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10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE

SERIAL No. T 74/81
19 January 1981

THE PRIME MINISTER

Since I had the pleasure of welcoming Your Highness to 10 Downing Street during your visit to this country in September 1979, there have been many important developments in the Middle East affecting your country and region as well as British interests in the Gulf. I was sorry that, because of the change of Ministerial appointment about which he has written to His Highness Shaikh Hamad, Francis Pym was not able to make his planned visit to you earlier this month to discuss these developments, but I am sure his successor, John Nott, will want to come to Qatar as soon as is mutually convenient. I would myself also like to have the opportunity to renew our acquaintanceship and to resume the extremely useful and wide-ranging conversation we had at Downing Street. I would hope to be able to make a visit to Qatar later this year if this were convenient to Your Highness.

Your Highness will recall that we discussed at some length the Soviet Union's attempts to de-stabilise the Middle East. While the recent proposal of the President of the USSR for turning the Gulf into an area of Soviet style peace and security does not add much to what the Russians have been saying for some time, President Brezhnev's remarks were well publicised and were no doubt intended as attractive propaganda. We would naturally all like to see zones of peace in the world where they could be set up with guarantees for continued peace and security. We have taken careful note of the views often expressed by Gulf states that the Gulf should not be turned into an area of super-power confrontation. But perhaps Your Highness will share my view that while the Russian proposals aim to exclude military forces from the Gulf itself, they would be more persuasive if they took account of the deployment of large Soviet forces in Afghanistan, along the frontier with Iran and of the Russian presence in Aden. Russian

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leaders should demonstrate their attachment to the principles of the non-use of force and non-intervention in the affairs of others by withdrawing Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

Your Highness will know that in the British Government's view the best way to meet the challenges to stability in the Gulf is for the states of the region to increase their co-operation among themselves and to develop suitable structures for greater mutual security. I was heartened to learn that during the Arab Summit Meeting in Amman in November some steps were taken to improve such co-operation. I hope the process will continue.

As for the co-operation between our two countries, I have followed with close interest the development of practical co-operation in the defence field which has taken place in the last two months. I am most grateful for the way in which General Perkins was received in your country and I am very pleased that his advice was both welcome and capable of being transformed into speedy action. We remain ready to co-operate with you as effectively as we can in the fields of defence and security, by training and equipping your armed forces. I hope the continuing close contacts between our countries, including the group of eminent visitors from Qatar whom the Ministry of Defence are delighted to be receiving next week, will help us to identify forms of future co-operation in the defence field which will commend themselves to Your Highness.

Your Highness may recall that when we met in September 1979 I asked you to contact me if you thought that the United Kingdom was in any way less active in the region than you desired. This request, of course, remains; I hope you will not hesitate to do so at any time.

(Sgd) Margaret Thatcher

His Highness Shaikh Khalifah bin Hamad al Thani, GCMG