



PM/90/078

PRIME MINISTER

*I see no reason  
to give any*

*explicit assurance.*

*We would tie our hands  
and limit our freedom  
Kuwait*

*R. Marsh*

*(b(A-c))*

*CB*

*b/xi*

*free war cor.*

1. I have read with interest the record of your talk over the weekend with the President, and Charles Powell's with Brent Scowcroft.

2. We have not yet found a way of helping the US over the difficulty which they clearly see in starting a military operation from cold. I doubt if it is enough to argue that the difficulty ought not to exist. My worry is that, if no way through the difficulty is found, military action will be repeatedly postponed, with the consequences which you rightly fear. We would be left with the prospect of a long haul, with no certainty of success and the military option effectively discredited, and that would do us all immense harm.

3. The disadvantages of trying for a fresh Security Council resolution authorising member states to use force were set out in Charles Powell's talks with Scowcroft. But, as you know, I do not think we should absolutely rule this out. It would need to be done this month, under the US Presidency, and separated from the start of a military operation so that military surprise was not in practice lost. The difficulty is how to prepare it effectively with the Russian, Chinese and non-aligned without exposing ourselves to humiliation. We obviously must not get into a position where the Security Council refuses such a resolution or hedges it about with restrictions. The operation would be tricky and dangerous but not in my view impossible. Nor in this



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form need it constrain the scope of military action (see the Solicitor General's Opinion).

4. An alternative would be some form of ultimatum. If someone carrying the personal authority of the President could go privately to Baghdad, he could tell Saddam Hussein face to face (without dates) that if he did not fully comply with the Security Council Resolutions he would be attacked, and that if he did fully comply he would not be attacked. This last assurance has not, so far as I know, been explicitly given, but it is implicit in the President's and your refusal to extend the objectives laid down by the Security Council. (We would then move into the new chapter which you have recently been sketching of dealing with his NBC capabilities over time via sanctions and the retention of forces.) If Saddam Hussein rejected this ultimatum despite the assurance mentioned above, then the President would be on strong ground with Congress and US opinion if he published the exchange at the same time as he ordered the military option. He could show that he had been up to the wire in search of peace.

[It is in your speech]

5. A further, though probably less effective, alternative would be a solemn public warning by President Bush to the same effect.

6. These ideas seem to me worth considering if we come to the conclusion that, without something on these lines, American opinion was building a cage around their President's freedom to act.

7. Four United States' Senators called on me today. The three Democrats said the President would have no support for military action in their states. Senator

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Lloyd Bentsen said that Texas would support a military action for 30 days.

8. I am copying this minute to the Defence Secretary.

DH

(DOUGLAS HURD)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
5 November 1990

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FILE

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

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*From the Private Secretary*

5 November 1990

*Dear Sophie,*

KUWAIT

The Prime Minister has read the Foreign Secretary's minute of 5 November about the transition to the military option in the Gulf. This will of course be one of the main issues for discussion at her meeting with Secretary Baker. Her only comment at this stage is that she sees no reason to give Saddam Hussein an explicit assurance that he would not be attacked. It would tie our hands and limit future options.

I am copying this letter to Simon Webb (Ministry of Defence).

Charles Powell

Stephen Wall Esq  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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