

TO: Mr Powell

JHW 24/10
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FROM: David Lidington

DATE: 23 October 1990

Mr Whittingdale
No 10

IRAQ/KUWAIT

1. As I expect you know, Peter Gummer and his senior colleagues from Shandwicks have been giving us some informal (and of course unpaid) advice on the media and domestic political handling of the crisis.

2. Last Thursday, Mr Charles Jones, Managing Director of Shandwicks' US businesses, came with Mr Gummer to the Foreign Office. Mr Waldegrave has asked me to send you a copy of my note recording Mr Jones's comment on the state of US public opinion. This is enclosed and I should be grateful if you could pass a copy on to Charles Powell and any others in No 10 who have an interest.



David Lidington
Special Adviser

7. Mr Jones said that back in August the American public had supported Bush because of the international nature of the response to the Iraqi invasion and, most importantly, because of oil. The key thought then in American minds was "we are never going to put up with a situation where we have to queue for gas again". But public attention span was short. The issue was losing its emotional appeal and it was therefore harder for Bush to find public support. The troop deployments in the Gulf region were giving people in the States the impression that Saddam had been contained and most Americans would not know where to find Kuwait on a map let alone feel strongly about its liberation. However, public attention could easily be aroused again if the right emotional focus were forthcoming. Mr Jones' best guess was that Bush, as an old CIA hand, could ask Webster to find him a pretext for military action on a given date. The high moral tone struck by Bush in recent speeches, especially his references to the atrocities being carried out by the Iraqis in Kuwait, were another sign that the President was now seeking to engage public opinion on a more emotional level. The key unknown factor in this equation was Israel. The American public felt very strongly about Israel and would certainly, in Mr Jones' view, support wholeheartedly a war designed to defend Israel against Iraq. Americans might even tolerate the use of nuclear weapons against Iraq if Israel had been attacked using chemical weapons. The problem for Bush, if it did come to war, was less casualties than duration. Mr Jones said his own view was that the American public would tolerate 25,000 US servicemen killed provided that the war was fought in what they believed to be a just cause, and that it was won fairly quickly. He thought that six months was the maximum period of time in which Bush could count on public support for a continuing military war. Mr Jones promised to keep in touch with me from time to time with his thoughts on US public opinion.



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