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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

16 October 1985

Thank you for your letter of 11 October about the forthcoming visit of the Iraqi Foreign Minister to London.

The Prime Minister has agreed to see Mr. Tariq Aziz and we have provisionally arranged that this should be at 11 o'clock on 4 December for half an hour. The Prime Minister has commented that we should let Mr. Aziz know in advance that we are expecting progress on the cases of Mr. Smith and Mr. Haggar.

(Timothy Flesher)

Colin Budd, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

11 October 1985

Prime Minister  
This is difficult but not impossible in diary terms.

Agree to a brief meeting?

P.S. We might let him know in advance that we should be expecting progress on

Dear Charles,

CDP/K.

Visit of Iraqi Foreign Minister to London

As you know, we have an outstanding invitation from the Secretary of State to Tariq Aziz to visit the UK in December. The visit, accepted in principle by the Iraqis, is planned for 4/5 December.

Since our last correspondence, the new Iraqi Ambassador, during a call on the PUS, has made it clear that Tariq Aziz is expecting substantive high level discussions, including with the Prime Minister, during his stay. We have been told that Tariq Aziz would rather postpone his visit than not see the Prime Minister (whom he last met when the Arab League Delegation called on the Prime Minister in November last year). Sir Geoffrey fully understands the pressures on the Prime Minister's time and entirely agrees with the need to keep down calls on the Prime Minister by Foreign Ministers. But he feels that there will inevitably be a small number of exceptional cases in which it will be necessary to ask the Prime Minister to see a Foreign Minister. He considers that there are grounds for making an exception in the case of Tariq Aziz.

Smith Hagger at such a meeting. CDP

First, a call would enable the Prime Minister to register at the highest level our concern over the cases of Smith and Hagger.

Second, it would provide an opportunity to dispel at the highest level the ever-present suspicion in Iraqi minds that HMG is officially and secretly sustaining the Iranian regime's ability to continue the war by the supply of vital defence equipment.

[you've already done that].

Finally, Tariq Aziz is aware that the Prime Minister had been prepared to offer him a call when the visit was originally planned in February. The Iraqis would interpret a refusal to receive him at Prime Ministerial level as a change

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in HMG's attitude towards Iraq. As a Deputy Prime Minister and senior member of the Revolutionary Command Council, Tariq Aziz ranks second only to Taha Ramadan in his ability to influence Saddam Hussein. If anything, he has gained in domestic and international stature since February, as Iraq's fortunes in the war have prospered.

In the light of the above, Sir Geoffrey Howe hopes that the Prime Minister will agree that it would be right to see Tariq Aziz on 4 or 4 December.

?

*Yr ever,*  
*Peter Ricketts*

(P F Ricketts)  
Private Secretary

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