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Prime Minister.

A.J.C. 27/12.

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SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Terrorism in the Middle East

1. In the latest Weekly Survey of Intelligence (JIC(83)(WSI) 50) the item entitled "Implications of recent bomb attacks in Kuwait" analysed the evidence for Iranian instigation of the attacks on 12 December. Investigations in Kuwait now show the Iraqi Shi'a Al Da'wa party to have been responsible for these attacks and the degree of Iranian involvement is less clear. Nevertheless, the terrorist threat in the Middle East clearly goes wider than the Lebanon and Kuwait alone and, with the agreement of my JIC colleagues, I think I should draw the following to your attention.

a. The spread of terrorist attacks to the Gulf obviously increases the danger to British institutions of all kinds in the area, but especially Embassies and military advisory or training teams. Shi'a Islamic communities in any of the States could provide cover for terrorists.

b. The danger is not limited to bomb attacks. Security measures may induce "truck-bombers" to diversify their methods. This adds to the existing threat of assassination and hijack (or bombs in civil aircraft) from such groups as Abu Nidhal and the PFLP (GC).

c. United States perceptions of a close Iranian connection with the attacks in Kuwait will further strengthen United States hostility to Iran and United States determination to "make Iran pay".

d. If Iranian responsibility for or connection with the Kuwait attacks is confirmed, this will remove United States inhibitions about using their forces against Iranian-connected targets in Lebanon, as well as Syrian targets. (We do not agree with the United States view of the extent to which Syria is directly involved in recent terrorist acts; the evidence for Iranian involvement is more compelling). It will also increase United States willingness to use force in the Gulf whether to assist the Gulf States or to keep open the Strait of Hormuz.

e. The United States must be thinking deeply about longer-term methods of forcing Iran and Syria to change their policies. It is already planning to enlist support in Europe and elsewhere for restriction of supplies to Iran. Other measures could be increased political and material support for Iraq, attempted boycott of Iranian goods, particularly oil, and in the case of Syria continued military confrontation in Lebanon. The association of the United Kingdom with such policies would increase the exposure of British targets in the Gulf and Lebanon to terrorist attacks.

f. In this situation there is an obvious need to keep in very close touch with United States policy-making and to obtain every possible indication of United States thinking about action against Iran and Syria, whether civil or military.


ANTHONY DUFF

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