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From the Private Secretary

3 September 1990

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH THE
CROWN PRINCE OF KUWAIT

The Prime Minister had an hour's talk this evening with the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Kuwait. Sheikh Sa'ad al Sabah was accompanied by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and by the Kuwaiti Ambassador.

After conveying greetings from the Amir, the Crown Prince said that Kuwait was enormously grateful for the support of the British Government and people. They were now waiting to see what further steps the United Nations Security Council would take, following passage of Resolution 665. The Prime Minister said that she would be interested in any information which the Crown Prince had about conditions in Kuwait and the strength of the Kuwaiti Resistance. Our own Embassy there was virtually under siege and our citizens were naturally fearful. We would keep the Embassy open as long as possible. She hoped the Resistance would make things as difficult as possible for the Iraqis. The Crown Prince said this was not easy: there were 150,000 Iraqi troops in Kuwait. They had done very considerable damage. But he could guarantee that the Kuwaitis would not co-operate with the Iraqi invaders.

The Crown Prince then gave a rather incoherent account of the events immediately following the invasion. It appeared that he had picked up the Amir following the first news of the invasion, and the two of them had driven post haste to the Saudi border. The conduct of the Iraqis was beyond belief. Kuwait had been given constant assurances that they would never invade, but it was now clear that they had been planning an invasion for a long time. There was no doubt at all that they intended to go on to occupy Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States. Further evidence of Iraq's perfidious intentions was the fact that the puppet government established immediately after the invasion had now disappeared without trace.

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Returning to his original theme of what would happen next, the Crown Prince said that Kuwait had been prepared to wait and see what result there was from the meeting between the United Nations Secretary-General and the Iraqi Foreign Minister. But clearly that meeting had got no-where. The Prime Minister said that the United States was still building up its forces in Saudi Arabia, as were some of the Arab States. We must give time for that to be completed and for sanctions to work. Meanwhile there must be no question of trying to devise compromise solutions. The only solution was that in the UN Resolutions: Iraq must withdraw from Kuwait and the legitimate government must be restored.

The Crown Prince said that he was very much saddened by King Hussein's behaviour. He was making many mistakes. The Prime Minister said that we were grievously upset that King Hussein had failed to come out against Saddam Hussain. She had told him so quite bluntly during his recent visit. But Jordan was a long-standing friend and we wanted to bring her back on side. The Crown Prince said that, if King Hussein changed his policy, Kuwait would be prepared to consider giving some help. The Prime Minister agreed that Jordan must apply sanctions vigorously in order to qualify for assistance.

The Crown Prince said he was still troubled that some people might be attracted by a half-way house. What if Saddam Hussain gave assurances that he would not invade Saudi Arabia? Would the Americans and others begin to withdraw their forces? It was all very well saying that sanctions must have time to work, but he was certain that Saddam Hussain would not leave Kuwait unless we were ready to use force. The Prime Minister said that, if sanctions did not work within a reasonable time, we would all have to consider the next steps. We had not ruled out anything. She could assure the Crown Prince that Britain and the United States would not give in to Iraq. We would persevere until the objectives set out in the United Nations Resolutions had been achieved. There would be no compromise.

The Prime Minister stressed the need for effective counter-propaganda by Arab Governments. They should stress particularly the damage which Iraq's actions, and the PLO support for it, had done to the Palestinian cause.

The Prime Minister also referred to the importance of financial assistance to countries such as Egypt and Turkey which had been particularly staunch. The Crown Prince said that Kuwait would help.

The Crown Prince said he wanted to be certain that the Prime Minister felt that the United States were firm and serious. The Prime Minister confirmed this: so was the United Kingdom. The Crown Prince said he was in no doubt about that. Kuwait was very pleased and satisfied with Britain's role and hoped it would continue. The Prime Minister said the crucial thing was for the Arab World to stand absolutely firm.

CONFIDENTIAL

- 3 -

I am copying this letter to Simon Webb (Ministry of Defence) and Sonia Phippard (Cabinet Office).

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