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IRAQI REFUSAL OF INVITATION BY THE TWELVE

1. TODAY'S AL-THAWRA NEWSPAPER CARRIES AN IRAQI NEWS AGENCY REPORT OF A STATEMENT BY THE MFA OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN ABOUT IRAQ'S DECISION NOT TO ACCEPT THE INVITATION TO MEET THE TROIKA IN LUXEMBOURG. THE BODY OF THE REPORT TRANSLATES AS FOLLOWS.

BEGINS.

THE SPOKESMAN MENTIONED THAT IN ITS RESPONSE IRAQ HAD REFERRED TO THE INVITATION THAT THE EC HAD ISSUED EARLIER TO THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO VISIT ROME TO MEET THE THEN PRESIDENCY. IRAQ HAD ACCEPTED AND WELCOMED THAT INVITATION. HOWEVER, THE EUROPEAN PRESIDENCY HAD THEN GONE BACK ON ITS INVITATION WHEN THE VISIT OF THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO WASHINGTON HAD NOT TAKEN PLACE ON ACCOUNT OF THE ARROGANT MODE OF PROCEDURE ADOPTED BY THE AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION IN THE MATTER OF THE FIXING OF DATES.

THE SPOKESMAN SAID THAT THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS HAD INFORMED JACQUES POOS THAT IRAQ CONSIDERED THIS BEHAVIOUR UNFITTING, AND DAMAGING TO THE RULES OF BEHAVIOUR BETWEEN STATES. REFERRING TO THE EC'S SUBSERVIENCE TO US POLICY HE HAD TOLD MR POOS THAT IF THE TROIKA WANTED DIALOGUE WITH IRAQ WE SHOULD WELCOME ITS VISITING BAGHDAD.

THE SPOKESMAN SAID: 'WE SHOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS OUR HIGH APPRECIATION OF EUROPEAN PUBLIC OPINION AND THE PEOPLES OF EUROPE. HOWEVER, WE FEEL RESENTMENT AT THE FEEBLE POLICY OF SUBSERVIENCE ON THE PART OF CERTAIN EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS TO THE AGGRESSIVE AND BOMBASTIC POLICY OF THE US THAT IS REFLECTED IN THE OFFICIAL ATTITUDES OF THE EC TOWARDS EVENTS IN THE REGION. THESE GOVERNMENTS SHOULD KNOW THAT WHOEVER WANTS TO TALK TO IRAQ MUST VISIT BAGHDAD AND TALK TO OFFICIALS THERE DIRECT'.

ENDS.

COMMENT

2. THE IRAQI AUTHORITIES MUST HAVE BEEN DISAPPOINTED THAT ON 4 JANUARY THE TWELVE EVENTUALLY CAME OUT SO CLEARLY IN SUPPORT OF THE US POSITION. THEY PRESUMABLY CALCULATE THAT THERE REMAINS THE POSSIBILITY THAT TARIQ AZIZ'S REFUSAL TO GO TO LUXEMBOURG WILL PERSUADE ONE OR TWO EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS TO BREAK RANKS AND SEND ENVOYS TO BAGHDAD.

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