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CONFIDENTIAL

U K EYES ALPHA

FM WASHINGTON 121950Z APR 85

TO IMMEDIATE F C O

TELEGRAM NUMBER 1250 OF 12 APRIL

INFO IMMEDIATE MODUK, JEDDA, RIYADH, NEW DELHI (FOR P M'S PARTY)  
INFO SAVING AMMAN.

JEDDA TELEGRAM NO 210: U S/SAUDI ARABIA: DEFENCE SALES.

SUMMARY

1. GENERAL VESSEY'S AIM IS TO REASSURE THE SAUDIS OF CONTINUED U S SUPPORT DESPITE THE DELAY IN SUBMITTING ARMS SALES PROPOSALS TO CONGRESS. DECISIONS ON THIS ARE UNLIKELY TO BE TAKEN HERE BEFORE LATE MAY.

DETAIL

2. A MEMBER OF VESSEY'S STAFF (PLEASE PROTECT) HAS TOLD US THAT THE OBJECTIVES OF HIS VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA ARE TO REASSURE THE SAUDIS OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S FULL SUPPORT FOR THEIR SECURITY INTERESTS, IN PARTICULAR FOR MEETING THEIR LATEST REQUEST FOR ARMS; TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO BUILD UP A REGIONAL DEFENCE SYSTEM THROUGH THE G C C; TO GAUGE THE PROFICIENCY AND POTENTIAL OF THE SAUDI ARMED FORCES; AND TO DISCUSS THE SAUDI ASSESSMENT OF THE THREATS TO THEMSELVES AND THE OTHER G C C STATES.

3. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE PENTAGON ARE PRESSING FOR EARLY NOTIFICATION TO CONGRESS OF A SAUDI ARMS PACKAGE INCLUDING F-15S, THOUGH ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT THE GROUND ATTACK VERSION. OUR STATE DEPARTMENT AND N S C CONTACTS, HOWEVER, DO NOT EXPECT EARLY ACTION. STARK (N S C STAFF) HAS TOLD US THAT IT IS LIKELY TO BE SEVERAL WEEKS BEFORE THE INTER-AGENCY MIDDLE EAST ARMS SALES POLICY REVIEW IS COMPLETED. HE DID NOT, THEREFORE, EXPECT DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN ON ARMS SALES TO SAUDI ARABIA AND JORDAN AND ON THE TIMING OF THEIR NOTIFICATION TO CONGRESS BEFORE THE END OF MAY. STARK ADDED THAT IT HAD NOT BEEN DECIDED WHETHER TO GIVE SAUDI OR JORDANIAN SALES PRIORITY OR INDEED WHETHER TO NOTIFY BOTH PACKAGES TOGETHER. THE PROSPECTS FOR SECURING CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL OF MAJOR SALES TO JORDAN WOULD, OF COURSE, DEPEND ON PROGRESS ON THE PEACE PROCESS.

4. THE STATE DEPARTMENT SAY THAT ANY SALES WILL HAVE TO BE NOTIFIED INFORMALLY TO CONGRESS BY 3 JUNE IF THEY ARE TO GO THROUGH BEFORE THE SUMMER RECESS. THIS TIMING LOOKS RATHER TIGHT GIVEN THE DELAY IN COMPLETING THE POLICY REVIEW, THE UNCERTAINTIES OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE ADMINISTRATION'S OTHER PRIORITIES ON THE HILL. MCFARLANE TOLD THE DIRECTOR OF A T P A C (THE MAIN PRO-ISRAELI LOBBYING ORGANISATION) EARLIER THIS YEAR THAT MAJOR ARMS SALES TO ARAB COUNTRIES WOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED TO CONGRESS BEFORE LATE SUMMER. THIS TIMING STILL SEEMS MORE LIKELY. HENCE ALSO THE NEED TO RE-ASSURE THE SAUDIS.

F C O PLEASE PASS SAVING AMMAN.

WRIGHT