



Prime Minister

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PRIME MINISTER

I visited Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Kenya, India and Zimbabwe from 10th-26th September. You may find helpful a note of the main issues which arose together with some personal impressions.

2. The aims of my visit were to exchange views on international and defence issues, to promote defence sales, and to give support to our training and advisory effort (other than in India where this is not relevant). I was warmly received in all countries. I found admiration everywhere for our resolve and success in the Falklands conflict, and keen interest in the lessons of that experience. Our standing has improved and there could be gains in defence sales terms in the Middle East and India.

Kuwait and Saudi Arabia

3. Both Kuwait and Saudi leaders expressed their satisfaction with the outcome of the Fez Summit and a cautious welcome for the Reagan initiative, qualified by doubts as to whether it would be properly followed through. Our early and positive public statement on Fez had been well received and I made the point that we deserved some credit for our role in encouraging a more constructive approach by the US. (This was, of course, all before the Beirut "massacre".) On the Iran/Iraq war the Kuwait Foreign Minister confirmed that at Fez the Arabs had decided to come out more clearly in support of Iraq, but he also expressed his concern about the dramatic increase recently



in Russian shipments of arms to Iraq which were passing through Kuwait. I made it clear that this Russian involvement would make it more difficult for us to help the Iraqis in the future.

4. Leaders in both countries expressed appreciation for the work of our service personnel who assist and advise their forces and I was myself much impressed by the enthusiasm and commitment of the members of our Liaison Teams in Kuwait whom I met during my visit.

5. There is some Kuwaiti interest in Challenger tanks, Hawk, and Tornado and its possible derivatives and there is the more immediate prospect of orders for air defence equipment. The Kuwaitis are looking towards some local manufacture of defence equipment for the Gulf Co-operation Council countries.

6. I had friendly and positive talks in Saudi Arabia with Crown Prince Abdullah, who was acting as Viceroy in the absence at Fez of King Fahd, and Princes Sultan and Naif. Prior to my visit, the extension to the air defence MOU and a contract for FH70 field howitzers had been signed. The Saudi MOD seem genuinely interested in Nimrod AEW; other possible sales include the Lynx helicopter for their embryonic Army Air Corps, the Hawk, and air defence equipment. Negotiations are proceeding on a hovercraft sale to the Ministry of the Interior; prospects with the National Guard include tanks and air defence equipment. I visited the new National Guard hospital which was about to be opened by the King. While I was able to give our equipment a useful push, competition from the Americans and the French is of course very strong and some of the methods of the French in particular are not easily matched. So often, it is gifts of country estates and pretty girls that win contracts around the world - not determination, quality or price.



Kenya

7. I was received most warmly by President Moi, who gave an elaborate luncheon in my honour, and was clearly pleased that a British Cabinet Minister should visit so soon after the attempted coup. I was able to thank him for Kenya's stalwart support at the UN during the Falklands crisis. I obtained his agreement to an increase in the number of British Army units allowed to use each year the excellent training facilities in Kenya. I expressed our willingness to help in rebuilding the Kenyan Air Force following its part in the attempted coup, and it is likely that this will be a major military assistance project in the coming year. While in Kenya I took the opportunity to visit HMS AURORA, RFA GREY ROVER and HMNZS WAIKATO which were in Mombasa on a break from the Gulf Patrol.

8. For all the signs that President Moi has moved quickly to assert his authority and restore normality following the attempted coup (which perhaps had more widespread support than I had previously thought) I have to say I was discouraged by what I saw in my short stay in Kenya. The signs are that Kenya's economic (and demographic) problems are growing rapidly while the Government machine is becoming less efficient and able to cope, and that, for all her natural advantages, Kenya will subside to the African norm - I fear rather soon.

India

9. I have already sent to you from Delhi some impressions of my Indian visit. The Indians seemed keen to make some play of this and there was genuine warmth towards Britain, particularly in the Armed Forces. There are good sales prospects for the Sea King and Sea Harrier aircraft and other British equipments are being short-listed.

10. The Indians are anxious to develop collaboration in defence R&D - in areas of some sensitivity - and to obtain access to the latest technology. My visit to the Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd



factory in Bangalore, where Jaguar is being assembled and will soon be manufactured, suggested that they still have a long way to catch up - the machine tools are new but the management and scientific/technical staff did not impress.

11. There are risks in a closer association, particularly for security. We must guard against technology transfer without a sufficient gain to our own industry. Equally there are potentially large opportunities, particularly in the aircraft field. I am reviewing our policy on defence contacts with India, which must take account also of India's political and strategic importance, and of the large and relatively stable market she represents for future defence sales. I will report further by the end of the month.

Zimbabwe

12. I was in Zimbabwe for less than 24 hours. During that time I met Prime Minister Mugabe, Dr Sekeramayi, the Minister of State for Defence and the commanders of the Zimbabwean Army and Air Force. All were fulsome in their praise of the British Military Advisory and Training Team (BMATT), which has played a vital role both in integrating the forces which contested the civil war, and in helping to sustain white confidence in the new order. The Zimbabweans would clearly like BMATT to remain for some time, although the military would like it to concentrate now on training instructors at a single centre, and to withdraw from the advisory role at unit level. If we do this, there will inevitably be a loss of influence with the units themselves but we would avoid the danger of association with the growing Army thuggery in Matabeleland in particular. I am in favour of this move since it will lower BMATT's profile in the country, make it easier to reduce its size next year, and distance us from the nastier side of African behaviour. The CGS is visiting Zimbabwe over the next ten days, and I have asked him to take a hard look at the practicalities. When he has reported, I will submit a proposal to you.



13. I raised with Mr Mugabe the situation of those senior Air Force officers who are being held in connection with the sabotage of aircraft at Thornhill in July. I told him of the concern in Britain about allegations that the Zimbabwe police had tortured these officers to extract "confessions", and I urged that they should be brought to trial as soon as possible. My personal view is that these allegations are accurate. Mr Mugabe denied the allegations, and indicated that the officers would be brought to trial: but he also suggested that the British public should be more concerned about the sabotage than about torture (on which I contradicted him). I do not see how the officers can be brought to public trial without an international outcry and we shall have to withhold assistance to the Air Force which the Zimbabweans have asked for. There is nothing to be gained in our providing skilled technicians to an Air Force that is in danger of rapid decline as a result of the torture allegations.

14. I was left uneasy by my meeting with Mr Mugabe. He may have been distracted by other matters, but I formed the impression that he either did not know what was going on in his army and on the security front, or that he knew things were not right, but was not disposed or able to do anything about it. The drift in Zimbabwe towards increasingly unpleasant and extra-constitutional methods must have consequences both for the confidence of white Zimbabweans and for the prospects for Western investment.

15. I am copying this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Secretaries of State for Industry and Trade, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

SW.

Ministry of Defence
6th October 1982