

PRIME MINISTER

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MEETING ON THE GULF

There is another meeting of OPD(G) on the Gulf tomorrow morning. The agenda is unrealistically meaty and long, given that there is only half an hour for the meeting itself. I suggest you concentrate on three things:

- (i) hear the explanation from the Defence Secretary about what has gone wrong on anthrax immunisation. The Department of Health have discovered that one of the first three main batches of vaccine is defective. What are the implications for the programme as a whole? What does it do to the timetable agreed yesterday for immunising our troops? Will they have some answers for you before you go to Washington next week?
- (ii) what to do about the issue of respirators to British civilians in danger areas in the Gulf. We have enough respirators out there already for adults: but the kiddie size will not be ready until 7 January. The choices are: to issue them to adults now; to wait until 7 January and issue adult and kiddie respirators simultaneously; or to issue them only when there is a more distinct threat. The MOD recommend the second of these which seems sensible. There is no reason to think the CW threat is absolutely imminent: on the other hand, once we have them available for everyone, it makes sense to get them issued. We shall not be the first country to do so;
- (iii) on the complex of papers about the implications of partial or total Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, you cannot realistically aim to do more than give a general steer to officials who will be going to Washington on Friday. The points are best set out in Percy Cradock's minute. Both partial and total withdrawal would create

very substantial difficulties in terms of weakening public opinion and the international coalition against Iraq. They also leave us with the problem of what to do about Iraq's formidable armoury. There are not any clear-cut answers. The essentials are:

- ✓ - we should not accept partial withdrawal as any way satisfactory and this must be made clear in public statements;
- ✓ - we should make clear the military option remains, as does UN authorisation for it, unless there is total withdrawal by 15 January;
- ✓ - to stress that Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait does not by any means solve all the problems, and that Iraq remains a pariah;
- ✓ - the continuing need for sanctions, particularly on imports of technology and military equipment;
- ✓ - some sort of continuing security arrangements for the Gulf after Iraq's withdrawal.

I do not think you can realistically do more than authorise officials to talk to the Americans on the basis of these papers and report back for fuller discussion in OPD(G) next week before you go to Washington.

C. D. POWELL

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