



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

29 June 1984

Prime Minister

Agree message to

Sultan Qaboos

CDP 29/6

Dear Charles

Saudi Offer of Military Assistance to the United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Omani officials have told us that Saudi Arabia has offered the UAE military assistance, in the form of F15 aircraft and supporting personnel, to be positioned in the UAE. Sultan Qaboos has asked that the Prime Minister take any action possible to dissuade Shaikh Zaid from accepting the Saudi offer, first because the Sultan believes that such a move would risk extending the war to the lower Gulf, and second because he views the Saudi offer as intended to increase Saudi influence in the region.

THIS IS A COPY. THE ORIGINAL IS RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3 (4) OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

However, when Sultan Qaboos received our Ambassador at Muscat on 27 June, he asked when a reply would be forthcoming. There is consequently no reason why the Prime Minister's reply should not be transmitted by Mr Slater. He is expecting to be summoned by the Sultan again next week, which gives this question a degree of urgency.

In the Foreign Secretary's absence in Oslo, Mr Luce endorses Mr Slater's view that we should not take action with the UAE in the sense the Omanis ask. He doubts whether Shaikh Zaid will wish to jeopardise the UAE's links with Iran (a potential channel of communication which the other Gulf countries would probably wish to keep open). Even if Shaikh Zaid were persuaded to accept Saudi assistance in this or some other form, this would not in itself risk extending the war to the Southern Gulf. Indeed the opposite might be true: following the Saudi destruction of an intruding Iranian aircraft in Northern waters on 5 June the only Iranian attack has been well out of Saudi

/range

W) because they want to go near the U.A.E. they may go where Saudi planes are not i.e. to attack Oman installations.

It seems that we haven't worked out our own record very well. W. J. de P. D. O.



range in the Southern Gulf. The Iranian Air Force may well think twice before tangling with the Saudis again. The Omani contention that increasing the threat to Oman - already militarily much stronger - is inherently improbable.

To take action as the Sultan wishes would certainly infuriate the Saudis. Moreover, the Saudi offer of assistance is reported to have been made during a meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council Foreign Ministers on 12-14 June, which seems to have made some progress towards coordination of the air defences of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain. If true, this is a welcome development and fully in line with our policy of encouraging greater cooperation between GCC countries. It would run wholly counter to that policy if we were to try to discourage cooperation - however one-sided - between Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

It is, however, clearly important to present our views to Sultan Qaboos in a way which will avoid leading him to think that his concerns have been brushed aside. He is clearly expecting a reply from the Prime Minister in person, and this will need to explain in some detail why we are not prepared to act as he wishes. I attach a possible draft in the form of a telegram to Muscat.

I am copying this letter to Richard Hatfield, and also to Sir A Duff and Bill Savage in the Cabinet Office.

Yours ever,
Peter Ricketts

(P F Ricketts)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

2 (I think we should mention Saudi Khalifa's visit from UAE in mid-July when we can discuss these things with him.)

3 N.B. If this does go ahead, it looks as if our chances of selling more aircraft to the Gulf are seriously reduced.