

OPS  
Subject File No:  
Iraq. Pr4 Internal Sit  
Iran/Iraq war

cc Subject  
Master

PRIME MINISTER'S  
PERSONAL MESSAGE  
SERIAL No. T40184

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT REAGAN

DEAR RON,

I KNOW THAT YOU SHARE MY CONCERN ABOUT THE IRAN/IRAQ WAR AND THE DANGER THAT THE SITUATION COULD SUDDENLY DETERIORATE, WITH POSSIBLY GRAVE CONSEQUENCES FOR WESTERN INTERESTS.

OUR PEOPLE HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH YOURS ABOUT CONTINGENCY PLANNING. AS A PRACTICAL DEMONSTRATION OF OUR CONCERN, AND IN RESPONSE TO A REQUEST FROM YOUR SIDE, WE HAVE DECIDED TO ADVANCE THE STATE OF READINESS OF A MINE COUNTER-MEASURES FORCE WITH A VIEW TO DEPLOYING IT TO THE MEDITERRANEAN.

WE SHALL NOT GIVE PUBLICITY TO THIS DECISION. IF IT LEAKS WE SHALL MAKE IT CLEAR THAT THE PURPOSE IS SOLELY PRUDENT CONTINGENCY PLANNING. IT IS OBVIOUSLY IMPORTANT TO AVOID GIVING EITHER IRAQ OR IRAN THE IMPRESSION THAT WE EXPECT AN ESCALATION IN THE FIGHTING. TO DO SO WOULD ONLY ADD TO THE TENSION IN THE AREA AND WOULD PLAY INTO THE HANDS OF KHOMEINI WHO COULD USE IT TO JUSTIFY HIS OWN EXTREME ACTIONS.

WE DO NOT PLAN TO MAKE ANY DECISION NOW ABOUT THE DISPOSITIONS OF OUR 'ARMILLA' PATROL IN THE ARABIAN SEA. NAVAL MOVEMENTS ALREADY PLANNED FOR THE COMING WEEKS WILL IN ANY CASE GIVE US AN ENHANCED PRESENCE IN THE AREA AT CERTAIN TIMES.

THERE IS A FURTHER VERY IMPORTANT POINT. I BELIEVE WE SHOULD USE THE TIME AVAILABLE TO REACH WITH YOU A CLEAR POLITICAL UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE OBJECTIVES OF ANY WESTERN INTERVENTION WHICH MAY BECOME NECESSARY IN THE GULF, THE RANGE OF SITUATIONS WHICH COULD DEVELOP AND THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY ACTION WHICH MIGHT BE APPROPRIATE IN THOSE SITUATIONS. WE WOULD NEED SUCH AN UNDERSTANDING IF WE HAD TO CONSIDER FURTHER COMMITMENTS.

IF YOU AGREE, I SHOULD LIKE TO SEND A SMALL TEAM TO WASHINGTON FOR THIS PURPOSE IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS, LED BY RICHARD LUCE.

WITH BEST WISHES  
YOURS EVER  
MARGARET  
BT