



22 (a-4) (1)

Prime Minister

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The Defence Secretary
recommends a squadron of
Tornado ground attack to
Bahrain: plus an RAF
Regiment Rapier detachment:

PRIME MINISTER

ENHANCEMENTS TO UK FORCES IN THE GULF

Following our discussions on Monday, the Chiefs of Staff have now given me further advice on enhancing the UK contribution to the defence of Saudi Arabia and other friendly Gulf states. I have discussed this with the Foreign Secretary.

You might like
to announce the Tornados

2. The main conclusion is that we should now deploy a squadron of Tornado GR1 aircraft to the theatre. If Iraq attacked, these 12 aircraft would provide a valuable adjunct to US and Saudi capabilities with their specialised anti-tank and anti-airfield weapons and low-level and night capability. The Tornados, drawn from UK and Germany, would be ready for operations some 5 - 7 days after our decision. Presentation would, however, need careful handling since this could also be seen as offering a broader offensive capability. The clear military preference would be for deployment to Bahrain, with Tabuk in north-west Saudi Arabia as a fall-back option. We are currently checking with the Bahrainis that they are content, and can accommodate the aircraft; we are also letting the Saudis know what we have in mind. Subject to the results of this consultation, which I will report on at our meeting tomorrow, and the agreement of colleagues, I could make an announcement on Thursday afternoon.

CBD
22/8

3. In my original announcement I said we would be sending an RAF Regt Rapier detachment to defend the location of the initial Tornado ADV Squadron. In the event, as they went to Dahrhan which was



already well defended, we held the Rapier detachment in Cyprus. If the Tornados are accepted by Bahrain, the Rapier detachment will be needed there, and we would deploy them in support. By this route we can also seek to reassure the Bahrainis about other aspects of their security raised with Alan Clark, but I can go further into detail with them next week when I visit the country.

4. We also have in mind to deploy forward the Jaguars currently based in Oman to Bahrain where they would be more useful in the event of an attack. Deployment of the Tornado GR1s is however the first priority and I suggest we leave a decision on the Jaguars on one side for the time being: the Bahrainis are not being consulted about this but I have asked HM Ambassador to advise whether this additional deployment would be manageable in Bahrain.

5.

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G. Gray

3/1/17

6. We will need to decide shortly whether the three mine counter-measure vessels, and the associated survey ship HERALD, should continue to the Gulf area (our announcement was that they would initially deploy to the eastern Mediterranean). There is an argument for getting them into their potential area of operating at the earliest opportunity. There is also a question of whether to add a fourth frigate to the naval forces in the Gulf, depending in part on others' contributions. I will make firm recommendations on these issues shortly.

SECRET



7. I am sending a copy of this minute to the Foreign Secretary, the Secretary of State for Energy, the Attorney General, and to Sir Robin Butler.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "TK".

Ministry of Defence
22nd August 1990

(T K)

SECRET