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PRIME MINISTER

THE GULF

General Scowcroft telephoned me this afternoon on the secure line to prepare for your talk with the President tomorrow, and give an indication of the subjects which the President will raise. The President will telephone you at Chequers at 1400 hours.

General Scowcroft said the President had been talking at length with General Powell, Jim Baker and himself about the possibilities in the Gulf. General Powell had recommended to the President that more US military capability was needed to guarantee Iraq's defeat. This was based on a fresh estimate of the Iraqis' own military posture. General Powell had recommended three more armoured divisions: two from Germany and one from the United States. He was also suggesting that the British forces might be rounded up to one division (my impression is this would mean about another 4-5,000 men). The President shared General Powell's view that the only forces which could be relied on were the United States and British. General Scowcroft added that the President had not reached a final decision on additional numbers but would probably agree to General Powell's request. The forces themselves would be in place and ready for action not later than 15 January.

General Scowcroft continued that Secretary Baker's first task on his forthcoming visit to the area would be to secure King Fahd's approval for the increased forces. Besides that, he would sound out various heads of government to assess whether they were really willing to face up to the possibility of conflict. He would also take very secret soundings about the prospects of securing a further United Nations Resolution which would tell Saddam Hussain that he had x days or weeks to withdraw from Kuwait, otherwise the members of the multinational force would be free to take any necessary steps to enforce earlier Security Council resolutions. It was important that news of these soundings should not leak out: it would be damaging if it became

known that Baker had tried and failed to obtain support for this idea.

General Scowcroft continued that the big question was the timing of military action. There was not absolute unanimity of views in Washington on this. Everyone was agreed that the military option should be used not later than 1 February if Saddam Hussain had failed to withdraw by then. But Cheney and Scowcroft himself were arguing for any time from early December. They believed that we had to be prepared to move at whatever was the best time militarily, psychologically and diplomatically from our point of view. It was common ground that we had to be able to say that sanctions had been given a reasonable chance. Jim Baker argued that you had to give as long a period as possible for this, because the longer the time you gave Saddam Hussain, the better people would recognise that military action was justified. Scowcroft himself was inclined to the view that Saddam Hussain would have had plenty of time by the beginning of December.

I said it was helpful to have this forewarning of what was on the President's mind. I thought the point which would concern you most was that the decision to send three extra divisions risked delaying the military option too long. We would be getting close to the end of the climatic 'window'. General Scowcroft said that the first two divisions, which would come from Germany, could be in the area by early December. It was only the third division, which would come from the United States, which would take until mid-January. He could conceive that military action could start in December while the third division was still in the process of arriving. He himself favoured that.

I asked whether the President was likely to revert with you to the question of the American Embassy in Kuwait. General Scowcroft did not think that the President would make it a big issue with you. Your message had made your position clear. But there was no doubt the matter was still on his mind: the Americans faced a deadline which we did not have.

C

I said I was sure you would continue to argue against a further UN Resolution to authorise the use of force. General Scowcroft made clear this would not worry him. Even Jim Baker, who was the most optimistic, rated the prospects of securing the agreement of the Security Council to such a Resolution as no more than 25 per cent. I said that this only underlined your point that it was better not to try and fail. General Scowcroft said this was the point of the very secret and informal soundings which Secretary Baker would be undertaking: if they were negative, the Americans would not go ahead in New York.

I said that we had noticed that American rhetoric had become noticeably stronger over the last week or two. General Scowcroft said that, in his own view, it had tightened up too much. The President had got a little out of hand. It was important to escalate the rhetoric at a pace that could be sustained over the period until military action became feasible.

Reverting to the UN Resolution, General Scowcroft said the President would argue that going the UN route got you the maximum world unity behind you, if it succeeded. The President was very concerned about the difficulties of going to war from cold: he saw a need to generate some excuse to go. I said you took the view that everything Saddam Hussain had done in Kuwait was more than enough excuse. I added that I thought you might suggest to the President our idea of a presentation to the Security Council about the brutalities in Kuwait. This would need to be very professional. General Scowcroft said it was a capital idea. It was a constant problem to keep the Iraq's brutalities before the public mind.

I said that you remained concerned about the Soviet activities in the area, particularly Primakov's mission. General Scowcroft said that the Americans continued to believe that there was a tug-of-war going on between Primakov and Shevardnadze. Jim Baker would now be going to Moscow as well, because Shevardnadze had said that the situation was too difficult for him to get away to Geneva for a meeting. The advantage was that Baker would see Gorbachev.

D

I said that I thought you would probably mention the GATT problem to the President. You had fought hard at the Rome European Council but the French and Germans had been very obstructive. General Scowcroft said that the President would speak very strongly to Chancellor Kohl on this when they met, assessing that there was a better chance of moving the Germans than the French. But he would probably agree not to go too hard publicly before the German elections on 2 December. I said that would not leave much time for negotiation: the President ought to be leaning on the French and Germans now. General Scowcroft said that he remained very worried indeed about the GATT issue which could cause a major political problem for the President.

It was clear that part of General Scowcroft's purpose in telephoning me was to indicate where he thought it would be useful for you to impress your views once more on the President, in particular on the question of further recourse to the United Nations and an earlier start for military action. I made clear that I did not think you would be in a position to give a straight answer tomorrow to a request for additional British forces. Scowcroft said this would not matter: the President just wanted to register the point.

C. D. P.

C. D. POWELL

3 November 1990

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