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MR KING/MR WALDEGRAVE - PC - 23 AUGUST 1990

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FROM EGMG FOR COI RADIO TECHNICAL SERVICES

TRANSCRIPT OF JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE

HELD BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE, MR TOM KING,

AND THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH MINISTER OF STATE,

MR WILLIAM WALDEGRAVE,

ON THURSDAY, 23 AUGUST 1990

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*Prime Minister*

TRANSCRIPT A

*You may like to glance at the passages which have underlined in this in case you do the pen conference tomorrow. can*

MR KING:

Two weeks ago I announced the initial deployment of British forces to the Arabian Peninsular as part of the multinational effort to defend Saudi Arabia and other threatened states in the area and to deter further Iraqi aggression. Since then we have been fully involved also in the United Nations' efforts to restore Kuwait's independence through peaceful means and in support of the UN embargo.

Following consultation with our friends in the region and with the United States and the visit of the Minister of State, Alan Clark, and Sir Richard Vincent the Vice-Chief of Defence Staff, on how we can further improve the defensive capability in the region, I have decided to deploy a further squadron of Tornado aircraft. It is likely that they will be based at Bahrain. These will be Tornado GR1 aircraft which will provide a capability day and night to counter any attack by Iraqi armour or concentration of forces.

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We are also evaluating the possible deployment of an RAF Regiment detachment with Rapier surface to air missiles and other forces for their security, taking account of other defensive capabilities already present.

We are keeping under close review how we can best help the region in this time of tension and in this connection I shall be visiting Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states earlier next week to discuss the situation with their governments and at the same time to visit our own forces in the area.

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(QUESTIONS AND ANSWER)

QUESTION:

Secretary of State, the Tornado is a deep-strike bomber, does this give you a capability to attack into Iraq, is this one of the considerations you had? And when you talk about other forces, are you talking about Army troops?

MR KING:

In response to the first question, the value of this aircraft, it has a night and day capability and it does have a good anti-armour capability as well and so it is a very useful addition as entirely for defensive, not for aggression at all, but to reinforce the defensive capability of the forces to prevent Iraqi aggression. This has come out of discussions with our friends in the region, with the United States as well, and it is quite clear that this is one way in which we can help most effectively reinforce the defensive capability that we have. There is a scale of Iraqi armour and the need to ensure we have an adequate defence against any aggression.

That has been our first objective which we hope we are achieving to ensure that we retain the territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia and that has been our concern and this contribution I may say has been welcomed. And although it is likely to be based in Bahrain, obviously the very close proximity of Bahrain to Saudi Arabia, this has been discussed and welcomed by the Saudi Arabian government as well and for logistical reasons they welcome the idea also that it should be located in Bahrain.

On your second point, I refer to the fact that we are evaluating now. If these are likely to be in Bahrain, we need to evaluate the scale of air defence for our squadron in Bahrain. There are other forces there already so it is a matter of seeing what is there and how we can ensure that we have proper defences which are both of the Rapier surface-to-air side, but there may also be the need for security on the ground to secure the airfield area. And this is being evaluated now and the team will go very shortly, they are likely to go tomorrow to evaluate this and see the most effective way to do this.

QUESTION:

(Inaudible)

MR KING:

Within 5 - 7 days the squadron will be there.

QUESTION:

Where is the squadron coming from?

MR KING:

Germany.

QUESTION:

Is it connected to the fact that ... in Cyprus?

MR KING:

As I have said, we are evaluating whether it is necessary to go. To be clear about this, I made an earlier announcement two weeks ago that they would be going but because at that time I did not say where they would be going because with the number of resources arriving it was not at that time quite clear where they were going, but as we know they are now located in Dhahran, Dhahran already had satisfactory surface-to-air defences, and so it was not necessary. So we have forward based them in Cyprus and it is now likely to be that detachment that will then move forward if the evaluation indicates that their presence is necessary.

QUESTION (Guardian):

At an earlier stage in this crisis there were reports that the United States would have liked for a variety of reasons the British to contribute some ground forces as such as opposed to simply people to protect an airfield or whatever. Was that a factor in your considerations and if so why did you in the end decide not to take that particular route?

MR KING:

I think the United States are very appreciative and they have shown their appreciation of the speed with which we responded and the very effective way in which we responded to the multinational efforts to firstly ensure the defence of Saudi Arabia and to prevent further aggression. Obviously it is a matter of judgment as to which is the most effective way to do it and I would say this, that my announcement today is certainly very much welcomed by the United States, it is felt to be the most helpful way in the immediate area

that we could help in this respect. Obviously a Tornado GR1 Squadron does make a very effective additional contribution to the defence, particularly in the anti-armour phase.

QUESTION:

The GR1 is a nuclear capable aircraft, will you be making any clarification when they are deployed that they are armed with conventional weapons only?

MR KING:

We never comment on that but I think I have made clear the purpose for which they are being sent.

QUESTION:

We were told on the ground at Dhahran two days ago that if there was a deployment of ground defence troops for any airfield in the Gulf states that logically such a deployment for logistical and self-supporting purposes would need to be a battalion group. You have intimated now possibly that the deployment you are considering for Bahrain may be in some way probably less than that. Can you clarify whether in your judgment logistically in view of the temperatures and the rest that a battalion group is the sensible singular unit to send or not?

MR KING:

I do not ask a team to go and evaluate it and make up my mind in advance what the answer should be - that is the reality. We are going to see the most effective way in which this can be done.

I have seen various speculation about it, I would not like to

encourage that speculation further because genuinely we are looking to see how this might be most effectively done and the team will go tomorrow.

QUESTION (Flight International):

Can you tell us the name of the squadron from West Germany that is going, the number, and also whether you plan to send a further Rapier detachment to Cyprus to relieve the one that may be going to the Gulf? Or are you sending hawks to take point defence of Akrotiri?

PANEL SPEAKER:

The squadron will come from Germany but we are evaluating which is the best one. There is no difficulty about choosing a number of squadrons from Germany.

MR KING:

And on the Rapier defence side I think not at this stage yet, not at this stage.

QUESTION:

There is obviously a focus these days on the difference between offensive and defensive. The Americans have tried to make it clear that this is not supposed to be an American show but clearly it is an American show if there is to be any question of an offensive. Is there any planning by the British Government that they will take part in an offensive action if it is decided in Washington that is what is needed?

MR KING:

No there is no such plan at all. We are going entirely for defensive purposes to safeguard the territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia, in other words to protect Saudi Arabia against suffering the same fate that Kuwait has suffered by the naked aggression of Saddam Hussein and Iraq. Our method to then see the restoration of the legitimate government of Kuwait is by the effective application of the United Nations embargo and that is why we attach such importance to the successful establishment of that embargo.

The Foreign Secretary and I were in Paris for the Western European Union on Tuesday and there was, I am glad to say, unanimous agreement round that table of all the members of the WEU that the United Nations Resolution 661 must be effective. That is the way that we must be sure it is effective and effective quickly and that is why we attach so much importance to it and we have no offensive plans.

QUESTION:

... presumably any plan by Washington to mount an offensive action?

MR KING:

I have said precisely what our position is, that is our position. We want to see the resolution of this, the ending of the aggression, the restoration of legitimate government achieved by peaceful means. It is very important indeed for the world, for the Arab nations themselves, for the Arab people, that this is done and that is why we are anxious that the most effective peaceful way to do this is a United Nations embargo that is effective.



MR KING:

We believe, and it is the agreement of the United Nations, that is the action that the United Nations will take and calling on all member states to take such action. And I said at the Western European Union meeting that I had never been at an international gathering of that kind at which there was such unanimity of purpose. And I think that people are noticing out of the United Nations the striking feature of the Security Council where actions are being taken without a dissenting voice, for instance in condemning the aggression, and we are anxious to see that United Nations action is genuinely effective and quickly.

QUESTION:

Are you considering sending out the Welsh Guards and if so when might you do that?

MR KING:

No, that was the answer to the question I was asked. We are now evaluating the most effective way to secure our situation, if the squadron is located in Bahrain, likely to be located, the most effective way to secure the ground situation there. And there will be no further comment until we have the fruits of that evaluation. But I shall of course myself be there early next week and I shall be looking myself at the situation on the ground.

QUESTION:

Would it be fair to say that the decision you are announcing today is as much a political one as a military one?

MR KING:

No, it is identified very much as a gap that needs to be filled in effective defensive structure to preserve the integrity of Saudi Arabia. I see this as another very significant stone in the wall that now is the shield that is defending Saudi Arabia from suffering the fate that Kuwait suffered. And it is one that has been identified on a military basis as the most effective contribution we can make.

QUESTION:

... Western Intelligence sources in Riyadh quoted this morning as saying that Scud launchers have not been moved into Kuwait, what is the current assessment on that and what chemical or crude nuclear capability they might have?

MR KING:

The answer to that is I think that is correct.

(END OF TRANSCRIPT A, CONTINUED ON TRANSCRIPT B)

FROM JAMES LEE FOR COI RADIO TECHNICAL SERVICES

TRANSCRIPT OF JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE

GIVEN BY

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE, MR. TOM KING

AND

FCO MINISTER OF STATE, MR. WILLIAM WALDEGRAVE

IN LONDON,

ON THURSDAY, 23 AUGUST 1990

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TRANSCRIPT B - (CONTINUED FROM TRANSCRIPT A)

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

A brief follow-up to the statement we made earlier in the week about action in Geneva with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations Human Rights Commission:

We have been laying with them today examples of some of what the Prime Minister has called the totally scandalous use of families with small children in the gathering together of people by the Iraqi authorities in Kuwait and we considered that the best way to do this in order to emphasise the urgency which we feel about this, was to give an example, not that this example is the only one; it stands as an example, we fear, of other such families - but the Buchan family with two small children who have now been taken by the Iraqi authorities and placed in a hotel, which is presumably part of the announced policy of Iraq, which they talked about at the end of next week. We think this is a particularly repugnant example of this

policy, that Saddam Hussein should be threatening to shelter his forces behind women and children.

This morning, Her Majesty's Ambassador at Geneva was instructed to draw this particular case to the attention of the Chairman of the ICRC, Mr. Sommaruga, who I saw the day before yesterday, and to the Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights, Mr. Martinson (phon), but I have to say this is not the only case where children are being held - we have given this as an example to stand for the others - but I would be happy to answer questions on the wider consular and other aspects.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTION:

Can you tell us how many children?

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

The Buchan family have two children. We believe that there are some more children probably now being held in a variety of different locations in Kuwait with families so this is not the only case but it is one that is particularly well-documented.

QUESTION:

Can you tell us how many exactly?

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

I cannot tell you exactly but there are a number of others.

QUESTION:

Can you tell us what it is you want the Red Cross to do?

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

What we want the Red Cross to do is to get in there, to start applying the requirements of the Fourth Geneva Convention which apply. They have the right to access; they have the right to take protected persons - and all our citizens should be protected persons - out of the zone; and incidentally, the Fourth Geneva Convention specifically mentions the use of civilians - of protected people - to protect military or other sensitive facilities in a military sense; that is actually covered directly in the Fourth Geneva Convention, so we want them in there. I very much hope that the Iraqis, who have been using the ICRC in their own prisoner swap with Iran and therefore must accept their neutrality, will give access to them as a matter of absolute urgency.

QUESTION:

Can you tell me what action the Foreign Office will take if Baghdad carries out its threat to remove diplomatic immunity from embassies that refuse to close tomorrow?

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

Our view is that this is an illegal order which derives from an illegal act and we will ignore it.

QUESTION:

Was the Prime Minister aware, do you know, when she made her comments about the Red Cross at her news conference the other day, that this team from the International Red Cross had just arrived in Baghdad?

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

I think that the style of the Red Cross is to pursue matters in a very diplomatic and quiet way in getting access; we respect that but we do note that in a number of other situations round the world the humanitarian organisations seem to have made a rather louder noise and we wanted to emphasise that this acute situation - there has not been a situation like this in the modern world - should be bringing absolutely unanimous efforts and condemnation of all the humanitarian organisations.

The one which is a good example is the Human Rights Commission of the UN. The Special Advisory Sub-Committee is in session in Geneva; they happened also to be in session at the time of Tiannenman Square and they at once passed a motion condemning it. We hope that such a motion will be passed this week also - and I have some confidence that it will be. These are independent experts, not governmental representatives. It is essential to get every single one of the international organisations, from which Iraq has herself profited for example in terms of the prisoners of war, to work in this situation.

QUESTION:

If any of the women and children are indeed harmed in Kuwait

or Iraq, would you then consider that that was reason for abandoning the defensive posture and taking more positive action against the government?

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

What I would say to that before perhaps passing that back to the Secretary of State, is that the Foreign Secretary made a rather important point yesterday when he said that those who take the responsibility for illegal acts should remember that there may ultimately be no hiding place in the long term for responsibility for those acts.

I think I will pass it to the Secretary of State.

MR. KING:

If I may just add to what William Waldegrave said, I think the point is that it is not just those responsible but it is that individual people bear the responsibility for the acts they carry out and will be held so responsible as the Foreign Secretary has made clear.

We have made absolutely clear that we wish this matter to be resolved by peaceful means. We wish there to be an end to aggression and we wish to see the restoration of the legitimate government of Kuwait.

The question of barbaric behaviour of the the kind that we are seeing at the present time, taking babies at gun-point from people's houses and forcing them into whatever circumstances they are, is barbaric behaviour and anybody who perpetrates that sort of behaviour has to be ready to face the consequences of it.

I am not going to say any more than that, but the reality is that civilised nations of the world in the end will not tolerate that sort of behaviour. That is the stark truth of the matter.

We have a responsibility to our people. I have a keen direct interest because we have a British Liaison Team working in Kuwait - a number of people helping, non-combatants - who have been taken in total violation of the Geneva Convention and they have wives, they have children. It is quite unacceptable behaviour and we shall not rest until that matter is put right and people are restored the liberty to which they entitled under the law.

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

I might just add one thing if I may, Secretary of State: I, as you know, have responsibility for the Middle East under the Secretary of State in the Foreign Office and have a very large number of Arab friends. Saddam Hussein has been comparing himself to Saladin and the difference in behaviour from that great courteous prince to a man who is willing to put his famous army behind women and children is rather marked and if my friends in the Arab World think that is a champion worth backing, well they are backing a loser!

JACK THOMPSON (BBC WORLD SERVICE)

Mr. Waldegrave, I understand there are four diplomats left at the embassy in Kuwait, including the ambassador, Mr. Weston. You have said that we will ignore any attempt by the Iraqis to close that embassy down but in practical terms, what if the Iraqis



actually roll up at the front door and try and remove Mr. Weston and the diplomats? What is the UK's response going to be then?

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

We will not ask Mr. Weston to resist by force - that would be foolish - but if they are going to impose an illegal order, they will have to impose it on us. We are going to take no cognisance of it until they were to take such action and in that respect, we are in complete unanimity not only with the countries of the Twelve but a wider group of countries, including Japan and a number of others too.

JACK THOMPSON:

Do you expect them to do it when the deadline comes?

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

It is rather difficult to say. They have been in quite a muddle in recent days and have said one thing in Kuwait, another thing in Baghdad. I do not know. Let us see!

QUESTION:

Can you confirm that Iraqi planes and troops are now in Yemen and also that, following the signing of the Sudanese-Iraqi Military Cooperation Pact, that there are now Iraqi fighter planes in the Sudan?

MR. KING:

I think it is no secret that there were some Iraqi planes there before the conflict started. I cannot comment further on that.

QUESTION:

(Inaudible - re offensive action by British forces not being ruled out if the provocation increases or continues)

MR. KING:

We wish to see this settled by peaceful means but we rule out no option. If you say would we just sit down under any provocation, no matter how grave, and make no effort to seek to restore the correct situation, then that would not be correct.

We are determined to achieve our rights; we are determined to achieve the liberty of British subjects. We wish to see this settled by peaceful means but we do not rule out any option.

QUESTION:

(Inaudible but re war)

MR. KING:

I add nothing to what I have said. I have said quite clearly that we wish first of all to achieve the territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia. First of all the immediate emergency: this country was very speedy in the action that we took to come to the immediate assistance of our friends and allies in the area to ensure firstly that there was no further aggression. Now, we are

embarked, in concert with our friends and allies in the United Nations in a quite a remarkable show - it is worldwide - to see this aggression ended. We wish to see it ended by peaceful means. We do not wish to see fighting; we do not wish to see conflict. We did not start this problem; we are not the people responsible for this barbarous behaviour; we are not the people who murdered our own citizens - as William Waldegrave discussed it, Saddam Hussein must probably be on record as the man who has already killed more Arabs than any other man in history - and we are determined to see that this barbarous treatment that our nationals are suffering is ended at the earliest moment and that the rule of law is preserved and restored in the world - as important for Arab peoples as it is for peoples anywhere else in the world.

QUESTION:

(Very faint) Do you have any information about the Iraqis putting up their....to allow the evacuation of refugees?

MR. KING:

I have heard some accounts of that but I would not want to comment on it further. There have been a number of, I think, rather misleading stories and I am not sure quite what the present situation is, to be honest, on that.

QUESTION:

Can I ask the Secretary of State and perhaps Mr. Waldegrave a question about the Kingdom of Jordan?

Is the Office of IMF still functioning in Amman and what are its present operating instructions in view of the crisis?

MR. KING:

My understanding is that it is. I must admit my eye has not been closely on that ball in the last couple of days, but I think it is. My understanding is that it is but obviously we are keeping everything under review at the present time.

QUESTION:

Can I ask the Chief of the Defence Staff what types of aircraft were in Sudan and Yemen prior to the crisis starting?

MR. KING:

My answer was only about the Yemen. I think I am correct in saying that there were some aircraft there. In case there is any misunderstanding about what I said, I was not able to comment and did not know anything about the Sudan point.

CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF:

I do not want to go into details now on this. There have been a variety of aircraft over a period of months but I would not want to be drawn on which particular ones for obvious reasons.

QUESTION:

..an apparently related incident, that of Mr. Keenan, another hostage. There was some suggestion that he may be released. Have you got anything to say, Mr. Waldegrave?

MR. WALDEGRAVE:

Not really! We hope it is true; it came from an ... report, as I understand it. There have been previous reports before, but we have no other information. We hope it is true.

(END OF TRANSCRIPT B AND END OF WHOLE TRANSCRIPT)