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FROM: S G Eldon
Emergency Unit

DATE: 1 November 1990

cc: PS
PS/Mr Waldegrave
PS/PUS
Mr Fairweather
Mr Broomfield
Mr Goulden
Miss Spencer
Mr Muir, Information
Dept
Mr Mower, News Dept
Mr Young, o.r.
Mr Denne, EU
PUSD (CN)
Int Cell, JOC, MOD
Defence Debriefing
Unit, Ashford

A brave man

Mr Gore-Booth

CONDITIONS IN KUWAIT

1. This evening the Emergency Unit received a telephone call from Mr Ron Sargeant, a British citizen in hiding in Kuwait. Mr Sargeant asked for Mr Young by name and was directed to me in his absence. He said he was calling on a telephone (presumably a satellite link) lent to him by the Kuwaiti resistance and had earlier been in touch with his wife (from whom he is separated). On 20 October we had received a fax from Mr Sargeant containing much useful information about conditions in Kuwait and had attempted to get a message of thanks back to him through the Embassy. We have also been in touch

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with Sir John Stanley MP, of whom Mr Sargeant is a constituent.

2. Mr Sargeant was clearly under a great deal of strain and broke down twice during the conversation. He said that conditions for those in hiding in Kuwait had deteriorated markedly in recent weeks; they were now much worse off than those in the Embassy. The house where he was hiding had recently been searched for a second time by the Iraqis. He and his colleagues had only been saved by the presence of mind of the Kuwaiti who was hiding them who had had to stand with a gun at his head for 20 minutes while soldiers looted his TV, stereo and video equipment. Mr Sargeant thought that many Kuwaitis were reaching the end of their tether. They were beginning to despair of ever regaining their country and might soon become reluctant to shelter British citizens in the courageous way they had done up to now.

3. Mr Sargeant said that the British community could not last for much longer. He was lucky to be in touch with a number of others: those hiding on their own were in a far worse position. It was only a matter of time before everyone would have to give themselves up, thus adding another 1350 detainees (his figure) to those already held by the Iraqis. Drawing on Mr Lennox-Boyd's Gulf Link interview (which Mr Sargeant had heard) I said that a decision on whether to give up was a personal one and would have to be taken in the light of individual circumstances. Mr Sargeant said this was all very well. But the community was frightened of what the Iraqis would do to anyone who gave themselves up. Four Western bodies had recently been found under a pile of rubbish in Kuwait City: he had heard (but could not confirm) that one of them was an American. He wanted to appeal to the Prime Minister to send the troops in very soon; as far as the British community was concerned that was the only way out of the crisis. He repeated this several times; I said I would pass the message on.

4. Mr Sargeant added that he was in close touch with the Kuwaiti resistance which, despite media reports to the contrary, remained very active. He could assure me - as members of his group had assured the Americans - that they were in a position to control Kuwait City should an attack be mounted. He could guarantee that

there would be no street fighting should the multinational force move in. The resistance possessed ground-to-air missiles and were in a position to deny the Iraqis the use of Kuwait Airport.

5. This was the first direct contact that the Emergency Unit has had with anyone in hiding in Kuwait for some time. It confirms what Mr Weston and Colonel Duncan have reported about the strain under which the British community is currently existing. Mr Sargeant said he had further useful information to pass on and (though I do not think we can necessarily take all that he said at face value) we managed to arrange successfully for him to speak to the MOD later in the evening. I offered to transmit any further messages to his family but he said that, having spoken to his wife and children, he had done all that was necessary.

S.G.E.

S G Eldon