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Prime Minister

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## GULF: MEDIA ARRANGEMENTS

Content with points  
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You will recall that at OPD(G) on 3 January you said, in your summing up of the discussion of the current international situation, that when certain briefing being prepared by the FCO and JIC was available Ministerial colleagues should be encouraged to give interviews, and that this action should be co-ordinated through the network of Information Officers within Departments. Earlier this week I discussed with colleagues - including the Foreign and Defence Secretaries, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Chief Whip - the machinery that would be needed to ensure that the Government's press line was properly co-ordinated over the whole range of issues arising from the crisis, in the event of hostilities and also in the run-up to them. We took as our starting point the proposals put forward by the Cabinet Secretary in his minute of 4 January to Mr O'Donnell.

It has already been agreed that the Ministry of Defence will take the lead in respect of military operations in the Gulf. Equally, on matters which are the responsibility of one Departmental Minister only, it is up to that Minister to produce a suitable press line promptly, consulting you or other colleagues if he judges that the matter is sufficiently important. This said, it is clear that as the pace of events accelerates the Government will be under pressure to respond publicly, very quickly, to a wide range of developments. Machinery and procedures for co-ordinating this response, and ensuring that we are not wrong-footed, should therefore be put in place as soon as possible.

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 Those present at my meeting endorsed two proposals by the Cabinet Secretary for which I now seek your approval. The first is that your Press Secretary should chair a daily meeting of Information Officers. The nucleus of attendance would be from the FCO, MOD, Central Office of Information, Cabinet Office and Department of Energy; representatives of other Departments involved in aspects of the conflict (eg the Department of Transport and the Home

Office) could be invited when necessary. This meeting ought to take place early in the day and before OPD(G) meet.

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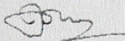
The second proposal is that a Ministerial Group should be established under my chairmanship to ensure that Government supporters have the briefing they need and are appearing regularly to put across the Government's case. This should not cut across the arrangements for the Defence Secretary to take the lead on day-to-day operational news from the Gulf or for other Ministers to take the lead on matters within their departmental responsibility. (During the Falklands conflict there was a similar group under Cecil Parkinson's chairmanship which met to co-ordinate Ministerial media appearances in order to avoid bunching and periods of silence). The membership should include Ministers from the FCO and MOD, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Chief Whip with the support of your Press Secretary and other Information Officers. The Cabinet Secretary suggests the attached composition and terms of reference for this Group.

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The Cabinet Secretary has also suggested that it might be useful if part of the daily OPD(G) meetings were devoted to media handling matters and if your Press Secretary were to attend for this item before taking the No 10 Lobby. I think that this would be helpful if you are agreeable.

It would be helpful if we could settle these arrangements when OPD(G) meet on 10 January.

I am copying this minute to the Foreign Secretary, the Defence Secretary, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Chief Whip, Sir Robin Butler and Mr O'Donnell.



SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY  
9 January 1991



January 1991

CABINET

DEFENCE AND OVERSEAS POLICY COMMITTEE

SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE GULF

MEDIA HANDLING GROUP

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COMPOSITION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

Note by the Secretary of the Cabinet

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By direction of the Prime Minister, a Group has been constituted with the following Composition and Terms of Reference -

COMPOSITION

Secretary of State for Energy (Chairman)  
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs  
Secretary of State for Defence  
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster  
Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury

Other Ministers and officials may be invited to attend as appropriate.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference are

"In supplementation of the role of individual Ministers in dealing with matters within their departmental responsibility, to ensure that the Government's case on the Gulf crisis is presented as effectively as possible by the Government and its supporters through national and regional media, and to report to OPD(G) as necessary."

SECRETARIAT

The Secretaries are Mr W D Reeves, Mr D J Gowan and Mr D C J Ball, Cabinet Office.

Signed ROBIN BUTLER

Cabinet Office

January 1991

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Prime Minister

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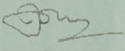
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SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY  
9 January 1991

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