

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM USINT BAGHDAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1486

INFO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

S E C R E T BAGHDAD 898

EXDIS

FOR UNDER SECRETARY SISCO AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IZ, US, IR

SUBJECT: U.S. POLICY ON IRAQI-IRANIAN CONFLICT

1. SUMMARY: DOWNING OF TWO IRAQI A/C BY IRANIAN MISSILES IS, AS YOU KNOW, ONLY MOST DRAMATIC EXAMPLE OF RECENT MASSIVE AND DIRECT IRANIAN INTERVENTION IN IRAQ, APPARENTLY NECESSITATED BY IRAQI ARMED FORCES SUCCESS AGAINST BARZANI IN THIS YEAR'S CAMPAIGN. IT IS, IN MY VIEW, TIME FOR U.S. TO MAKE STRONGEST POSSIBLE DEMARCHE TO SHAH TO END THIS INTERVENTION NOT ONLY IN IRAN'S INTEREST BUT IN INTEREST OF REGIONAL STABILITY. END SUMMARY.

2. SHAH'S OBJECTIVE IS APPARENTLY TO BRING ABOUT NEW GOVERNMENT IN BAGHDAD MORE AMENABLE TO HIM. IT IS TRUE THAT BAKR/SADDAM HUSSEIN REGIME IS DEEPLY COMMITTED TO VICTORY AGAINST KURDS AND CONCEIVABLY COULD BE REPLACED IF WAR DRAGS ON. IT DOES NOT NECESSARILY FOLLOW, HOWEVER, THAT SUCCESSOR REGIME WOULD BE IMPROVEMENT. SOME OBSERVERS, ASUCH AS FRENCH AND BRITISH, BELIEVE IT WOULD BE MORE RADICAL AND DISRUPTIVE, AND PROBABLY BE FORCED TO RELY HEAVILY ON USSR. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY IS ARMY TAKEOVER WHICH MIGHT BE ANTI-COMMUNIST, BUT, HISTORICALLY, MILITARY REGIMES IN IRAQ HAVE RESULTED IN INTERNAL INSTABILITY AND CHANCES ARE THIS WOULD AGAIN BE THE CASE. THIS MAY SUIT SHAH, BUT IT

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DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW IT WOULD SERVE U.S. OR WESTERN INTEREST

IN REGIONAL STABILITY.

3. BAATH REGIME, FOR ALL ITS ABHORRENT TRAITS, HAS GIVEN IRAQ OVER SIX YEARS OF STABILITY. IN ADDITION, IT IS NOW CONCENTRATING ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENERGETICALLY ATTEMPTING TO BRING ABOUT FULL RAPPROCHEMENT WITH WESTERN EUROPE AND CONSERVATIVE ARAB STATES (BAGHDAD 857). WHATEVER MOTIVES LAY BEHIND THIS TWIN POLICY OF DEVELOPMENT AND RAPPROCHEMENT AND WHATEVER RADICAL RHETORIC USED TO CONCEAL IT, CHARACTERISTICS OF BAATH REGIME IF POLICIES SUCCESSFUL LIKELY TO BE QUITE DIFFERENT FROM CURRENT CHARACTERISTICS WHICH ADMITTEDLY OFTEN RESEMBLE THOSE OF CORNERED RAT.

4. KURDISH LEADERSHIP IS FIGHTING HOPELESS BATTLE. NO INTERESTED PARTY WANTS TO SEE THEM SUCCEED. EVEN THE IRANIANS SAY THEY WILL NOT GIVE THEM ENOUGH ASSISTANCE TO TAKE OFFENSIVE. THEIR SOLE HOPE AGAIN APPEARS TO BE OVERTHROW OF BAGHDAD REGIME. IN CASE OF KURDS, HOPE THAT OVERTHROW WOULD LEAD TO MORE AMENABLE POLICIES TOWARD KURDS IS EVEN GREATER DELUSION THAN IN CASE OF IRAN. ALL IRAQI REGIMES IN PAST, INCLUDING BRITISH, MONARCHY, AND MILITARY HAVE, TO BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE, REFUSED TO GRANT KURDS KIND OF AUTONOMY THEY SEEKING. OLD IDEA OF KURDISH-SHIA COALITION IS ALSO, IN MY VIEW, BOTH A DELUSION AND UNREALISTIC. NEITHER KURDISH NOR SHIA COMMUNITIES HAVE EITHER THE INSTITUTIONS OR PERSONNEL TO GOVERN AND CONTINUE MODERNIZATION PROCESS. MAJORITY OF BOTH COMMUNITIES ARE STILL LIVING IN ESSENTIALLY TRIBAL, MEDIEVAL SOCIETIES.

5. BRITISH AMBASSADOR GRAHAM TOLD ME IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE THAT COURT MINISTER ALAM HAD RECENTLY TOLD BRITISH THAT IRAN WAS DETERMINED TO CONTINUE THE WAR BY GIVING BARZANI NOT ONLY WHAT HE NEEDED TO GET THROUGH THE WINTER, BUT SUFFICIENT ARMS AND EQUIPMENT TO RENEW FULL SCALE HOSTILITIES IN SPRING. IF THIS REPRESENTS SHAH'S THINKING THEN WE ARE ALMOST CERTAINLY HEADING FOR LARGE SCALE REGIONAL CONFLICT.

I BELIEVE THEREFORE TIME HAS COME TO MAKE STRONGEST POSSIBLE DEMARCHE TO SHAH TO DETERMINE EXTENT TO WHICH U.S. AND  
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IRANIAN INTEREST CONFLICT IN THIS MATTER AND HOW THEY MIGHT BE RECONCILED. AS PREVIOUSLY SUGGESTED, I BELIEVE MOST PROMISING APPROACH WOULD BE FOR U.S. TO RECOMMEND THAT IRAN TEST SERIOUSNESS OF IRAQI DESIRE FOR RAPPROCHEMENT RATHER THAN INFLEXIBLY MAINTAINING THAT BAATH REGIME IS INCORRIGIBLY HOSTILE TO TI.

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