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35(A-D)

PRIME MINISTER

MEETING OF MINISTERS, THE GULF

You have one of your regular Meeting of Ministers on the Gulf before Cabinet tomorrow morning. There are three big issues to discuss.

- Tom King's visit to Saudi Arabia and whether we should send additional forces;
- a further UN Resolution on use of force;
- and preparation for your meeting with President Bush in Paris on Monday morning.

I think we may have to leave some of the smaller issues on one side in order to concentrate on these three.

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Defence Secretary's visit to Saudi Arabia

The Defence Secretary will wish to report on his visit to Saudi Arabia. You will find in the folder an account of his meeting with Prince Sultan, which went well. The Saudis would be happy for us to send additional forces. They are also ordering more defence equipment from us, including Blackhawk helicopters.

Ford  
Walt  
Tramp  
A...

②

Additional British forces

Secretary Baker made a formal request to you for additional British forces and suggested we might like to increase our armoured brigade to a full division (which would mean sending two further brigades). He also mentioned the possibility of minesweepers. You have told the Americans that we are ready in principle to consider additional forces, but have made no commitment on the size and nature of them. At the same time, the Chief of the Naval Staff has been lobbying you (and others) to send an aircraft carrier to the Gulf.

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I do not know precisely what the Defence Secretary will recommend, but my information is that he is likely to suggest sending one additional armoured brigade to which the Americans would add a third, thus constituting a division which would be under British command.

Even one additional brigade is a substantial extra commitment in terms of men (about 7,500), equipment (another 120 Challenger tanks) and money. (I cannot give a precise figure, but it would be substantial.) Equally, you may think that, given the massive increase in American forces, we can hardly do less than an additional brigade. But we have to be aware of the risks. We shall be even more heavily committed, and the disproportion between our contribution and that of others would be more striking. Casualties could be higher. Saddam Hussain might be even more inclined to victimise British hostages. By sending another 120 tanks we would be denuding BAOR: and inevitably the tanks would be less reliable than the first 120, because the available spares would have to be spread more thinly.

You will want to satisfy yourself that there is no sensible alternative, eg an Artillery brigade or some Commandos. You will also want to get a clear answer from the military as to exactly how long they envisage it would take, from a signal to start, to get an additional brigade deployed in Saudi Arabia.

⊖ I have heard 70 days mentioned which seems quite a lot. We do not want our late arrival to become an excuse for the Americans to postpone military action.

⊖ I think the case for additional naval assets is not a strong one. In particular, I have not found any serious defence commentator who thinks that an aircraft carrier would be a sensible addition to our forces. The Americans are using theirs as floating airfields: we do not need that. An aircraft carrier would be expensive and vulnerable: and we have had no high level request from the Americans to send one, although I am sure the American Navy would like it.

Shocked when I got British  
Dismantled from U.S.  
Mick Helms  
Mullis

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U.S. Defence  
coll'ons

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You will also need to think about the form of a decision to send additional forces. We need to take the decision as early as possible and you will want to give the President a provisional reply on Monday. But equally, the decision should be discussed in a wider circle than OD(G), with the Treasury present. Either you could have a special OD next week: or you could have an OD(G) with the Chancellor present followed by full Cabinet next Thursday.

#### Further UN Resolution

*Vodes*  
*Film*

You have seen the exchanges with New York on this. The Americans are still being very slow in producing a draft and deciding how to get the Five Permanent Members aboard for it. Meanwhile, the clock is ticking and there are only two weeks of their Security Council Presidency left. You will need to discuss the issue with President Bush. You will also want to satisfy yourself that our plans for a son et lumiere for the Security Council on Iraq's atrocities in Kuwait is moving ahead, and will be a thoroughly professional job.

#### Meeting with President Bush

You are to have a breakfast meeting with President Bush in Paris. The key points you will want to cover are:

- you will need to give him some idea of the response we are likely to make to his request for additional forces;
- you will want to urge him to rapid action on the UN front;
- you will want to secure his endorsement of, or comments on, the strategic objectives which we have sent to the Americans. Only when we are formally agreed on the objectives can we commit our forces to American command, and start on joint operational planning. It is still far from clear that the Americans have any similar document themselves;
- you will want to press him to agree that, once the strategic objectives are endorsed by both sides, we should send some people across to Washington for two or three

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days of talks on military planning, so that we can sort out precisely what our role would be. Thereafter, the details can be left to the force Commanders on the spot.

If there is time, another point you might cover is:

- Advice to British and American communities in the region. You raised that with Secretary Baker and it was agreed there would be further contacts between the Foreign Office and State Department. Again, time is running out and we need to reach agreement rapidly.

C.D.P?

C. D. POWELL

14 November 1990

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