



10 DOWNING STREET

29 July 1985

From the Private Secretary

VISIT OF THE IRAQI FOREIGN MINISTER TO LONDON

Thank you for your letter of 26 July about the visit of Tariq Aziz.

As you know, we are trying to put a stop to the notion that Foreign Ministers are entitled to expect to call upon the Prime Minister. I have consulted the Prime Minister about this particular case and she has said that no commitment should be given that she will see Tariq Aziz. I suggest therefore that arrangements for the visit should go ahead without anything being said on the subject of a meeting with the Prime Minister. If the Iraqis enquire you will have to say that we cannot make any commitment at this stage.

(C.D. Powell)

Peter Ricketts, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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Prime Minister

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

26 July, 1985

He's a very tiresome man: and we are trying to limit calls on you by Foreign Ministers. But having originally agreed to see him, it will be hard to refuse now that the visit is to be held. Agree to a short meeting? Charles

No commitment

4th December is slightly outside Euro Council, but statement ch. The 5th would be better, if we have to do it. M6A257

Visit of Iraqi Foreign Minister to London

CDD 27/7

A long standing invitation from Sir Geoffrey Howe to Tariq Aziz to pay an official visit to London has now been accepted by the Iraqis for 4-5 December. Previous plans for a visit in February fell through when Tariq Aziz was unable to make the dates we proposed.

The Prime Minister agreed to see Tariq Aziz when we were making plans for the February visit (your letter of 31 January). In proposing those dates, we confirmed to the Iraqis that the intended programme would include a call on the Prime Minister. As well as being Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz holds the rank of Deputy Prime Minister and is a member of the influential Ba'ath party junta, the Revolutionary Command Council. As in the case of the February visit, we would also propose to arrange calls for Tariq Aziz on other Government Ministers.

Sir Geoffrey Howe continues to believe that a visit by Tariq Aziz would be useful and endorses our post's view that the success of the visit is likely to depend on the level of Ministerial attention he is granted. Having been offered a call on the Prime Minister last time, the highly protocol-conscious Iraqis would certainly react badly if they were not offered a similar call this time. They could well decide not to go ahead with the visit. Our relations with Iraq have never been smooth and the furtherance of Britain's commercial and other interests in Iraq depend to a large extent on taking the occasional opportunities that come up for high-level Ministerial contacts with the Iraqis. In particular, a call on the Prime Minister would enable us to emphasise at the highest level the importance we attach to the early release of the two Britons who have spent a number of years in Iraqi jails, Messrs Smith and Hagger. There is continuing concern in this country for the welfare of these two men.

Sir Geoffrey has therefore reluctantly concluded that it would be right to ask the Prime Minister to

/agree

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agree to a call by Tariq Aziz on 4 or 5 December.

I am sending copies of this letter to Richard Mottram (MOD) and Maureen Dodsworth (DTI).

Yours ever,

Peter Ricketts

(P F Ricketts)
Private Secretary

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