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Meeting with HRH Prince Bandar - 21 August

Prince Bandar called on me for an intelligence briefing on 21 August. Invited to give his views, he said he was off to Moscow that night. He said that he had been working with Secretary of State Baker on how best to enlist Russian support. Recently, with King Fahd's approval, he had requested, through the Soviet Embassy in Washington, that the Russians send troops ("perhaps just a battalion of paratroopers") to Saudi Arabia. At the same time the Saudis offered to purchase for cash large numbers of Soviet anti-tank weapons.

2. The Prince said that the Saudis wanted Soviet involvement as a means of "sending a message" to leftist groups in the Middle East and, above all, to the Iraqis.
3. Two days ago the Russians replied that they had studied his proposal. They said that they were willing to consider any action under the UN flag. They stressed, however, that they were not closing the door to the Saudi request. They proposed face-to-face discussion in Moscow.
4. To Soviet surprise the Prince had replied on the spot that he was authorised to fly to Moscow at once. This disconcerted the slow-moving Soviet bureaucracy. In the absence of a Soviet reply he told the Soviet Embassy that he was flying to London and could fly on from there. When he reached London invitations were waiting for him (including one delivered through the Kuwaiti Embassy in Moscow, which represents Saudi interests).



5. Prince Bandar said that the Saudi fall-back position was that if the Russians could not provide direct support, they should at least agree to the Security Council approving the enforcement of sanctions.

6. With some pleasure, the Prince claimed that a similar approach had worked well with the Chinese: he had first asked for Chinese air defence forces to protect the CSS-2 missiles; when this had thrown the Chinese into a spin he asked that they should play a positive role in the UN and not veto action by the Security Council. This they had gratefully accepted.

7. On Saddam Hussein, the Prince argued that he had grossly underestimated international reaction to his invasion of Kuwait - not just on the part of the West, but also that of Saudi Arabia itself.

8. After the invasion Saddam had been in an almost light-hearted mood when he had spoken to King Fahd by telephone. The next day he had sent his deputy Prime Minister, Ibrahim, to see the King to discuss the situation. He promised that Ibrahim would be the bearer of a solution proposal. But once it became clear that the Iraqis were not willing to leave Kuwait, the King told Ibrahim to tell Saddam that he had made a big mistake and had created a grave situation. Saddam had also been surprised by the robust response from Egypt and Syria. Saudi Arabia now expected that Egypt would send one to two heavy armoured divisions to join the Multi-National Force.

9. Prince Bandar said that, in his view, the situation had now reached the point of no return. Recovery of Kuwait by itself was not enough. Unless Saddam was ousted, the region would remain threatened by Iraq. There would be a string of crises if the MNF withdrew.



10. The world could not wait much longer. Public opinion would become less supportive and if Saddam was not ousted Iraq's menacing military capabilities would continue to grow.

11. He continued that "our" aim should be to draw Saddam into making a false move which would serve as a *casus belli*. If Saddam did not make a false move, then we should raise our objective to the military liberation of Kuwait, which could only be achieved by suppressing Iraqi forces in Iraq itself.

12. Bandar believed that Western and Saudi airpower would make it possible for the West quickly to gain control of the skies. For political reasons, however, ground force operations should be "spear headed" by Arab troops.

PERCY CRADOCK

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