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SECRET AND PERSONAL



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

3 January 1991

Dear Qidari,

**PRIME MINISTER'S CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT BUSH:
THE GULF**

President Bush telephoned the Prime Minister this morning about the proposal to send Secretary Baker to Europe and to offer to make him available there for a meeting with Tariq Aziz.

The President said he decided to instruct Secretary Baker to visit Europe next week from 7 to 9 January and to offer to make him available to meet Tariq Aziz in Switzerland. The thinking behind this was that his original offer to send Secretary Baker to Baghdad and see Tariq Aziz in Washington had expired yesterday. Public opinion both in the United States and in Europe clearly believed that one more offer would be worthwhile. His latest proposal would take away the argument that not enough had been done on the diplomatic side to find a peaceful solution. He recognised that some of the members of the international coalition might be uneasy about the proposed meeting, but he hoped they would understand the true purpose of it. He wanted to emphasise that he had not changed by one iota the thinking which he had discussed with the Prime Minister during their journey from Washington to Camp David. The purpose of Baker's meeting would be to let the Iraqis know what they must do and what would happen if they did not do it. There would be no offer of negotiations, no compromise, no deal. He could give an absolute assurance that there had been no secret discussions behind the scenes. He hoped that the proposal accorded with the Prime Minister's thinking. Indeed he had understood from my talk with Scowcroft yesterday that the Prime Minister thought such a move would be worthwhile. The President added that he had very much welcomed recent comments by the Foreign Secretary and by our Ambassador on his return from Baghdad.

The Prime Minister agreed that our Ambassador had done a good job. He was sure that the President's latest proposal was right in terms of public presentation. It would be particularly helpful in Europe and make tomorrow's meeting of EC Foreign Ministers easier to manage. Without it, the Foreign Secretary

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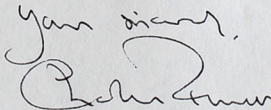
would have had some trouble with the desire of some Member States for an extra gesture. The proposal was very much what he personally wished to see.

The President said that the Iraqis might try to argue that the meeting between Secretary Baker and Tariq Aziz in Switzerland was a substitute for Tariq Aziz's proposed visit to Washington, and that Secretary Baker should subsequently visit Baghdad before 15 January. He was strongly disinclined to accept any such proposition. The earlier offer had been on the table for plenty of time but had now expired. This was a new approach. The Prime Minister agreed that Saddam Hussain had had an opportunity to take up the earlier offer. He could see no need for a subsequent meeting since any message could be delivered at the encounter in Switzerland and there would be nothing about which to negotiate.

The President said there would no doubt continue to be a series of outside initiatives. He understood that the Prime Minister would be seeing King Hussein. The Prime Minister confirmed that he would be meeting the King later today and expected him to be bearing some initiative which would have no realistic prospect of success. The President said that Senator Dole had met the Iraqi Ambassador on his return from Baghdad. The Ambassador had nothing new to offer: he simply carried on insisting that it was Iraq's right to set the time of any meeting in Baghdad. The Prime Minister said that I would telephone General Scowcroft with an account of the meeting with King Hussein. The President said it would be helpful if the Prime Minister would tell Hussein that he understood that his personal relations with the President went back many years and the President was sorry that they were in such a difficult situation at present.

The President said that he and the Prime Minister should keep very closely in touch. His thinking remained exactly as he had described it at Camp David.

I am copying this letter to Simon Webb (Ministry of Defence), John Neilson (Department of Energy), Juliet Wheldon (Law Officers' Department) and to Sir Robin Butler.



(C. D. POWELL)

Richard Gozney, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.