



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Prime Minister.

*Agreed
mt*

10 April 1984

To be aware of
the action which
is being taken.

Dear John,

Iran/Iraq: Supply of Chemicals

In your letter of 2 April, you recorded that the Prime Minister had asked to be kept informed about the results of our efforts to control exports to Iran and Iraq of substances which might be used in the manufacture of chemical weapons. The Foreign Secretary raised this subject in Cabinet on 5 April.

The same day officials informed representatives of the UK chemical industries of the Government's concern about the use of chemical weapons in the Gulf and that Ministers were due to consider the possible extension of controls to the export of certain chemicals to Iran and Iraq. The companies raised no objection, except to point out that supplies of the chemicals likely to be controlled could be obtained from elsewhere.

At a meeting here on 6 April, Mr Luce and Mr Channon agreed that export controls should be introduced on the five chemicals on which a US embargo was already in operation, that two other chemicals, dimethylamine and chloroethanol should also be included, and that subject to further consultation among officials, which has now taken place, methyl phosphonyl dichloride (which has been identified as an ingredient in the manufacture of the nerve agent Sarin), should also be included. They also agreed that although sodium and potassium cyanide could conceivably be used in CW manufacture, their wide availability and commercial application argued strongly against their inclusion in an exercise of this kind. Finally they agreed that export controls should be limited to Iran and Iraq, and should be reviewed after six months.

Sir Geoffrey Howe raised this with Community colleagues in Luxembourg on 9 April. He told them that we intended to extend the list of chemicals covered by the Export of Goods Control Order so as to make it possible to control the direct export of those goods to Iraq and Iran and urged them to take similar action. In subsequent discussion the following points emerged:

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- (a) there was a consensus on preventing the export of chemicals likely to be used by Iraq or Iran to manufacture CW in the present conflict;
- (b) a number of partners, including the major chemical exporters, are planning or considering measures similar to our own;
- ? (c) joint Community action is not possible, at any rate at this stage, for Danish doctrinal reasons;
- (d) partners will therefore keep one another fully informed as they take national action, and will harmonise this as far as is possible;
- (e) the problems of diversion of trade etc which will inevitably arise as the Ten take their separate national actions will be discussed by a group of experts of the Ten which the Presidency will urgently convene for this purpose;
- (f) the Community machinery will discuss the matter as necessary.

Sir Geoffrey Howe believes that we should aim for an early announcement of the new controls. I understand that the Department of Trade and Industry (who are responsible for the Export of Goods (Control) Order) are proposing to arrange an inspired PQ to be answered on the afternoon of Thursday 12 April, when the new controls will come into effect.

I am sending copies of this letter to Callum McCarthy (DTI), Richard Mottram (MOD) and David Goodall (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,

Peter Ricketts

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