THE TASK OF DEFENDING THE REALM.

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