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BY FAX

Mr Charles Powell
Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister
No 10 Downing Street
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Your reference

Our reference

Date

19 October 1990

Dear Charles,

IRAQ/KUWAIT: NEW YORK TIMES

1. You asked about reference in the New York Times to a claim by King Hussein that the Prime Minister had said that US troops were on their way to Saudi Arabia before they had been requested formally.

2. I attach an article by Judith Miller, printed in the New York Times on 16 October, based on an interview with King Hussein. In it she writes that the King had said that "The United States decision to send forces to the Saudi desert was taken before the Riyadh Government formally requested them and, he said, seemed ultimately intended not to defend Saudi Arabia but to destroy President Hussein."

3. She goes on to say: "Furthermore, the King said, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had told him, during a meeting at her country residence, that the United States troops were 'half way to Saudi Arabia' before they were formally requested. The King said he had confirmed this later through what he described as his own sources."

4. As far as we can find, this has not been picked up elsewhere in the US media. It certainly has not been picked up in a big way.

5. I attach a short piece from Cairo printed in the New York Times on 18 October about an Al Ahram article on the question of whether King Hussein did or did not know about the Iraqi invasion before it happened.

Francis Cornish
Francis Cornish

cc: Minister

NEW YORK TIMES - 16 OCTOBER 1990

King Hussein on Kuwait and Dashed Hope

By JUDITH MILLER

Special to The New York Times

AMMAN, Jordan, Oct. 15 -- He is chain-smoking again, and says it is impossible to sleep more than four hours a night. To relieve the pressure, he has taken to riding around his palace on a BMW motorcycle. While his eyes can sparkle at times, he looks at other times as if he is carrying the cares of 200 million Arabs on his shoulders.

Since the Persian Gulf crisis began, King Hussein of Jordan has traveled more than 50,000 miles and met with 15 leaders to avert a war that he warns would be catastrophic not only for his country, but also for this region and the West.

"With or without war, nothing will return to what it was," the King says. "This will be an area of turmoil unless people face up to the need to create new dreams and new realities."

Missed Opportunities

Now, after 10 weeks, he says that war may be imminent, despite statements in Washington indicating that there are still months of waiting to see if the economic sanctions against President Saddam Hussein of Iraq will work.

If war comes, the Jordanian King says, it will be partly because of a failure by President Bush and



Paul Casella

King Hussein of Jordan said war might be imminent.

other Western leaders to respond in time to signals from the Iraqi leader, soon after the Kuwait invasion, that he was ready to withdraw from most of the occupied territory.

The 54-year-old King, now in his 38th year on the throne, says that he believes a peaceful end to the Kuwait dispute is possible, but only

if there is a greater willingness to compromise by the United States and its Arab allies, and what he called "an end to the current embargo on dialogue."

"A dialogue across the airwaves is not constructive," he said. If diplomacy fails, he said, his conversations with Saddam Hussein have

Continued on Page A18, Column 1

Jordanian Talks of Chan And Trust Betrayed in K

Continued From Page A1

convinced him that the Iraqis would fight.

"If it's a question of humiliation and surrender, it won't work," the King said. "Capitulation is unacceptable."

Back at Nadwa, his yellow granite palace in downtown Amman, the King continues his diplomatic campaign with King Hassan II of Morocco and President Chadli Benjedid of Algeria, sending letters and messages back and forth between Baghdad and other Arab capitals, planning his next moves.

In a series of interviews over the weekend, he spoke at length about his efforts to prevent and later to contain the Persian Gulf crisis, the first time he has given a full public accounting of his actions.

He disclosed that on Aug. 2, the day of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, he had been given 48 hours by President Bush to secure a commitment from President Hussein to withdraw his troops. He said that President Hussein had promised to begin pulling out troops if the Arab League did not condemn him, something it did do, which he said, led to the collapse of his early efforts.

The King's mood, often frustrated and angry, was lightened by occasional bursts of humor as he mused about happier times, or watched the latest news on CNN. At one point, his spirits darkening, he spoke of thoughts of resigning from a job that many regard among the most dangerous in the Middle East, thoughts he said he has since put firmly out of his mind.

A Favored Land Now Out of Favor

Jordan was once regarded by the United States and other Western countries as the most dependable of the Arab nations. Now, King Hussein showed his distress at the way he and his country have been criticized since the start of the crisis by the United States and its allies. They have deplored what they regard as his hedging on condemning the Iraqi invasion, a stand that the harshest critics say comes close to condoning Baghdad's action.

What made his isolation particularly stressful, he says, is that he and President Bush are friends of long standing. And he went out of his way not to assail the United States. He was more critical of his former Arab allies.

Of all Arab leaders, King Hussein said, President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt has disappointed him the most. The King said he had helped bring Egypt back into the Arab fold, after its peace treaty with Israel in 1979, but that the move seemed not to have assuaged Egyptian anger at having been excluded in the first place. At a Cairo summit meeting in August, the King said he had the feeling that the

take military action.

The King repeatedly emphasized that Jordan has supported all the United Nations Security Council resolutions on Kuwait. He has, however, opposed the presence of American forces in Saudi Arabia, something he said was neither anti-Western nor pro-Iraqi.

"I am pro-peace," he declared. "I have backed nobody except my conscience and the interests of all in peace and security in this region."

Nevertheless, in the interviews, he praised Mr. Hussein as "a friend and a new phenomenon in Arab politics."

When he was asked if he believed that President Hussein, his namesake but no relation, was justified in having invaded part or all of Kuwait, he seemed momentarily uncomfortable.

"I honestly can't tell, but given the leadership of Saddam Hussein, I know it was not easy," he replied. "I can't justify or condone, but the reason must have been pretty substantial to have had it happen. Both sides, I fear, gradually succumbed to a conspiracy theory about the other."

Quashing Rumors Of Lust for Land

The King seemed especially eager to rebut a conspiracy theory that has gained wide credence in Arab circles since the invasion, that Iraq, Jordan and Yemen had been eyeing Kuwait and Saudi Arabia for themselves, and had been planning for months before the invasion to divide up the oil-producing area among themselves.

According to these accounts, Iraq would have taken Kuwait, securing its long-sought free access to the Persian Gulf; Yemen would get part of disputed Saudi territory, and King Hussein, who is revered as a 33d-generation descendant of the prophet Mohammed, would be restored to his family's traditional role as custodian of Islam's most sacred sites in Saudi Arabia.

He said Jordan wanted nothing but peace, and had not been forewarned about the Iraqi invasion.

The King argued, however, that the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait could have been prevented through astute Arab diplomacy, and that American forces would not have been needed if the Arabs had enough time to resolve the problem themselves.

And, he said, the United States' decision to send forces to the Saudi desert was taken before the Riyadh Government formally requested them and, he said, seemed ultimately intended not to defend Saudi Arabia but to destroy President Hussein.

According to the King's account, he received an agreement from President Bush, in a telephone conversation within hours of the Iraqi invasion, that he would be given 48 hours to secure a commitment from Mr. Hussein to withdraw his troops. The King said the commitment was given while he was meeting in Alexandria, Egypt, with Mr. Mubarak.

The King said he told the American and Egyptian leaders that he had

2

Chances Missed in Kuwait Crisis

Mr. Mubarak that the Iraqi leader had also warned that he "would not respond positively to threats or intimidation."

Conciliatory Words From Iraqi Quoted

The Arab League foreign ministers were meeting in Cairo, and the King said, Saddam Hussein suspected that the ministers might call for foreign involvement. "Let us not scratch each other's eyes out," the King quoted the Iraqi leader as saying. "If things go that way, we may say Kuwait is part of Iraq and annex it."

Early the next morning, Aug. 3, the King flew to Baghdad, where he found President Hussein "fine and more relaxed than on my previous visit" six days earlier. The Iraqi leader, he said, reiterated that he was willing to withdraw from most of Kuwait — exactly to where he did not say — and to discuss other grievances at a meeting of heads of government in Jidda on Sunday, provided the Arab League did not condemn him or call for foreign intervention.

The King returned to Amman later that day, confident that agreement was possible, but he said he was unable to get either King Fahd or President Mubarak on the phone. While still waiting to convey the results of the Baghdad meeting, he said, he learned that Egypt had just condemned Iraq's invasion, and that the Arab League was preparing to take similar action that night.

King Hussein said he still did not understand why his initiative was undermined. But the condemnations dashed hopes of an early peaceful resolution to the crisis, he said, adding "Suddenly, it was all torn apart."

From the King's version of the crisis, an extraordinary picture emerged of the world of Arab politics — a milieu of secrets and conspiracies; of lies and treachery; of humiliations for him and other, poorer Arabs; of duplicity, revenge and broken promises, and of dashed hopes that, he said, had brought him to consider resignation.

"When you look beyond this," he asked, "what is there for us? I'm proud of what I've done in Jordan, but the region itself is sitting on a time bomb. So before the crisis, I was thinking of quitting. I won't quit in the middle of this. But I'll never be a burden to my country."

When Baghdad Decided to Strike

Ranging back and forth through his experiences in recent weeks, the King shed fresh light on other aspects of the crisis.

Among other things, he said, after the invasion Mr. Hussein had told him that he had decided only late in July that military action was necessary. The King said the Iraqi leader had told him that he had decided to seize all of Kuwait. Instead of the part of the territory long in dispute, because he expected the United States to defend the sheikhdom with force, and he believed he could go to a stronger position militarily and politically, if he could eventually withdraw to a point

that left Iraq with the disputed territory only.

The King said Saddam Hussein also told him that he never intended to invade Saudi Arabia, a threat that was originally cited by the United States in sending troops there.

Furthermore, the King said, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had told him, during a meeting at her country residence, that the United States troops were "halfway to Saudi Arabia" before they were formally requested. The King said he had confirmed this later through what he described as his own sources.

The King, of this small country, flanked on three sides by Iraq, Israel and Saudi Arabia, seemed most agitated when expressing the view that the invasion could have been prevented.

On at least five occasions since the end of the Iran-Iraq war in 1988, he said, he had unsuccessfully tried to persuade Kuwait directly or through Gulf intermediaries to resolve the financial and territorial disputes with Baghdad that he said triggered the invasion. Saddam Hussein also made repeated, unsuccessful attempts, he said.

He said he first became concerned about an escalation of the dispute five months ago, at the end of May, at an Arab summit meeting in Baghdad. "We had a closed meeting and I was very frank," the King said. President Hussein warned that his oil-rich country was being strangled by economic warfare waged by the "brother" Arab leaders, and that these leaders should understand

to the fact that Iraq had protected them and their people with "the blood of Iraqis" during the just-concluded war with Iran.

Saddam Hussein had already tried to resolve the border issue during the Iran-Iraq war, the King said. Kuwait and Iraq had formed several different levels of joint commissions to resolve it, but with no success.

A Volatile Mixture: Oil and Outrage

The King's "second jolt" came when he learned that Iraq's Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz, had sent a scathing public memorandum to the Arab League on July 15 accusing Kuwait of violating its oil-production quotas and of stealing Iraqi oil from the Rumaila field, which the two countries shared. Terrible consequences might result, Mr. Aziz warned.

In retrospect, neither Kuwait nor Saudi Arabia seemed to have trusted him, the King said. But he added that relations with Kuwait had never been easy. An assistant to the King described his visits to Jaber al-Ahmed al-Sabah, the Kuwaiti Emir, for discussions of financial matters, as a "tin-cup exercise," and said that they had become increasingly humiliating.

By 1988, the Gulf states had stopped making payments that had continued for 10 years under a 1978 pledge to support Arab countries threatened by Israel. Some had not made full payments. Jordan had a \$8 billion deficit. After 1988, the payments abruptly ended. "They were putting the squeeze on us and I realized we were going to have severe internal problems," the King said.

In the spring of 1989, as he had feared, severe food rioting erupted in Jordan. Kuwait ultimately paid Jordan a modest sum, for which the King said he was grateful.

He said his final effort to warn Kuwait about the potential consequences of its deteriorating relationship with Iraq came late in July. On July 29, he visited Mr. Hussein in Baghdad.

"They were bitter," the King recalled, speaking of the Iraqis. They recalled with fury, for example, that after Iranian-backed terrorists had tried to assassinate the Emir, "Iraq had blasted Iran with everything they had — ground to ground missiles, the works." Iran had retaliated, causing 1,500 civilian casualties, but Kuwait

would not write off its debt, or end the border dispute, or stop stealing oil."

"I realized then that the situation was really very serious," the King said. "I knew they were hurting badly. The atmosphere was tense. The troops were on the border."

On July 30, the King visited the Emir in Kuwait and expressed hope that a special meeting in Jidda between Kuwait and Iraq, scheduled to open the next day, would succeed. And he warned that the meeting was critical.

"I pleaded with them," he said. "They were warm and cordial, as usual. But there was no commitment, just hopes that it would not fail."

A View of Doom In Soldiers' Eyes

Before boarding his plane, he said he had a premonition. "I looked at some Kuwaiti soldiers on the tarmac. I suddenly had a deep sense of sadness. Sometimes, leaders' failures can cost these young people's lives."

On the plane back to Jordan, the King said his aides told him that they too, had failed to detect true concern in their meetings with the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister. "They said their Constitution does not permit us to give up an inch of territory. We won't give in. If they attack us, we would call the Americans." The Kuwaitis' only concern, the King said he was told, seemed to be that relying on American military backing would be "embarrassing" because of American support for Israel.

He said he had learned of the invasion at 6 A.M. on Aug. 2, when King Fahd telephoned him and urged him to call Saddam Hussein and ask the Iraqi leader to withdraw to the disputed territory. "It's all Kuwait's fault," King Hussein said, quoting King Fahd. "They would be this adamant. They've brought this about."

The King spoke to King Fahd rarely after that. On Aug. 6, the Saudi ruler invited "friendly forces" to assist in his country's defense. The next day, he sent an envoy to assure King Hussein that relations between Riyadh and Baghdad were fine, that there was no evidence of a hostile Iraqi buildup on the border, and that despite American assertions, there was no truth to reports that Iraq planned to invade Saudi Arabia. Later that night, the presence of U.S. forces in the Saudi desert was announced.

New York Times 18 10 1990

Cairo's Major Daily Calls Jordan's King A Party to Invasion

By ALAN COWELL

Special to The New York Times

CAIRO, Oct. 17 — Egypt's most prominent newspaper assailed King Hussein of Jordan today as a co-conspirator with President Saddam Hussein of Iraq in the invasion of Kuwait.

The paper, Al Ahrām, said King Hussein had acknowledged in an interview with The New York Times that he had known of the planned invasion several days before it happened on Aug. 2, but had been promised by the Iraqi leader that Baghdad's forces would pull out of Kuwait if the Arab League did not condemn him. Al Ahrām's version of the interview was at odds with the Times article based on the interview, published on Tuesday, in which the King said he learned of the invasion only at 6 A.M. on Aug. 2.

Egypt is prominent among Arab countries opposing the invasion and has sent troops to support the American-dominated military buildup in the Persian Gulf region. Jordan opposed the dispatch of Arab forces and has been accused in the West of adopting an ambiguous stance.

The relationship between the erstwhile allies, once grouped with Iraq and Yemen in the now-defunct Arab Cooperation Council, has worsened in recent days with Egyptian assertions that Jordan plans to expel as many as 70,000 undocumented Egyptians working there.

The editorial today has added strains because it is certain to be taken in Jordan as officially inspired.

"King Hussein's statements make it quite clear that Saddam decided to invade in July," Al Ahrām's editorial said.

The newspaper also accused President Hussein of lying about what he had told President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt before the invasion. The Egyptian leader has said he received assurances that Iraq would not invade as long as there was hope of negotiating an outcome to Iraqi-Kuwaiti differences.