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10 DOWNING STREET
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From the Private Secretary

9 November 1990

Dear Stephen,

POSSIBLE VISIT BY THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE GULF

The Prime Minister is contemplating paying a brief visit to the Gulf in the period immediately before Christmas. But she does not want this to be known outside a very small circle at present.

I should therefore be grateful if this letter could be handled by a very restricted number of people indeed.

The purposes of going would be to pay a Christmas visit to British forces in the area and to hold talks with the principal Heads of Government. In order of priority, they would be King Fahd, President Mubarak, the Amir of Kuwait and the rulers of Oman, Bahrain and the UAE. But time constraints may make it impossible to undertake all these.

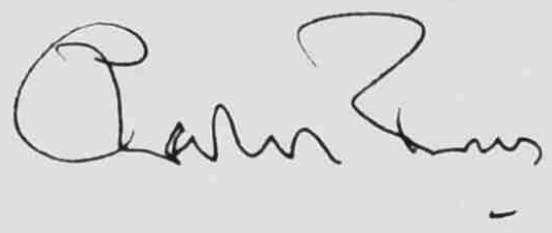
The Prime Minister envisages flying to the area immediately after the conclusion of the Rome European Council on Friday 14 December. She would need to be back in London late on Monday 17 December, giving her in effect three days. We would have to work on her Statment for the European Council while in the Middle East: and would look to you to let us have material for supplementaries.

It would be very helpful if FCO and MOD could draw up a draft feasible programme within these time constraints, but they should not consult posts in the area or our military commanders at this stage. The Prime Minister would want to have adequate time to meet members of our forces, both on the ground in Saudi Arabia as well as those stationed elsewhere in the Gulf. The visits to some of the smaller states such as Bahrain and the UAE would have to be very brief indeed, possibly a matter of only an hour or so. We may have to omit Oman altogether on this occasion.

Once we have an idea of what is feasible, we will consider approaching posts. But I repeat the Prime Minister is extremely concerned that knowledge of this possible visit and the timing of it should be very tightly held indeed.

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I am copying this letter to Simon Webb (Ministry of Defence).

Yours sincerely,


CHARLES POWELL

J S Wall Esq
Foreign and Commonwealth Office