

PRUNIAUX Andre

From: FERNANDEZ Lucien
Sent: mardi, 25. mai 1999 10:18
To: PRUNIAUX Andre
Cc: POITEVIN Alexis
Subject: VISIT OF THE MOT IN UMM QASR

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Andre,

Spoke with John Almstrom, as soon as I got the news by telephone; they were in an emergency meeting I called. Their feeling is that this is plain posturing in the context of the negotiation of Phase VI, not endorsed by Iraq, although unanimously endorsed by all members of the Security Council.

Their advice as far as we are concerned is to play low key for the moment and keep recording accounts of what may be said or written in this regard. At their end, they will formally write to the Iraq Mission asking whether the above mentioned visit implies that the Iraqi Authorities are withdrawing their support and cooperation for the authentication. I reminded them that they still had an official communication to the Iraq mission pending, regarding the claims and their settlement (discussed when we were in New York last time). John Almstrom said that the official letter had been held up by the legal team, and the corrections made (recently received) rendered the text unusable. They are now awaiting the comments of Jeremy Owen, presently on leave.

Umm Qasr has been badly shaken by the show of force made by the MOC (2000+ heavily armed guards pointing their artillery at you surely make an impression!) and they are adamant that they are not going to authenticate any shipment for the time being unless so instructed by the Iraqi authorities, which I had to endorse until something official comes out of OIP.

Since week-end emergencies are the rule rather than exceptions, I need to be reachable at any time (it was past 22:00 hrs when I got the call, but was out of home). Fortunately I was in Iraq when the smuggling and misbehaving was discovered, which required immediate action to be taken, failing what the whole contract could have been in jeopardy. In view of the above, could you please approve a cellular phone for me in order to be available 24 hrs a day and 7 days a week when the need arises, and it seems that it is not going to get any better in the near future. Thank you for issuing the relevant instructions to administration at your earliest convenience.

Thanks and best regards,
Lucien

SPECIAL



COTECNA INSPECTION SA

Umm Qasr

UN SCR-986 PROGRAMME



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Umm Qasr, May 24, 1999, 20:40 Hr

At 20:20 Hr, a motorcade stopped in front of the camp. His Excellency, the Minister of Trade, Mr. Mohammed Mahdi Saleh, stepped out of his Mercedes and, surrounded by an impressive security cordon, called us. He declined the invitation to enter the camp.

His Excellency enquired whether we had any problem at the port. Upon our negative answer, he replied that he had one with us. The message he sent was unequivocal and clear.

Trade Authorities and Grain Board will, from now, not allow discharge of any vessel before completion of analyses in Baghdad, on quality as well as on conformity of the cargo with contract specifications.

The Ministry of Trade will, then, as the case may be, authorise the discharge.

In case of discrepancy on quality or on contract specifications, we are not allowed any more to authenticate, nor to pay the supplier.

We explained to His Excellency that we are not the paying authority. His Excellency replied that, in any case, we are not authorised to send any document that would entail payment to the supplier.

The Harbour Master was present, but had to remain silent.

We consider the situation as serious.

P. de Hennin

T. Benon