



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

18 March 1981

Dear Sir,

Visit of the Iraqi Foreign Minister,  
Dr Sa'Adoun Hammadi: 9-11 March 1981

As expected, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary was questioned closely during this visit by Dr Hammadi on the Government's policy towards arms supplies to Iraq and Iran. This subject came up first in *tete à tete* conversation, and the points made were subsequently reaffirmed in the official talks.

Dr Hammadi pressed Lord Carrington strongly not to allow any defence supplies, and in particular tank spares, to be shipped to Iran. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary explained our general policy and pointed out that, while hostilities continued, we had to take account of the obligations of neutrality. We had decided not to allow arms and ammunition ('lethal items') to go to either side while the present level of hostilities lasted.

On the question of spare parts, Dr Hammadi questioned the distinction between 'lethal' and 'non-lethal' items. He argued that spare parts could make the difference between a tank being operational and, therefore, 'lethal', and non-operational. Lord Carrington undertook that no spare parts would be supplied to Iran without the Iraqis being told in advance.

On the Kharg, Lord Carrington said that no decision had been taken on its release, but he pointed out that we might have to address this question in due course, and that the vessel could hardly be used effectively in the war by the Iranians since it was in poor condition; it was merely a support vessel and was only very lightly armed. He questioned whether its eventual release to the Iranians could in any way pose a threat to Iraq. Dr Hammadi nevertheless pointed out that it did have a gun and implied that the Iraqis would be reluctant to see it released to Iran.

Dr Hammadi said that British businessmen would be welcome to help in the reconstruction of war damage in Iraq provided their prices were right. He said that Iraq was keen to import a very large quantity of arms - if they could be had at the right price - because

/because



CONFIDENTIAL



because of the high level of British technology and for reasons of language; there would be no need to go through the usual processes of tendering and so on. He specifically said that the Iraqi Trade Minister looked forward to accepting HMG's outstanding invitation in June and that the Iraqi Oil Minister also looked forward to visiting Britain. Lord Carrington considers that Dr Hammadi came here with the intention of taking a deliberate step towards the further improvement of Iraqi/British relations and that the visit was a success in this respect.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to other members of OD, and Sir Keith Joseph, Mr David Howell, Sir R Armstrong and the Head of Defence Sales.

(F N Richards)  
Private Secretary

*Yours over.*

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'F N Richards', written in a cursive style.

Brian Norbury Esq  
PS/Secretary of State for  
Defence  
Whitehall  
London SW1

CONFIDENTIAL