

SECRET

FM DUBLIN

TO DESKBY 271630Z FCO

TELNO 902

OF 271515Z DECEMBER 90

INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON, EC POSTS, BAGHDAD

YOUR TELNO 2226: FUTURE OF EMBASSIES IN BAGHDAD

SUMMARY

1. IRISH POSITION NOT YET FORMED.

DETAIL

2. FOLLOWING RECEIPT THIS MORNING OF TUR, WE CALLED ON SWIFT (COUNSELLOR, DFA POLITICAL DIVISION) AND OUTLINED THE OPTIONS IN ITS PARA 2. SWIFT WAS GRATEFUL THAT WE WERE POOLING OUR THOUGHTS. THE IRISH WERE THINKING ABOUT WHETHER TO CLOSE THEIR EMBASSY COMPLETELY. THEIR INTERNAL CONSULTATIONS HAD VIRTUALLY STOPPED OVER THE CHRISTMAS BREAK: SWIFT HIMSELF HAD ONLY LOOKED BRIEFLY INTO THE DFA, WHICH WAS OFFICIALLY CLOSED TODAY.

3. SWIFT COMMENTED THAT THERE WAS LITTLE SCOPE FOR THE IRISH TO REDUCE TO A CORE STAFF: THEY WERE ALREADY DOWN TO TWO, OF WHOM ONE, THE AMBASSADOR (MAC UNFRAIDH) WAS IN DUBLIN FOR CHRISTMAS. MAC UNFRAIDH WAS THEREFORE LIKELY TO BE DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN DUBLIN'S DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THEIR EMBASSY'S FUTURE. SWIFT THOUGHT IT ALMOST CERTAIN THAT MAC UNFRAIDH WOULD RETURN TO BAGHDAD, EVEN IF ONLY FOR A WEEK OR SO SHOULD HOSTILITIES BREAKOUT.

4. SWIFT ASKED WHETHER WE WOULD CONSIDER OURSELVES IN A STATE OF WAR WITH IRAQ IF HOSTILITIES DID BREAK OUT, AND WHETHER THIS WOULD AFFECT OUR DECISION ON OUR EMBASSY'S CONTINUED OPERATION. WE SAID WE WERE UNBRIEFED ON THIS, BUT THAT THE ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST THE THREE OPTIONS (INCLUDING OPTION (111) IN WHICH CORE STAFF WOULD REMAIN IN BAGHDAD - ALBEIT BRIEFLY - ON THE OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES), APPEARED AT THE MOMENT TO BE PRACTICAL AND POLITICAL RATHER THAN LEGAL ONES. SWIFT SAID THAT THE IRISH WERE LOOKING AT THIS ISSUE. THEY HAD NOTED THE AUSTRIANS' CONCLUSION THAT THE USA WOULD NOT FORMALLY BE A COUNTRY AT WAR AND THEREFORE BY AUSTRIAN LAW PROHIBITED FROM MILITARY OVERFLIGHTS.

5. THE DFA WOULD LET US KNOW EARLY NEXT WEEK HOW THEIR THINKING ON

THE EMBASSY QUESTION HAD DEVELOPED.

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