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GRS 600

No. 10
(I)

Prime Minister.

relevant to the ad(ers)
discussion on Wednesday.

A.F.C. to
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T.M.A.C.

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FROM ABU DHABI 181600Z DEC 83
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 303 OF 13 DEC
REPEATED INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON
REPEATED INFO ROUTINE AMMAN, BAGHDAD, DAMASCUS,
GULF POSTS, PARIS, MODUK

FROM PS/MR LUCE

MR LUCE'S VISIT TO THE UAE: CALL ON PRESIDENT.

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RECEIVED UNIVERSITY RD.	
19 DEC 1983	

1. MR LUCE HAD TWO HOURS WITH SHAIKH ZAID THIS MORNING. AFTER INITIAL COURTESIES HE ASKED HIS ADVISERS TO WITHDRAW THE REST OF THE SESSION WAS THEN DEVOTED TO A STRONG PLEA FOR BRITISH HELP IN DEFENDING THE UAE IN THE EVENT OF AN IRANIAN ATTACK.

2. SHAIKH ZAID TOOK THE LINE THAT BRITAIN WAS THE TRIED AND TRUSTED FRIEND OF THE EMIRATES. THE SAME WAS NOT TRUE OF NEW ALLIES SUCH AS THE AMERICANS OR THE FRENCH. THEIR WILLINGNESS TO MATCH FINE WORDS WITH ACTION WHEN THE CRUNCH CAME HAD YET TO BE PROVEN. HE PRESSED HARD FOR A BLANKET ASSURANCE THAT BRITAIN WOULD PROVIDE WHATEVER ASSISTANCE THE UAE REQUIRED TO DEFEND ITSELF OR, FAILING THAT, FOR A PRECISE INDICATION OF THOSE AREAS IN WHICH WE COULD COMMIT OURSELVES FIRMLY TO HELP. WHAT PRECISELY COULD WE OFFER, FOR INSTANCE, IN RESPONSE TO AN IRANIAN ATTACK ON ONE OF THE UAE OIL INSTALLATIONS?

3. MR LUCE REMINDED SHAIKH ZAID THAT OUR MILITARY RESOURCES WERE LIMITED, AND SAID THAT WE COULD NOT REALISTICALLY PROMISE THAT WE ALONE COULD PROVIDE ALL THE HELP THE UAE MIGHT REQUIRE. WE WERE THEREFORE KEEPING IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH THE AMERICANS. IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT WE TAKE FORWARD OUR PLANNING TOGETHER, WITH THE AMERICANS TAKING THE LEAD IN AREAS WHERE THEY WERE BEST QUALIFIED TO DO SO. IN CERTAIN FIELDS WE HAD EXPERTISE TO OFFER. FOR INSTANCE, WE HAD ALREADY MADE A SPECIFIC COMMITMENT TO THE SULTAN OF OMAN ON MINE COUNTER MEASURES IN THE STRAITS OF HORMUZ.

4. SHAIKH ZAID WAS UNMOVED. HE SAID THAT THE GCC HAD SHOWN ITSELF UNWILLING TO GRASP THE NETTLE OF ASKING FOR OUTSIDE HELP. HE WAS NOT GOING TO LET THEIR INDECISION DEFLECT HIM FROM PROTECTING THE UAE'S VITAL INTERESTS. HE THEREFORE NEEDED TO KNOW URGENTLY WHAT HELP WE COULD GIVE THE UAE. MR LUCE REITERATED THAT WE STOOD BY OUR COMMITMENTS TO THE UAE

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John Kenny

AND THAT, IF SHAIKH ZAID SO DESIRED, A MILITARY EXPERT COULD VISIT ABU DHABI IN THE NEW YEAR TO DISCUSS MATTERS FURTHER WITH HIS ADVISERS. THIS COULD COVER HELP WITH THE TRAINING OF THE UAE FORCES AS WELL AS BRITISH HELP IN RESPONDING TO AN OUTSIDE ATTACK. SHAIKH ZAID ASKED THAT THE ADVISER'S VISIT SHOULD TAKE PLACE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, BUT REMAIN OBVIOUSLY WORRIED AND DISAPPOINTED AT THIS RESPONSE.

5. MR LUCE MADE CLEAR THAT, IF WE WERE TO GIVE MILITARY HELP, THIS MUST BE IN RESPONSE TO A CLEARLY AND PUBLICLY EXPRESSED INVITATION FROM THE GULF STATES.

6. THE TOPIC RESURFACED AT MR LUCE'S CALL ON THE COURT CHAMBERLAIN, SHAIKH SUROUR, THIS AFTERNOON. THE LATTER SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN BRIEFED BY SHAIKH ZAID ON THE MORNING'S CONVERSATIONS, BUT THEN PROCEEDED TO TAKE A RELAXED LINE. HE BRUSHED ASIDE TALK OF CONTINGENCY PLANNING ON THE GROUNDS THAT THERE WAS NO REAL THREAT OF A DIRECT IRANIAN ATTACK. DESTABILISATION MEASURES OF THE SORT SEEN IN KUWAIT WERE MUCH MORE LIKELY.

COMMENT

7. WHILE THESE CONTRADICTIONARY SIGNALS LEAVE A CONFUSED PICTURE, MR LUCE BELIEVES THAT WE SHOULD RESPOND AS QUICKLY AS AND AS FAVOURABLY AS WE CAN TO SHAIKH ZAID'S REQUEST. EVEN BEFORE DMAO'S VISIT, THE AMBASSADOR SHOULD HAVE AUTHORITY TO TELL THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE VERY PRECISELY WHAT WE CAN COMMIT OURSELVES TO PROVIDING IN THE EVENT OF ATTACK. IT IS CLEAR THAT THEY SEE A SPECIFIC OFFER AS A LITMUS TEST OF OUR COMMITMENT TO THEM: VAGUE UNDERTAKINGS TO CONSIDER REQUESTS SYMPATHETICALLY WILL CUT LITTLE ICE HERE.

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SIR J LEAHY
MR WRIGHT
MR EGERTON