



FCS/84/7

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE

Ann to end on  
Omani request  
at X. Do not  
delay 07 (LHM)  
more than 2  
weeks

Prime Minister 14

A

G11

Consequences of an escalation of the Iran/Iraq War

1. When OD(EM) met on 21 December, we agreed that we should continue to explore:

- (i) the possibility for further diplomatic action to prevent the Iran/Iraq war escalating; and
- (ii) the military requirements for response to public requests for help from the Gulf States.

2. On the first point, developments on the diplomatic front have not been encouraging. I enclose at Annex A a summary of recent mediation efforts which colleagues may find of interest. Despite the very considerable efforts which have been made, there has been no real progress. Perhaps the most hopeful prospect continues to be the mediatory role given to the UN Secretary-General by Security Council Resolution 540. We shall continue to explore, particularly with the Americans and French, every other possible means towards a diplomatic solution.

3. The situation on the ground has changed little since we met on 21 December. The Iranians have been somewhat more active in the Gulf area, but there has been no further signs of escalation of the war.

4. As regards the second point, we need now to be clear about what assistance we can give to the Gulf States if they publicly seek it. Annex C of our earlier joint memorandum contained a useful statement of the total resources available to us. But

/a number



X a number of specific decisions are now required. First, the Omanis have urgently asked for our Mine Counter Measures (MCM) force to be brought to a higher state of readiness by hiring a civilian support ship at Omani expense. I consider we should agree, both because there would be military advantage in being better prepared to counter Iranian mine-laying in the Straits of Hormuz, and also because it would demonstrate our sympathy and support for the Gulf States generally.

5. Second, we need to reach decisions on the scale of response we envisage to requests from Gulf States, in particular:

(i) would we in practice envisage despatching any of the ground force elements and RAF air defence aircraft listed in Annex C of the earlier memorandum even in response to a direct request? To do so would involve adopting a higher profile than, for instance, assisting with ground-based air defence;

(ii) a number of Gulf rulers, especially Shaikh Zayid of the UAE, have asked us for specific offers of help in specific areas. In view of Shaikh Zayid's strong representations to Richard Luce, I think there is a good case for being prepared to be reasonably specific in the case of the UAE, for instance on air defence units on the ground. We shall need to consider how far we go in telling Shaikh Zayid of what we conclude;

(iii) it is quite possible that in the event of an escalation in the war, Qatar and Kuwait, in addition to Oman and the UAE would look to us rather than to the US for assistance. In that case how should we allocate our scarce resources between the various states?

Our planned responses to these three questions will need to provide for various alternatives depending on the nature of the threat or threats and to the request or requests received.

/I thought



I thought it would be useful as background to set out the specific commitments we have made to Gulf States: these are at Annex B.

6. I know that our officials have been working closely together in addressing these issues. But I believe that it would be useful to have further comments from you as a basis for decisions in OD(EM) or, as I am sure colleagues would wish, proposals which could be agreed between us. I have, therefore, suggested that the meeting of OD(EM) fixed for 9 January should be postponed and that we should aim to have a further meeting in about two weeks which would have available your comments on the questions set out above. In the meantime, Richard Luce or I would be happy to have a word with you if that would be useful. In view of the urgency of the Omani request for our MCM force to be brought to greater readiness, I would, however, welcome your and our colleagues' agreement as soon as possible that we should endorse this proposal.

7. I am copying this minute to our colleagues in OD(EM).

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

6 January 1984

ANNEX AIran/Iraq: Mediation EffortsSecurity Council Resolutions

1. Mediation efforts within the UN framework have so far come to nothing. Successive Security Council Resolutions calling for a ceasefire or peaceful settlement have been ignored (SCR 479 - September 1980, SCR 514 - July 1982, SCR 522 - October 1982). A fourth SCR (SCR 540), in the drafting of which the UK played a leading role, was passed on 31 October 1983. This called on the UN Secretary-General to continue his mediation efforts, and on both participants to cease military operations against civilian targets, to respect free navigation in the Gulf and to end all hostilities in the Gulf area. Iraq welcomed the Resolution on 1 November, but warned that she would only stand by it if it were implemented by Iran in all its parts. The eventual Iranian reaction on 12 December disassociated Iran from SCR 540, but stopped short of ruling out action by the Secretary-General. However, the Iranian Foreign Minister, Dr Velayati, has since written to the UN Secretary General denouncing the Resolution in strong terms, and saying that there is no current role for the Secretary-General.

UN Secretary-General's Special Representative

2. Following SCR 479 in September 1980, the UN Secretary-General appointed Mr Palme of Sweden as his Special Representative. In this capacity, Mr Palme made a number of visits to the area, the last of which was in 1981. His failure to achieve any progress then, and the increased calls on his time since being reappointed Prime Minister of Sweden, have made him disinclined to be active, at least until both sides show some signs of wishing to make progress. After the passing of SCR 540 in October 1983, the Secretary-General sent a member of his staff to discuss the situation with Mr Palme in Stockholm, but, despite strong encouragement from the UK and other interested neutral countries, nothing concrete has emerged from this meeting.



### Missions of Enquiry into Civilian Casualties

3. A UN Mission of Experts visited the war areas in May 1983 to investigate claims and counter-claims about the sufferings of the civilian populations. Their report made it plain that Iraq was more to blame than Iran in inflicting civilian casualties and damage to non-military targets. The Iranians have recently pressed for a second such Mission, to investigate renewed Iraqi attacks on Iranian towns, and also allegations that Iraq has used chemical weapons on the battlefield, but the Iraqis have refused to agree. UK efforts at the UN to trade withdrawal of Iraqi objections to this second Mission for reciprocal withdrawal of Iranian objections to a visit by a Special Representative of the Secretary-General, have not so far borne fruit.

### Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)

4. In 1981, the Non-Aligned Movement formed a committee under the chairmanship of Mrs Gandhi to investigate the possibility of mediation. It made little progress. There was a temporary revival of interest in the idea after the 1983 NAM Summit meeting, but this appears to have subsided. Mrs Gandhi proved unreceptive to our suggestion, at the time of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in November, that she should again interest herself in this issue.

### Islamic Conference

5. A similar mediation committee, including Pakistan and Turkey, was appointed by the Islamic Conference in 1981. It made no more progress than its NAM counterpart. In December, the UN Secretary-General suggested that the forthcoming Islamic Summit meeting in Casablanca from 16-18 January might provide an opportunity to get Iran and Iraq together. This hope has now been torpedoed by the Iranian announcement that they intend to boycott the Conference, which they have accused of showing partiality towards Iraq.



### GCC Countries

6. In the autumn of 1983, the GCC countries became interested in the possibility of mediation and the Foreign Ministers of Kuwait and the UAE visited both Baghdad and Tehran. Premature and over-enthusiastic publicity for this visit led to Iranian rejection of any future mediatory role for the GCC. However, two further mediatory visits to Damascus were made by the President of the UAE, Shaikh Zayid and other GCC representatives, in the hope of persuading Syria to reopen the Iraqi oil pipeline, which would help to ease the economic pressure on Iraq. These efforts were unsuccessful.

### Algeria

7. The Algerians gained considerable kudos from their successful management of the negotiation for the release of the US Embassy hostages from Tehran at the end of 1980. Encouraged by this, they for some time pursued the possibility of mediating in the Iran/Iraq war. In the end, however, they were rebuffed by the Iranians, who confirmed to a senior member of the UK Mission to the UN in December 1983 that the Algerians now regarded their mediation efforts as ended.

### Japan

8. The Japanese Foreign Minister visited both Tehran and Baghdad in August/September 1983, and the Deputy Foreign Minister was subsequently due to visit both countries in November. After he had already visited Baghdad, the Iranians asked for his visit to Tehran to be postponed, and no new date has yet been set. We were in close contact with the Japanese over these visits, which we greatly welcome. However, Japanese willingness to be active in pursuit of mediation has probably been sapped by the recent General Election results, in which the ruling

/Liberal



Liberal Democratic Party lost considerable ground, partly because of reaction to Mr Nakasone's more active stance on foreign affairs.

Direct UK Representations

9. We take every opportunity that arises of urging restraint on both parties. These conversations are too numerous to list in detail, but we made strong representations at Deputy Minister level in both Baghdad and Tehran in December, and spoke also to their diplomatic representatives in London and New York.

ANNEX BUK Commitments to Gulf States

1. Following the abrogation in 1971 of the treaties by which the UK took responsibilities for the defence and foreign relations of the lower Gulf States (the 7 Emirates of the UAE, Bahrain and Qatar) no formal treaty commitments exist which oblige us to come to their defence in time of need. The treaties of friendship which we have signed with these countries contain no such provisions. However, some oral commitments have been made by British Ministers to the UAE and Oman.

UAE

2. In October 1980, Mr Moberly (AUSS at the FCO) called on Shaikh Zaid with a personal message from Lord Carrington that in the spirit of our very long-standing friendship, we stood ready in principle to provide military assistance if asked. Such assistance would be defensive in nature.

Oman

3. Mr Hurd (Minister of State at the FCO) told Sultan Qaboos on 2 December 1981 that we intended to maintain our close defence relationship with Oman. We had decided to keep in being certain forces that could be used outside the NATO area either with an ally (for example the US) or alone. The elements we could make available could include a naval escort task group, mine clearance units, some combat aircraft, one or two infantry battalions or commandos with support for land or amphibious operations. Subsequently, the Prime Minister wrote to Sultan Qaboos on 15 July 1982 to assure him "that we are fully committed to the security of Oman". (This, however,

/referred





referred primarily to use of British Loan Service Personnel in time of internal or regional conflict).

Other Gulf States

4. No such commitments have been made to other Gulf States, though at various times they have been told informally that we would be inclined to look favourably on any request from them for assistance and would, depending on circumstances and on our commitments elsewhere, do whatever we could to help.