



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

1 June 1987

Dear Charles,

*Prime Minister
Content with this
approach?
CDP/1/6.*

Venice Summit: Shipping in the Gulf

President Reagan has indicated that he wishes to discuss protection of shipping in the Gulf at the Venice Summit.

Our own story is a good one. We have increased patrolling by the Armilla Patrol twice in the last eight months. There are now three RN warships regularly in the area (previously only two) and we aim to cover the passage of the majority of British merchant ships through the Straits of Hormuz and the most threatened parts of the lower Gulf. We keep the threat under close review and have been prompt in responding to increases in the threat.

US handling of the question in recent months has left something to be desired. Having turned down a Kuwaiti request to convoy ships in December, they hurriedly changed course in February when they learned that the Russians were prepared to help the Kuwaitis. In trying to pre-empt the Soviet move, the Americans did not give themselves time to think through all the implications. The attack on the USS Stark has greatly complicated their task. We want to help the American Administration as far as we can to get through this temporary period of heightened pressure. There are however real constraints. The Armilla Patrol is specifically designed to protect British shipping interests. We have succeeded in maintaining a posture of strict impartiality in the Iran/Iraq conflict, and the objective of the Armilla Patrol is to deter, not to provoke. The Rules of Engagement are carefully judged with this end in mind. While sharing the American concern over the maintenance of freedom of navigation in the Gulf, it is important that we should maintain our own freedom of action to respond to the threat in a way we judge will best serve British interests, as a contribution to serving the interests of the West as a whole.

Congress is laying particular emphasis on the need for burden sharing by Allies. As a result of a meeting in Brussels between CDS and Mr Weinberger, we have already

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provided the Americans with a note on the Armilla Patrol (copy attached). This is to be drawn on publicly and before Congress to emphasise that at least some Allies are pulling their weight, without being unduly provocative to the Iranians or causing concern to Gulf Arabs. The Embassy have instructions to make the most of our positive and effective record.

Before the Venice Summit we anticipate requests from the Americans for, at minimum, further bilateral consultations, and possibly our help in persuading other countries to make at least a token naval contribution. According to the State Department any request to us for further cooperation is likely to fall short of proposing an increase in the RN presence in the Gulf. Mr Weinberger is seeing Mr Younger later this week following talks with the French and Saudis (in Europe). Mr Renton will be seeing three US Senators on Friday, which will be a good opportunity to spell out the efforts we are already making. FCO officials are likely to see Dick Murphy the same day.

Although we still await precise American proposals, the postponing of immediate plans to begin convoying Kuwaiti tankers and President Reagan's intention to discuss the matter among Heads of Government in Venice is a shift of emphasis from military to diplomatic action, which we should encourage. The President is unlikely to receive much support for a coordinated Western naval presence in the Gulf, although it may be possible to explore the gesture of European countries providing substitutes for American ships withdrawn from the NATO area to reinforce in the Gulf.

X on
The Summit might also be used by the Americans to press for early progress towards a Mandatory Security Council Resolution, backed by an arms embargo. Of the Summit 7 only Canada is not currently on the Council. We have recently accepted that the draft agreed amongst Permanent Members should be discussed with the rest of the Council, without first obtaining agreement amongst the Five on follow-up measures. The Russians appear ready for an early Resolution, and the Chinese will be the ones dragging their feet, so we can comfortably support the Americans on this, while still making clear our doubts about the efficacy of such a Resolution. But if the Secretary General can be persuaded to work for a moratorium on attacks on shipping, this would be a practical UN move with greater immediate impact.

The Foreign Secretary believes that the discussions of this issue at Venice could be difficult. They will show us in a good light, but given other Allies' reluctance to become directly involved in the Gulf, discussion may underline

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more the limitations of, than opportunities for, a collective response. The French and the Italians preserve bad memories of the unhappy precedent for US-led intervention set by the MNF in Beirut. Japan and FRG cannot constitutionally deploy ships away from home. We therefore need to spend the next few days trying to ensure that the Americans set their sights at a realistic level. We should try to persuade the Americans to engage partners (particularly Japan) in an expression of concern at the situation in the Gulf, and support for freedom of navigation, thus implicitly endorsing American efforts. In addition to whatever collective statement can be agreed at Venice we should also be prepared to have further bilateral consultations with the Americans if this is requested. We must show that we are prepared for maximum coordination of efforts locally in the Gulf, short of joint or integrated operations. We can acknowledge UK/US consultations publicly, if this helps the Americans, without implying that we are prepared to go along with ideas for joint Western action or to provide additional warships. We should also encourage the Americans to explain to the Russians that any Western moves are not anti-Soviet.

If the Prime Minister is content we will proceed on these lines, and provide suitable briefing for Venice.

Yours ever

R N Culshaw

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SIC ACA/ZAC/EAD

PUBLIC STATEMENT ON ROLE OF ARMILLA PATROL

REF A. MODUK TEL DTG 262125Z MAY 87.

FROM SEC(O)(C) TO BDS (W)

CORRECTED VERSION:- DISTRIBUTION SUPERCEDES THAT OF MY 281500Z MAY 87.

1. A DRAFT TEXT FOR PASSING TO DOD HAS NOW BEEN AGREED BETWEEN MOD AND FCO. IT IS AT PRESENT AWAITING FINAL MINISTERIAL APPROVAL: WHEN THIS IS ACHIEVED WE SHALL OF COURSE INFORM YOU ASAP. MEANWHILE PLEASE TYPE OUT AND PREPARE THE TEXT BELOW AND ARRANGE TO DELIVER SIT TO DOD ON FRIDAY. IT SHOULD BE PASSED SOVER TO MR WEINBERGERS OFFICE SINCE IT WAS PRODUCED AT HIS PERSONAL REQUEST. YOU SHOULD STRESS THAT ITS CONTENTS CAN BE USED, DISTRIBUTED OR QUOTED AS THE US GOVT THINKS BEST. THE FCO ARE ARRANGING FOR THE

STATE DEPT TO RECEIVE AN IDENTICAL TEXT.

TEXT IS AS FOLLOWS

QUOTE THE ROLE OF THE ARMILLA PATROL.

1. THE UNITED KINGDOM HAS MAINTAINED A CONTINUOUS NAVAL PRESENCE IN THE GULF AND INDIAN OCEAN AREA FROM THE START OF THE IRAN/IRAQ CONFLICT IN SEPTEMBER 1980. TWO ROYAL NAVY WARSHIPS WITH AFLOAT SUPPORT CONSTITUTE THE ARMILLA PATROL IN SUPPORT OF BRITISH

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/MERCHANT

C O N F I D E N T I A L

MERCHANT SHIPPING IN THE AREA. THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAS RESPONDED FLEXIBLY TO DEVELOPMENTS BY INCREASING PATROL TIME SPENT INSIDE THE GULF IN LATE 1986 AND TEMPORARILY ASSIGNING A FURTHER WARSHIP TO THE INDIAN OCEAN AREA IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS TO SUPPLEMENT THE PATROL.

2. THE UK IS STRICTLY IMPARTIAL IN THE CONFLICT BETWEEN IRAN AND IRAQ. WHILE BRITAIN IS NOT HERSELF CRUCIALLY DEPENDENT ON GULF OIL, BRITISH POLICY IS TO SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION IN THE GULF AND THROUGH THE STRAITS OF HORMUZ AS WELL AS TO SAFEGUARD BRITISH LIVES AND PROPERTY IN THE REGION. THE PRESENCE OF THE

ARMILLA PATROL IS THE PRACTICAL EXPRESSION OF THE POLICY.

3. THE ARMILLA PATROL ACCOMPANIES A SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION OF BRITISH MERCHANT TRAFFIC THROUGH THE MOST THREATENED AREAS BUT DOES NOT CONVOY OR CLOSELY ESCORT.

ITS OPERATION ARE NON-PROVOCATIVE AND DE-ESCALATORY, BUT RN WARSHIPS ARE WELL PREPARED TO EXERCISE THEIR INHERENT RIGHT OF SELF DEFENCE, BOTH FOR THEMSELVES AND FOR THE MERCHANT VESSELS ENTITLED TO THEIR PROTECTION. WHILE THE ARMILLA PATROL IS A SPECIFICALLY BRITISH OPERATION THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT KEEPS IN CLOSE CONTACT

WITH FRIENDLY STATES AND FORCES IN THE REGION, AND THE ARMILLA SHIPS ARE AVAILABLE TO RENDER HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, IN ACCORD-

ANCEWITH INTERNATIONAL LAW, TO ANY DISTRESSED OR DAMAGED VESSEL REGARDLESS OF NATIONALITY WHERE HUMAN LIVES ARE AT RISK.

BT

DOLNAN 7405

IRAN/IRAQ

STANDARD (PALACE)

MED	NCAU
NENAD	PSD
NAD	SEC D
UND	ERD
SOV D	ECON ADVS
ECD (E)	CONS D
MAED	CONS EM UNIT
ESSD	DEF D
SCD	SIR D MIERS
EED	CABINET OFFICE

ADDITIONAL DISTRIBUTION
IRAN/IRAQ

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