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Prime Minister

Agree?

2nd September 1990 <sup>CBS</sup> 2/9.

MO 6/17/15

Dear Charles,

The American Ambassador to NATO wrote to the Secretary General on 27 Aug, seeking a meeting of Permanent Representatives to discuss the US requirement for sea and air lift to support operations in the Middle East. Specifically, he identified an immediate requirement for at least 20 roll-on/roll-off ships and a follow-on requirement for 60 more by mid-September. This will be discussed at a meeting of the North Atlantic Council on Monday afternoon.

Although some NATO members may have difficulty with the US approach to NATO per se for this out-of-area requirement (rather than bilateral approaches to individual members) my Secretary of State feels that the UK should be seen to be giving the maximum support to this US initiative for practical burdensharing. Although we cannot be criticised for not playing our part already he feels it is important that we do not rest on that, and show that here again we are prepared to make a contribution. He, therefore, proposes that we should offer to provide a Ro-Ro ferry and he has asked for immediate enquiries to be made to establish what might be available. The Government Freight Agent advises that a suitable vessel is likely to be available, but it may not necessarily be British flagged. The preliminary advice is that the cost would be some £1.5M if we take it for forty days and this would need to be debited against the separate Op GRANBY account.

We need to give Michael Alexander advice by lunch-time tomorrow, and my Secretary of State would be grateful to know if colleagues agree with his proposal.

I am sending a copy of this letter to John Gieve and Carys Evans (Treasury), Dominic Asquith (FCO), Simon Whiteley (DTp) and Sonia Phippard and Len Appleyard in the Cabinet Office.

Yours sincerely

*J R Binstead*

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