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*From the Private Secretary*

17 August 1990

Iraq/Kuwait: President Bush's Meeting with  
King Hussein and Prince Saud

Robert Gates telephoned me at midnight last night to give a quick read-out on the meeting which the President had had that day. He was unable to give a full read-out since much of the session with King Hussein had been restricted to the principals plus single note-taker. (Much of the ground is covered in similar terms in the report and telegram from Washington.)

The King had spent much of the meeting going over the role that Jordan had sought to play in securing an Arab solution and the difficulties that situation caused for Jordan. He made clear that he had no message or letter from Saddam Hussein and was not trying to act as an intermediary. He said that he had given direction for compliance with the UN resolution on sanctions. His people were seeking legal clarification from the UN about the full extent of the resolution. They were in particular exploring two issues: how far the humanitarian exception applied to foodstuffs, and whether, if Iraqi debt to Jordan was repaid in oil and the Iraqis were not getting any new money for it, did that fall in the sanctions resolution. The King said that Aqaba was not a problem. Through trade had in any case slowed to a trickle and goods which would be in breach of the sanctions resolution would not be allowed through. Gates commented that this was particularly welcome news for the Americans, who were very wary about the difficulties for them of enforcing sanctions off Aqaba.

There was some non-specific discussion of economic assistance for Jordan. The President expressed a general willingness to work with other countries to help Jordan, recognising that they had special problems, but Jordan needed to be seen to be implementing effectively the UN resolutions. The tone of the meeting and the lunch thawed considerably. Gates's only other comment was that while in terms of substance it had not been worth three hours, overall the Americans thought the time had been well spent in re-establishing good relations with Jordan and helping to bring King Hussein back on side.

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The President went almost immediately into a meeting with Prince Saud. Again, there was limited discussion of substance. The Prince was full of Saudi gratitude for the action which the Americans and others had taken. There was a discussion on the US/Saudi framework agreement on military forces which for obvious reasons Gates did not want to go into over an open line. He commented that Prince Saud had been very up-beat. The Prince was highly optimistic that, provided the international community continued to work effectively, the sanctions would bite and would achieve the desired results. The Saudis were already getting reports of dissidence within Iraq. The Prince thought that these reports were genuine and that disaffection with Saddam would grow quite rapidly in the coming weeks. Saddam's greatest asset might be his massive military forces; they also posed the greatest threat to him.

A copy of this letter goes to Jane Binstead (Ministry of Defence).

DOMINIC MORRIS

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