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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

23 February 1984

Dear John,

Iran/Iraq

Thank you for your letter of 20 February about this subject, which was further discussed at OD(EM) on 21 February.

A good deal of work has been done on the questions raised in (a) to (g) of your second paragraph. Three JIC papers in particular are relevant: JIC(82)(N)94 of 23 September 1982 on Iran's Foreign Relations, JIC(82)13 dated 1 November 1982 on the Islamic Revival and Extremist Muslim Movements in the Middle East and Afghanistan, and JIC(83)(N)81 of 10 June 1983 on Islamic Sectarianism in the Gulf. I understand that the Assessments Staff will be taking a fresh look at the range of subjects raised by the Prime Minister, and will consider urgently what additional work is necessary to provide a full and up-to-date answer to the questions you raised. We shall of course be contributing.

A good deal of work has similarly been done on various aspects of Gulf contingency planning, including both action to contain any threat of disruption to world oil supplies, and the wider question of the circumstances under which some military involvement in the area might become necessary. OD(EM) considered this latter aspect at meetings on 21 December 1983 and 26 January, on the basis of memoranda put forward jointly by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Defence Secretary (OD(EM)(83)4 of 16 December 1983 and OD(EM)(84)1 of 25 January 1984). These were in addition to a number of minutes from the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to the Prime Minister and the Defence Secretary. Since possible contingency measures directly involve a number of other Departments, the Cabinet Office will urgently review the state of our contingency planning in all areas. This would be a separate exercise from that being undertaken by the Assessments Staff.

On the diplomatic front, we continue to be among the forefront of those encouraging the UN Secretary-General to resume his mediatory activities, despite the relatively discouraging circumstances. You will see from UKMIS New York telegram No 182 of 21 February (copy enclosed) that

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there seems to be no prospect of a UN Mission being despatched to Tehran and Baghdad for the time being. We are therefore exploring other possible avenues of activity, including demarches to leading members of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement. We are considering whether to propose that the Prime Minister send messages in this connection to President Zia and Mrs Gandhi. I shall write again very soon with advice on this point.

I am sending copies of this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever

Peter Ricketts

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Private Secretary

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