

FROM JAMES LEE FOR COI RADIO TECHNICAL SERVICES

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS BRIEFING

GIVEN BY FCO MINISTER OF STATE, MR. WILLIAM WALDEGRAVE,

IN LONDON,

ON THURSDAY, 16 AUGUST 1990

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

When I originally asked you to come in - and I am grateful to you for coming - I intended to have a broad-ranging press conference dealing with the whole situation. Since then, there has been a development which I regard as a grave and sinister development.

The Iraqi military authorities occupying Kuwait have instructed the British community, which numbers some thousands of people - men, women and children - to assemble at a hotel in Kuwait. It is clear to me that that cannot be because they believe that they are going to be, as they put it, "safer" in that hotel. I have no proof of this, but I fear that it is in preparation for moving those people somewhere else. I would like to express the anger of the British people if any such step is taken.

We are, of course, consulting our allies and our colleagues to find out whether similar demands have been made of other communities. We believe they have been made of the Americans and perhaps some others.

This is a further example of the duplicity of the Iraqi regime. Some of you may have heard the Iraqi Ambassador this very

lunchtime talking about the safety of what he called "guests of the Iraqi people".

I hope that these reports and the storm of protest which will break around the head of Iraq if she pursues any policy of interning people will make her draw back even at this late stage from any such policy, if that is what she contemplates.

Thank you! As you can imagine, I have quite a lot now to do, so I will have to cut this a little short, but let us have a few questions!

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

JOHN DICKIE (DAILY MAIL):

What was the reason given for assembling these people at one particular place? Are they to be treated as hostages or internees?

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

The reason given was that it would be for their safety but that if they did not assemble, there would be trouble for them.

QUESTION:

What is the deadline for this assembly and where is it supposed to take place?

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

It takes place at the Regency Hotel in Kuwait.

QUESTION:

And this applies to all British residents?

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

In Kuwait. There is as yet no clear deadline. We are, of course, urgently protesting in Baghdad and everywhere else.

QUESTION:

Are the diplomats affected?

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

I have asked the diplomats in the British Embassy in Kuwait that some of their number should join the assembling British community at the hotel so that if they are moved anywhere else there should be diplomats with them.

QUESTION:

But they are not required to leave officially?

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

No.

QUESTION:

How many British people are we talking about being asked to assemble?

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

We are talking about the order of two-and-a-half thousand people. We have broadcast a message with the help of the BBC on our emergency system to pass the Iraqi message to the community.

QUESTION:

What is your advice to those people, Mr. Waldegrave?

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

The advice the ambassador in Kuwait has broadcast to them makes it clear that though we hope this will not happen, they should come prepared with some minimum stocks of movable food and other

kit, but they should be prepared to supplement the food at the hotel if that is where they stay for some time but to have some minimum kit with them if they go elsewhere.

QUESTION:

Not cooperate? Not resist the order?

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

There is a clear threat in the Iraqi message that there will be trouble for people if they do not assemble there.

QUESTION;

....Iraqi instruction?

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

We will give it to you shortly.

QUESTION:

There is a discrepancy in your figures of 2,500; the figure of 4,000 was mentioned before.

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

I am sorry! 4,000.

QUESTION:

Do you assume they will be sent eventually to Baghdad or to Iraq?

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

What we fear is that they will be interned somewhere; I should think most likely in Iraq somewhere. I have no proof of that and part of the purpose of raising this so swiftly is to try to deter even at this last stage such a policy from taking place.

QUESTION:

If they carry out their threat to round these people up, what action will we take other than protest?

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

We will be considering that over the next few hours.

QUESTION:

Did this come out of the blue or was there any thought that it might happen connected with the decision to move people out to Baghdad?

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

It came out of the blue - there was no connection.

JOHN DICKIE (DAILY MAIL):

Are you raising this at the United Nations?

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

We are raising it with the United Nations; we are raising it in every relevant fora; we are raising it with our colleagues

in the EEC, with our allies and with other countries whose nationals may be affected.

QUESTION:

....convoy that is supposed to be leaving today has left?

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

It left - it has not arrived.

(END OF TRANSCRIPT)