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Paul

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Secretary of State

Sir J Graham

Private Secretary *Ar*

IRAN/IRAQ: MILITARY AID TO GULF STATES

Problem

1. Certain Gulf rulers have approached us looking for offers of support and assurances of military protection. There are indications that the French have made similar offers to the Rulers. What action should we take?

Recommendation

2. I understand that the Secretary of State wishes to discuss this tomorrow with the Prime Minister. I recommend that he should do so, having first spoken to Mr Pym, and that he should seek agreement that we should offer a general assurance to Gulf States. I submit a draft telegram of instructions. I further recommend that the MOD be asked to give further consideration to the options that might need to be examined. MED concur.

Background

3. The UK has Treaties of Friendship (which expire in 1981) with Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. These require us to consult in times of crisis and need. We also have a Treaty of Friendship with Oman. British Loan Personnel are currently serving in all these countries and in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia with which we have no such Treaty.

4. The Gulf Rulers are already aware of the implications for them of the present conflict. It is likely that if the war continues they will look to the West for some form of reassurance and/or assistance in maintaining the integrity of their States. Both because of their historical ties with us and because they fear the involvement of both superpowers if they were to turn to the Americans, the Gulf Rulers are likely to look first to the UK for help. The Ruler of Ras al Khaimah has already indicated that he would prefer our help to that of anyone else (Dubai telno 38 to Abu Dhabi). The UAE Minister of Petroleum has made similar points (Abu Dhabi telno 322). In his

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C telegram no 117 from Dubai, HM Ambassador has suggested that the UAE is already looking to us for reassurance. It is likely that Bahrain and Qatar would also look in our direction.

5. The French appear to have offered some form of unspecified assistance to the UAE. Their performance in Zaire and their covert help to Saudi Arabia during the Mecca incident indicates that they will be ready to deliver. We need to show a willingness to give similar assurances.

Argument

6. There are a number of possible scenarios in which the Gulf States may seek outside aid. These range from threats to internal security caused by internally or externally inspired subversion to full-scale war against them. If either Iran or Iraq were to launch an all-out attack by land or sea on the Gulf States, UK resources would not be sufficient by themselves to repel such an attack. Moreover it would be impossible for the UK alone to put troops on the ground in sufficient numbers in a short time-scale. But there are a number of lesser scenarios where the UK could render aid, eg:

- (a) internal security problems overstretching local resources;
- (b) rescue of a Ruler beleaguered/^{in his Residence} as a result of internal disorder;
- (c) air attacks on Gulf States.

(a) could probably be dealt with by using up to a battalion of infantry or an RN Royal Marine Commando. A force of this size (Spearhead battalion) is always on standby in the UK for duty abroad. It and its air transport are at 72 hours' notice to move, with the leading company at 24 hours' notice. The Overseas Anti-Terrorist Team (Pulpitt) drawn from No 22 SAS is always on 24 hours' standby, and is trained and equipped in such a way that alone or supported by infantry up to battalion strength could undertake a rescue mission as in (b) above.

7. The greatest immediate threat to the area is, however, probably from air attack. The Gulf States and their oil installations, ports and airfields are particularly vulnerable. An Iranian attack in retaliation for alleged support for Iraq cannot be ruled out. The RAF could provide, at about 72 hours' notice, a range of possible elements of assistance. A Rapier detachment could be made available from the unit now deployed at RAF Lossiemouth. AEW aircraft and

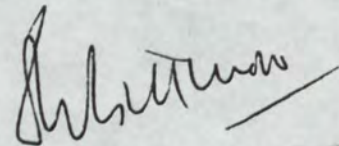
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mobile radar could also be deployed. At the other extreme a squadron of RAF air defence aircraft might be made available by removing them from the UK Air Defence Region. / In all of these cases, of course, it would be necessary to inform SACEUR,. Moreover, if steps of this kind had to be taken in parallel with the despatch of the Spearhead battalion, we would face severe problems of airlift.

8. As far as the Navy is concerned, HMS Coventry is, of course, already in the area and the RFA Olwyn will join her in the Gulf of Oman tomorrow. The remainder of Task Force 318.0 is still in the Far East within ten days' steaming time of the Gulf, where, on the basis of plans made before the present Iraq/Iran crisis, they are due to make port visits.

9. An alternative which would perhaps provide as large a measure of assistance, but one that is less visible, would be the despatch of a Rapier detachment in the guise of either a Defence Sales Team, or a specialised training detachment.

10. We have been in touch with MOD officials to alert them to the possible need to look urgently at contingency planning to deal with the sort of scenarios outlined above. The MOD are deeply concerned at the risk of giving an open-ended commitment which would add to the already marked overstretch of our defence resources. They are also worried about the precedent that the giving of such a commitment could have elsewhere in the world. They have been told, however, that the political requirement to be in a position to give some reassurance and perhaps active assistance to the Gulf Rulers is a very strong one. But they point out that the problems of supporting and resupplying UK forces on the ground after the initial deployment would be considerable. There would also be a need for adequate communications back up. And the cost in terms of fuel resources alone would, in present economic circumstances, have important repercussions elsewhere.(eg in NATO).



D H Gillmore
Defence Department

9 October 1980

9/10/80
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/cc to

File No.....

Department MED

OUTWARD

Drafted by (Block Capitals) K J PASSMORE

TELEGRAM

Tel. Extn. 4774

Security Classification SECRET
Precedence IMMEDIATE
DESKBYZ

FOR COMMS. DEPT. USE	Despatched (Date) (Time)Z	POSTBYZ
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PREAMBLE

(Time of Origin) Z (G.M.T.) (Restrictive Prefix)
 (Security Class.) SECRET (Caveat/Privacy marking)
 (Codeword) (Deskby) Z

TO IMMEDIATE ABU DHABI (precedence) (post) Tel. No. of

AND TO (precedence/post) IMMEDIATE DUBAI, DOHA, BAHRAIN, MUSCAT

AND SAVING TO

REPEATED TO (for info) JEDDA, KUWAIT

SAVING TO (for info)

Distribution:-

Iraq/Iran

[TEXT]

YOUR TELNO.322 OF 7 OCTOBER: SECURITY OF THE GULF

1. I wish to use the opportunity of John Moberly's visit to the UAE to convey assurances to UAE leaders of my personal concern and interest in the security of the Gulf at this difficult time.

2. In speaking to UAE leaders you and he should say that he is travelling with my personal authority and that I shall be taking a close interest in his report upon his return. The following points could be made:-

- a. We all have the strongest interest in not seeing the conflict spread. The Straits of Hormuz are of vital interest to us all;

and freedom of navigation throughout the Gulf

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b. I greatly appreciate the balanced and wise judgment of Gulf governments which has prevented them from becoming embroiled in the current conflict;

c. I share the concern of those in the Gulf who say that the West, in making contingency plans for eg. shipping should as far as possible refrain from taking actions which might be thought the beginning of superpower involvement in the area;

d. on security questions of this nature we wish to act only with the agreement of, and indeed at the invitation of, Gulf states - as the Americans have over AWACS to Saudi Arabia;

e. we wish to keep in close touch with the Gulf on their security needs as well as on wider questions such as energy. We hope they will not hesitate to consult us if they think we can help; ~~in any way.~~

f. the decision by Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states to increase their oil production has been extremely welcome to the whole West.

3. ~~If you are asked about~~ ^{On} British assurances to the Gulf states of a military nature, or for any commitment similar to what the French are reported to have offered Abu Dhabi, you should say that in the light of our Treaty of Friendship we have been considering what assistance we might make available if Gulf rulers asked for it. In principle, as conditions prevailing at the time of a request from Gulf rulers might dictate,

NOTHING TO BE WRITTEN IN THIS MARGIN

Lord
Carmichael
thinks
this is
too
explicit.

WE WOULD BE ABLE TO PROVIDE CERTAIN AIR DEFENCE ELEMENTS, A BATTALION SIZED UNIT OF GROUND FORCE TROOPS, OR MORE LIMITED NUMBERS OF SPECIALISED FORCES. IF WE WISHED TO PROVIDE SUCH ASSISTANCE, HOWEVER, WE WOULD NEED TO SET IN HAND MORE DETAILED ASSESSMENTS. DO RULERS THINK IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO DO SO? IN ANY CASE WE SHOULD GIVE THESE CONTACTS AND CONSULTATIONS NO PUBLICITY.

4. ON PARA 3 ABOVE BAHRAIN AND DOHA HAVE DISCRETION TO SPEAK TO APPROPRIATE MEMBERS OF QATARI AND BAHRAINI GOVERNMENTS IF THEY DEEM IT OPPORTUNE.

WE WOULD BE READY TO LOOK URGENTLY AT THE POSSIBILITY OF PROVIDING PRACTICAL ASSISTANCE. WE SHOULD FIRST WISH TO MAKE A MORE DETAILED ASSESSMENT OF THE POSITION ON THE GROUND. THIS WOULD NATURALLY INVOLVE CONTACTS AND CONSULTATIONS, WHICH WE HOPE COULD BE GIVEN NO PUBLICITY.