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FCS/80/180SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCEThe Iran/Iraq Conflict: British Support to the Gulf Region

1. We have been studying the proposals contained in your letter of 5 November, and the paper enclosed with it, with great interest.

*(We do not appear to have a copy - will request one if required)*

2. I am grateful to your officials and to the Service staffs for this valuable work. I agree with the general thrust of the conclusions. I am also content with the specific recommendations for the work which should be set in hand. To the extent that they are not already in train, the low level commitments can be pressed forward. In presenting them we should bear in mind the need to maximise the political benefit and leverage they give. General Perkins's recent visit is an excellent example of the benefits we can derive without any large commitment of British forces. Our willingness and ability to make a speedy and practical response to the UAE's enquiries has put us in a favourable light and should have laid to rest any lingering doubts the Rulers may have had that we had lost interest in them.

3. The paper has rightly concentrated on our response to the threats flowing from the Iraq/Iran conflict, for which purpose it ranks the possible responses under three broad headings in terms of their resource cost and of the political commitment they imply. I have no quarrel with this methodology. But the way in which the paper has followed this approach may, perhaps, tend to reduce its usefulness beyond the current crisis. It might be useful for our officials to meet soon to take stock of what is in hand. They might also consider revising the paper to serve as a basis for a longer term policy in the Gulf area. In particular they might look at the passages on the threat and

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possible responses which highlight the point about the paper's longer term usefulness.

4. I understand that work is already well in hand on the most urgent priorities identified in the paper. I hope that we can agree that officials should meet early in the New Year to take matters further.

5. I am copying this minute to Sir Robert Armstrong.

C

(CARRINGTON)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

29 December 1980

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