



MO 3/9/4/2

Prime Minute.

Agree that the US/UK military talks on the Gulf should now proceed to cover, without commitment, such matters as rules of engagement and command and control?

A.S.C. 10/5.

PRIME MINISTERIRAN/IRAQ

I read with considerable interest the Foreign Secretary's minute of 3rd April covering Richard Luce's report on his discussions in Washington on 19th/20th March. I share his view that this was a very useful visit which served to underline both our essential support for the Americans' policy in the Gulf, but also our concerns about the risks of precipitate or over-excessive military action.

2. In paragraph 3 of his minute the Foreign Secretary has identified a number of areas for further discussion with the Americans, including questions of rules of engagement and joint operational planning. As you know, we have already held two rounds of military-to-military talks with the US in parallel with the politico/military discussions but, as reported in the paper which Sir Robert Armstrong submitted to you on 5th March, these have so far stopped short of any form of joint planning. They have concentrated essentially on an exchange of information about each side's operational capabilities; we have been given a considerable amount of detail about the US operational concept known as PORT GRAND concerned with maintaining free sea and air passage in the Gulf. However, if we are to go further, for example into the areas of rules of engagement and command and control, we shall be getting very close to defining a joint concept of operations which would only require political approval to become an operational plan.



3. We have previously recognised the risks involved in joint planning: in particular that we should either be drawn in to supporting military action that we could not control, or that in a crisis we might be forced to disappoint US expectations of support. Nevertheless I think there is a case for allowing the military talks to proceed naturally to this next step, on the clear understanding that the discussions should be confined to considering separate but co-ordinated operations, that they would take place entirely without commitment on either side, and that all planning would be subject to political approval in the event of an actual operation. Mr Weinberger has already made it clear he would welcome closer military co-ordination, and the deployment of our MCM force to the Mediterranean has already created a climate of expectation in Washington which will not be significantly strengthened by joint planning. Moreover if we are seen to draw back now, it will erode much of the advantage gained by the MCM deployment and Richard Luce's visit. Finally talks on these lines will enable us to identify and perhaps clarify some of the more complex issues which might be difficult to resolve in a fast-moving crisis.

4. A further round of military talks has been provisionally scheduled for mid-May. Subject to your agreement and that of our OD(EM) colleagues, I therefore propose to instruct our team to proceed on the basis outlined in paragraph 3 above.

5. I am copying this minute to our OD(EM) colleagues and to Sir Robert Armstrong.


Ministry of Defence

8th May 1984

IRAQ PT4

Internal SAT.

50 MAY 1984

