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Prime Minister

FM BAHRAIN 200745Z FEB 84

TO PRIORITY FCO

Very interesting.

TELEGRAM NUMBER 31 OF 20 FEB

INFO MIDDLE EAST POSTS WASHINGTON TEHRAN

A.J.C. 2/2

THE GULF AND LEBANON

1. WITHIN THE LAST FEW DAYS I HAVE HAD DISCUSSIONS ON DEVELOPMENTS IN LEBANON AND LESS POLICY THERE WITH BOTH THE AMIR, AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER AS WELL AS WITH OFFICIALS. I DETECT A MARKED INCREASED IN THEIR ANXIETY AND A SHIFT IN THEIR PERCEPTIONS. *MB*

2. THE BAHRAINIS ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED BECAUSE:

(A) THEY SEE AMERICAN POLICY AS FURTHER EVIDENCE OF THE UNRELIABILITY OF THE US AS AN ALLY. FIRST THE US PULLED THE RUG FROM UNDER THE SHAH. NOW, HAVING GONE IN TO LEBANON TO SUPPORT PRESIDENT GEMAYEL THEY HAVE BEEN SEEN OFF BY THE SYRIANS. THEY FAILED TO USE ADEQUATE FORCE AND HAVE BEEN DRAWN THROUGH POLITICAL INEPTITUDE INTO FIGHTING UNSECESSFULLY ON BEHALF OF ONE FACTION AND WITH DISREGARD FOR SYRIA'S OLD-ESTABLISHED AND NATURALLY DOMINANT INFLUENCE IN BEIRUT.

(B) THIS REFLECTS ON THE RELIABILITY OF THE UNITED STATES AS A GUARANTOR OF BAHRAIN'S OWN SECURITY. THE AMIR COMMENTED THAT THE IRANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER HAD WITHIN THE LAST FEW DAYS WARNED THE GULF STATES AGAINST PUTTING ALL THEIR EGGS INTO THE AMERICAN BASKET; BAHRAIN HAD TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF THIS AND HAD FOR EXAMPLE JUST REFUSED AGREEMENT FOR THE AMERICANS TO INSTAL A NEW TELECOMMUNICATIONS DISH AERIAL.

(C) THEY FEEL THERE IS A SAD LACK OF SAUDI POLITICAL LEADERSHIP. AT A TIME WHEN THE AMIR THINKS THE GCC HAVE A REAL NEED TO MEET AT SUMMIT LEVEL, KING FAHD IS IN MARBELLA.

(D) DEVELOPMENTS IN BEIRUT UNDERLINE THE ADVANCE OF SHIISM THROUGH THE AREA, A DIRECT THREAT TO STABILITY IN BAHRAIN WITH ITS SHIA MAJORITY. THE FOREIGN MINISTER STRESSED TO ME THE NEED, IF AN INTEGRAL LEBANON CAN EVER BE RESTORED, FOR THE RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES TO BE ENTRENCHED: THERE SHOULD BE NO WHITTILING AWAY OF THEIR SPECIAL POSITION. →

HIS ARGUMENT IS THAT THE MARONITES

AS A THREATENED MINORITY IN THE LARGELY MOSLEM ARAB WORLD NEED ALL THE REASSURANCE THAT CAN BE GIVEN THEM, BUT UNDERLYING THIS IS HIS FEAR OF SHIA ASCENDANCY.

3. DISTRUST OF VACILLATING US POLICY IS PARAMOUNT. THE BAHRAINIS ALSO REGRET THAT THE BRITISH CONTINGENT SHOULD HAVE WITHDRAWN FROM LEBANON. THOUGH THEY ACCEPT THE INEVITABILITY OF THE MOVE, THEY ARGUE THAT BRITISH POLICY ON ALL MIDDLE EASTERN ISSUES HAS COME TO FOLLOW THE US TOO CLOSELY. THEY ADMIRE BY CONTRAST THE INDEPENDENCE OF FRENCH ACTION, AS THEY SEE IT, THOUGH THEY WERE APPALLED BY REMARKS RECENTLY ATTRIBUTED BY AFP TO PRESIDENT MITTERAND IN CONDEMNATION OF PRESIDENT GEMAYEL AND IN SUPPORT OF THE SHIA.

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/4

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4. THE GULF WAR REMAINS THE FIRST SECURITY PRIORITY FOR BAHRAIN. BUT THE AMIR AND HIS FOREIGN MINISTER NOW SEE DEVELOPMENTS IN LEBANON AS PART OF THE SAME COMPLEX OF ISSUES IN WHICH ESTABLISHED PRO-WESTERN REGIMES THROUGHOUT THE AREA ARE THREATENED BY REVOLUTIONARY, LARGELY SHIA, INFLUENCES BACKED BY IRAN AND SYRIA. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES THEY FEAR THAT US POLICY WILL AFFORD ITS ARAB FRIENDS NO MORE EFFECTIVE SUPPORT IN THE FUTURE THAN THAT ENJOYED BY THE SHAH AND NOW BY PRESIDENT GEMAYEL.

TOMKYS

MIDDLE EAST

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2

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