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From the Private Secretary

26 October 1990

GULF CRISIS

I spoke to General Scowcroft late this morning to follow-up a couple of points which were made at this morning's meeting of OD(G).

This letter contains highly sensitive material and should be seen only by a very limited number of people.

Primakov Mission

I said that the Prime Minister was disturbed to see Primakov continuing his unhelpful attempts to launch peace negotiations with a further visit to the area. She was considering a message to President Gorbachev, to try to get Primakov called to order. She wondered whether the President had anything similar in mind.

General Scowcroft said the President had already sent a message to Gorbachev, very shortly after Primakov's talks in Washington, in order to be sure that Gorbachev got an unvarnished account of them. When the Americans learned that Primakov was going to Cairo, the President had telephoned Mubarak on an open line and given him an equally unvarnished account - which the Russians will undoubtedly have picked up - of what he had told Primakov. Scowcroft thought that the President would be enthusiastic about the idea that the Prime Minister should also send a message to Gorbachev.

I said there seemed some evidence of a difference of view on this issue between Primakov and Shevardnadze. Scowcroft said the Americans shared this assessment. The Soviet Ambassador in Washington had taken Bob Gates aside and told him that the rivalry between Primakov and Shevardnadze was a domestic political problem. The Ambassador had advised the Americans to put their money on Shevardnadze. This underlined the utility of a message to Gorbachev.

Additional American Forces for Saudi Arabia

I told Scowcroft that we had heard that the Americans were considering sending an additional 100,000 troops to Saudi Arabia. It would clearly be a major operation. We wondered how long that

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would take. Might it bring them up against the closing of the 'climatic window' for military action towards the end of February? Scowcroft said the President had not actually taken a decision on this yet, although he was likely to come down in favour of sending additional forces. The Americans would probably send two divisions, mostly from Europe. Cheney estimated that they could reach Saudi Arabia within 28 days: 'the ships are already moving'. The aim was to have the additional forces in place by early December. I said that we had heard estimates which stretched rather beyond this. Scowcroft laughed and said that the military were getting a bit nervous about forecasts, after getting the amount of time needed to move the first units badly wrong. But Cheney had been categorical that two extra divisions could be in Saudi Arabia within 28 days of a decision to move. I asked whether shipping was likely to be a problem. Scowcroft did not know of any problem for the Americans, but said that shipping was still needed for a second Egyptian Division.

Secretary Baker

Scowcroft said that Secretary Baker would probably visit the area in about a week's time and hoped to come through London. The Americans were in the process of refining their thinking and Baker would be in a position to put some more concrete proposals to the Prime Minister.

GATT

I said that the Prime Minister had received the President's message on the GATT negotiations and would do her best to get some progress at the European Council. The main problem was Helmut Kohl. Scowcroft said that he was getting seriously worried about an irreparable breakdown of the GATT negotiations. They would wait and see how we got on at the weekend. But thereafter, the President might have to call in some chips from Helmut Kohl.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Simon Webb (Ministry of Defence) and to Sir Robin Butler.

CHARLES POWELL

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