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1 April 1985

*From the Private Secretary*

SAUDI ARABIA: TORNADO

While we were in Brussels at the European Council on 30 March the Director General of Marketing at the Ministry of Defence telephoned to say that he had been approached with the suggestion that the Prime Minister should stop off in Saudi Arabia either on the way to or from South East Asia. The suggestion apparently came from King Fahd and was connected with the Prime Minister's recent meetings with Prince Bandar. I subsequently discussed this by telephone with Richard Mottram who undertook to consult the Defence Secretary and let me have urgent advice on the morning of 1 April.

I have had some preliminary discussion of this with the Prime Minister. Her instinct is that, if we could be certain that the outcome of her visit would be to clinch the Tornado deal, she would be prepared to go. But any decision must of course wait upon the Defence Secretary's and the Foreign Secretary's advice.

As a contingency step I have telephoned Protocol and Conference Department and, without explaining the reason, asked them to work out timings for a possible visit to Riyadh either on Thursday 4 April or on Sunday 14 April. In the first case, it would mean a very early departure from Heathrow on 4 April to enable us to spend, say, 2 hours in Riyadh before travelling on to arrive in Kuala Lumpur at the planned time of 1045 on 5 April. If we were to do it on the return journey it would probably make sense to sleep overnight in Delhi on 13 April and leave there very early on 14 April, again spending a couple of hours in Riyadh on the way back. I have asked for possible timings to reach me by Monday morning.

There is one further point which worries the Prime Minister and which it would be helpful to have taken into account in any advice which is tendered.

It may be that this could be explained in a message from the Prime Minister. Alternatively, she might have to stop over very briefly in Oman on the way back from South East Asia.

To return to the point I made at the beginning: the crucial factor seems to me whether we could get a really clear undertaking that a visit would clinch the Tornado contract.

You will remember that correspondence on this subject has to be limited to a few named people only.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

C.D. POWELL

L.V. Appleyard, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

2 April 1985

**SAUDI ARABIA: TORNADO**

The Prime Minister has seen Richard Mottram's letter of 2 April to me recording the Defence Secretary's conversation last night with Prince Bandar. The Prime Minister agrees that, in the light of this, she should visit Saudi Arabia on her way back from South East Asia and the arrangements set out in my letter of yesterday evening should therefore be implemented.

I should be grateful if instructions could be sent to HM Ambassador Jeddah to inform King Fahd that the Prime Minister would be delighted to stop briefly on her way back to meet him in Dhaharan on 14 April. At the same time, he should agree with Saudi officials the text of an announcement of the visit on the lines set out in my earlier letter. The essential point is that the statement must make clear that the invitation comes from The King. I suggest that we should aim to make the announcement tomorrow afternoon. This will give time for an explanatory message from the Prime Minister to the Sultan of Oman to be approved and despatched.

I should also be grateful if Protocol and Conference Department could put in hand the necessary arrangements for the Prime Minister's party to overnight in Delhi on 13/14 April.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Richard Mottram (Miistry of Defence).

C D POWELL

Len Appleyard Esq  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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 Telephone 01-3207822 218 2111/3

MO 5/3/3

1st April 1985

THIS IS A COPY. THE ORIGINAL  
 RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3 (4)  
 OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

New Under

SAUDI ARABIA: TORNADO

Thank you for copying to me your letter of today's date to Len Appleyard about a possible visit by the Prime Minister to Riyadh. When we spoke on the telephone, I agreed to give you the Defence Secretary's views in writing. He has yet to see the advice from our Ambassador in response to your telegram.

The Defence Secretary supports the Prime Minister's instinct, as reported in the second paragraph of your first letter of today's date, that she should be prepared to go to Riyadh if we could be certain that the outcome of her visit would be to clinch the Tornado deal.

The confusion over the King's knowledge of the invitation is not inconsistent with this since it would be normal Saudi practice to find out whether an invitation would be accepted before issuing it.

We cannot, however, rule out that matters have not yet been resolved and that a prospective visit by the Prime Minister is being used as a card in an internal Saudi argument. Given this, the Defence Secretary believes that the Prime Minister should not simply accept that she is now committed to visiting Saudi Arabia because to do otherwise would risk offence: rather we should respond more cautiously. He would therefore advise, subject to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's views, that our Ambassador should make a further approach to the Saudis explaining that the Prime Minister would, of course, welcome the opportunity to call on the King and is most grateful for the invitation put to her by Prince Bandar. As well as the wider Middle East questions on which she has been in touch, the Prime Minister has continued to take a very close interest in the question of the sale of Tornado and Hawk to the Royal Saudi Air Force. This is already the subject of keen interest in this

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country and speculation will inevitably increase about it as a result of the Prime Minister's visit. The Prime Minister assumes that it would be the intention of the King to use their meeting to inform her of the decision reached on this matter. To avoid any scope for misunderstanding, we would be grateful if the Saudis could clarify the intentions in this respect behind Prince Bandar's approach to the Prime Minister on behalf of the Royal Family.

I am copying this letter to Len Appleyard.

*Yours etc*

*Richard Mottram*

(R C MOTTRAM)

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

2 April 1985

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Dear Charles,

Prime Minister's Visit to Saudi Arabia: Press Line

/ I enclose a draft announcement to be made by your Press Office during tomorrow, 3 April. We have telegraphed this to Sir P Wright in Jedda, and asked him to confirm by 1100 BST tomorrow that the Saudis have no objections. We have also suggested some points to be made unattributably in response to questions.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (MOD).

Ye ever,

Peter Ricketts

(P F Ricketts)  
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq  
No 10 Downing Street

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VISIT BY THE PRIME MINISTER TO SAUDI ARABIA:  
ANNOUNCEMENT AND PRESS BRIEFING

ON THE RECORD:

At the invitation of His Majesty King Fahd, the Prime Minister will pay a brief visit to Saudi Arabia on 14 April on the way back from her series of visits to South and South East Asian countries.

IF ASKED (UNATTRIBUTABLE):

Visit arranged at invitation of King Fahd. Stopover: a few hours only. No formal agenda, but discussions likely to centre on Arab/Israel, Gulf conflict, possibly Lebanon.


Important to maintain high-level contacts with country of such importance to British interests (largest market outside Western Europe and North America; exports 1984 £1387 million; swing producer in OPEC; huge financial reserves, much invested in Britain; 35,000 UK passport holders in Saudi Arabia). Prime Minister's first meeting with Fahd since her visit to Saudi Arabia and then Crown Prince Fahd's visit here, both 1981.

Relations excellent; no major problems. Visits: outward: Foreign Secretary January 1984; Defence Secretary January and November 1984; Minister for Trade November 1984; Minister of State, FCO (Mr Luce) 4-7 March 1985. Inward: Crown Prince Abdullah visited UK in February 1984. Invitation to King Fahd open: no dates agreed.

Prime Minister unlikely to have time to raise consular matters or individual cases. Mr Luce made clear our views to Saudi hosts in March.

Visit not seen as opportunity for substantive exchange of views on oil matters. But if King Fahd raises the subject, welcome as always his views on current developments in the market. Have explained to Saudis decision to abolish BNOC: Yamani said move "might not lead to any adverse development". OPEC reaction to decision generally muted.





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IF PRESSED ON TORNADO:

Will take opportunities as they arise to promote major export projects. Would not be surprising if Tornado were raised in this context. Still under discussion: no decisions taken (equally, no evidence that sale has gone to the French).

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