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TRANSCRIPT OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER
AND MR. IAN LLOYD, M.P. - SATURDAY 30 APRIL, 1983, 1545 HOURS

PM: Hello Ian.

IL: Prime Minister its very good of you to ring. I now have the information which I think is essential for looking at this problem. If you've got a pen perhaps you'd jot this down. There are two production platforms with several wells discharging large quantities of oil into the Gulf - between 6 and 10 thousand barrells a day.

PM: Two production platforms?

IL: They were fired by rockets and the structures are now completely melted down. The well has not been capped and is not likely to be in the near future. The second is your own question what other governments have been involved. My information is Holland, France, Germany and Norway through their governments have all offered some kind of help, but all on a joint commercial basis. That is the governments would be supplying the equipment via the companies and negotiations have all been about what it is going to cost. In addition this morning a United States company has made an offer, which might conceivably involve the US Coastguard. They consider that a maximum of £10 million worth of equipment could conceivably be required. The British Ambassador has not at the time of my telephoning this morning so far been in touch with the government about this matter. The prevailing weather is presently off the Saudi shores but a change at any moment would affect them

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very seriously because it would affect all their desalination plants. Now their specific requests for help are as follows. They would like if possible access to the Department of Trade stockpiles of equipment, particularly very large capacity pumps, capable of pumping large quantities of sea water and heavily emulsified crude oil. They would be most appreciative of any offers to airlift equipment.

PM: I'll tell you what my information is. It makes me very surprised about this but go on.

IL: They would like if possible any help with aerial surveillance light aircraft.

PM: This is the Saudis?

IL: The Saudi Arabian Government. With a particular type of radar which is known as side-looking airborne radar. They would like if possible to have access to the expertise of our fisheries research stations at Burnham-on-Crouch and Torrey, Aberdeen. They would like similar access to the Warren Springs Laboratory at Stevenage.

PM: Warren Springs, is that ours?

IL: Yes it is. They would like if possible assistance by the Government laboratories in the testing of oil samples. They would like someone to authorise and have direct contract with the Department of Trade's Marine Pollution Control Unit under Admiral Stacey.

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PM: I find this astonishing, because my information is that an expert from the Department of Trade spent two weeks in the Gulf in April to give technical advice to officials of Gulf countries on the oil slick.

IL: Really.

PM: Yes. And his impression was the Gulf States at that time ^{were}/~~not~~ very interested in the numerous offers of assistance which they had received and I have a list of British companies but go on . . .

IL: And all they want is telephone contact so they can get advice.

PM: Under Admiral Stacey?

IL: Yes and finally and hardly worth stating, they would like whatever diplomatic pressure can be brought to bear on Iran and Iraq to allow people to go in and cap the wells.

PM: Well that I think is the real problem.

IL: Yes of course.

PM: That's the real problem. I've ^{got}/~~the~~ Foreign Office onto the Embassy who in fact advise that one of the official secretariats told us that the real problem was political rather than technical. The one that you've just been dealing with. I've got a whole list of British companies that are right to the

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fore in trying to do something. Insofar as they want help from us they can have it. Also incidentally I understand that our Embassy are now in touch with your son Mark. And Nigel Lawson arrives in Riyadh on 2 May and so we obviously can take advantage of that to give any offer of help but in the meantime its very very useful to have this because there's nothing to stop them having access to all of this. We'd be delighted to let them have access to everything we know but I gather the real problem is to get Iran and Iraq to agree to cease fire long enough so the thing can be capped.

IL: Yes I quite agree Prime Minister and until they do so the pollution will continue and will cause grave devastation throughout the Gulf.

PM: Well I'll let Nigel know and the Department of Trade know just exactly what they want Ian, but I think you'll find our Embassy are now in touch with Mark.

IL: Yes, his chap (Mr. ?).

PM: Is your chap secretary to the President of the Saudi Ports Authority?

IL: Yes. And he is the man who has been charged by the King with full authority dealing with the slick and that really is why he's come on to me. And I can only repeat what he said.

PM: Well indeed it might be good to let him know the extent to which we have been making offers but what we didn't know

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is what they wanted.

IL: Well I asked him to define the requirements . . .

PM: That's very helpful Ian. Enormously helpful. Now I've got something to bite on.

IL: Thank you very much Prime Minister.

PM: Thank you Ian. Bye.

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