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Tim Hunter

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PRIME MINISTER

OPD(G): 10 January

This is a preview of the likely topics for OPD(G) on Thursday. The briefing will be completed in the usual way by Wednesday evening so that it can take account of the latest events.

Your visit to the Gulf

2. Colleagues will want to hear your assessment of the Gulf situation in the light of your visit. This might include your impression of the firmness of resolve of the local rulers, the attitude of the Saudis in particular and the state of morale and readiness of our forces in the area. You will obviously want to compare notes with Mr Baker when you see him on his return on 13 January.

Current international situation

3. The Foreign Secretary will wish to brief you and colleagues on the latest state of play in the diplomatic endgame following his meeting with Mr Baker in London. By Thursday we should have an initial read-out of the outcome of Mr Baker's meeting with Tariq Aziz. We should also have had an account from posts of Mr Baker's meetings in Paris, Bonn and Milan which could be just as tricky. Mr Genscher is playing a murky role and the French attitude remains ambiguous and opportunistic with President Mitterrand talking, apparently off-the-cuff, about another Security Council meeting. So far, the UN Secretary General has been sensible and robust. It is still not clear whether, despite the initial Iraqi rebuff, there will be a meeting between Mr Poos and Tariq Aziz. We can expect a renewed burst of Eurodiplomacy



before 15 January if the meeting in Geneva produces a stalemate. All these factors mean that your meeting with Mr Baker at the weekend will be of exceptional importance.

4. You have agreed with the Foreign Secretary that the remaining staff in our Embassy should be withdrawn at the weekend in the light of the US decision to withdraw their staff on 12 January. The other EC missions appear to be leaving rapidly. The FCO is reviewing the staffing of Embassies in countries where there is a significant threat of Iraqi-inspired terrorist action.

5. The Foreign Secretary may also present a short paper on whether there should be an evacuation of British citizens from the danger area, in which the FCO is expected to propose that they should be advised to sit tight. Ministers have been taking steps to provide war risk insurance for aviation and shipping as the deadline approaches.

UK/US talks

[NOT included] 6. The second round of UK/US talks took place in London on 7 January. I attach the note by officials recording the outcome. Agreement was reached on the text of the strategic and military objectives, though the US team insisted that this was not a joint document. Nevertheless, they accepted that it accurately represented the approaches of both governments and were keen, as we were, to avoid any implication of alliance division.

7. The discussion focussed mainly on possible collateral damage from attacks on chemical and biological installations. The US forces have come to recognise that this is not as straightforward as they had apparently originally thought, partly perhaps as a result of the paper we gave them in the first round. They accept that more work needs to be done on attacks on chemical and biological agent storage facilities (the area of



concern for our experts) and will not take a decision on action until this work has been completed. They will let us know the results of their further work and the guidelines which they will use. They have accepted the commitment in (new) paragraph 7c, somewhat in the teeth of the military. So the outcome will enable Ministers to give an assurance that this issue has been carefully examined, that our views have been fed into the US Government (which will have to take the military decisions) and that we have been given the necessary commitments on their intentions. At the same time it might be worthwhile your mentioning to Mr Baker our concern to ensure that every possible precaution is taken over attacks on CW and BW storage facilities.

As much care as Saddam Hussein would take if he used them?

8. The talks contained a clear hint from the Americans that if Saddam Hussain behaves in a way which goes well beyond the international norms, the US Administration reserves the right to take punitive action. The Attorney General will either circulate a note beforehand or speak at the meeting on the legal implications under the rights of reprisal. The Foreign Secretary secured a commitment from Mr Baker that you would be consulted if President Bush envisaged a significant change of strategy on these lines.

Response to Partial and Full Iraqi Withdrawal

9. The FCO are preparing a short paper which the Foreign Secretary will be reviewing in the course of today. This will be limited to dealing with partial withdrawal. But the Americans want to agree with us in advance a detailed response to be made quickly if Saddam Hussein offers to withdraw and have proposed that this should be covered in official discussions when Mr Baker returns on Sunday.

Current military situation

10. The Defence Secretary may have points on the sealift and readiness of our forces. The main substantive issues which may

The generals are concerned above all about ammunition shortages.



need resolution are the despatch of the carrier group (on which the Chief Secretary has also expressed doubts) and Rules of Engagement, on which we await a further note from the Defence Secretary.

at political level.

Media Handling

11. The Energy Secretary has had two Ministerial meetings on the arrangements for both Ministerial and official handling of the media and is expected to minute to you requesting approval of the mechanism proposed for co-ordinating this.

Debate in Parliament

12. There has been further discussion among Ministers about the advisability of a debate in the House on 15 January and about whether it should be on a substantive motion or on the adjournment. You will have seen that the Opposition are in increasing disarray on the subject. We have asked the Lord President to let you have a note, in consultation with the Chief Whip, for your return so that a decision can be taken at OPD(G) and Cabinet.

Separate meeting after OPD(G), with Lord President & Chief Whip but not officials.

IEA Stockdraw

13. President Bush is expected to contact you, since the UK chairs the IEA Governing Board, to propose that at its meeting on 11 January the IEA agree to a co-ordinated stockdraw if hostilities break out. The Energy Secretary can report on the latest position.

Cabinet 10 January

14. You will wish to check with the Foreign and Defence Secretaries that there are no outstanding points for decision in advance of the Cabinet discussion on the Gulf, which is being taken as a separate item.



Pattern of Meetings in the Event of Hostilities

15. I have been discussing with the JIC, the MOD and the FCO a pattern of daily meetings, based on experience of the Falklands campaign, to ensure that you and your colleagues have the necessary information for the military and political decisions, and the decisions you will have to take on media handling if hostilities break out. It will be helpful if you can agree these arrangements with OPD(G).

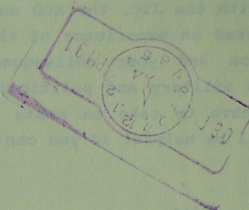
Cabinet Office

8 January 1991

ROBIN BUTLER



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