

SECRET AND PERSONAL

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SECRETARY OF STATE'S MEETING WITH SECRETARY BAKER:

9 NOVEMBER 1990

NOTE OF THAT PART OF THE MEETING ATTENDED BY AMBASSADOR
CATTO AND PRIVATE SECRETARY

Hostages

1. In response to a question from the Secretary of State, Mr Baker confirmed that the hostage issue was beginning to run quite hard in the United States. It was coming back to public consciousness and families were starting to organise. The Secretary of State gave the numbers of our hostages in Kuwait and Iraq. In the event of hostilities, we would need to show awareness of the hostages and of our concern not to expose them to needless risk. Our targets would still have to be targets but we did know where the hostages were. Mr Baker said he thought that was right. There would be collateral damage.

Command and Control

2. Mr Baker said he had agreed with the Saudis that, in the event of military operations, joint command would continue. However, the Commander of the US forces would have the final operational authority for planning and conducting all military operations. That would obviously have consequences which we would need to think about and which Mr Baker would mention to the Prime Minister.

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Embassies in Kuwait

3. Mr Baker said the American Embassy in Kuwait could make it to mid-December at the latest. The people there had been very courageous. They had dug a well. They were, however, running out of food. There were private citizens as well as diplomats there. The military were confident that a rescue operation was not possible ("we do not have a workable non-permissive evacuation plan"). That would be to kick off a wider-ranging conflict. The US Government had thought about sending the Iraqis a message saying that they were sending in a Red Cross helicopter and requiring the Iraqis to let it in. Congress had already taken the view, however, that to take such a step, when others had already closed their Embassies and allowed the inmates to go to Baghdad, would not in their view be a justifiable pretext for a wider conflict.

4. The Secretary of State confirmed that our Embassy in Kuwait were operating on a similar time constraint. We did not want to pull our people out while they were still in touch with the British community. We thought it was in order for our people to make a dignified exit to Baghdad but he recognised that the Americans were in a different situation. Mr Baker said that the Americans still had secure communications. They would run out at about the same time as the food (presumably because of fuel running out). The President was still keen to get Americans out through a "non-permissive" operation or by using the route of a re-supply operation. But Mr Baker reiterated that Congress was against what it called phoney provocation.

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Views of Arab countries

5. Mr Baker said he had found Turkey and Egypt entirely robust, though keen to get the political cover of a UN resolution before military action, if possible. The Syrians remained committed - but out of animosity to Saddam Hussein. The Gulf states were ready for action but had no capacity to fight, with the possible exception of their air forces. The Saudis were keen to pay the Americans to do their dirty work. The Saudis would be happy to go with only Article 51 cover. The US military were not comfortable with the idea of a ground campaign in the absence of further reinforcements.

6. The Secretary of State asked whether the Americans were thinking of the end of January. Mr Baker said that they would go for a resolution in the UN of a general kind, eg saying that military action would be justified unless the Iraqis were out by 1 January. If we got the resolution, then politically we would be constrained from using Article 51. If we concluded that we could not get a resolution, then the Article 51 route would still be open but the military were reluctant to go for anything other than an air attack before 1 February, though they would look at action in January.

7. Mr Baker asked that we take a close look at the non-aligned and see which members we could influence, putting the biggest chit we had on the table. The Secretary of State said that we could certainly look at Malaysia. ^(and possibly others) Mr Baker said that President Mubarak had also indicated that he would use his influence with the Malaysians.

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we wanted thereafter. The Secretary of State said we would do our best but it would be difficult.

Jordan

12. Mr Baker did not seem to think that the leak of goods into Iraq from Jordan was on a large scale. He agreed with the Secretary of State about the seriousness of the Jordanian economic situation. He had not even tried to persuade the Saudis to change their view on Jordan though he had tried to persuade the Saudis to do something about Yemen. The Yemenis would be the next in the chair in the Security Council and it really was possible to win them back. The problem was that the Saudis were flexing their muscles and feeling that they could use the American presence to solve all their border disputes.

Syria

13. The Secretary of State described our recent efforts to get alongside the Syrians and the abortive mission by Sir James Craig (whom he did not name). We were now waiting to see how the Saudis got on in their approaches to the Syrians on our behalf. The Syrians must show some effort if they wanted an improvement in our relations.

14. Mr Baker said that the US too had been disappointed. He had visited Syria. The President had spoken on the telephone to President Assad on a number of occasions. Assad's rhetoric on terrorism was good but the Americans had had no satisfactory response on PA103. In order to get debt relief for Egypt and the arms package for Saudi Arabia, the Administration had had to agree to the supply of additional arms to Israel. The Syrians were now

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blasting the Americans for that in their media. Everywhere he had been in the Gulf, the rulers had leant on Mr Baker on Syria, urging him to pay more attention to Syria and to take them off the terrorism list etc. Mr Baker did not think the Syrians would leave the coalition. He also thought that they would fight. They and the Egyptians would be the only ones who would.

German attitudes

15. The Secretary of State described recent German behaviour over the Brandt mission. There was some evidence which suggested that the Germans had not really taken on board the realistic possibility of war. Mr Baker implied that Chancellor Kohl had a realistic view. The President talked to him on the phone often enough. But Herr Genscher might be in a different world and he recognised the need to pay some attention to him.

9 Novmeber 1990

(J S Wall)

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