



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

20 October 1981

*Discussed in Cabinet*

*Dear Michael,*

*L. Carrington 25/10*

The Sinai Peace-Keeping Force (MFO)

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary discussed the MFO with the Prime Minister on the evening of 19 October. He explained that the French had come back to us with two points on the draft statement that we had put to them ad referendum before the discussion between the Prime Minister and Lord Carrington at Blackpool.

The first French point is that, having received a formal request from the Egyptian Government as well as the US that they should make a contribution, they feel that they should put the statement to the governments of the US, Egypt and Israel with a view to all three signifying that they accept it as a statement of the position of the Ten (we believe that this is the position of the Italian Government too). The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary had taken the view that there was no need for us to communicate directly with the Egyptian or Israeli Governments, who had not been in touch with us, and that the statement that we issued need only refer to the US Government. Nevertheless it would be undesirable if there were a difference between ourselves, the French and the Italians. Accordingly we are now discussing with the French and the Italians a formula for the penultimate paragraph of the draft statement so that it would read:

'They have received confirmation from the governments concerned that they recognise that the European contribution to the Force is made on the basis described above.'

The second French point is of more substance. They wish to drop the last part of the last paragraph ('and the US Government have welcomed this') on the grounds that the latter would be unable to go as far and would be liable to come back with a conditional welcome (eg 'on the understanding that the Europeans' activities are complementary to and do not undermine the Camp David process'), which would be less than satisfactory. Lord Carrington believes it is very important to extract a clear statement from the Americans that they welcome our continued separate role. Assuming we can obtain the agreement of the French and the Italians, therefore, he proposes that we should discuss the draft text with the Americans, making clear however that we have little room for manoeuvre. In the last resort, it would be open to us either to drop the last few words or to seek some other satisfactory wording with which the Americans could live. We have put these arguments to the French in Paris and have just heard that they too have some further textual amendments, which we expect to receive by telegram. It may be necessary to set up a meeting with the French and Italian representatives - probably on Wednesday afternoon - to try to sort these problems out.

/Lord



Lord Carrington discussed with the Prime Minister the best way to deal with the reservation of our right to withdraw our contribution. He said that he believed that to attempt to insert a reservation in the text of the statement would be regarded by our partners, and certainly by the Americans and Israelis, as a wrecking condition. The Israelis, for historical reasons, were suspicious of international peace-keeping forces and a reservation on the lines discussed at Blackpool would be seized upon by them as proof that such forces gave no effective guarantee and that European, especially British, participation was unreliable. That could lead to all the other potential contributors withholding their contributions and, perversely, HMG would be blamed. Accordingly Lord Carrington proposed that the Prime Minister should make it clear to President Reagan at Cancun that she would undoubtedly be asked in the House of Commons about our right to withdraw our contribution and that she would propose to reply as follows:

'Our participation in the Sinai Force is a matter for national decision, arrived at after consultation with other interested countries and having regard to the purposes of the Force. Any decision to extend or cut short this participation would similarly be a matter for our national decision.'

This formula was agreed, the Prime Minister emphasising that she would wish to put it in writing to President Reagan.

Finally, we have taken the opportunity of these further contacts with the French and Italians to make a self-explanatory amendment to the first paragraph in the text sent to the Prime Minister under cover of Lord Carrington's minute of 15 October. The new text spells it out that our decision to contribute has been taken 'in principle and subject to agreement on the practical arrangements'.

I am copying this letter to David Omand in the Ministry of Defence.

*Yours ever,*  
*Francis Richards*  
(F N Richards)  
Private Secretary

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