

SECRET AND PERSONAL

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MO 6/17/15S

11/15 September 1990

MP

Prime Minister

Dear Charles.

You will want to note that we shall have to talk to the Saudis tomorrow about the command & control arrangements for a British

FORCE DEPLOYMENT TO THE GULF

I am writing to record the outcome of the consultation with the US about options for further force deployment to the Gulf. As we discussed yesterday evening this was undertaken by Air Vice Marshal Wilson with General Schwarzkopf in Riyadh. *British Contingent, whatever is composition.*

AVM Wilson put to Gen Schwarzkopf the two options. At the Defence Secretary's specific direction he made clear the advantages and disadvantages of each, emphasising in particular questions that have existed about the reliability of the Challenger tank. *is composition.*

AVM Wilson reports that Gen Schwarzkopf was delighted at the prospect of UK ground forces and very grateful for being consulted. General Schwarzkopf was clear that he would prefer the armoured brigade. The Artillery brigade/recce regiment option would not fit into his overall force plan (his staff would be giving us more details so that we can understand his reasoning in more depth). General Schwarzkopf said that he understood that the Challengers might have problems about reliability and sustainability but would still very much like to have them. If the British Government could make them available he would deploy them with MARCENT (the US marine component) situated on the Eastern side of Saudi Arabia based on the sea port of Dhahran. This might allow us to reduce our logistic tail because sea access would be easier and we could draw on the US Marines infrastructure (CDS sees no difficulty with such an arrangement). *12/9.*

General Schwarzkopf saw a potential difficulty with the Saudis about command and control. They saw Prince Khalid as primus inter pares with him - a source of some recent difficulty. The Saudis would instinctively be opposed to UK forces being placed under sole

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American control. General Schwarzkopf said that they might be persuaded but we would have to approach this skilfully. He would discuss the problem with General Powell. One approach would be for General Powell to speak to Prince Bandar in the first instance, who could then try to sell the idea to his father. The Defence Secretary might then write direct to Prince Sultan to confirm. It was essential that we should go through this process before any public announcement was made on command and control.

AVM Wilson also mentioned to General Schwarzkopf our likely plans for Tornados. These were warmly welcomed and General Schwarzkopf said he would direct his staff to be helpful about accommodating them. His first reaction would be to deploy the second squadron in the west of Saudi Arabia leaving the first Tornado squadron at Bahrain (all these issues together with the question of trying to bring forward the Jaguar squadron from Thumrait would be looked at further).

AVM Wilson emphasised to General Schwarzkopf that at this stage, he was merely taking soundings at a military-to-military level, but these overtures will be reported to General Powell who is visiting General Schwarzkopf tomorrow. We are now, with the Foreign Office, drawing up plans for consultation with the Saudis. If Ministers wish to make an announcement on Friday afternoon, then we shall have to initiate this soon (ie ahead of the formal OD discussion). The Defence Secretary believes this could now be done on a contingent basis, subject to final decisions on whether, and if so which, ground forces to send.

In another interesting aside which he asked to be carefully protected, General Schwarzkopf said the French had made a direct approach to the Saudis about deploying ground forces to the Red Sea coast. Gen Schwarzkopf commented that this was no use to him at all particularly as they would be under independent command. He said he was having considerable difficulty persuading the Saudis to put their own forces in front line position. They could not, or would not, accept that the best way to put pressure on Saddam Hussein was to convince him we were prepared to fight if necessary.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Richard Gozney (Foreign Office), and to Sir Robin Butler. In view of its sensitivity the subject should be treated in the strictest confidence, though my Secretary of State would of course be happy for our Ambassadors in Riyadh and Washington to be put in the picture on a personal basis.

*Yours sincerely,
John Webb*

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Private Secretary