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PERSIAN GULF SITUATION

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, today released a copy of a letter to the Honourable John Bosley, Chairman of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade of the House of Commons, regarding the situation in the Persian Gulf. The text of this letter is attached.

- 30 -

For more information, media representatives may contact:

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The Rt. Hon. Joe Clark, P.C., M.P.
Secretary of State for External Affairs



Le très hon. Joe Clark, C.P., député
Secrétaire d'Etat aux Affaires extérieures

OTTAWA, Canada
K1A 0G2
28 December 1990

Dear John,

As the year draws to a close, I wanted to update you and your Committee on recent developments in the Gulf crisis.

Much of our discussion at the last Committee session focussed on the impact of sanctions on Iraq and the relative lack of sensitivity in the Iraqi leadership to the shortages and problems created by the international embargo. We are aware of no significant change in this situation since that time: the civilian sectors of the economy are being affected more severely than the privileged military; rationing continues; prices of foodstuffs and consumer goods continue to rise; and more non-essential industries have been forced to reduce or cease production. Most important, international cooperation in imposing and policing the embargo is proving very effective, and sanction-breaking remains insignificant. As you are aware, Canada is playing a leading role in implementing sanctions, and Canadian ships have intercepted 1,597 vessels in the Gulf as of today. This represents 25% of all such interceptions carried out by the multinational force.

However, in spite of the fact that these are the most comprehensive and effective sanctions ever applied by the international community, we must recognize that there are no signs whatsoever that they are having their intended impact of persuading the Iraqi government to comply with Security Council resolutions. As we have discussed before, it is evident that the Iraqi leadership appears to be far less concerned about the welfare of its people than in holding on to its ill-gotten territorial gains.

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The Honourable John Bosley
Chairman,
Standing Committee on External Affairs and International
Trade
House of Commons
Ottawa

c.c. All Members of the Standing Committee on External Affairs
and International Trade

Indeed, there has been a continued military build-up inside Kuwait, to a point where more than fifty percent of Iraqi forces now appear stationed there, and there is no evidence whatsoever that withdrawal is being considered as an option. Worse, we have all seen recent confirmation that the brutal occupation of Kuwait continues, with Iraqi forces violating every norm of civilized behaviour and human rights.

At your last Committee session on the crisis, we discussed the diplomatic efforts that had been pursued, including my own trip to the region, in the period leading up to and surrounding the passage of Security Council Resolution 678. Since that time a number of senior foreign leaders, including President Chadli Bendjedid of Algeria, have been actively trying to find a peaceful path to resolving the crisis, always on the basis of Security Council resolutions. I am afraid that their efforts have fallen far short of hopes, and I regret to say that they are increasingly of the view that Iraq is determined to hold onto Kuwait at any cost.

Of greatest concern in this regard has been Iraq's attitude to discussions with the United States which President Bush offered one month ago. Although Saddam Hussein's initial acceptance of the proposal was an encouraging sign, his subsequent refusal to accept a sensible date and his efforts to establish pre-conditions for the talks have unfortunately shown an unwillingness to approach the dialogue seriously.

At the same time, the international coalition arrayed against Iraq remains firm. In spite of Iraqi efforts to split the consensus, regional and other governments have demonstrated their determination to remain together in opposition to the Iraqi invasion and annexation of Kuwait. Although some commentators have suggested that this collective resolve may have been weakened by the recent announcement by Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze that he would be resigning, I am persuaded that the Soviet Union remains unchanged in its support for our common resolve.

In spite of the lack of recent positive signs, the Government is determined that no stone be left unturned in our efforts to find a peaceful solution to the crisis based on Iraqi compliance with Security Council resolutions. We remain in constant contact with regional and other leaders. During my recent visit to the Middle East, I explained that while Canada could not accept any linkage of the Gulf crisis with the Arab-Israeli dispute, we recognize that durable solutions to all the

problems of this troubled region must be found. We have also made clear our willingness to participate in establishing a peace-keeping presence in the region, should this prove useful, in a post-withdrawal period. These questions will be pursued by the Associate Minister of National Defence in her visit to the region which starts this weekend.

As the year draws to a close, I think that all Canadians can take great pride in the role that their country and their compatriots are playing in this crisis. We have been active diplomatically in the region and elsewhere. We have played a constructive part in the deliberations of the United Nations Security Council, on which our term is now drawing to a close. We have been in the forefront of the programs of economic assistance to countries most severely hurt by the crisis and have chaired a key UN sub-committee charged with the coordination of that assistance. The staff at our Embassies in Kuwait and Baghdad have worked tirelessly, and in the face of some personal danger, to ensure the safety and well-being of Canadians and, indeed, of others, caught in the vortex of this crisis. And many young Canadian men and women remain, of course, in the region today as part of our military contribution to the collective effort to oppose aggression and to make clear that the world we believe in is founded on respect for international law.

Irrespective of the events of the coming weeks, there are lessons we are already learning from the Gulf crisis. These are consistent with Canada's approach to international politics since our beginnings as a country. The first and most important lesson is that the crisis has galvanized the international community to use the United Nations in the way that its founders intended it should function when they drafted the UN Charter at the close of the Second World War.

A second lesson is that we must reinforce our efforts to deal with the risks and problems associated with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. These are issues, among others, to which we must and will be turning our efforts in the months to come.

I know that all Canadians share with us, especially as they reflect during this holiday season upon 1990 and the year to come, the hope that war can be avoided in the resolution of this crisis. Possibilities for peace are not yet exhausted. I personally remain hopeful that Iraq will realize the depth and extent of the world's determination and reverse its annexation of Kuwait, just as it reversed its decision to retain international hostages.

At this time when we have put the Cold War behind us, when there are so many positive signs that a new era of international cooperation and respect for the rule of law may lie ahead, it is all the more important to remain firm in our collective resolve to prevent the rewarding of aggression..As it has in the past, Canada is playing, and will continue to play, its part in this international endeavour.

I look forward to further discussions with you and your Committee on January 15th. As the crisis in the Persian Gulf is very much on the minds of all Canadians, I am taking the liberty of making this letter public.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature consisting of two parallel diagonal lines sloping downwards from left to right, with a small dot or flourish at the end.

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