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file
bc: Tim Fletcher

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

25 July 1983

VISIT OF FIRST DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER OF IRAQ

I am sorry that it has not been possible to give you an earlier reply to your letter of 1 July proposing that Mr. Taha Ramadhan should be invited to visit the United Kingdom some time in October. Before taking a view on this, it has been necessary to fix dates for certain other foreign affairs engagements for the Prime Minister.

bc

Mrs. Thatcher would be able to offer talks and lunch for Mr. Ramadhan on Thursday 6 October. Perhaps you could let me know in due course whether this is acceptable? (I should warn that it will be difficult to find alternatives).

I am copying this letter to Jonathan Spencer (Department of Trade and Industry) and Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

A. J. COLES

John Holmes, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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Prime Minister

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Agree to hold talks,
followed by lunch, on
Thursday, 6 October?

1 July, 1983

A J. C. $\frac{22}{7}$

Yes not

Dear John,

Visit of Taha Ramadhan, First Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq

You will recall that this visit, which was due to take place from 8-10 June, was postponed because of the general election. The visit has been postponed on two previous occasions and the Prime Minister's invitation to Mr Ramadhan has now been open for over eighteen months.

The arguments in favour of Mr Ramadhan's visit to the United Kingdom were set out in my letters to you dated 7 January and 15 March (copies enclosed). The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary believes that a visit by Ramadhan would still benefit our relations with Iraq, and that it is in our interest that the visit should go ahead. On previous form the Iraqis will no doubt wish to link the Ramadhan visit to a meeting of the UK/Iraq Joint Commission. We and the Department of Trade are again happy to go along with this but as before we will make it clear to the Iraqis that the Prime Minister will take no substantive part in the talks on the UK side.

You will be aware from the previous correspondence on this visit that talks with the Prime Minister followed by a meal would be an essential part of the programme for Ramadhan if it was to be a success.

On timing, Sir Geoffrey Howe believes that sometime after the summer months, preferably October, would be best. Sir Geoffrey would therefore be grateful to know if the Prime Minister would agree to reschedule the arrangements for talks and a meal with Mr Ramadhan to sometime in October and if you could offer a specific date for this which we could put to the Iraqis.

I am sending copies of this letter to John Rhodes (Department of Trade and to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

(J E Holmes)
Private Secretary

Yours ever
John Holmes

Unfortunately, Mr Ramadhan can be very touchy about protocol. We need to offer him a programme which takes account of this and of his position as number two in the Ba'ath regime. So far as the official part of the programme is concerned, Mr Pym envisages a round of calls, as well as hospitality. He hopes that the Prime Minister as nominal host will agree to talks and a meal (as envisaged in Francis Richards's letter under reference). A call at noon followed by lunch might be the best arrangement. Mr Pym believes that it would jeopardise the success of the visit if the programme did not include the offer of a meal hosted by the Prime Minister. It would be better therefore to offer dates some way ahead, if necessary, than to offer earlier dates without the prospect of hospitality by Mrs Thatcher. Our Ambassador in Baghdad has advised that Mr Ramadhan will probably refuse to come if he is not offered hospitality by the Prime Minister.

I should be grateful to know if the Prime Minister would agree to talks and a meal as proposed, and if you could let me have perhaps alternative dates which we could put to the Iraqis for the visit.

I am copying this letter to John Rhodes (Department of Trade), Ian Ellison (Department of Industry) and David Oman (Ministry of Defence).

Yours ever

John Holmes

(J E Holmes)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street



for talks and a meal to some time between mid-May and 12 June and if you could offer a specific date for this which we could put to the Iraqis.

I am sending copies of this letter to John Rhodes (Department of Trade) and to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

*Yours sincerely
J E Holmes*

(J E Holmes)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

*Tracy, Naisi,
Visit of Ramadhan*

-1 JUL 1983

