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INCOMING
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TEL AV 13256 01 OF 02 191243Z

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO WHITEHOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0276

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NODIS CHEROKEE

FOR THE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY MUSKIE FROM LEWIS

E.O. 12065: RDS-1 7/19/00 (LEWIS, SAMUEL W.) DR-M
TAGS: MNUC, MILI, FR, IZ, IS, US
SUBJECT: BEGIN'S APPEAL TO PRESIDENT CARTER CONCERNING
FRENCH ENRICHED URANIUM SHIPMENTS TO IRAQ

REF: A) STATE 189464, B) PARIS 22137

1. (S) - ENTIRE TEXT)

2. DURING MY FIRST MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER BEGIN SINCE HE CAME OUT OF THE HOSPITAL, AN HOUR LONG SESSION AT HIS RESIDENCE BEDROOM JULY 17, HE ASKED ME TO DELIVER TO PRESIDENT CARTER A PERSONAL AND VERY EMOTIONAL MESSAGE CONCERNING HIS FEARS THAT IRAQ WOULD SOON BE IN POSSESSION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS. BEGIN SAID THAT THE RECENT REPORTS THAT THE FRENCH ARE GOING AHEAD TO SHIP HIGHLY ENRICHED URANIUM TO IRAQ, IN A QUANTITY (72 KG.) WHICH WOULD PERMIT THE MANUFACTURE OF AT LEAST THREE NUCLEAR WEAPONS, HAS GIVEN HIM AND HIS COLLEAGUES CONTINUOUS SLEEPLESS NIGHTS. BEGIN STRESSED THAT THE IRAQIS ALREADY HAVE SOVIET TUPOLOV-22 BLINDER BOMBERS WITH WHICH BOMBING RUNS TO THE HEART OF ISRAEL AND RETURN TO BAGHDAD, CARRYING

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By Amf, NARA, Date 2/3/05

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NUCLEAR WEAPONS, ARE PERFECTLY POSSIBLE. EVEN ONE OR TWO NUCLEAR WEAPONS DROPPED INTO THE CENTER OF ISRAEL'S CIVILIAN POPULATION "WOULD WIPE OUT OUR CITIZENS."

3. BEGIN STRESSED THAT YOU SHOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THAT IRAQ "IS THE BLOODIEST AND MOST IRRESPONSIBLE OF ALL ARAB REGIMES, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF KADDAFI IN LIBYA, HAS SENT SUBSTANTIAL FORCES TO FIGHT AGAINST ISRAEL IN ALL OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI WARS, AND HAS NEVER AGREED TO SIGN ANY ARMISTICE AGREEMENT AFTER ANY OF THESE WARS, UNLIKE THE OTHER ARAB STATES ALL OF WHICH DID SIGN ARMISTICES."

BEGIN THEN RECOUNTED A STORY

[REDACTED]

FOIA(b) (/)

ACCORDING TO WHICH MUBARAK WAS SHAKEN UP CONSIDERABLY DURING A VISIT TO PRESIDENT SADDAM HUSSEIN'S OFFICE IN BAGHDAD TO FIND HIM WITH A LOADED PISTOL ON HIS DESK DURING THEIR CONVERSATION. THIS, BEGIN SAID, ILLUSTRATES WHAT KIND OF IRAQI LEADER WE ARE DEALING WITH.

4. BEGIN CONCLUDED HIS APPEAL BY ASKING ME TO PUT TO THE PRESIDENT IN THE STRONGEST POSSIBLE TERMS HIS PERSONAL REQUEST THAT THE PRESIDENT DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE WITH THE FRENCH TO STOP FURTHER ENRICHED URANIUM SHIPMENTS TO IRAQ. I TOLD HIM I WOULD CONVEY HIS APPEAL IMMEDIATELY.

5. COMMENT: IN RECENT DAYS, ISRAELI OFFICIALS, JOURNALISTS, ACADEMIC EXPERTS, AND KNESSET MEMBERS HAVE BEEN WORKING THEMSELVES UP INTO A STATE OF NEAR PANIC ABOUT THE IRAQI NUCLEAR ISSUE. ISRAEL'S MOST WIDELY RESPECTED NUCLEAR PHYSICIST, YUVAL NE'EMAN, HAS GIVEN SEVERAL INTERVIEWS STATING FLATLY THAT ISRAEL CANNOT AFFORD TO MAKE ANY OTHER ASSUMPTION BUT THAT THE IRAQIS WILL TAKE ALL OR

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PART OF THE ENRICHED URANIUM WHICH THE FRENCH ARE SUPPLY-
ING AND TURN IT INTO SEVERAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS OF ROUGHLY
THE YIELD OF THE HIROSHIMA BOMB. THIS, HE AND OTHERS
HAVE INSISTED, CAN CONFRONT ISRAEL WITH AN IRAQ ARMED WITH
NUCLEAR WEAPONS WITHIN ONE YEAR OR LESS, ALTHOUGH

[REDACTED]

FOIA(b) (1)

IRAQI NUCLEAR CAPABILITY IS A
FEW YEARS FURTHER OFF, THEY CANNOT AND DO NOT DISMISS BY
ANY MEANS NE'EMAN'S "WORSE CASE" SCENARIO. NOR, OBVI-
OUSLY, DOES BEGIN.

6. FROM DISCUSSING THIS ISSUE WITH BEGIN AND A NUMBER OF
OTHERS HERE IN THE LAST FEW DAYS, I FIND THAT ANY ARGU-
MENTS ABOUT FRENCH INSPECTION OF THE USE OF THE NUCLEAR
MATERIAL, OR INTERNATIONAL IAEA INSPECTION SAFEGUARDS
FALL ON COMPLETELY DEAF EARS. THE ISRAELIS ASSUME FROM
THEIR OWN EXPERIENCE THAT THE FRENCH CAN AND WILL TURN A
BLIND EYE TO DIVERSION OF THE MATERIAL, AND THAT IN ANY
CASE INSPECTORS ARE NOT THAT DIFFICULT TO FOOL. THE
ISRAELI EXPERIENCE IN SPIRITING WEAPONS OUT OF FRANCE IN
EARLIER TIMES UNDER THE NOSE OF THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT IS
ONE OF THE FACTORS IN THEIR LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN ANY
FRENCH ASSURANCES THAT THE NUCLEAR MATERIAL, ONCE IN
BAGHDAD, WILL BE KEPT UNDER EFFECTIVE OBSERVATION.

7. BEGIN'S APPEAL TO YOU SHOULD BE SEEN AGAINST THE BACK-
DROP OF THIS RISING TIDE OF ANXIETY. FROM WELL-INFORMED
JOURNALISTS WE KNOW THAT THE ISRAELI AUTHORITIES ARE NOW
LOOKING VERY SERIOUSLY AT HOW ISRAEL ITSELF CAN STOP THE
IRAQI NUCLEAR PROGRAM, IF THE U.S. IS NOT EFFECTIVE IN
"BRINGING THE FRENCH TO THEIR SENSES." WE ALSO KNOW THAT
THE ISRAELIS ARE LAUNCHING DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS IN EUROPE
TO TRY TO BRING PRESSURE TO BEAR ON THE FRENCH, AND THAT
THEY ARE MAKING A MAJOR EFFORT TO FOCUS THE WEIGHT OF
PUBLIC OPINION AND JEWISH INFLUENCE WITHIN FRANCE ON
GISCARD D'ESTAING. SHIMON PERES TOLD ME JULY 18 THAT HE

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NODIS CHEROKEE

FOR THE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY MUSKIE FROM LEWIS

AND HIS FRIENDS IN THE LABOR PARTY WERE LAUNCHING PARALLEL EFFORTS IN FRANCE, SINCE ON THIS ISSUE THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE OF VIEW BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE OPPOSITION.

8. I AM UNAWARE OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH WE HAVE ALREADY MADE STRONG EFFORTS WITH THE FRENCH ON THIS ISSUE. BUT I AM CONVINCED THAT AS THINGS ARE NOW DEVELOPING IN THE REGION, THERE IS NO MORE DANGEROUS ISSUE THAN THIS ONE. UNLESS WE CAN SOMEHOW CHANGE THE COURSE OF FRENCH POLICY AND REASSURE THE ISRAELIS, WE MUST ANTICIPATE THAT THEY WILL FEEL COMPELLED IN THE NOT TOO DISTANT FUTURE TO TAKE SOME KIND OF UNILATERAL ACTION TO THWART THE IRAQI NUCLEAR PLANS WELL BEFORE THE IRAQIS ACTUALLY POSSESS A WEAPON. AND BY THE "VERY NEAR FUTURE," I MEAN WITHIN THE NEXT SIX MONTHS. INITIAL ISRAELI MOVES WOULD PROBABLY BE CLANDESTINE, BUT WE COULD NOT AND SHOULD NOT RULE OUT ANY POSSIBILITIES, PARAMILITARY, OR EVEN PREEMPTIVE STRIKES WITH CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS AGAINST THE IRAQI NUCLEAR FACILITIES, REGARDLESS OF THE AWESOME CONSEQUENCES SUCH ACTS COULD PRODUCE.

9. FOR THESE REASONS, I URGE YOU TO RESPOND AS CONVINC-

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INGLY AND EFFECTIVELY AS POSSIBLE TO BEGIN'S APPEAL,
LEWIS

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