

PRIME MINISTER

Prime Minister ①

Notes for your visit

review.

CAD?

You are to make a short visit to the Gulf Support Group Helpline in the Connaught Rooms at 3 pm tomorrow.

Helpline was formed about ten days ago to offer comfort and practical advice to those who have friends or relatives trapped in Iraq or Kuwait. You will meet Robert Hayward MP, the moving force behind the Gulf Support Group, who has a close friend trapped in Kuwait.

The attached briefing was prepared for the Foreign Secretary, who made a successful visit yesterday.

PROGRAMME

15.00 Arrive at New Connaught Rooms, met on steps by Robert Hayward, who will lead you through the lobby and into a lift to the Third Floor.

15.05 Met at lift by Joanna Copley, one of Robert Hayward's fellow co-ordinators. She will take you into the Operations Room, where phone calls are answered. You will meet some of the volunteers, although you will not of course be listening to the conversations, which are confidential.

THIS IS A SMALL ROOM, BUT A VERY SMALL PRESS POOL -- ONE STILL CAMERA, ONE TV CREW -- WILL BE PRESENT. NO REPORTERS WILL BE ALLOWED

15.15 Joanna Copley will take you down a narrow corridor into the rest room, where you will be able to meet some more volunteers.

YOU WILL BE ASKED TO POSE FOR A QUICK PHOTOGRAPH WITH SOME OF THE VOLUNTEERS AT THIS POINT.

The press will leave after the photograph, and you will then have the opportunity of seeing the logbook which details the calls that have been made. You will also have the chance to discuss with Robert Hayward and Joanna Copley how they see Helpline developing.

15.25

To lift for descent to Ground Floor, accompanied by Robert Hayward.

AS YOU LEAVE THE BUILDING, PRESS WILL BE PRESENT ON YOUR RIGHT. THEY WILL ASK YOU FOR YOUR REACTIONS TO THE WORK OF HELPLINE.

Charles and I will accompany you on your visit.

ms

Philip Aylett

PHILIP AYLETT
Press Office
23 August 1990

SECRETARY OF STATE'S VISIT TO HELPLINE OFFICES, 22 AUGUST

BACKGROUND

1. Helpline was formed last week when two of three unofficial organisations established following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait merged. Its purpose is to offer comfort and practical advice to those who have friends or relatives trapped in Iraq and Kuwait. The moving force behind it is Mr Robert Hayward MP, who has a close friend who is trapped in Kuwait. Helpline, which is staffed entirely by volunteers, was initially critical of the FCO's failure, as they saw it, to keep in touch with families. It has now established a reasonable working relationship with the FCO Consular Emergency Unit. Mr Hayward and others visited the Emergency Unit on 15 August, and met Mr Waldegrave.

2. Mr Hayward has warned us of a number of points which he hopes to raise with the Secretary of State:

(i) Finance - Provision for Exfiltrators from Iraq/Kuwait

The Department of Social Security has sent a circular letter to all local DSS Offices instructing them to deal sympathetically and promptly with applications for help. They consider that existing social security provisions should be sufficient to meet immediate needs of those who cannot provide for themselves.

(ii) Lack of Cooperation by Banks and Building Societies on Funds for Ex-Filtrators and UK-Based Dependants of Detainees in Iraq and Kuwait

We have no evidence of such lack of cooperation. But lack of access to bank accounts, and shortage of money for mortgage payments, could obviously be problems. Have Helpline any suggestions?

HELAAN

(iii) Foreign Office Communication with Mr Hayward's Helpline Organisation

Since Mr Hayward and his colleagues visited the FCO on 15 August the Emergency Unit has sent copies of all situation reports by fax to Helpline. We have also been in contact by telephone whenever there have been significant developments. Helpline, for their part, have been very helpful in putting members of the public in touch with the FCO when they believe that there would be anything to be gained from such contact.

(iv) Counsellors: Are FCO Officials Qualified to Deal with the Notification of Distressing (Non-Death) News to Relatives?

No. The members of the FCO telephone team, who are working in shifts to man the 10-line unit around the clock, have to rely mainly on their natural tact when dealing with distressed relatives. Some are more gifted than others. Their role is to inform relatives and friends what is happening, not to provide counselling. They have been guided by a qualified Counsellor in the FCO's Medical Welfare Unit on how to handle distressed relatives gently.

(v) Financing of Mr Hayward's Helpline

Helpline have told us that they are approaching companies with employees who are trapped for help. The Secretary of State may wish to enquire what response they are getting. British Telecom announced last week that they would contribute £2,500.

Mr Waldegrave told Mr Hayward on 15 August that the FCO would certainly find a way of helping Helpline. We have since told Mr Hayward that we expect to be able to give him some of the income from the Emergency Unit 0898 profit-earning information line. We have asked him for a

breakdown of his costs.

(vi) Social Security Problems Faced by Returnees

See (i) above. The Department of Social Security have told us in confidence (not for use) that they hope to be able to lend Helpline an expert for the duration of the crisis to advise members of the public on how to claim benefits.

(vii) The Accommodation of Mr Hayward's Helpline Offices

The present accommodation is being provided free of charge. There is no possibility of the FCO providing accommodation for Helpline when they have to move out of the Connaught Rooms in two weeks' time. But if they include rent in their projection of costs we shall see if we can help.

(viii) What the Government Is/Is Not Doing to Help those in Kuwait and Iraq

The Secretary of State will not require briefing on this item.

SECRETARY OF STATE'S VISIT TO HELPLINE OFFICES, 22 AUGUST

POINTS TO MAKE

- Appreciate what helpline are doing to comfort and inform families and friends of those trapped in Iraq and Kuwait.
- Grateful to those who are generously giving their time as volunteers.
- FCO will continue to support, and will give financial help.

cc Miss Spence
Mr Young
News Dept.

HBLAAN