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17th Beam *(32)*



BRITISH EMBASSY

TEHRAN

(Teh/c.1252)

7 November, 1968.

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Naval News Summary

I should like to draw your attention to the September edition of this periodical (No. 264), a copy of which I imagine you will be able to obtain from the Ministry of Defence.

2. The Naval Attache here receives two copies of this summary each month and, after checking that the contents will not upset the Iranians, passes one copy to the Iranian Navy. In this particular issue the Naval Attache noted not only the photographs of the Royal Navy in Bahrain on the inside of the front cover but also the mention of the islands of Tunbs and Abu Musa in the second paragraph on page 10, the last part of which reads:-

"After a fleeting check on the islands of Tunb and Abu Musa, at the latter a new flag was dropped by helo, the ship H.M.S. Tartar returned for a maintenance period prior to leaving the Gulf in the Middle of July for a further spell on the Beira patrol."

Quite rightly Handley decided to withhold this from the Iranians. Subsequently he received a telegram from C.B.F.G. (for which we were grateful) classifying the news summary as secret, in view of the item on page 10.

3. This episode raises two question apart from the obvious one of how such an embarrassing item slipped through into an unclassified news summary designed for reproduction. First, has the offending publication been distributed widely in London or elsewhere and, in particular, has a copy been sent to the Iranian Embassy in London or any other Iranians in the U.K.? If so, we could still be in for trouble here.

/4.

A. R. Moore, Esq., C.M.G.,
Near Eastern Department,
F.C.O.

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4. Secondly, was it really necessary for the Navy to supply a new flag to be flown on Abu Musa just at this time and, moreover, to do so in a way which may well have attracted the attention of SAVMA's agents? I believe that British ships and aircraft had been instructed to pass near the Tunbs and Abu Musa on their patrols to check what flag was flying, that there had been complaints that since the flags were so old it was extremely difficult to identify them, and that for this reason it was decided that a new flag should be supplied. While I appreciate the practical difficulties, the Iranians are only too likely to categorise this action as "provocative" if and when they get wind of what has happened.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'C. D. Wiggin'.

(C. D. Wiggin)

cc: E. S. Weir, Esq.,
Bahrain Residency.

J. L. Bullard, Esq.,
Dubai.