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US/ISRAEL
SUMMARY

1. THE ADMINISTRATION THINK ISRAELI ANXIETY OVER THE GULF CRISIS INCREASING. VISIT OF SHAMIR WILL PROVIDE OPPORTUNITY TO REASSURE THEM ON US DETERMINATION TO DEAL WITH THE IRAQI THREAT.

DETAIL

2. WE HAVE SPOKEN TO STATE AND NSC ABOUT THEIR PERCEPTION OF ISRAELI INTENTIONS ON THE GULF AND THE FORTHCOMING VISIT TO WASHINGTON OF PRIME MINISTER SHAMIR.

3. NEITHER STATE NOR NSC CLAIMED TO HAVE A CLEAR PICTURE OF ISRAELI INTENTIONS. ROSS (PLANNING STAFF, STATE) DESCRIBED THE ISRAELIS AS UNEASY AND NEEDING REASSURANCE OVER AMERICAN POLICIES. THEY CONTINUED TO SEE THE GULF CRISIS AS A ZERO SUM GAME. THEIR PRESENT LEVEL OF ANXIETY WAS GOING UP. ROSS MADE IT PLAIN THE ADMINISTRATION DID NOT SEE THIS AS A GOOD TIME TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE ISRAELIS OVER THE OTS OR ARAB/ISRAEL QUESTIONS. ISRAEL HAD MAINTAINED A LOW PROFILE ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT US POLICIES TOWARDS IRAQ WOULD REMAIN RESOLUTE. THEY HAD TO BE RECONFIRMED IN THAT ASSUMPTION, AND REASSURED AS TO EUROPEAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS THEM. IN THE LONGER TERM, IF SADDAM WERE ALLOWED IN ANY SENSE TO SUCCEED, A MAJOR WAR WOULD BE INEVITABLE. THAT MEANT A LONG-TERM POLICY OF CONTAINMENT OF IRAQ, ASSUMING THE PRESENT CRISIS WERE TO BE RESOLVED PEACEFULLY, WAS ESSENTIAL IF THE ISRAELIS WERE TO HAVE ANY CONFIDENCE IN THE POSSIBILITY OF MAKING PROGRESS ON THE WIDER ARAB-ISRAEL ISSUES. THE SAME APPLIED TO THE ARAB MEMBERS OF THE PRESENT COALITION.

4. THE NSC AT DESK LEVEL TOLD US THEY SAW A CONTINUING RISK THAT IF THE ISRAELIS THOUGHT THE GULF CRISIS MIGHT BE RESOLVED WITHOUT CUTTING BACK IRAQ'S MILITARY POWER, THEY COULD TAKE ACTION TO BRING ABOUT A MILITARY CONFLICT. ALTERNATIVELY, GIVEN ISRAEL'S HIGH STATE OF ANXIETY, AN IRAQI MOVE - SUCH AS LAST WEEKEND'S TEST MISSILE FIRINGS - COULD CONCEIVABLY PUSH THEM OVER THE BRINK. BUT THAT WAS SPECULATION.

5. KURTZER (NEA, STATE) THOUGHT THAT SHAMIR'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON OFFERED AN OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE THE ISRAELIS WITH

SOME REASSURANCE. SHAMIR WOULD MEET THE PRESIDENT AND CHENEY (11 DECEMBER), VICE PRESIDENT QUAYLE (12 DECEMBER) AND BAKER (13 DECEMBER, AFTER BAKER'S RETURN FROM HIS MEETING WITH SHEVARDNADZE IN HOUSTON). KURTZER THOUGHT THE PRESIDENT WOULD BE IN NO MOOD TO CONFRONT SHAMIR OVER THE ISSUES THAT DIVIDED THEM, PARTICULARLY SETTLEMENTS, UNLESS SHAMIR CHOSE TO DRAW ATTENTION TO THEM. HE AND BAKER WOULD, HOWEVER, WANT TO MAKE CLEAR THAT THEIR INSISTENCE ON AVOIDING LINKAGE BETWEEN THE GULF CRISIS AND ARAB/ISRAEL DID NOT DIMINISH THEIR SUPPORT FOR A REVIVED PEACE PROCESS ONCE THE GULF CRISIS WAS RESOLVED.

6. ON THE GULF CRISIS, THE PRESIDENT WOULD BE ABLE TO SAY THAT ISRAEL'S ADOPTION OF A LOW PROFILE HAD, FOR THE MOST PART, BEEN WORKING WELL, AND THAT THE US APPRECIATED THEIR DOING SO DESPITE THEIR HIGH LEVEL OF CONCERN OVER THE IRAQI THREAT. KURTZER SAID THE PRESIDENT WOULD EMPHASISE TO SHAMIR THE HIGH PRIORITY WHICH THE ADMINISTRATION WAS GIVING TO POST-CRISIS SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS IN THE REGION: THE INFERENCE BEING THAT UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD THERE BE A RETURN TO THE STATUS QUO ANTE. THERE WAS, THEREFORE, NO REASON FOR ISRAEL TO FEEL THAT A PEACEFUL SOLUTION WOULD NOT MEET HER CONCERNS.

7. STATE EXPECTED SHAMIR TO OUTLINE ISRAEL'S NEED FOR FURTHER ECONOMIC AND SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO BAKER AND CHENEY, WHO WOULD DO NO MORE THAN LISTEN AND REMIND SHAMIR OF US BUDGETARY DIFFICULTIES. THEY WOULD, HOWEVER, BE ABLE TO TELL HIM THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD NOT BE MOVING QUICKLY ON THE REMAINDER OF THE SAUDI ARMS REQUEST.

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PAGE 2

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