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MEETING RECORD



10 DOWNING STREET . . .

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

16 August 1990

Dear Sir

**PRIME MINISTER'S TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH
SHEIKH SABAH OF KUWAIT**

After the usual opening exchange of courtesies, Sheikh Sabah said that he had just returned from a visit to Washington and wished to put to the Prime Minister the same question he had put to the Americans: was the operation only for the defence of Saudi Arabia or was it also to free Kuwait?

The Prime Minister replied that the forces that had gone to Saudi Arabia were there to protect the territorial integrity of that country and all of the Gulf States. Alan Clark was currently paying a visit to the Gulf States because the Bahrainis and the UAE had invoked the Treaty of Friendship. The frigates in the Gulf area were available to help them, and there was a possibility of a visit by our Tornado Squadron to Bahrain. If Sheikh Sabah was asking whether there was a military option to re-take Kuwait the Prime Minister's answer was that no option had been permanently ruled out. The first step had been to secure the territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States and to prevent Saddam Hussein following his seizure of Kuwait by further invasions. At the same time the sanctions flowing from the UN resolution were there to put pressure on Iraq. We were determined to see it through and there was no question but that Iraq must withdraw from Kuwait and that the duly constituted government of Kuwait should be restored.

Sheikh Sabah (somewhat truculently) said that this was not an answer to his question. Did the UK government need a formal request from the Amir to intervene militarily? The Prime Minister reaffirmed that we and the international community had taken firm action; that the logical sequence had been first to stop Iraq taking over other countries and second, to secure the effective implementation of sanctions. Our fleet was there to help in that process and thus ensure that Iraq was the loser from its invasion. But the Sheikh should be in no doubt that the forces were there for the defence of the Saudis and the Gulf States. The Prime Minister pointed out that many nations, particularly Moslem States, were assisting with sending troops. Other nations had responded well despite the economic cost; Turkey in particular had been marvellous. The sanctions resolution would secure its intended effect. The Prime Minister said that she readily understood Sheikh Sabah's concern about

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people in Kuwait. We too understood and shared that concern, particularly since there were many British nationals in Kuwait. She welcomed the diplomatic activity which Sheikh Sabah and the Amir were undertaking. It was important that the legitimate government should be active, and be seen to be active on behalf of the interests of the Kuwaitis and the citizens from other countries who were trapped in Kuwait.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Jane Binstead (Ministry of Defence).

Yours ever

Dominic

(DOMINIC MORRIS)

Simon Gass, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.