

CONFIDENTIAL

FM AMMAN

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 866

OF 091130Z DECEMBER 90

INFO IMMEDIATE RIYADH, JEDDAH, BAGHDAD, MUSCAT, WASHINGTON

INFO IMMEDIATE UKMIS NEW YORK, ALGIERS, SANA'A, TUNIS

ADVANCE COPY

YOUR TELNO 611: JORDAN/SAUDI ARABIA/OMAN

SUMMARY

1. KING HUSSEIN CLAIMS TO HAVE DONE ALL HE CAN TO REPAIR FENCES WITH KING FAHD. SEES NO FURTHER SCOPE FOR OMANI MEDIATION AT THIS STAGE.

DETAIL

2. AT MY AUDIENCE WITH KING HUSSEIN ON 8 DECEMBER, I USED THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE (YOUR TELNO 614 NOT TO ALL) AS A PEG TO LAUNCH A DISCUSSION ABOUT RELATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA. I EMPHASISED THAT WE WERE NOT SEEKING TO INTERFERE OR TO ACT AS INTERMEDIARIES IN WHAT WAS ESSENTIALLY AN ARAB MATTER, BUT THAT WE WERE ANXIOUS TO DO WHAT WE COULD TO HELP.
3. THE KING IMMEDIATELY SAID THAT HE WELCOMED OUR INTEREST IN WHAT FOR HIM WAS A VERY DIFFICULT ISSUE. HE FELT THAT THERE WAS LITTLE MORE THAT HE HIMSELF COULD DO. THE JORDANIAN PRESS WHICH HE KNEW THE SAUDIS COMPLAINED ABOUT WAS BEYOND HIS CONTROL: AND IF THIS SAFETY VALVE HAD NOT EXISTED, THE SITUATION NOW MIGHT HAVE BEEN FAR WORSE. I SAID THAT WE UNDERSTOOD THE SENSITIVITIES ATTACHING TO THE MEDIA IN THIS NEW PHASE OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY: NEVERTHELESS, SINCE THE NATIONAL INTEREST WAS AT STAKE, THERE MIGHT BE SOME SCOPE FOR GUIDANCE. THE KING DID NOT RESPOND TO THIS.
4. I SAID THAT, APART FROM THE CONCERN ABOUT THE JORDANIAN MEDIA, THE SAUDIS WANTED A MORE FORCEFUL CONDEMNATION OF IRAQ'S ACTION. HAD THERE BEEN ANY PROGRESS WITH THE OMANI MEDIATION WHICH I UNDERSTOOD HAD BEEN DESIGNED TO PRODUCE A STATEMENT THAT MIGHT SATISFY THE SAUDIS? THE KING REPLIED THAT HE HAD MADE SUCH STATEMENTS (IE, I SUPPOSE, CONDEMNING IRAQ) IN OMAN AT THE TIME OF HIS LAST VISIT, AND SUBSEQUENTLY. IN ANSWER TO MY QUESTION, NOTHING WAS HAPPENING ON THE OMANI FRONT. HE HAD SENT THE JORDANIAN AMBASSADOR BACK TO RIYADH WHICH WAS INTENDED AS A

CONCILIATORY GESTURE. HE HIMSELF HAD TRIED TO CONTACT FAHD DIRECT BUT WAS ALWAYS TOLD THAT HE WAS BUSY.

5. I SAID THAT SAUDI WILLINGNESS TO ASSIST JORDAN FINANCIALLY WAS PROBABLY ALSO AFFECTED BY THE KING'S CONTACTS WITH SADDAM SUCH AS THE RECENT MEETING IN BAGHDAD (ON WHICH SEE MIFT) AND BY A BELIEF THAT HE WAS SEEKING TO PROMOTE A COMPROMISE SETTLEMENT. THE KING ASKED RHETORICALLY HOW HE COULD BE EXPECTED NOT TO MAKE SUCH EFFORTS. IF HE DID NOTHING AT THIS CRUCIAL STAGE, THE CONSEQUENCES, IF WAR OCCURRED, WOULD ALWAYS BE ON HIS CONSCIENCE. HE ADDED THAT THE NEED FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE WAS CRITICAL. THE PROBLEM OF ABSORBING NEARLY 200,000 JORDANIANS WHO HAD RECENTLY RETURNED FROM KUWAIT WAS OF ITSELF ALMOST AN INSUPERABLE BURDEN.

6. SEE MIFT.

REEVE

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