



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

13 October 1980

*Despatched by Prime Minister
to Lord Carrington earlier today.*

Dear Michael,

Iran/Iraq

*Ca. 12h
13/X*

You asked for an account of recent developments.

Situation on the ground

The Iraqis are continuing to advance from Khorramshahr towards Abadan and also towards two other ports about 60 miles away, Bandar Khomeini and Bandar Mashur. The main military activity is in the south, but there is some activity in the central/northern sector where the Iraqis are still apparently attempting to seize the city of Dezful, and are attacking south of Ahwaz. They have not yet, as far as we know, cut the strategic oil pipe-lines in that area. In the air Iranian activity has decreased significantly in the last week, whilst Iraqi activity has increased. The Iranians seem nevertheless to have caused substantial damage to the Iraqi oil installations though it is far from clear how long it would take to repair. At sea there is little change: Iranian vessels continue to patrol in the Straits of Hormuz but are not interfering with the normal passage of ships. The disposition of other naval forces in the area is shown in the attached map.

Attempts at mediation

The main focus is in New York. The President of the Security Council (Trojanovsky, USSR) called consultations of the whole on 10 October and informed members that Ardakani (Iran) had received instructions to participate in a formal Council meeting. This might take place very soon. Trojanovsky said he would arrange the timing once he had confirmation that the Iranians were ready. The likely outcome of this meeting is not yet clear but it is mildly encouraging that the Iranian has instructions to participate.

Chatti, the Secretary General to the Islamic Conference, has been despatched once again to Tehran and Baghdad by President Zia, but we have no news of how he has been doing.

There have been no other initiatives on mediation, but both the Iranians and the Iraqis have told the Indian Government that they hope the Indians would be willing to help towards this end.

/Shipping



Shipping

Action in the UN to secure the release of trapped ships may provide an opportunity for a limited ceasefire, although neither side has yet responded to the Secretary-General's appeal of 11 October.

Three British ships (one UK registered and two registered in Hong Kong) are trapped in Basra but are in no immediate danger. One UK registered ship, the Altanin, with 38 persons on board is in a much riskier position off Khorramshahr. The Consul from Baghdad has gone to the area to try to arrange with the local military authorities for the disembarkation of all but a skeleton crew. The owners have been advised that unless the situation becomes intolerable, no landing should be attempted without the agreement of the Iraqi military. Priority has been given on the advice of the Embassy in Baghdad to securing Iraqi co-operation for this operation in the first instance. We are, however, in touch with a number of other countries with shipping trapped in the Shatt-al-Arab about the possibility of joint demarches to both Iran and Iraq to allow the ships to leave.

Oil

Shipping continues to pass to and from the Gulf ports, other than those in Iraq and Iran, normally. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE have raised output in order to offset, for the benefit of developing countries, the loss of Iraqi and Iranian oil.

UK contribution to security in the Gulf

HM Coventry is now deployed in the Gulf of Oman. We are discussing with the MOD how best to move another ship to the area immediately.

We have informed the Ruler of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Zaid, that, in the spirit of our Friendship Treaty, we stand ready in principle to provide military assistance if asked. We have told the Shaikh that we would like to send a small team, mainly from the MOD, to consult the Rulers on the UAE's likely needs and on what the local facilities are. As a first step a former commander of the Sultan of Oman's Army is flying out to the Gulf this week where he will meet Mr J C Moberly. (There is some difficulty because of a local holiday, the 'Id al Adha, but we believe it is important to react swiftly.)

/Consultations



Consultations with our Allies

We have not yet told our allies of the initiative to help the UAE. When the arrangements for General Perkins' visit have been completed, we intend to tell the Americans and French in general terms.

My impression is that Lord Carrington is still rather concerned at the inadequacy of allied consultations. There was a useful Quadripartite discussion in Paris last week and there will be another meeting there on 27 October. But so far there has not been much enthusiasm on the part of our partners for giving them a more politico-military content. There is still too much of an impression of separate approaches and inadequate coordination. We shall continue to press upon the Americans and French the need for close contact and some form of military consultations.

Lord Carrington did not see this letter before despatch, but will see a copy over-night.

I am copying this letter to David Wright (Cabinet Office).

J. G. H. Walden

(G G H Walden)

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