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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5193
INFO RUGMBI/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY 5107
RUFHRS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 1067
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 3206
RUEHAD/USINT BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0997
RUGMBE/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 5680
RUFHOL/AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY 0599
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 2607
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 1800
RUGMDJ/AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI PRIORITY 0087
RUGMOD/AMEMBASSY DOHA PRIORITY 2884
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 0553
RUGMRA/AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY 6657
RUGMKM/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY 0705
RUFHUK/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3658
RUGMAM/AMEMBASSY MANAMA PRIORITY 4243
RUGMMT/AMEMBASSY MUSCAT PRIORITY 2310
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 0442
RUFHOK/AMEMBASSY NOUAKHOTT PRIORITY 0162
RUDKBT/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 0646
RUFNPS/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 2328
RUGMNS/AMEMBASSY SANA PRIORITY 1478
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 1236
RUDKKR/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 0785
RUEHDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0878
BT
S E C R E T KUWAIT 0168

E.O. 12065: RDS-1 1/9/90 (DICKMAN, F.M.) OR-M
TAGS: PEPR, SCUL, MPOL, IR, AF, KU, XF, SOPN
SUBJECT: (S) KUWAIT REACTION TO EVENTS IN TEHRAN AND AFGHAN-
STAN

REF: MANAMA 0031

1. (S - ENTIRE TEXT).

2. SUMMARY. KUWAITI REACTION TO EVENTS IN TEHRAN AND AFGHANISTAN CONTINUES TO REVEAL A DEPRESSINGLY PROFOUND DISTRUST OF THE UNITED STATES. THIS IS REFLECTED IN THE PRESS. THE KUWAITI TENDENCY TO TAKE CONTINGENCY US DEPLOYMENT IN THE AREA MORE SERIOUSLY THAN THE ACTUAL SOVIET INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN, THE STATE OF KUWAIT'S DISILLUSIONMENT WITH US POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AND ATTEMPTS BY YOUNG KUWAITIS TO FIND NEW SPIRITUAL VALUES NOT TIED TO THE EAST OR THE WEST. WASHINGTON'S COMPARTMENTALIZATION OF ISSUES DOES NOT WORK WITH OUR KUWAITI FRIENDS WHO SEE AFGHANISTAN AS PART OF A BATTLE BETWEEN SUPER-POWERS AND EVENTS IN TEHRAN AS SYMBOLIZING A NEW ISLAMIC FORCE SEEKING TO DEFINE A SET OF VALUES DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF THE WEST. END SUMMARY.

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3. DESPITE OUR INTENSIVE EFFORTS TO REVIEW EVENTS IN TEHRAN AND AFGHANISTAN WITH WIDE GAMUT OF KUWAITI OFFICIALDOM AND SOCIETY, KUWAITI REACTION GENERALLY CONTINUES TO REVEAL A DEPRESSINGLY PROFOUND DISTRUST OF THE UNITED STATES REFLECTING A DIFFERENCE IN POLITICAL PRIORITIES AND A DESIRE TO IDENTIFY WITH A FORCE THAT IS NEITHER WITH THE WEST NOR THE EAST. THIS DISTRUST IS MANIFESTED IN DIFFERENT WAYS.

A) THE NEWSPAPERS HERE, THOUGH HISTORICALLY CHARACTERIZED BY THE EMBASSY AS NOT REPRESENTATIVE OF RESPONSIBLE KUWAITI OPINION, ARE CARRYING EVERY KIND OF SLANDER ABOUT AMERICA. THEY DO GIVE LIP SERVICE TO THE IMPROPRIETY OF HOLDING DIPLOMATS HOSTAGE IN TEHRAN, AND TO THE ILLEGALITY OF THE SOVIET INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN, BUT THEY EMPHASIZE, AFTER NOODS IN THESE DIRECTIONS, THAT BOTH EVENTS MAKE GOOD POLITICAL CAPITAL FOR PRESIDENT CARTER. THEREFORE THESE EVENTS "MUST" HAVE TAKEN PLACE WITH THE CONCURRENCE OF THE USG. THESE PAPERS ALLEGE THAT, SINCE AMERICAN INTELLIGENCE WAS AWARE OF THE MASSING OF SOVIET TROOPS NEAR AFGHANISTAN, AND AMERICA DID NOTHING ABOUT IT, USG PROTESTS ABOUT THE SOVIET INVASION MUST BE ONLY FOR THE RECORD. IT FOLLOWS, IN THEIR CONSPIRACY-THEORY ORIENTATION, THAT THE USG MUST HAVE AGREED IN ADVANCE WITH THE RUSSIANS. IF THE RUSSIANS ARE TO HAVE AFGHANISTAN, THE ARGUMENT GOES, THAT THE USG MUST HAVE RECEIVED RUSSIAN ASSURANCES EITHER THAT IRAN WOULD FALL TO OUR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE, OR AT LEAST THAT RUSSIA WOULD NOT INTERFERE AS WE DEPLOYED SECRETARY BROWN'S 100,000 MAN EMERGENCY FORCE -- INTO THE GULF SO AS TO CONTROL OIL SUPPLIES, UNDER THE EUPHEMISM OF PROTECTING FRIENDLY STATES.

B) STATEMENTS APPEARING IN US MEDIA DISCUSSING HYPOTHETICAL US EMERGENCY DEPLOYMENT IN THE REGION IS TAKEN MUCH MORE SERIOUSLY BY RESPONSIBLE KUWAITIS THAN IS THE ACTUAL SOVIET INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN. THERE ARE SEVERAL REASONS FOR THIS ATTITUDE. AFGHANISTAN IS STILL A GOOD WAY AWAY. THERE ARE SO MANY ARTICLES THAT RUSSIA IS GOING TO FIND ITS "VIETNAM", AS INVINCIBLE AFGHAN MOUNTAIN MEN DO TO THE SOVIETS WHAT THEY HAVE DONE TO INVADERS IN THE PAST, THAT KUWAITIS RATIONALIZE THAT IT IS A CIA TRICK. THE US HAS LURED THE RUSSIANS TO A LONG DRAWN OUT AND DEBILITATING CONFLICT. WHILE HISTORIANS HAVE WRITTEN ABOUT RUSSIAN ASPIRATIONS TO THE INDIAN OCEAN OR CONTROL OF THE GULF AND ITS OIL, AMERICAN POLITICIANS CONTINUE TO SPEAK OF THE NEED TO DEPLOY FORCES TO PROTECT THE FLOW OF OIL AND THE REGION GENERALLY. RECENT OFFICIAL AMERICAN STATEMENTS REGARDING SENDING TEAMS TO DETERMINE AVAILABILITY OF MILITARY FACILITIES IN THE REGION OR ADMISSION THAT US MILITARY AIRCRAFT HAVE BEEN IN EGYPT FOR TRAINING EXERCISES ARE SEEN AS CONSTITUTING ALMOST AN OFFICIAL PROMISE OF USG INTERFERENCE IN ARAB AFFAIRS, WHEREAS SOVIET ACTIONS IN AFGHANISTAN STILL FALL FAR SHORT OF SUCH A DIRECT THREAT IN THEIR EYES.

C) THERE IS NOW SUCH A STATE OF DISSILLUSIONMENT (REFLECTED IN REFTEL) WITH US POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST OVER THE ARAB-ISRAEL QUESTION THAT MANY OF OUR KUWAITI INTERLOCUTORS ARE NOT REALLY WILLING TO LISTEN ANYMORE TO OUR ARGUMENTS. TIME AFTER TIME, SINCE THE EMBASSY

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IN TEHRAN WAS OCCUPIED. FRIENDLY AND RESPONSIBLE KUWAITIS HAVE (1) COMMISERATED ABOUT THE DIPLOMATS HELD HOSTAGE ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS, BUT (2) ASKED US WHAT WE COULD EXPECT IN THE WAY OF REAL ARAB SUPPORT IN VIEW OF OUR CONSISTENT IGNORING OF ARAB AND PALESTINIAN RIGHTS VIS-A-VIS ISRAEL. THERE ARE SOME WHO AGREE WITH US WHEN WE POINT OUT THE ESSENTIAL IRRELEVANCE OF PALESTINE TO IRAN AND AFGHANISTAN. SOME ALSO AGREE THAT LIKE KHOMEINI'S HATRED FOR THE SHAH, KUWAITI UNHAPPINESS WITH US MIDDLE EAST POLICY BLINDS THEM TO DANGERS OF RUSSIAN ENCROACHMENT. BUT THEY MAKE THE POINT THAT WHEN USG HAS MADE ITSELF UNBELIEVABLE AND UNTRUSTWORTHY ABOUT AN ISSUE CLOSE AND VITAL TO ARAB HEARTS, THE US CANNOT BE FULLY TRUSTED AND BELIEVED ON OTHER ISSUES.

D) THERE IS A RENEWED DESIRE ESPECIALLY AMONG YOUNG KUWAITIS TO RETURN TO SOME KIND OF SPIRITUAL VALUES. THE US REMAINS THE SYMBOL OF MATERIALISM AND EXPLOITATION AND PLEASURES. KUWAITIS HERE TELL US THE MOSQUES ARE NOW FULL OF YOUNG PEOPLE, THOSE IN THE TWENTIES FAR OUTNUMBER ALL OTHER ATTENDEES. WITH DEPARTURE OF NASSER AND LACK OF ANYONE TO REPLACE HIM AS POLITICAL LEADER IN THE ARAB WORLD, THEY ARE LOOKING FOR A NEW SPIRITUAL LEADER. KHOMEINI DOES NOT EXACTLY FILL THE BILL BUT THERE IS A SEARCH FOR NEW SENSE OF VALUES WHICH ARE NOT IDENTIFIED EITHER WITH US OR WITH SOVIET UNION.

4. WE HAVE FOR SOME TIME, IN PREVIOUS GORM EXERCISES FOR EXAMPLE, POINTED OUT THAT WE ARE JUDGED OUT HERE PRIMARILY BY OUR ARAB-ISRAELI POLICY, AND THAT KUWAITI PERCEPTIONS OF OUR FAILINGS IN THAT AREA SPILL OVER AND AFFECT OUR RELATIONS ON UTTERLY DIFFERENT MATTERS. IRAN AND AFGHANISTAN, TWO DRAMATIC INSTANCES IN WHICH WE REALLY WANT ACTIVE KUWAITI SUPPORT, ARE PERFECT ILLUSTRATIONS OF THIS THEME. AS A FOREIGN MINISTRY DESK OFFICER TOLD US RECENTLY IN CONTEXT OF A DISCUSSION ON AFGHANISTAN, "WE WOULD BE WITH YOU ONE HUNDRED PERCENT IF IT WERE NOT FOR YOUR BLIND FAVORITISM FOR ISRAEL." WHILE THIS IS AN EASY OUT, IT REFLECTS COMMONLY HELD ATTITUDE THAT THE US CANNOT EXPECT REAL HELP FROM THE ARABS ABSENT PROGRESS ON THE ARABS' CENTRAL POLITICAL CONCERN -- A STATE WHICH MEETS BASIC PALESTINIAN ASPIRATIONS.

5. THE KUWAITIS, AND WE BELIEVE OTHER ARABS TOO, ALSO SEE US AS COMPARTMENTALIZING ISSUES FAR TOO EASILY. FROM FOGGY BOTTOM, THE CONTINUED DETENTION OF THE HOSTAGES STRIKES AT FUNDAMENTAL BASIS FOR RATIONAL DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGE AND REPRESENTATION IN THE WORLD AND AFGHANISTAN IS A GLOBAL STRATEGIC MATTER HAVING NOTHING TO DO WITH PALESTINE. FROM THE KUWAITI PERSPECTIVE, EVENTS IN TEHRAN ARE SEEN AS SYMBOLIZING A NEW ISLAMIC FORCE SEEKING TO DEFINE A SET OF VALUES DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF THE WEST. AFGHANISTAN IS SEEN AS PART OF THE ENDURING BATTLE BETWEEN THE TWO SUPERPOWERS, WITH THE USG TAINTED BY ITS CONTINUED LARGE MATERIAL AND POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL WHILE ISRAEL PERMITS THE EXPANSION OF SETTLEMENTS ON THE WEST BANK IN THE FACE OF OFFICIAL AMERICAN STATEMENTS THAT THEY ARE ILLEGAL.

6. WHILE WE HAVE NO INTENTION OF CHANGING OUR APPROACHES ON TEHRAN AND AFGHANISTAN, WE SHOULD REMAIN AWARE THAT KUWAIT AND WE BELIEVE OTHER

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ARAB GULF COUNTRIES WHICH ARE AMONG CLOSEST TO
IRAN AND AFGHANISTAN, CONTINUE TO SEE THEIR
SECURITY AND EXISTENCE AS BEING DETERMINED FIRST BY
WHAT HAPPENS IN PALESTINE AND SECOND BY WHAT
HAPPENS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE GULF. AT THE SAME
TIME, BEING BUFFETED BY ANTI-ISLAMIC BRUTALITY OF
THE SOVIET UNION IN AFGHANISTAN AND US ATTEMPTS TO
STIR THEM UP ABOUT KHOMEINI'S INIQUITIES, MANY
KUWAITIS SEE THIS AS A PLOT WHOSE MEANING THEY DO
NOT YET FATHOM. FOR THE YOUNGER GENERATION OF
KUWAITIS, IT TENDS TO REINFORCE THEIR
DESIRE TO FIND A NEW LEADERSHIP WHICH AT LEAST
WILL EMPHASIZE PIETY AND SELF ABNEGATION AND WHICH
CAN PROVIDE SOME REASSURING EXPLANATION FOR THE
CONFUSION AROUND THEM.
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