

CONFIDENTIAL



System to Home
Office.
CDP
23/9

HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SW1H 9AT

23 September 1985

Dear Richard

VISIT OF PRINCE SULTAN

with MEA or CDP

Thank you for your letter of 18 September about the visit to this country between 25 and 28 September of Prince Sultan, the Saudi Defence Minister.

We are fully aware of the purpose of this visit and its very great importance. Nevertheless, the Saudis' request that one of Prince Sultan's bodyguards should be allowed to carry a firearm throughout the visit does raise difficulties. As you know the security of visiting dignitaries is the responsibility of the UK authorities, and protection is provided to those who need it. Visiting protection officers are accordingly not generally permitted by the police to carry firearms - and it is the chief officer of police, in this case the Commissioner, who has the statutory responsibility in these matters. The Commissioner has agreed in principle to limited exceptional circumstances in which he would be prepared to grant the necessary firearm certificates, and as a result of consultations between the Prime Minister, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Home Secretary, the Commissioner agreed last year to make exceptions in suitable cases but only in respect of security personnel accompanying Heads of State or Heads of Government from countries which allow reciprocal facilities.

The operational reasons for limiting exceptions to the minimum are strong. Visiting security personnel will not necessarily be familiar with our law or practice. There are no doubt attractions, in terms of relations with those concerned, if an exception were to be made: but an incident involving the questionable use of a firearm by a visitor would attract, at the very least, criticism which would be harmful to our relations. The involvement of armed visitors can make the job of Metropolitan Police Special Branch, whose responsibility is it to provide protection, considerably more complicated. Members of the MPSB protection teams train together and learn the same techniques and methods, and the same responses to difficult situations. It does not assist the safety of the visiting dignitary, or of the general public here, to add to the risk of confusion or misunderstanding in the event of a real incident or a false alarm.

It is to take account of the existing policy, and the statutory responsibilities of the police in these matters, that we find it helpful (as agreed in the recent correspondence about Prince Bandar) that requests with regard to protection should be routed through the Protocol Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who liaise with the Metropolitan Police on protection for visiting dignitaries, bringing us in as necessary. That procedure ensures that the question whether protection should be provided is considered on the basis of a threat assessment, as well as any other relevant factors. The threat against Prince Sultan is not in fact assessed by the Metropolitan Police Special Branch as being such as to justify providing him with personal protection. Nevertheless, I am confident that in the special circumstances of this visit they will be willing exceptionally to do so.

R C Mottram, Esq

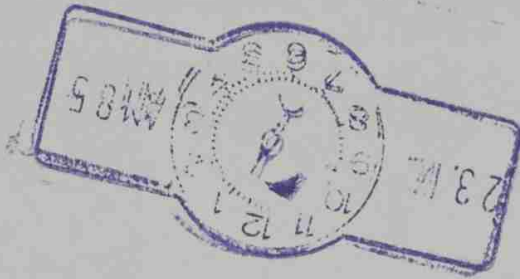
CONFIDENTIAL

You will see from what I have said above, however, the reasons why the Home Secretary would be reluctant to go further and ask the Commissioner to agree to issue a firearm certificate in a case well outside the policy so recently agreed. In the circumstances, the Home Secretary hopes that urgent steps will now be taken, perhaps in the context of a discussion with the Saudis about security arrangements which will enable us to underline how carefully he will be looked after, to try to persuade them to withdraw their request. The Home Secretary would himself be willing to see the Saudi Arabian ambassador, whom he knows, if that would be helpful.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Mark Addison at No 10 and to Len Appleyard in the FCO.

Yours sincerely
W R Fittall

W R FITTALL





MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone 01-~~8367825~~ 218 2111/3

MO 5/3/3V

18th September 1985

New Hugh

VISIT OF PRINCE SULTAN

You will be aware of the visit to this country between 25th and 28th September of Prince Sultan, the Saudi Defence Minister, to sign an agreement for the purchase by Saudi Arabia of Tornado and Hawk military aircraft and associated equipment.

We are currently putting together a programme for the visit and tying up the administrative details including the security provision for Prince Sultan. He will be arriving here with a full retinue of armed bodyguards. The Saudis have requested, most insistently, that quite apart from the protection that will be provided by the Special Branch, one of the Saudi bodyguards should be allowed to retain his firearm throughout the visit; the remainder would surrender their weapons on arrival and retrieve them immediately before departure. The party will travel on to the United States where President Reagan has approved the carrying of firearms by the whole of the bodyguard.

TEMPORARILY RETAINED. J. Gray 8/7/2014

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

I am not sure of the precise arrangements for obtaining approvals of this kind but the Defence Secretary would be most grateful for the Home Secretary's help in securing a satisfactory outcome on this - very special - occasion. I might add that the Prime Minister has directed that every effort must be made to ensure that the visit is a success.

H Taylor Esq
Home Office

CONFIDENTIAL



I am copying this letter to Mark Addison (No 10) and Len Appleyard (FCO).

Yours etc,

Richard Mottram

(R C MOTTRAM)