



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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*Richard*

CONFIDENTIAL

22 August 1990

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*Dear Charles,*

*ms*

Iraq/Kuwait: Secretary of State's Conversation with Mr Gerald Kaufman

As you may know, since the beginning of the Iraq/Kuwait crisis, the Secretary of State has been in touch with Mr Kaufman about once a week to brief him on the situation. Mr Kaufman called on the Secretary of State this morning for a talk, which was conducted on a Privy Councillor basis. In fact, nothing of great sensitivity passed between them.

There was a brief discussion on our progress towards a new Security Council resolution and on the plight of British nationals in Iraq and Kuwait. Mr Kaufman then said, in a manner which reflected some preparation, that he fully understood the distinction between our efforts to enforce the United Nations embargo and our efforts to deter aggression. He supported both of these aims. He recognised that hostilities would certainly break out if Iraq launched an attack on Saudi Arabia, and that under those circumstances, we could not conduct purely defensive military action. Some offensive action against Iraq would need to be part of the engagement. He believed that Article 51 and the request for action by the Government of Kuwait provided a legal basis for the US and its allies to attack Iraqi forces in Kuwait in order to end the Iraqi aggression, but he believed that this would be a catastrophic error because of the consequences, which would be felt round the world.

The conversation then moved to the possibility of Parliament being recalled. The Foreign Secretary spoke along the lines used yesterday by the Prime Minister during his press conference. Mr Kaufman said that he had been in touch with Mr Kinnoch both before and after his holiday. Although the Labour Party was keeping the matter under review, it was unlikely to press for the recall of Parliament unless events took a new and serious turn.

*Sincerely,*  
*S L Gass*

(S L Gass)  
Private Secretary

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