



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

7 January 1991

*Dear Charles,*

US request for the deployment of a UK Carrier to the  
Red Sea

The Foreign Secretary has seen a copy of your letter of 4 January.

During the Foreign Secretary's talks with Secretary Baker in London today he raised the question of the United States' request for a British carrier to go to the Red Sea. Mr Baker was unaware of this request. It was certainly not something the Americans wished to press at a high level. They would be happy for us to make up our own minds on the merits of the case. There had been an operational request which had come to Mr Baker's attention some time ago, when the Americans had taken a deliberate decision not to pursue it at a high (ie political) level.

I am copying this letter to Simon Webb (MOD), to the Private Secretaries of other members of OPD(G) and to Sir Robin Butler.

*Yours ever,*

*R H T Gozney*  
(R H T Gozney)  
Private Secretary

Sir Charles Powell KCMG  
10 Downing Street

22A-B

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SIR CHARLES POWELL

Foreign Secretary's meeting with Secretary Baker,  
4 January: Tete-a-Tete

I shall be repeating to you a telegram reporting the main part of the Foreign Secretary's longish meeting with Mr Baker today, 4 January, at which Bob Kimmitt, Ray Seitz, Henry Catto, Patrick Wright, Patrick Fairweather and I were also present. Before the meeting the Foreign Secretary and Mr Baker spent 20 minutes alone. The Foreign Secretary told me afterwards that they covered three points.

Timing

The position remained as the President had explained to the Prime Minister at Camp David. No decision had yet been taken about just when, within the limited time-frame described to the Prime Minister, military action would start. Nor would a decision be taken just yet. Baker said he would not be talking to the French or any of his other interlocutors in Europe or the Middle East about timing.

Mr Baker's call on the Prime Minister next weekend

Mr Baker said that the President felt that he and the Prime Minister were exactly on the same wavelength. The Foreign Secretary said that this was also the Prime Minister's view, but he himself did think it important

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for Mr Baker to call here a second time next weekend in order to see the Prime Minister for reasons of presentation as well as substance.

Aircraft carrier in the Red Sea

As agreed between the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary on the telephone on 5 January, the Foreign Secretary raised the question of the United States' request for a British carrier to go to the Red Sea. Mr Baker was unaware of this request. It was certainly not something the Americans wished to press at a high level. They would be happy for us to make up our own minds on the merits of the case. There had been an operational request which had come to Mr Baker's attention some time ago when the Americans had taken a deliberate decision not to pursue it at a high (ie political) level. I am writing to you separately (copied to Simon Webb) to record Mr Baker's comments in a PS letter - without any gloss from the Foreign Secretary.

R. H. T. Gozney

(R H T Gozney)

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