



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

24 October 1990

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Dear Aunts,

CM

Statement on the Middle East

I enclose a draft of the Foreign Secretary's Statement to the House this afternoon. This is in final form except for one or two statistics, which the MOD are kindly providing.

I am copying this letter to Tim Sutton (Lord President's Office), Simon Webb (MOD), John Neilson (Department of Energy) and Sonia Phippard (Cabinet Office).

Jans,  
Stephe Wall

(J S Wall)

Private Secretary

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## STATEMENT ON THE MIDDLE EAST BY THE RT HON DOUGLAS HURD

CBE MP: 24 OCTOBER 1990

With permission, Mr Speaker, I shall make a Statement about developments in the Middle East since the Emergency Debate on 6 and 7 September.

Then, the House endorsed the Government's policy, which is that of the entire international community. Saddam Hussein must leave Kuwait and the legitimate government must be restored. Iraq must release our hostages.

Since the House met, at the United Nations we have applied growing pressure to Iraq. Negotiations are now under way in New York for a further resolution, to hold Iraq liable to pay compensation for the damage resulting from its actions, including the maltreatment of foreign nationals and property.

Sanctions have been enforced, in particular by the effective blockade by allied ships now operating in the area. 104 ships from [x] countries are on constant patrol. The Royal Navy have challenged over 1,000 vessels and have taken part in 9 boarding operations. The House will wish to pay tribute to the courage and professionalism of the Royal Navy.

The United Nations will continue to tighten the screw of sanctions. We cannot relax our determination to ensure Saddam Hussein's complete and unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait. Since the House met, there have been many more examples of his tyranny. All the evidence suggests that, far from being under strict orders to behave with discipline in Kuwait, Iraq's soldiers have been allowed complete licence. The House will be aware that many Kuwaitis who have been able to escape their occupied country have testified to wanton destruction of property and to cruel and inhuman treatment of Kuwaiti citizens, including several murders carried out in front of wives and children, rape and torture. I remind the Iraqis once again that at all levels of authority, military or civilian, they are personally responsible under the Geneva Convention for illegal acts committed as occupiers in Kuwait.

In these circumstances, one of our first concerns has been the welfare of the eight hundred British people still in Iraq, and of the remaining substantial British community in Kuwait. In Kuwait, our Embassy, one of the last to stay open, is down to the Ambassador and one colleague. They will remain as long as they have food and water and as long as they can continue, through the warden system, to help Britons in Kuwait.



We welcome the release of British nationals in response to the humanitarian appeal by my rt hon Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup. But this carefully calculated gesture by Saddam Hussein is not enough. All of our nationals - all foreign nationals - should be allowed to leave Iraq. I admire the courage of those detained or in hiding in Iraq and Kuwait and of their families here. Our Embassies have helped organise the evacuation of over 900 women and children and we are doing what we can to ensure that those who remain in Iraq have the money and comforts they need.

The situation is particularly agonising for families here at home. We are working in the closest cooperation with the Gulf Support Group to provide as much help and information as we can. We cannot work miracles. But my staff and that of the Embassy in Baghdad are working round the clock on these problems. Where complaints have been made, we are investigating them urgently. Where there is room for improvement, we are making those improvements as quickly as we can.

We should not forget that the plight of our hostages is caused by Saddam Hussein. It is he who is playing a cat and mouse game with them. He must be in no doubt that the British Government and this Parliament cannot be blackmailed.

The United States and Britain moved fast immediately after the invasion of Kuwait to protect Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries from the threat of attack. Since then, a unique coalition of forces has been established in the Gulf consisting of [x] men from [y] countries. My rt hon Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced on 14 September the deployment of the 7th Armoured Brigade (the Desert Rats) and of more Tornado aircraft. This will bring the total number of British forces committed to the Gulf to some 16,000. They have the support and gratitude of this House and of the countries of the region.

Saddam Hussein will seek to cling on to the country which he has acquired by force or to negotiate his way out so that he can claim some gain from his aggression. He has tried to sow disunity among the coalition ranged against him, with a variety of bogus peace plans, delaying tactics and smokescreens. One of these is his attempt to present himself as the champion of the Palestinian cause. In fact, the Palestinian cause has been set back by Iraq's aggression and the credibility of the PLO has been damaged by their ambivalent response to it.

Some have suggested that Saddam Hussein should be persuaded to withdraw from Kuwait in exchange for an international conference on the Middle East. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the countries of the Gulf and the government of Kuwait have all firmly rejected that suggestion. There can be no reward for aggression. Iraq's withdrawal must be complete and unconditional. But Members of this House and the British Government have long argued the urgent need to find a lasting settlement in the Middle East. Once Iraq is out of Kuwait, we must return to this issue. The policy of the British Government is clear and is the one I re-stated during my recent visit, that is self-determination for the Palestinian people and the right of Israel to live in peace behind secure borders.

The killing of 21 Palestinians on the Dome of the Rock or Temple Mount on 8 October and the subsequent murder of Israelis underlines the tragedy of the Arab/Israel dispute. The cycle of violence is repeating itself. I hope the government of Israel may yet agree to accept the UN Secretary General's mission to investigate those killings. To do otherwise will risk diverting the Security Council from its main task - getting Iraq out of Kuwait - and will give Saddam Hussein a cause which he will exploit ruthlessly.



Mr Speaker, our aim remains Iraq's complete withdrawal from Kuwait and the restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government. At a meeting of the Kuwaiti ruling family and their people in Jeddah earlier this month, there was an impressive display of the loyalty of all Kuwaitis and of the unity which the crisis has produced. The Kuwaitis have announced their intention to implement in full the 1962 democratic constitution when the legitimate government is restored. Many will welcome that decision, which was taken freely by Kuwaitis. In the meantime, the pressures on Saddam Hussein remain diplomatic isolation, the economic blockade and the threat of forcible expulsion from Kuwait. Saddam Hussein's choice is simple: retreat or defeat. The Government, and doubtless this House, strongly hope that the restoration of Kuwait will be achieved without further bloodshed. But the daily destruction of Kuwait and the murder of its people continue. We are tightening the screw of peaceful pressures but we will not shirk from our part in the alternative course if that course finally becomes necessary.