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IRAQ: Iraqi/Iranian Relations

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From the Private Secretary

8 August, 1987.

Dear Resident Clerk,

MEETING WITH THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR

The Soviet Ambassador came to see me at 1400 today to hand over a reply from Mr. Gorbachev to the Prime Minister's two recent messages, the first about her visit to Washington, the second about the situation in the Gulf.

As you will see, the reply deals mainly with the Prime Minister's first message. At first sight, the passages on arms control are largely a routine statement of the Soviet position, although there appears to be a request to elaborate our ideas on predictability and the SDI. The passage on the Middle East seems to me to be slightly more forthcoming than usual. There is a friendly ending. The Prime Minister would no doubt welcome any comments which the department have.

The Ambassador said that he had been instructed to amplify orally the brief passage in Mr. Gorbachev's reply on the Gulf. The Soviet Union had been informed by the Iranian Government that they accepted the idea of a meeting with the UN Secretary-General to discuss SCR 598. They would invite the Secretary-General to visit Tehran; but if this was not possible, they would send a high-level delegation to New York. In answer to my question, the Ambassador said that the Soviet authorities had informed the Secretary-General of this. The Soviet view was that it was reasonable for the Security Council not to hurry to a second resolution until this meeting had taken place and the Security Council had been able to hear and assess Iran's views on SCR 598. The Soviet reply to the Prime Minister's message was, therefore, that movement to the second stage, that is an enforcement resolution, should be slowed down to give the Iranians a chance to explain their position. I said that I would of course report this. But one was bound to be suspicious that the Iranians were just playing for time. It would be perfectly possible for them to respond without the Secretary-General going to Tehran. The Ambassador agreed that this was a risk. But the Iranians had made clear that if the Security Council were to impose an arms embargo, they would cease all cooperation with the United Nations. It was worth while waiting just a short time for their response.

I asked whether there was any reply to the Prime Minister's other suggestion, namely that there should be a Security Council resolution or a statement by the Secretary-General on mining. The Ambassador said that his instructions did not cover this point.

I should be grateful if you could inform Mr. Mellor and Sir David Miers of the exchange on the Gulf. You may also wish to inform Sir Crispin Tickell in New York and our Embassies in Washington and Moscow (but only about the Gulf and not the remainder of the message at this stage).

I am copying this letter and enclosure to Ian Andrews (Ministry of Defence) and Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,
Charles Powell

C.D. Powell

The Resident Clerk,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.