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 TAGS: PREL, IZ, US  
 SUBJ: ISMET KITTANI'S REACTION TO US CHEMICAL WEAPONS STATEMENT  
 AND NEXT STEPS IN US-IRAQ RELATIONS

1. CONFIDENTIAL -- ENTIRE TEXT.

2. MY MARCH 7 MEETING WITH UNDERSECRETARY ISMET KITTANI TO DISCUSS HIS COMING VISIT TO WASHINGTON AND NEW YORK WAS CONDUCTED IN THE ATMOSPHERE CREATED HERE BY US CONDEMNATION OF THE IRAQI USE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS. KITTANI'S REACTION WAS, AS COULD BE EXPECTED, MORE SOPHISTICATED THAN THE OFFICIAL OUTRAGED IRAQI LINE. WE OPENED BY SIMULTANEOUSLY EXPRESSING DISMAY WITH EACH OTHER'S STATEMENTS AND POSITIONS. AS THE CONVERSATION SETTLED DOWN KITTANI'S COMPLAINT CENTERED CHIEFLY ON TIMING AND THE MANNER IN WHICH WE HAD PRESENTED THE ISSUE. HE THOUGHT IT WOULD HAVE BETTER TO ALLOWED EVIDENCE FROM THIRD PARTIES TO HAVE FULLY DEVELOPED BEFORE THE US EXPRESSED ITSELF PUBLICLY. HE ALSO THOUGHT A RESPONSE TO A QUESTION WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER THAN A FORMAL STATEMENT. HE THEN NOTED THE ALLEGED CHEMICAL USE HAD BEEN ON IRAQI SOIL AND HE COMPARED IT TO USE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS TO SHORTEN THE

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WAR WITH JAPAN.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
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3. I OBSERVED THAT OUR STATEMENT HAD CONTAINED CRITICISM OF IRAN'S INTRANSIGENCE AND SUPPORT FOR THE LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ, BUT HE DISMISSED THIS AS MATERIAL THAT THE MEDIA HAD IGNORED. IN RESPONSE TO HIS CHARGE THAT WE ARE ABETTING IRANIAN PROPAGANDA I NOTED THAT IT WAS IRAQ'S USE OF THIS WEAPON AND THEIR OWN STATEMENTS THAT HD GIVEN THE IRANIANS THEIR OPENING.

4. KITTANI AGREED THAT WE SHOULD TRY TO MINIMIZE THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OUR DISAGREEMENT ON THIS ISSUE WOULD HAVE ON BILATERAL RELATIONS AND ATTITUDES. I RECALLED THAT IN EARLY FEBRUARY ASSISTANT SECRETARY MURPHY AND TARIQ AZIZ HAD BRIEFLY ALLUDED TO A POSSIBLE VISIT BY TARIQ AZIZ TO WASHINGTON. I DID NOT HAVE SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS IN THIS REGARD BUT HAD NOTED A FAVORABLE ATTITUDE TOWARD SUCH A VISIT DURING CONSULTATIONS IN WASHINGTON DURING FEBRUARY. I SUGGESTED THAT KITTANI MIGHT WISH TO OBTAIN TARIQ AZIZ' LATEST THOUGHTS WHEN HE SEES HIM THIS EVENING PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE TOMORROW FOR THE US.

5. KITTANI SAID HE WOULD MENTION THIS TO TARIQ AZIZ. HE GAVE THE IMPRESSION HOWEVER THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO TREAT THE SUBJECT VERY CAREFULLY IN THE AFTERMATH OF OUR CHEMICAL WEAPONS STATEMENT. HE OBVIOUSLY HOPES AND BELIEVES THAT THE DUST WILL EVENTUALLY SETTLE AND PERMIT CONTINUATION OF THE HIGH US-IRAQI DIALOGUE, BUT HE DOES NOT KNOW HOW LONG THIS MIGHT TAKE.

6. I SUGGEST THAT IN KITTANI'S MEETINGS WITH MURPHY AND EAGLEBURGER HE BE TOLD THAT A VISIT BY TARIQ AZIZ WOULD BE WELCOME AT A MUTUALLY CONVENIENT TIME. EAGLETON  
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